

Community Visited: **Onalaska, Wisconsin**

Date of Visit: May 14 & 15, 2009

Visit Completed by (community): Little Chute, Wisconsin

First Impressions:

A Program for Community Assessment & Improvement



Prepared by Jim Resick, Community Development Educator, Outagamie County University of Wisconsin-Extension, July, 2009. This program was first developed by Andrew Lewis and James Schneider in 1991, and revised in 2002 and 2007 by Andrew Lewis of UW-Extension Center for Community Economic Development.

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**First Impressions:
A Program for Community Assessment & Improvement
Final Report**

Community You Visited (City and State): Onalaska, Wisconsin

Visitation Team Profile:

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Date of visit and time spent: May 14 & 15, 2009 26 hours
Weather on dates of visit: Sunny, spring days



Prior To Your Visit

What is your impression of the community before your upcoming visit? What are you expecting to see? Please comment on what you know about this community.

- *I thought Onalaska would have a natural, up-north feel, but instead I found a vibrant shopping area.*
- *I have been to Onalaska before. All I knew of it was the mall/big box shopping area. Prior to our visit, I checked Onalaska websites and learned of all the recreation/nature opportunities in the area.*

How easy was it to get information by mail and telephone about the community you are visiting? Are you satisfied with the quality of information received? Did the information arrive in a timely fashion?

- *Contacted website and requested info to visit. I received a 2009 Visitors Guide and map. It must have been sent out immediately. Suggestions:*
 - *I would have like a listing of retail businesses*
 - *It would been nice if map was color enhanced e.g. restaurants in blue, recreation in green, lodging, etc.*
 - *I would have liked a short community profile (population, tax base, etc.)*

Please rate and comment on the community's online web materials and information (only answer if you were assigned the task of reviewing the community's website). Could you find information on this community on state and regional tourism web sites?

- *I didn't look on state sites.*

Quality of online materials:

Observations:

- *Onalaska seemed well represented on their websites but I didn't find a Business Association website. Was there a "Helpful Links" link on the website and maybe I missed it?*
- *City site – discoveronalaska.com – both decent sites.*
- *Discoveronalaska.com has good visitor info*
- *WHERE is info on the \$30 million planned Native American Cultural Center? Could not find it anywhere.*

The Five Minute Impression

After taking a five-minute drive through the community without stopping, what was your first impression?

- *First impression was of a vibrant shopping on the fringes of the community. Everything looked so new. Then when we found Downtown, the public buildings were new and beautiful. The Downtown streetscape is beautiful, but many businesses and old, unrevitalized buildings detracted from a general feeling of well being in the community. Hwy 35 corridor also detracted from the feeling of wealth and beauty. Directional signage was lacking throughout the community. It seems more signage is needed when there is not a standard grid pattern.*
- *There were not many flowers as tulips and daffodils, pansies would be in bloom. There seemed to be more shrubs than flowers. It seems you could plant annuals earlier in the spring, but I don't know last frost date. Barren pots are best removed from the Downtown when there are no flowers in them.*
- *The attention to detail found in the streetscape, new retail on the fringe is not shown by at least ½ of the businesses Downtown.*
- *Beautiful area, lots of good nature/recreation opportunities. Tidy in general, people take pride. Prosperous. Needs more authentic/non-chain or big box retail and restaurants. Mall and area big retail possibly bad for downtown.*
- *Onalaska is spread out and has few (almost no) signs to tell you where the town begins or ends, or even where things are located. Coming into the downtown was confusing. First you couldn't be absolutely sure you were headed downtown and, when you got there, it didn't look like a unified, central downtown location or district. Hodge-podge spots of businesses mixed with residential. Some of the buildings (presumably newer) were nice and others (often right next door) were run down and needed repair, paint and/or clean-up. Most of the time there would be a small number of businesses together and then a long length of mostly residential buildings with an occasional church or government building mixed in. If you were looking for a specific type of business, you could easily miss it. There seems to be no café for breakfast or coffee. We were told that Maggie's was a good place to eat, but, for lack of signage, we passed it three times and only found it later during a walking tour. The "downtown" area was very poor looking and spread-out. You couldn't walk from one shop to another. You had to get in an automobile and drive to the next group of commercial buildings. It seemed like it was easier to go to one of the mall areas to find what you wanted and those several areas are also spread out. They are, however, cluttered with signage which, unfortunately, obscured the view of the beautiful, green backdrop scenery of the treed hills. The only noticeable Onalaska sign was a nice, large granite sign coming off an exit at I-90.*
- *Prosperous community. Has sense of aesthetics and order. Lots of street trees, very green community. Focus on natural amenities as part of identity e.g. street signs, river views. Hard to find downtown, and then not many retail/service offerings. Caters to shoppers along I-90 corridor, with more than its share needed for resident shoppers.*

