FIRST IMPRESSIONS

OF

BRODHEAD, WISCONSIN

Oregon, Illinois

MAY, 1995

A PROGRAM FOR COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENT
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Initiated As A Cooperative Project Of The
University of Wisconsin Cooperative Extension Service
and
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As you approach the community.....

I. What was my perception before visiting? What did I expect?

♦ A farming community. Basically a "drive through" town between Monroe & Madison.

♦ A quaint rural town with friendly people.

♦ A small rural community similar in size to Oregon with an agriculture orientation and one or two small industrial firms.

♦ A quiet, sleepy tourist town.

♦ A small town similar in size to Oregon (3,000 to 4,000 people).

♦ No perception - just knew it was similar to Oregon.

♦ Small farming center town.

♦ A small rural community with little or no industrial activity and average commercial section.

♦ I really wasn’t sure what to expect.

II. The "five minute impression:

Take one drive through the community without stopping. As you exit the community, pull over to the side of the road and write down what you felt about the town with only this quick look. Do this in silence, don’t talk with the others in your group for this part.

♦ Very clean and neat. Yards and homes were well-kept.

♦ A very clean and neat community in all areas (residential, commercial, recreational, & industrial), with virtually no blighted sections. Excellent signage.

♦ Clean, neat appearance. Well kept homes. The business district was older but looked nice.

♦ Neat, clean, well-kept. Good signage.

♦ Brodhead is a very clean town. Lawns are well taken care of. Signs are good for streets, churches, parks, special interest points, etc. Overall appearance is very impressive.

♦ Neat town. Well maintained properties. Several newer homes but a number of well maintained older homes. Attractive downtown area with older buildings in good state of repair. Very few "junky" looking areas. Supermarket, fast food, etc. located in
outlying areas.

- Nice small town starting to develop new business. I was impressed by the historic downtown area.
- Appears to be a pleasant, quiet residential community (a nice place to live; good area for service-oriented businesses (dry cleaners, deli/coffee shop, etc.); focus on nature-oriented recreation activities (hiking, biking, canoeing).

III. Driving...evaluate EACH entrance.

South Entrance:
Basically clean; appearance of growth; many new businesses and a lot of development; McDonalds is a good indicator of growth potential; modern health care available.

North Entrance:
Nice signage; farmer's market maintained well and provides an appealing entrance; pastoral/nature oriented environment; recreation focus.

Southwest & Southeast:
Industrial development availability.

West Entrance:
Pretty entrance with park and creek, but no distinguishing signage.

General Comments About Entrances:
- All entrances are basically well maintained. Appears to be a community with pride in appearance. Good directional signage.
- Adequate and attractive signs at the entrances on the main roads. Also signs as one drives through town indicating parks, schools, industries, etc.
- Good signage. All areas mowed and neat.
- Entrances on each road are well marked. Welcome signs to the city are very nice. Signs showing civic organizations are good. Looks like an inviting town.

IV. (a) Driving...evaluate the downtown business area:
(signs, appearance, size, etc.)
- Very clean with freshly planted flower boxes and planters. Sidewalks and streets are well kept. Commercial signage was average as to style and amount. Civic signage was superb with excellent design, groupings of information by color and location.
- Signs were very good!
- Fairly busy. Good signage. Public restrooms and neat area to sit and visit out of the sun. Ample parking, no meters.
- There is a very attractive area in the center of the shopping area with a gazebo and an area to relax for a few minutes to enjoy the beautiful day. Containers of flowers and trees planted in front of businesses is very appealing. Stores are identified with
Unique downtown lay-out. Flowers and trees were attractive.

Older, well maintained buildings. Variety of stores. Appears to be adequate parking including some off street parking. No meters. Nice plantings of trees, flowers, etc.

Pretty historic buildings and nice central park area.

Business district "mall"-median effect quite attractive with flags and gazebo; most signage for businesses adequate; store fronts for art shop, craft shops & antique mall inviting; great signage for street corners, attractive and informative.

(b) Driving...evaluate other business area.

Entry from south gives appearance of larger community with 3 or 4 large modern clinics, McDonalds & industrial development parks/sites; Not much development appears to be happening on north; Most industrial development appears to be planned for south, southwest and southeast areas.

