FIRST IMPRESSIONS VISIT:

MONROE, WISCONSIN

Prepared by:

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and
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(1) What was my perception before visiting the community: what did I expect, etc.?

Reviewer A

- small rural community
- random commercial districts along entrance highways
- pleasant shopkeepers
- a mixture of home cooking establishments and quick food businesses
- clean streets, well kept schools and city buildings
- green spaces and pleasant parks
- dairy products

Reviewer B

- small town similar to Baraboo, i.e., county seat, not much industry

Reviewer C

- I really had no expectations ... I knew nothing about this community

Reviewer E

- a small town known for its cheese ... a great 18-hole golf course ... little industry ... knew about Advance Transformer

(2) Approaching the community, what do you notice first?

Reviewer A [Highway 69 from the north]

Positive
- nice sign -- good "by-line"
- noticed population sign and ordinance
- no billboards made nice clean appearance
- everything was clean and neat

Negative
- mixture of residential, commercial and large green spaces in between and around
- confusing to eyes

Reviewer B [North]

Positive
- nice signage: entryway & directional
- lack of billboard clutter

Negative
- confusing route into downtown

- farm equipment dealer needs to be offset from highway (landscape buffering would help)

Reviewer C [north entrance via Highway 69]

Positive
- signage was nice/attractive (i.e., welcome sign)

Negative
- it was like coming in the back door ... signage to downtown was minimal

Reviewer D [from East via Highway 11]

Positive
- few billboards
- clean
- green

Negative
- highway signage didn't indicate Monroe, only other communities

Reviewer E [Highway 11 & 81W]

Positive
- clean entrance
- 4-lane road
- very few billboards
- farmland neatly kept
- airport sign, city sign (population 10,241 -- get the population straight)
- directional blue signs great to different locations
- good City of Monroe sign
- great 1 hr., 2 hr., 4 hr. and 10 hr. meters around the square

Negative
- in town population 10,313 sign
- no chamber of commerce signs directing to office location
- why are there some flower barrels around square some places & other places nothing -- no theme or planning on this apparent
- street lights not impressive (don't match with a period or architectural style)

(3) As you drive around town your comments on:

A. Appearance

1. Downtown

Reviewer A

- pleasant - alleys are pretty clean and neat ... like concrete

Reviewer B

- sea of blacktop around courthouse, it needs more green space, lawn and trees
- lack of trees around perimeter
- architectural integrity of many historic structures has been compromised negatively, especially on the first story
- clean
- sidewalks and street badly cracked
- vacant lot at 11th & 17th an eyesore

Reviewer C

- streets and sidewalks in need of replacement
- architecture was a "mish-mash" of old and new construction
- parking meters irrelevant
- downtown space is wasted with wide sidewalks and streets

Reviewer D

- plenty of parking
- wonderful "older" architecture
- lack of theme (occasional Swiss style doesn't work, but original architecture could be captured with good historic preservation)
- sides of buildings in need of paint

Reviewer E

- clean (a few buildings on side need paint
- distraction of many types of store fronts
- great for parking
- the alleys were very clean
- one empty store on square: variety shops, mens shop (I did not see a good ladies shop)

2. Residential

Reviewer A

- large Victorians and newer subdivisions
- nice ... clean

Reviewer B

- very clean
- not much for sale

Reviewer C

- areas looked clean and pleasant

Reviewer D

- lots of trees

- streets and curbs good
- various types/ages of homes

Reviewer E

- railroad runs in some residential areas (used or not?)

3. Industrial park

Reviewer A

- mixture
- where's signage?
- industrial park or parks?