Community Entrances

Approach the community from the major entrances. Rate and comment on each entrance. While there may be an obvious main entrance to the community there are typically multiple ways to enter the community. In some communities there are entrances for other modes of transportation. Comment on other community entry points like airports, bike trails, water access (boat landings), and train stations (page 11).

ENTRANCE #1: *From LaCrosse, 16 East*

Observations:

- *No indication you have entered Onalaska. LaCrosse signage going in other direction is more obvious, helpful.*

ENTRANCE #2: *Hwy 90, Exit 5*

Observations:

- *Large Onalaska sign, generic large shopping area, lots of options but no authenticity*
- *I loved the big, granite Onalaska sign and I appreciated the planting islands done by local businesses (their sign was in them) and would love to do this in Little Chute.*
- *Finally, there was a sign—a nice, big granite sign telling you that this was Onalaska. Lots of big box names, yet, a little further down, there seemed to be lots of empty storefronts. It doesn't seem to be an unkempt area and has lots of big box traffic around it with varied items. It doesn't appear to be a bad place to do business. Why so many empty storefronts? Again, no signs to direct you to locations although signage on buildings is quite a bit better than what was found in the traditional downtown area. (Highway 35 and Main).*
- *Granite "Onalaska" monument helps anchor the visual onslaught of strip mall signage.*



ENTRANCE #3: *35 North, Main Right*

Observations:

- *No signage telling you if you were in Onalaska, where it started or where downtown was located. I didn't see any flowers or color. There was no visible signage on many of the commercial buildings with few exceptions. When there was signage, some was deceptive. One store on Main said something about a fountain on the awning. During a walking tour, it was discovered there was no fountain of any kind there. I liked the frequent trees and benches in the streetscaping on Main. But, they weren't that noticeable on the first run through. There were also plaques on historical buildings but no signs to tell you what they were from the street, so you might have missed them if you didn't have to stop. Also later learned the Mississippi River was only a block or two away, but you'd never know it riding through town. None of the businesses referenced the Mississippi in their business names and there were no signs stating that the Mississippi River was anywhere near 35 North and Main.*
- *No welcome sign, even though possibly the first likely entrance for travelers from west. Well kept properties with easy access.*
- *35 north to Main, right – hodgepodge of buildings – not much color (flowers) or green – some buildings new and nice, some old and run down*



ENTRANCE #4 – Hwy 35 going South:

Observations:

- *I liked the Onalaska School with WI State Champions*
- *Gorgeous views, tidy homes, no sidewalks or signage until you get downtown.*
- *Traveling along the river was beautiful. The scenery invited you to stop and take pictures but this was difficult on the highway. Finally there was an area by a large, plastic sunfish and gazebo which gave a nice view of the Mississippi and the ability to park for pictures. Across the street were motels and a resort-like area. It surprised me that the buildings were not higher to catch the view over the trees which lined the highway. The motels looked as if they had been built in the late 40's or sometime during the 50's and haven't been updated much since the 60's. For all of the beauty on one side of the street, the other side seemed trashy. I wouldn't build skyscrapers on that side of the road, but I certainly would make the resort-type businesses blend in better with the scenery and have two or three stories with verandas to enjoy the views.*



- *Couldn't tell if neighborhoods to east of this entrance are in Onalaska. Beautiful vistas with several turnouts accent the recreational opportunities of City. Giant sunfish is whimsical looking.*

ENTRANCE #5 – Sand Lake Road:

Observations:

- *No entry or welcome sign*

ENTRANCE #6 – Northern Entrance off of 53:

Observations:

- *Gas stations galore. There wasn't a lot on this road that really impressed me. It seemed like you were driving into a hub, but where? No signage saying it was Onalaska, LaCrosse or Nowhereville. The green scenery was now overshadowed by little boxes, one after the other. Not worth writing home about.*
- *Feels like a bypass, few exits. No welcome sign at entry. Nondescript landscaping along backs of buildings – appears they “turned their backs” on the highway.*