Many new businesses, building construction and fast food restaurants show town is developing.

Outlying supermarket, clinics, fast food, etc. along main north/south highway is concentrated rather than spread all over town.

Industrial park is very nice and planned out.

The town seems to be growing. Newer businesses are starting on the edge of town (fast food, etc. has arrived).

Approaches are neat. Area looks prosperous and healthy.

Growing business area.

Was well defined on main arterial streets and does not encroach in primary residential, school, and recreational areas. Almost all business areas were adjacent to Route 11. Only noticed one closed business (a closed gas station on south central side). The lumber/building supply company on southwest edge of business district is in deplorable condition.

V. Driving...comments on residential:

Very clean and well maintained homes. Lots of shade and streets are in excellent condition. Only a few houses that needed painting or exterior maintenance. Virtually no junk vehicles or excessive number of vehicles at any house. Trailer court on edge of town is one of the best I have ever seen. Area immediately southwest of business district was only section of town that requires some work.
♦ Neat, clean, lawns mowed and for the most part showed pride in homes.

♦ Homes and lawns well-kept.

♦ Well-maintained homes and lawns that showed pride. We looked all over for a "run-down" section and never found one.

♦ Houses are well-kept and lawns mowed. Neighborhoods seem quiet and friendly. People wave occasionally when we drive by. There doesn't seem to be a really bad district in town.

♦ Neat and clean. Not upper income town but more middle and lower middle class but each was taken care of like each was a million dollar home.

♦ Nicely maintained homes and yards. Very few run down or messy sites. Good streets, many without curb and gutter - a more natural and pleasant appearance. Churches seemed to be scattered in residential areas.

♦ Nice, well-kept homes. Almost every lawn was nicely manicured. Very impressive overall.

♦ Lovely, traditional-style residences with quiet, tree-lined streets (most very well maintained) makes an inviting appearance; new home development seems fairly well planned.

VI. Driving...comments on:

a. street signs

♦ Excellent - good contrast and placement makes for easy reading; attention grabbing art/design.

♦ Big signs with logo are unique and appealing. Easy to see where a person is going.

♦ Signs along main street displayed covered bridge which is apparently a local symbol. Nice idea. Banners as well.

♦ Great.

♦ Street signs are very attractive and very visible. The covered bridges on the signs are a great idea. They remind people of something special about the town.

♦ Good.

♦ Very good! Had covered bridge on them. Nice touch!!

♦ Very visible.

♦ Excellent. Some of the best I have ever seen. An excellent model for other
communities.

b. traffic patterns/street conditions

♦ Excellent, generally on a grid with no one way or diagonal streets. Most are not curbed in residential areas, but are in excellent condition. It is easy and enjoyable to travel by car in and through community.

♦ Okay!

♦ Good. Lots of stop signs.

♦ No problems.

♦ Traffic doesn’t seem to be a problem. No traffic jams. Some streets are a bit rough and in need of repair.

♦ No apparent traffic problems or congestion. Streets in good repair.

♦ On the whole streets are in good condition. Could use more sidewalks.

♦ Good, however I wonder if no curbs and gutters in residential areas present problems for drainage, lawn care, etc.; also, sidewalks in business district need repair in some areas.

c. welcome signs (at entrances)

♦ Quite good, liked natural wood background; easy to read & attractive display for civic clubs is a good idea for visitors.

♦ Good, big signs.

♦ Adequate, but not overdone.

♦ Nice.

♦ Welcome signs are well placed and attractive.

♦ Good.

♦ Very well done.

♦ Fairly new.

♦ Excellent in all respects.
d. direction signs to parks, schools, hospitals/clinics, attractions, services (i.e. police) etc.

♦ The best I have seen. An excellent model!

♦ Again, very well done. All the same color and size.

♦ Excellent.

♦ Good job of putting up signs. I think even I could find my way around!!

♦ Excellent. Covered bridge is a great idea.

♦ Excellent.

♦ Abundant signs make unfamiliar travel easy.

♦ Great! Easy to read and easy to locate facilities from signage.