4. Parks

Reviewer A

- didn't noticed any

Reviewer B

- what few I saw looked very nice

Reviewer D

- "cheese" theme
- newer playground equipment
- well maintained

Reviewer E

- over 100A
- band shelter
- tennis
- Twining is great park & play area
- 12A park & pool
- 12 parks! ... great program, well kept up
- also has 90A by airport to develop (Monroe is looking to future ... great idea having extra park land)

5. Schools

Reviewer A

- Administration Building needs new signage and clean up parking lot

Reviewer C

- schools looked fairly new and/or well maintained

Reviewer D

- well marked and easy to find

Reviewer E

- Junior high downtown could be a negative with kids

6. Infrastructure (sidewalks, street, lighting, etc.)

Reviewer A

- sidewalks, some curbs and some roads deteriorated ... others brand new

Reviewer B

- downtown street lights don't blend with historic buildings (too modern)
- sidewalks and street in residential areas appear well maintained

Reviewer D

- adequate

Reviewer E

- downtown light not attractive
- big problem with city sidewalks in residential areas (everyone talked about this)

7. Other

Reviewer E

- three movie screens downtown and two screens at drive-in are the only attractions at night (either go to the movies or go out of town!)

B. Signing

1. Community entrance/exit signs

Reviewer A

- very pleasing and uncluttered
- needs shrubs and/or flowers

Reviewer B

- wood sandblasted sign very attractive ... don't remember an exit sign

Reviewer D

- entrance: very eye appealing

Reviewer E

- good
- blue signs throughout great idea

2. Streets

Reviewer A

- easy to read
- standard

Reviewer B

- clearly marked (although one way streets were confusing for the first-time visitor and could be better signed)

Reviewer C

- downtown streets in bad shape

Reviewer D

- like Highway signage at street corners

Reviewer E

- good, no problems
- one way around downtown
- trees in city look healthy

3. Directions to hospital/parks/etc.

Reviewer A

- good blue signage throughout community (have arrows, great!)

Reviewer B

- blue directional signs are plentiful and clear ... somewhat boring design but very functional

Reviewer C

- directions to hospital were fine ... I cannot recall directions to parks or seeing any parks

Reviewer D

- liked color of directional signs but looked too plain ... could maybe use part of entrance sign design on top of signs plain

blue directional signs

Reviewer E

- excellent

4. Storefront signs

Reviewer A

- some need paint and repair
- mixture of "Swiss" and other types is not appealing
- get rid of themes and use natural beauty of old buildings

Reviewer B

- need improvement in the downtown
- often did not conform with style of architecture
- does Monroe have a sign code?
- lack of cohesiveness in storefront signs downtown

Reviewer C

- no continuity with downtown retail signage

Reviewer D

- again, a theme based on period architecture or type of shop would be nice (see Cambridge) ... some appeared out of place

Reviewer E

- not impressed
- no theme carried out
- trying for Swiss doesn't work

5. Industrial parks

[not addressed on this visit]

6. City Hall, police, etc.

Reviewer A

- missed it, wasn't looking for it carefully, or lack of signage didn't alert me

Reviewer B

- o.k.

Reviewer C

- city hall easy to find

Reviewer D

- adequate

Reviewer E

- nice building ... everyone friendly, helpful

7. Billboards/advertising/etc

Reviewer A

- not cluttered or clustered ... great!

Reviewer B

- minimal use of billboards and off premise signs (especially coming into town (north) was refreshing

Reviewer C

- the fewer the billboards, the better

Reviewer D

- not too many billboards

Reviewer E

- not to many in city which is good
- great use of empty lot showing coming events (although if it is to be permanent, it needs to be better designed and maintained and the lot needs work!)
- no signs to chamber office (besides above sign direction)

(4) Visitor/community information

A. City/Village Hall

1. Is there a street map?

Reviewer B

- yes (obtained at chamber)

Reviewer C

- yes

Reviewer D

- seems to be a lack of maps in community other than from the chamber ... city hall also failed to refer me to the chamber when I asked for relocation information

Reviewer E

- received street map
- people in office very friendly and cooperative
- Courthouse people (2) did not know where chamber of Commerce office was located

2. Community brochure/directory

Reviewer A

- confusing ... no street addresses with names of places, only phone numbers ... I need addresses to find them! (page 36 of The Source)

Reviewer B

- yes (obtained at chamber)

Reviewer C

- brochures about community were generally good
- could have more information about the art community and Arts Center

Reviewer D

- too much non-Monroe information at chamber ... it was difficult to locate actual Monroe information in rack
- information requested to be mailed was sent promptly and was informative

Reviewer E

- good
- fairground in city residential area?