OTHER ENTRANCES (airports, bike trails, boat landings, train stations, snowmobile trails):
Observations:

- *Very inadequate marking of bike trail head near Main Street. No sign?*
- *The best signage seemed to be for Bike Trails. They were in various spots in the town. Without a map, it may have been difficult to find the airport. Only one sign on the side of Highway 90 was visible. You could have missed it easily. As for Boat Landings, Snowmobile Trails and Train Stations, there were none that I saw.*
- *Bike trail entries could be signed as “now entering Onalaska, Sunfish Capital of World”. You can't tell when you're in city. Entrance to trail near downtown is not signed, but an info board is present that needs more community info on it.*



Housing and Residential Areas

Drive through as many neighborhoods as possible, including the Downtown.

How would you rate the overall quality, affordability, and availability of housing in the community?

Quality

Observations:

- *Homes were well kept. Many were new. Some older multi-family needed updating.*
- *All socio-economic classes are represented in the town. There are some beautiful, newer homes with wonderful brick treatment and landscaping. There are some middle income houses that are well kept and decent. There are also some very low-income*

apartments and houses that need lots of sprucing-up and work. Just like the downtown, you run from one to the other with no particular order and without, it seems, any effort on the part of city/town planning.

- *Appear to have mostly high quality housing including multi-family. Not a lot of older homes, and those present are typical modest sized, post WWII homes.*



Affordability

Is there an adequate mix of housing to suit a variety of income levels?

Observations:

- *It appears, yes, but with affordable housing on the limited side.*
- *It seems that there are a lot of higher-end places to live, if you can afford them, and not so many lower, to lower middle income that are decent. There wasn't enough time to explore the socio-economic structure of the entire community and compare it with the housing (and prices) available. My guess is there are a number of wealthier people who live in the Onalaska area and work in LaCrosse. The guess is based on the number of centers and newer government buildings available to the community.*
- *Appear to have a good mix of various income – level housing. Saw a modest amount of senior housing – youth & family – rental community.*



Availability

Observations:

- *It didn't appear many houses were for sale.*
- *How many of the higher end homes are made available to median income people with grants and loans? How many of the middle income homes are offered to people of lower median income families with grants and loans? Is the climb from one group of housing (like the apartments I dubbed "the projects") feasible or nearly impossible? Is there counseling available to young, poor families to show them how to manage their money and to attain wealth?*
- *Observed many available lots and fewer new homes under construction on east side of city. Only one or two available "apartment for rent" signs observed.*

What are the most appealing and least appealing features of the housing in this community? Why?

- *Loved the new community (Savannah Village), homes were new. Affordable housing appears limited.*
- *Most appealing – new "sustainable" homes at Savannah Village development and obvious high level of care given to maintaining homes.*
- *Least – some stark-looking rental housing that is absent landscaping and character of design. Also, fair amount of very small "cookie cutter" single-family homes in older parts of city.*



Please comment on the quality and availability of residential infrastructure (e.g., roads, sidewalks, lighting, public transportation, bike trails/lanes, and green space, street trees, yards):

- *All of the above were exceptionally nice.*
- *All of the above present and above average. Bike lanes – nice. Not many bus stops.*

Appeal Rating Category

How would you rate the overall appeal of housing to the following populations (1=Not Appealing, 10 =Very Appealing):

Average ratings for each:

5-5-6-4	Single young adults	4-5-9-5	Senior citizen
3-8-8-6	Young families	9-9-9-9	Upscale/professional
6-8-8-7	Middle income		

Please comment on your observations:

- *The mobile home park was well located. It was very tidy and well landscaped with big trees and a thick evergreen hedge as a buffer.*
- *The best residential district was the new, green, Savannah Village with higher middle income properties in the hills. The homes are built in an energy-efficient and saving way, in a beautiful area and, for some of the working class, are affordable. In town you generally go from one neighborhood of older, middle class homes, to fancy, new and huge gorgeous houses. Then, here and there, are dots of near slums. If the noticeably lower-income buildings, apartments and single residences, in the town could be painted, landscaped and repaired, it would go a long way in matching with the rest of the town. It may also instill a sense of community pride in the neighborhood which could foster care for homes, yards and cleanliness. A few shrubs, flowers and landscaping would go a long way—especially with a paint and repair job.*
- *Overall, streets and sidewalks seemed to be in good repair. There were some areas where sidewalks were not available and that was puzzling. Some of them were residential areas. As far as bike trails and bike lanes, coverage was more than adequate. In fact, it (bike trails) got to be a bit of overkill. If you didn't have and couldn't afford a bike or a rental, it seemed you were missing out on one of the best times in the town. Public transportation seems somewhat adequate. Not only were buses available (presumably from LaCrosse), but vans for public transportation were also available. The schedules for these methods of transportation were not obtained, however.*
- *As a Senior Citizen with low income, I don't believe I would be able to afford to live in Onalaska without assistance. And, I don't want to live in the low income housing area(s). I believe single, young adults can perhaps afford most of the upscale housing available in Onalaska, but families would struggle. Middle income and higher paid, professionals would survive best in your town.*
- *Trulia.com real estate search shows half of Onalaska homes < \$200,000 and half above. Not favorable to young families looking for starter homes, but favorable appeal for middle income and upscale/professional. Several newer subdivisions appear attractive to upscale and professionals.*
- *There does not appear to be a lot of older housing stock (> 40 years old) available for sale.*

Education, Health, Social and Emergency Services

Education

Comment on the availability and appearance of schools.

- *All of the schools are very nice, good-looking facilities.*

Pre-school/Kindergarten/Head Start

- *Did not observe*
- *Observed the Eagle Bluff School kindergarten class being supervised on playground. This is a beautiful school in gorgeous setting, spacious and green. Did not get to observe any in class. School District Annual Report (2008) gave quite a bit of information regarding goals and projects. Did not disagree with any of them.*

Primary/Elementary/Middle School

- *Beautiful schools. I liked the tree garden and the vegetable gardens. Active ball fields.*
- *Eagle Bluff School – nice gardens, learning gardens, tree walk*
- *None of the schools seen appeared to be in a rundown condition or incapable of fostering an educational environment. The buildings were sound (or better) and the activity seemed appropriate.*
- *Pertzach Elementary School has pleasant surroundings especially for being in heart of downtown. Middle school looks kind of plain from outside; it could use screening of can collection center. Eagle Bluff Elementary seems like a great setting.*



High School

- *Beautiful*
- *Again, was unable to monitor any classroom experience but noticed that the exterior of the schools was modern, clean and well kept. Students did not look unhappy and goals in the School District 2008 Annual Report seemed feasible.*

- *Nice looking campus nicely accented by nearby park and school's outdoor track.*

College/University

- *Although I did not locate a college or university setting within the town of Onalaska, I talked with a couple of students who commuted from LaCrosse and elected to live in Onalaska.*

What do residents (young and old) think about the quality and availability of their local schools?

- *One mother/waitress raved about her son's school – she located here because of it.*
- *When speaking with a young waitress she mentioned that she went to college nearby. When she and her boyfriend decide to marry, they plan to settle in Onalaska due to the quality of life and schools for their future children. An older gentleman told me that he is now retiring, selling his house and moving to Arizona. However, he said the quality of life and raising his family here was so good, he wouldn't hesitate recommending it to anyone. Schools were one of the criteria he named that helped him form this opinion.*
- *Students and young adults I met liked their school experiences. One talked very favorably about how the tech education program prepared him for work.*

Overall, how would you rate the adequacy of schools for a community of this size?

Observations:

- *New, beautiful and large!*

Health Care Services

Comment on the availability and apparent quality of healthcare facilities

Hospitals:

- *Many facilities, all excellent, appears to be much more than average community would have. Onalaska is probably a healthcare destination*
- *I don't recall seeing any signs for a hospital or seeing a hospital. However, the town is filled with clinic after clinic for any type of care. There are health centers, clinics and offices everywhere (as well as insurance offices).*
- *Not present*

Physician, dentist, optometrist, and other medical offices and clinics:

- *You didn't have to go very far in neighborhoods to find some type of office building complex with more than one type of medical facility. General practitioner, Dental, Podiatry, Optometry offices flourished throughout Onalaska.*
- *Two major health clinics present plus several nice-looking professional medical offices.*

Long-term care, assisted living, and nursing home facilities:

- *I looked for but did not see many facilities for the Elderly. They are there, I'm sure, but do not appear to be sufficiently prevalent to take care of the population that, within a few short years, will need this type of care. There was a street, almost like a cul de sac, with many Clinics and dental offices on them. All had about the same architectural*

design with some unique differences. The United Way Office was among them. It seemed as if these buildings were in the right place with the right stuff.