VII. Driving...comments on industrial park/area:
Sign well defined...busy...growing...new...etc.

♦ Good signage. Industry appears vital; sites well placed for access for shipping & receiving.

♦ Impressed by large industrial complexes in such a small town. Location at the edge of the city does not distract from the city’s friendly, small town atmosphere.

♦ Industrial area not defined as such by signs. Only one industry. Streets, sewer, and water already in place.

♦ The industrial park area seems to be growing - a good sign for a small town.

♦ Area looks ready-to-go. No need for excuses.

♦ What can I say, but again, very well done.

♦ Very nice industrial park with water, sewer, streets all in place and ready to go.

♦ Good location and grouped away from residential section. Plenty of area for expansion with all the infrastructure in place. Also vacant space in new industrial park is well maintained.

VIII. Driving...comments on schools:

♦ Building and grounds are well maintained. Good community support and pride in system. Just passed a $8 million referendum for new high school on first ballot!
♦ Very well kept and appear to be in good shape.

♦ Look well maintained.

♦ Schools seem to be older but well kept and grounds are neat.

♦ Appear to be well maintained with adequate room.

♦ Nice old buildings in good condition - at least on the outside

♦ Appear well kept; School spirit visible from windows and marquis.

IX. Driving...comments on parks, play grounds, athletic facilities, etc.

♦ Focus on nature (bike/hike trails a real plus); attractive golf courses; good mix of playgrounds, picnic sites, water sports & ball fields.

♦ Very well kept park and pool areas.

♦ Parks scattered throughout community. Well maintained.

♦ Public restrooms...nice!

♦ Parks are nice. I especially like the signs with the covered bridge theme carried out.

♦ Adequate for size of city.

♦ Very nice for a small town.

♦ All city parks...no park district.

♦ Well maintained, but seems there are not any located in south side of community.

X. Driving...comments on other:

a. hospitals/clinics.

♦ One new clinic and another one under construction. Location in commercial area adjacent to main traffic network.

♦ New clinics, Monroe & Janesville.

♦ Very good!

♦ Two clinics, readily seen.

♦ Clinics are easy to find and have good parking.
Easy to spot. Look new.

Two clinics operated by Monroe clinic and Mercy Hospital (Janesville). May be other medical services available, but was not readily apparent.

Noticed several health care facilities.

Modern, large enough to serve area; Good mix of health professionals to offer choices.

b. billboards/advertising

Sufficient, fairly well spaced.

Not much advertising or billboards, but that's nice...it keeps the green area from being congested.

Not the least overdone.

Didn’t notice any.

Not an overabundance of advertising. Billboards have been kept well in hand.

Not overdone.

Average. Not overbearing and gaudy.

c.

Appears to have good zoning.

XI. Walking around...comments on businesses (physical part):

Appearance, displays, signs, etc.

Very good except for old hotel with boarded up windows and weeds in sidewalk area on east side of building. Some care could be given to upper stories of buildings. Only one unoccupied business.

Businesses were clean and most were neat in appearance. Sidewalks were clean and not cluttered with vending machines or goods.

Very neat and clean.

Downtown stores well maintained. Paint not peeling. But where is the Chamber of Commerce?
♦ Buildings are two story with businesses on the 1st floor and possibly housing on the 2nd. Fronts of the buildings are for the most part well kept. Flowers have been placed on the sidewalks which adds a friendly touch. Streets are clean. Displays in the windows show what each shop is all about.

♦ Modern looking bank out of place in the downtown area. Just doesn’t look right. Signs adequate, not overdone. Nothing flashing or obtrusive.

♦ Buildings kept nice. Plenty of good signage.

♦ Attracted to craft, arts shops, & antique mall by displays & signage; drug and furniture stores highly visible also; city hall block needs improvement in visibility (should be focal point of "mall area" when viewing business district from highway) - appears "dead-ended".

XII. Walking around...comments on people:

Were they friendly, did they know answers to questions, did they try to help, appearance, etc.

♦ Friendly, positive, pro-community spirit "neighbors" approach to retail and promoting Brodhead; knowledgeable and helpful.

♦ Everyone was friendly and very willing to offer directions and give help.