3. Community profile (including business and industrial opportunities)

Reviewer A

- basic

Reviewer B

- yes, Green County Development Corporation

Reviewer C

- information about community (profile) was good ... interesting to note the lack of population growth over 14 years, yet nearly half the population is under 34 years old ... Monroe does not reflect this potentially youthful energy

Reviewer D

- received from city ... produced by county Economic Development Corporation (map should be to scale, otherwise information seemed complete)
- received from chamber ... seemed complete ... information sent out very quickly by mail

Reviewer E

- people in stores very friendly and helpful
- very active chamber of commerce ... businesses I talked to seemed happy with work being done
- great clinic in town ... people very proud (concerned over business downtown since move though)

4. Recommendations on place to stay/eat/visit/etc.

Reviewer A

- store clerks are unsure of social activities, even told me to go someplace else or "see a movie" (no activities at night)

Reviewer B

- asked for directions to the library ... person was very helpful

Reviewer D

- people seemed unaware of what to do and what was open

Reviewer E

- the suggested excellent restaurant was average at best
- lodging o.k. to good

5. Contact people & addresses listed if I want more information

Reviewer B

- didn't ask

Reviewer E

- some people gave me their business card

6. Complimentary items (postcards, bookmarkers, coupons, etc.)

Reviewer C

- the chamber had some sort of Monroe items for sale but I don't recall seeing complimentary items

Reviewer D

- none

Reviewer E

- brochures, directories only

B. Chamber office/visitor info center

1. Easy to locate (and did people refer you to it?)

Reviewer A

- yes, except map in The Source needs an address

Reviewer B

- walked around for a very short period of time and found the office

Reviewer C

- chamber very easy to find

Reviewer D

- could use better signage directing to chamber

Reviewer E

- no, there were no directional signs ... third person I asked told me where it was

2. Comments on information available (street map/brochures/ community profile/etc.)

Reviewer A

- quite a few brochures for other communities
- some brochures "out of date" (State Fair)

Reviewer B

- excellent

Reviewer C

- good stock of a variety of local and statewide brochures

Reviewer D

- received from city ... produced by county Economic Development Corporation (map should be to scale, otherwise information seemed complete)

- received from chamber ... seemed complete ... information sent out very quickly by mail

Reviewer E

- yes ... people very helpful in giving me directional information

3. Recommendations on places to stay/eat/visit/etc.

Reviewer A

- yes, but after 5 p.m. when stores close were told there's nothing to do! ... movies is it?

Reviewer B

- very good
- shopping was the recommended activity of choice ... cheese outlet stores and downtown stores

Reviewer D

- very helpful

Reviewer E

- some (did not ask too much on this)

4. How prepared/helpful were they?

Reviewer A

- stood, approached us
- pleasant
- knew answers

Reviewer B

- very prepared and helpful

Reviewer C

- chamber staff extremely helpful, courteous and informative

Reviewer D

- staff was friendly, helpful and honest (although being honest about little to do is a tough situation for Monroe)

Reviewer E

- very knowledgeable, friendly and helpful
- good person (man)

5. Convenient hours?

Reviewer A

- the Depot Visitor Center is closed part of the week, why?

Reviewer B

- yes

Reviewer C

- yes

Reviewer D

- didn't check on weekend hours

Reviewer E

- yes

C. Information from general community (service station/motel/ bars/restaurants/shop employees/etc.)

1. How knowledgeable about the community were they?

Reviewer A

- not very
- "'Cheese Days' is a fiasco, not held this year" one clerk told me
- very friendly & always asked if I needed help
- restaurant waitress told us to go to New Glarus to find something to do!