- *Seemed like a modest number of assisted living and nursing home facilities are present.*

Other health services (e.g., Chiropractor, psychotherapy, naturopath, massage, etc.):

- *There were a few chiropractic and psychotherapy offices that were visible in mainly the mall areas. I don't recall seeing any massage "parlors" or therapeutic massage clinics and only one holistic medicine clinic was noted.*

Overall, how would you rate the adequacy of health care services for a community of this size? Please comment:

- Overall, outstanding health services in area due to nearby medical centers in LaCrosse.

Social Services

What social services (e.g., day care, senior center, counseling, etc.) are available in the community?

- *Only one senior center, a couple of psychotherapy (and, hopefully, social service centers) and one senior center was seen. Unless they're hiding someplace, I didn't think this was adequate for a community this size. I could be wrong. I did not have a chance to visit them and get information on the breadth and depth of their services.*
- *I saw several day care facilities.*

Civic

Are there a variety of not-for-profit organizations and clubs within the community?

- *United Way, Learning Farm (Clearwater), Historical Society, YMCA – Whoa! Nice facility!*
- *The American Legion had a wonderful facility. I found references in brochures to the Jaycees, Business Association, Community Service Group, Lions Club, Rotary Club, Friends of the Onalaska Library, Sons of the American Legion and the American Legion Auxiliary. From the street, however, their efforts were not that prominent.*
- *Don't know, saw no listing of civic clubs anywhere.*



Overall, how would you rate the level of nonprofit/civic services for a community of this size?
Please comment:

- *The lists of donors at the Omni and the Library are impressive.*

Emergency Services

Overall, how would you rate the police, fire, ambulance, and emergency medical service facilities? How do local residents feel about these services?

- *It appears there is a high level of nonprofit work.*
- *I saw no police and only one State Patrol.*
- *Never saw a police car*
- *Police were nearly invisible. Do they mostly have unmarked cars? I think I saw two or maybe three squads on the street in all the time we were there. On the last day I met a friendly, retired policeman in the Visitor's Center. If he is any indication of the rest of the force, I'd say the community is in good hands. I saw a few fire stations but didn't hear any fire alarms or sirens and only one ambulance. No one I spoke with was concerned about their safety. Onalaska seems like a peaceful, safe town and everyone I asked said that they'd have no concern getting to a hospital on time or receiving treatment that was anything other than above average. Again, given the amount of medically-related offices seen in the community, one could drive to a local clinic without any difficulty, if called for.*
- *The fire and ambulance facilities near City Hall appear more than adequate.*

Local Economy

What is your impression of the health of the local economy?

- *Wonderful shopping at chain stores and the mall. Economy appears healthy and wealthy.*
- *Prosperous in general. Downtown needs to find its niche, but really nice streetscape, City Hall*
- *My impression of the local economy is that there is a division of class in Onalaska. There is a high, socio-economic level, some middle class and a low middle to low socio-economic level. The reason I say this is based on two things: 1) there are a lot of beautiful, private and public structures in Onalaska: the Omni Center, City Hall, the Parks, Schools, Skate Park, streetscapes (complete with lamps, trees in grates, bicycle posts, benches, brick, water fountains and street names engraved in sidewalks and, 2) many of the downtown areas and buildings are deteriorated and need refurbishing. There seem to be two economies side-by-side here and the big bucks aren't helping the little bucks to stand on their own.*

Downtown

Explore and visit as many businesses as possible.

Could you locate the downtown easily? If not, why did you have difficulty finding it?