♦ Yes! Yes! Yes! We got more help than we needed!

♦ Very friendly, positive, smiles, helpful attitude. Very proud of schools and athletics.

♦ I was greeted with at least a hello and may I help you at most stores. Many were eager to visit and be helpful. Merchants weren’t always ready to direct you to another business to find what you need, but if you ask a direct question you then would be directed. One shop owner (?) continued to vacuum as I looked which was not appealing.

♦ Always tried to help. Looked tidy and "well fed".

♦ Were very friendly, knew all the answers to questions or found someone who did. Were very helpful.

♦ Found all were very friendly and tried to answer our questions and help us.

♦ Pleasant and helpful except for lady in antique store. People in frame shop/art gallery, hardware store, antique mall, taxidermy shop & museum were pleasant and attentive. Volunteers in train museum were exceptional. I received an individually guided tour of depot and museum.
XIII. Community information: comments on...

a. community brochure (tourist type)
   ♦ Very well done
   ♦ Covers other areas re: bed & breakfasts. Had to pick up off floor in local drug store.
   ♦ Nice colored brochure with a good map showing museums, parks, motels, points of interest, etc. but does not include retail.
   ♦ Took notice of little signs welcoming bikers.
   ♦ A few available in a couple of places.
   ♦ Area brochure provided basic information.
   ♦ Need more information & better descriptive pieces specifically on things to do and see in Brodhead.

b. businesses/attractions brochures or directory
   ♦ Antique store literature good; lack information promoting other businesses in descriptive/directory format.
   ♦ 2 good pieces available about Brodhead, but were not developed by the city but rather as an area or county industrial development group.
   ♦ Did not find a brochure listing all retail businesses. Each shop had their own. It would be helpful for a visitor to know what is offered.
   ♦ Business brochure received from newspaper editor. Nothing from Chamber.
   ♦ Dated 1990

c. community profile (demographic, industrial type information for prospective business people, etc.)
   ♦ Business brochure from newspaper editor. Nothing available from Chamber.
   ♦ 2 pieces developed by area or county industrial development group.
   ♦ Did not seek.

d. map
   ♦ Need more detailed map on Brodhead & immediate area highlighting business district.
Available

- A map of area is on the Brodhead brochure with points of interest - well done.
- Saw colored map of city in city hall. Very well done.

- e. other (i.e. bulletin/notice tourism, kiosks, etc.)

- Very poor.

- Didn't find brochures were easy to find (not at your fingertips). Many places you needed to ask. In fact, one place had to move a dress rack in order to get them for me.

- No real tourism brochure. Was told they were listed in some area tourism brochures.

- Not much specifically on Brodhead except for trail.

XIV. City Hall...describe your visit:

a. appearance of facility, including signing

- Did not enter; need better, more attractive signage; promote as a source for information. No one referred me to City Hall for information.

- Buildings kept nice. Plenty of good signage.

- One person in office was very polite and helpful. I do feel they are very cramped for space.

- Cluttered - need more room. Lady was nice and polite, but was busy. Good city planning maps on wall.

- Average exterior. Did not go inside.

b. helpfulness of staff

- Yes, but did not have or know all information requested.

- Great!

- Very kind and willing to help!
XV. Chamber of Commerce...describe your visit:

a. did people know where it was (or who to refer you to?)

♦ Very hard to get the information on where location was. Went to drug store but druggist was too busy eating lunch to talk to 2 people wanting to open a manufacturing facility. Unbelievable!

♦ People always referred me to the drug store or dress shop. I was told the druggist was in charge of the chamber.

♦ People did know where it was. They were very busy, so did not have time to talk with them.

♦ Yes. Druggist was busy and didn't get to talk to him.

♦ Difficult to locate.

b. comment on information available

♦ Not much!

♦ Good

♦ Info was not easy to find at the drugstore. I had to ask. The same was true for the dress shop and I was told "we don't have a lot of information."

♦ Brochures on floor of drugstore.

♦ A few brochures available from the chamber

♦ Visibility of information not good at dress shop. Visible, but not well displayed at drug store or newspaper office.

c. comments on staff

♦ No staff

♦ No staff. Drug store clerk sent us to dress shop across the street. Information was 2 years old. Asked for membership information but was given none.