Reviewer B

- waitress suggested we go to New Glarus when we asked what there was to do
- shop employees (antique stores) were knowledgeable

Reviewer C

- waitress suggested going to New Glarus for something to do

Reviewer D

- service station: helpful, but had no map
- shop: very helpful
- restaurant: staff unaware of community

Reviewer E

- store merchants: above average to good

- city officials: very good
- county officials: poor to average

2. Did they refer you to someone else who could help?

Reviewer A

- no

Reviewer D

- no

Reviewer E

- store: did not, I did not ask
- city: yes, and to the right person!
- county: tried, but not too helpful

3. Attitude, appearance, etc.

Reviewer A

- willing to help
- neat appearance

Reviewer B

- shop employees were very friendly
- Victorian Gardens B & B have beautiful facility
- owner did an excellent job showing his B & B and selling the community (I'm coming back to stay in September and look forward to my visit)

Reviewer E

- store: very good, cooperative and friendly
- city: very good, cooperative and friendly
- county: very good, cooperative and friendly

4. Other comments

Reviewer A

- some stores were closed even though the sign said they'd be open
- no store vacancies (or very few) is great!
- museum closed
- Art Center has no signage on south entrance

Reviewer D

- people are friendly, but some feel it is a boring community (and weren't shy about telling me!)
- community pride could be increased

- water fountains (drinking) in downtown were nice

Reviewer E

- merchants were very free with their information (a little too free given they didn't know me or why I was in town!)
- city: directed me to the person or department
- county: did not know too much, but friendly

5. General

A. Do residents know their community history/events/directions/ etc?

Reviewer A

- don't know

Reviewer B

- don't really know

Reviewer D

- depended on age of person

Reviewer E

- merchants gave me good answers

B. Services ... variety of retail ... lodging facilities

Reviewer A

- yes

Reviewer B

- for a community of 10,000 Monroe appears to have a good selection of retail, service and lodging facilities

Reviewer C

- it appeared there were many good restaurants downtown
- lodging seemed accessible

Reviewer D

- seemed adequate

Reviewer E

- "Monroe needs a good 4-star restaurant" the merchants told me

C. Are there public restrooms?

Reviewer A

- city hall and courthouse

Reviewer B

- city hall and courthouse

Reviewer C

- no

Reviewer D

- no

Reviewer E

- were told only in courthouse, city hall and chamber of Commerce

D. Pay phones...are they working, phone books intact?

Reviewer D

- didn't notice any

Reviewer E

- did not see any in downtown area

E. Industrial park ... does it look active & attractive?

Reviewer A

- basically like any other park

Reviewer E

- yes

F. What does the community TASTE like (specialty restaurants/ bakeries/etc.)?

Reviewer A

- good sandwich at the Cheese Pub

Reviewer B

- restaurant where we ate had delicious sandwiches
- bakery had good pastries

Reviewer C

- the restaurant we ate at was fine

Reviewer D

- we heard wonderful things about several restaurants

Reviewer E

- good lunch, although nothing special
- many specialty restaurants around square (Chinese, Swiss, Cheese, bars, etc.
- popcorn was excellent

G. What does community SMELL like?

Reviewer A

- no special odors noticed

Reviewer B

- didn't notice anything in particularly good or bad

Reviewer C

- no unpleasant odors

Reviewer D

- clean

H. What SOUNDS did you hear?

Reviewer A

- pretty quiet

Reviewer B

- small town traffic

Reviewer C

- quiet

I. What did community FEEL like (emotional response, i.e., cold/ warm, crowded/deserted, inviting, etc.)?

Reviewer A

- small, midwestern, sleepy, town

Reviewer B

- people were uniformly warm & friendly
- downtown appears somewhat harsh due to "sea of roads and parking" and unattractive signage ... also, a lack of vegetation

Reviewer C

- I had no particular feeling about this community

Reviewer D

- not much activity though people seemed warm

Describe the people you met (friendly, helpful, etc.

Reviewer A

- very friendly ... one store clerk offered to sell a house to me in her neighborhood!