- *Yes, as I had a map and Visitors Guide.*
- *More directional signage would help.*
- *Not enough way finding signs to get to downtown. Signage in downtown good.*
- *I understand from a very nice visit with the Visitor's Bureau personnel that you are building a multi-cultural center from Highway 35 and Main to the Mississippi River with 1.3 million dollars. Where it's going is ideal. There isn't that much happening in that downtown area. But, how on earth did you raise that much money with Onalaska's population? You must have a high income tax base from some of your citizens or industry; it can't all be grant money. But, did you consider that it may be a center going nowhere if the rest of the town doesn't come up to speed? Those buildings deteriorating on the way to the new complex may deter people from going ahead, especially with no signage or reference to Onalaska or the Mississippi River! Having a wonderful streetscape, complex and plan is great! But, in order to get to Oz, it's helpful to have a yellow brick road without the scary forest. In other words, help those businesses, residential areas, that aren't so "pretty" get their houses in order.*

Rate and comment on the overall appearance of the downtown (buildings, displays, signage, streetscape).

- *The new and renovated buildings (especially City Hall) were very handsome. Older buildings and alleys were deteriorated. Streetscape and public signage rate #10 – really nice amenities and attention to detail. City did a great job on Main Street.*
- *Some very nice new construction. Some buildings in need of improvement/restoration. Crystal Theater is an interesting re-purpose, but bad reno job. New streetscape, pavement details, benches, bike lock-ups, fountains, light posts – AWESOME!*



Rate and comment on the variety of shopping in the downtown.

- *The skate and bicycle shops were great, but more retail is needed. The Del's Auto takes up too much room and it seems it should be relocated and the property used for commercial.*
- *Some essential services (lube shop, cleaners, dentist). Not enough specialty/niche businesses. Few places to gather, i.e. café, restaurant, etc. Need a café. Places for young people.*
- *I went to a store expecting to find a fountain (of some sort). It turned-out to be a sportswear and skating store. That was across from a auto tire and lube station which was next to a restaurant (although you couldn't tell it because the name of the place, much less the word "restaurant," or "café." or "bar and grill" was not evident. That restaurant was next to another restaurant on the corner of Main and Highway 35 which opened late in the day. On the opposite corner was a dilapidated, white apartment building desperately in need of renovation or replacement. (I now understand that is where the new complex will begin.) The street also carried an historic theater which, from all appearances was restored on the outside just for appearances and wasn't being used. That was a little swatch. Then, after more residential, you could find City Hall, a church/school, a pizza place in the same building with offices, more residential, and, suddenly, a mall--Center 90--with many empty storefronts. There really isn't one center with enough shops and stores within walking distance to call a full downtown. I am challenged due to weak ankles and knees. Walking from store-to-store is possible for me but, having to walk blocks to get to the next store is not. I could take a bike, but then how would I handle all of my purchases?*

Rate and comment on the customer service you received in the downtown.

- *Visitor Center and City Hall employees were very nice and helpful.*
- *Staff at Skate Store were not interested in me.*
- *The Visitor Center was closed over lunch.*
- *Was browsing in Spa Salon for 10 minutes, no one offered to help me. Got stared at a little.*
- *Not friendly in skate shop.*
- *Very nice and knowledgeable in bike shop*
- *A friend and I went into the sporting goods store that I thought contained some sort of fountain. After a minute or so of looking through the cute figure-skating outfits, I went toward the counter where a young man and young woman were having a conversation and waited. After a minute or so (seemed longer), the young woman stopped talking to the man, looked at me and said "You need something?" I explained that I had seen the sign on the awning for what I thought was the 'Monsoon Fountain.'" She said, "the Monsoor Fountain is only a sign. This building once had a soda fountain here but now it's sporting goods." I purposely looked disappointed. 'Oh,' I said, 'I wondered what that meant....' She then mumbled something about being a biking town and could she help me with anything else and returned to her conversation. Not exactly tourist friendly. On the other hand, at lunch I had a very polite and attentive young waiter (at Ciatti's) who I*

asked if he lived in Onalaska. He said he didn't right now but was planning to move to Onalaska as soon as his semester was up at the university. During my conversation with him he noted that he liked working and living here because of the quality of life it afforded him and the recreational opportunities. He offered to give me directions to where I was going but, not knowing where I was going and not being the driver, I thanked him and explained my friend was doing the driving. All of the staff was very friendly in a professional way. It was refreshing.

Rate and comment on the signage in the downtown.

- *The public signage was handsome. Loved the Onalaska pillars, Onalaska monument sign, Onalaska city logo in the sidewalk bump outs and tree grates and on each street sign.*
- *Private signage at Del's Auto, Insurance Co is substandard. Other business signage was generally nice.*
- *What signage? Do you see signage? I still can't tell you where most things are or how to get there. We passed a restaurant three times, looking for a place to eat, and never found it until we were out walking.*



Rate and comment on the window displays in the downtown.