♦ Chamber is relying on sales clerks for information given about their town. One clerk gave me 2 different roads I might find the covered bridge on and both were wrong.

d. other (hours, appearance, location, etc.)

♦ May need to think about a separate office area
Chamber was marked with a sign in front of the drugstore however when I entered I wasn’t sure where to get information. It’s not an easy job to run a business as well as be responsible for the chamber image.

Hours? Appearance is non-existent. Apparently 2 locations but neither one is good.

Appears to be no central office; depends on hours of retail businesses housing materials.

XVI. Other stuff...

a. public restrooms (available, condition, etc.)

♦ Excellent - clean, well located, easily accessible for all ages.

♦ Clean, handicapped accessible.

♦ Available and clean!

♦ Available, clean, parking available.

♦ Signs direct you to public restrooms...which are clean!

♦ Saw 2 sets. Clean, handicapped accessible. No mirror in ladies room.

♦ Yes! We used them and they were very clean.

♦ Yes! Clean, not out of the way, easy to get to and no writing on walls.

♦ Clean and easily accessible

b. pay phones (working, phonebook intact, etc.)

♦ Did not observe or inspect.

♦ Yes

♦ Yes

♦ Used downtown one. Had a bird nest and the bird scared me. We were trapped together in the booth!

♦ A payphone was found with phonebook intact!

♦ Yes

♦ Worked fine and had phone book.
Good. Well located for business district, however this was only outside booth noted.

c. Parking

♦ Good. Appears adequate.
♦ Plenty of parking areas.
♦ Adequate.
♦ Adequate. No meters.
♦ Parking seems to be quite adequate.
♦ No parking meters...YEAH!!!
♦ Good.
♦ Good. No meters. Help and owners park in front or in back. Don’t mark tires or write parking tickets.
♦ Adequate street and lot parking. No meters!!!

d. water fountains, benches, etc.

♦ Very nice formal park area with gazebo and benches across from city hall.
♦ There were no fountains, but benches in little park.
♦ Nice little park in main square. I truly liked that.
♦ Didn’t see one except at restrooms.
♦ The gazebo housed benches and a water fountain close by. Very nicely done. It let you know people care about their town.

♦ OK

♦ Only bench and water fountain found at the end of the business district. Probably could use some more benches.

♦ Excellent. Very attractive at business district.

e.

♦ Highly visible and conscientious police force; fire department facility appears modern and well equipped; train museum attractive asset, but parking lot to side badly needs
maintenance. Large number of churches is a good sign of community spirit/pride; Library sufficient but grounds need maintenance (hide A/C with shrubs? more friendly librarian?)

- Enjoyed plantings and trees in retail area.
- A lot of tourism potential. Townspeople don’t think of themselves as a tourist town
- Golf course is a nice draw and addition.
- The "little gal" that runs the sun tan business and her girlfriend should be ambassadors for Brodhead. They sold the town wonderfully!

WRAP UP

A. Using your "senses"

1. What does the community TASTE like? (Specialty bakery/restaurant, etc.)

- Good home-cooked style food. Poor service because there was only one waitress for entire restaurant.
- Had a very good meal
- No sense of anything. If any - lack of taste!
- The people I asked didn’t seem excited about their restaurants. Some said they had never eaten there or they were all about the same. The one I chose to eat in was - home cooking!
- Fresh & Clean - Like COLGATE!!!
- No specialties other than community of clean, neat people.
- Good food at local restaurant downtown.
- Need bakery/deli/coffee house with high visibility and attractive front to give "taste" to the area; home-style care bar/club only highly visible "tastes" of downtown.

2. What does the community SMELL like?

- Clean. No industrial or noxious odors.
- Clean air.
- Pleasant rural area.
- Country air.
I don’t remember smelling anything - no bakery or food smells. I wasn’t tempted to have a cup of coffee or something to eat!

Very homey!