Reviewer B

- property owner saw us looking up at buildings and wanted to know if we were looking for space
- B & B owner was very friendly (had retired to Monroe and really liked living in the community)
- antique dealers were friendly and knowledgeable about their inventory

Reviewer C

- in general, people were friendly and helpful

Reviewer E

- all very helpful and friendly ... they tried their best to help me and made me feel welcome

Additional comments/observations ...

Reviewer A

- get rid of parking meters ... we found a parking lot without them, then noticed how cheap the rates were, not a good impression
- one way streets are always confusing to new visitors, but yours are well marked
- nice signage at Highway 69 to direct people "nine Blocks to downtown"
- locals didn't know about shopping opportunities at Swiss Colony ... are there tours? ... shopping?
- nice to see a downtown with such a variety of shops and shoppers ... buildings look a little shabby, but look like they

get business

Reviewer B

- Monroe has a lot of potential to capitalize on its historic inventory of buildings ... removing the modern facades and canopies and working on signage would really make some positive improvements
- consider painting a mural on the side of the building adjacent to vacant lot at 11th & 17th
- vacant lot would make a nice vest pocket park if a new building is not constructed

Reviewer C

- redefine and pursue a new commitment to creating a historic downtown environment
- for Monroe, the best community development program is one that focuses on developing the business, social/cultural and economic resources to make Monroe the best place to live and work ... I would view the development of tourism as a secondary issue of importance

Reviewer E

- people downtown are wondering what affect moving clinic out will have on business -- time will tell about the impact of the clinic leaving downtown (250 people)
- talk about no problems malls, etc. outside city. Downtown special shops-go to Madison 1 hr, Milw. 2 hr, Chicago 2 hr., etc. • plenty of parking downtown (the problem is making sense out of parking ramps and meters and their posted prices, what is going on and why all the effort (and customer inconvenience) for such insignificant revenues?
- very clean alleys
- people discussed high taxes and no growth and nothing to do in evenings (movies or go to Madison)
- friendly people ... status quo ... community not growing last 20 years (needs a shot in arm!) ... maybe stop and try to get more business and industry into town (have development, but still control growth)

What will you remember about this community six months from now?

Reviewer A

- nice town to visit during an activity, but not much to offer for tourist downtown

Reviewer B

- friendly, helpful people
- good directional and entryway signage
- beautiful courthouse
- Victorian Gardens B & B

Reviewer C

- this is probably a very nice community to live in, but there is no compelling reason for me to visit again (the shopping is not distinctive, there are no major attractions, etc.) ... I'd even like to live in Monroe, but I wouldn't go out of my way to visit it

Reviewer D

- downtown and parks

Reviewer E

- friendly people
- parking availability downtown excellent
- clean alleys

6. Doing it Right!

A. List the 5 MOST positive things you observed about the community

Reviewer A

- good signage!!!!
- friendly people
- clean alleys with garbage bins being used
- variety of stores ... looks successful
- beautiful county building with nice green space around it

Reviewer B

- friendly, helpful people
- good entryway and directional signage
- well maintained residential areas
- good medical facilities
- good food

Reviewer D

- directional signage
- friendly people
- downtown square
- beautiful parks
- nice entrances to community

Reviewer E

- lots of parking downtown
- alleys very clean and rubbish in bins
- directional blue signs to places on interest (clinic, parking, downtown, school, park, fairgrounds, etc.)
- friendly people
- extra land for parks

B. Describe ONE idea that you will steal for use in your own business/community and describe the steps you will take to implement it within the NEXT 72 HOURS!

Reviewer A

- directional signage like your little blue signs are excellent ... we need something like them ... work with the chamber's economic development committee to continue discussions with city hall about signage

Reviewer B

- entryway and directional signage ... reinforce value of good signage with city hall and Baraboo Economic Development Committee

Reviewer D

- will include information on hospital in relocation and new business packets

Reviewer E

- try hard for signs in Baraboo ... discuss this with sign committee of Business Improvement District, chamber and Baraboo Economic Development Committee ... get the message to city hall to do something ... not real costly, but will help everyone (MFG, commercial, government, churches, tourism, Circus, etc.)