Fresh, clean and natural

3. What SOUNDS did you hear?

- Generally quiet pleasant sounds of a small midwestern community.
- Not a lot of outside noise
- Occasionally people saying hello as you walk. Quiet. Not much traffic noise.
- Fairly quiet. Birds.
- Music broadcast lightly in business district.
- It was a quiet community with little noise.
- Very quiet community. Highway traffic was only sounds.

4. What did the community feel like (emotional response, i.e. cold/warm, crowded/deserted, inviting, etc. or physical response, i.e. rough streets, etc.)

- Inviting, quiet atmosphere, even in business district. Maybe too much so, it also seemed deserted.
- The community felt friendly, very warm. The people were caring, making Brodhead a very inviting town.
- Warm. Inviting.
- Warm, busy, confident, proud.
- Seems like a very quiet and inviting town. I saw very few people other than our group and shop-keepers. People are friendly.
- Warm. Not many people on streets. Streets were in good shape and clean and fairly smooth.
- I felt the community was very warm! Some place I would like to raise a family.
- All good and positive.
- Warm, clean, friendly and comfortable.
B. List the 5 most positive things you observed about the community:

1. Every household was neat and clean.
   - Friendly & helpful people
   - Bike trail & Sugar River tourism potential
   - Safe, secure feeling
   - A sense of community pride from all.

2. Clean
   - Very neat homes & lawns.
   - Friendly
   - Quiet
   - Growing

3. Clean
   - Friendly
   - Growing community or wanting to grow
   - Controlled growth

4. Appearance of the town
   - Friendly people
   - No signs of vandalism or gangs
   - People must work together - flowers, gazebo, signs, etc.
   - New businesses coming to community.

5. Proud of their town.
   - Basically well-informed.
   - Good downtown - historical notation.
   - Good homes and well maintained
   - Passed school referendum of $8 million

6. Clean and neat including adjacent rural areas.
   - Three apparent prosperous industries
   - Pretty countryside as well as town with nice trees, wide streets,
   - Maintenance of rural and older atmosphere
   - We ran into some very positive attitudes about the community

7. Friendly people
   - Nicely kept park areas
   - Balanced industrial area
   - Nice homes with well-kept lawns
   - Many tourist attractions such as museum, trail, etc.

8. Great signage
   - Traditional-style, well maintained residential areas
   - Friendly, helpful people
   - Flags & flowers - evidence of community pride
   - Focus on nature/environment/recreation
C. Describe ONE idea that you will steal for use in your own business/community and describe how you will start to implement it within the next 72 hours.

✦ Signage - encourage our city to consider design and placement of similar signage (evidence of pride in community if you want visitors to find facilities and attractions residents believe important to share.)

✦ Flowers on sidewalks in downtown area. Will discuss measure with local Chamber.

✦ I will strive to make my own personal property even more attractive to passers-by.

✦ Downtown seating in business district. Have already called DCCA re: street/sidewalk improvement sources and $$$.

✦ Public signage.

D. What will you remember most about the community six months from now:

✦ Signage and cleanliness

✦ It's refreshing to know there's still a safe, friendly place called "Small town USA"

✦ Very nice community. I have told other people that also. Would like to return for another visit.

✦ The little park area with the gazebo. It gave me a feeling of a relaxed town with no hustle and bustle.

✦ How well they handled two manufacturers. Time spent. Auto tour of area, Good handshakes.

✦ Neatness, cleanliness, warmth.

✦ The friendliness of the town's residents.


E. Other comments (that just didn't seem to fit anywhere else!)

✦ Need hotel/motel facilities for visitors to stay in area; basically day trip visits.

✦ Most helpful voluntary information came from antique mall manager and newspaper personnel.

✦ Little trash in the downtown area. The community seemed to be maintained
much better than Oregon.

♦ I like Brodhead!! I would like to be their Chamber of Commerce Exec. Director! They need real help in this area.

♦ This town appears to have leaders who have gotten people to work together and accomplish much. There appears to be community spirit. They should be commended.

♦ Had fun doing this project. Brodhead should be very proud of their hometown. It shows!!

♦ Not very positive towards restaurants from townspeople. Didn’t look like too great a selection of restaurants and heard locals comment "they’re all Albanians."

♦ Clock by police dept. didn’t work.

♦ Many tourism related retail not open Sundays.