- *Good window displays are needed in the Downtown.*
- *A few good ones, but in general, not many to look at.*
- *Whatever displays there were did not catch my eye. I saw bicycles and wheels in the bike shop but I wasn't blown away by it.*

Rate and comment on the variety and quality of merchandise in the downtown.

- *The merchandise at the bike and skate shops was really nice and high quality. There weren't any other stores to visit.*
- *Zero. You had to go to the malls for that.*
- *Services rather than retail appear to dominate the downtown.*

Comment on the mix of facilities and services in the downtown (housing, professional services, retail, recreation, accommodation and food, industry, parks, etc.).

- *Downtown needs more development. Del's Auto corner is underutilized and unsightly. Housing is ok, could use more professional services, need more retail and recreation. Could use a café. No industry in Downtown is good, and none needed.*
- *Rome Park very nice, but very hard to find.*
- *No public restrooms downtown that could be found. Finally went to City Hall and used the facilities. I have to use the disabled unit. Could not comfortably use the facilities because a toilet paper dispenser or box was mounted too near the left side of the commode and correct posturing was impossible. There were mistakes like this in all but one of the bathrooms I used in town. As for housing, there was a mix of dilapidated units and somewhat newer apartment buildings. Retail was near non-existent (no novelty stores, no clothing or shoe stores, no food could be found on the first three passes). Industry was intertwined with garages and whatever other businesses dotted the hodge-podge. If you went to the mall, you could just about find it all. But, you only found the stores you could find in a hundred different towns—the big boxes. I did spot a few novel places, very few—even at the malls.*

Rate and comment on the quality and availability of parking in the downtown.

- *Thursday afternoon the parking spaces were underutilized. On Friday noon, parking spaces were filled. Is there any public parking Downtown? It appears some will be needed if retail is developed.*
- *Never had a problem finding parking.*
- *We thought the parking was open and accessible until it came time to park in front of the restaurant we had finally located at dinner time. So, parking availability is great, most of the time. When it is peak time, it is difficult. We rode around the block a couple of times and then decided on a spot about a block and one-half away.*

Rate and comment on the quality (appearance, adequacy, etc.) of lighting in the downtown.

- *Lighting was beautiful and adequately lit the downtown.*
- *I believe there are sufficient streetlamps in the districts I've seen to illuminate the streets at night. The style of the street lights is very appealing and fits with the streetscaping. I don't believe any changes are necessary at this time.*

Does the downtown play a role in tourism? Is there potential for the downtown to play a greater role?

- *Except for the tourism office, 2 retail stores and Maggie's Restaurant, tourism doesn't currently figure in the Downtown. Great potential for the Downtown with the future Cultural Center.*
- *Yes, biking. Major potential for better shopping/eating. Cultural Center will have major impact, but in what ways?*
- *I didn't see any indications that the downtown actively plays a role in tourism. I was told by the Visitor's Center that it did, but I couldn't see it.*



Describe the residential housing mix in the downtown (apartment, single detached).

- *Mainly apartments above businesses with single detached on the perimeter.*
- *Difficult to pinpoint. Most of what I saw was not that appealing and needed sprucing up.*
- *Not knowing what your population mix is, I would say there is a fair amount of housing downtown—too much residential, in fact, to make it an exciting tourist attraction. I would not care to live downtown. If there were more things to do within walking distance, that might change my mind. But, right now, there's not enough to do to make living downtown worthwhile.*

Would you find the downtown to be a desirable place to live? Please comment.

- *Not yet as there are not many places to walk to.*
- *Yes, but even better is it had gathering places, cafes, etc.*
- *Needs more activity, it was kind of dead.*
- *I would if I were elderly. It has a slower pace than other commercial districts.*

Were there any government or nonprofit organization activities that are serving as traffic generators for the downtown (city hall, post office, YMCA)?

- *City hall, elementary school – church. I didn't see a Post Office. The YMCA and Library and parks seem far away from the Downtown.*
- *Perhaps we picked the wrong time of the year to come, but I didn't see anything going on downtown that was sponsored by anyone.*

General Information About Overall Retail

Describe the mix of retail shopping available (malls, specialty shops, strip malls, big box stores).

- *Good retail mix. So many stores and great shopping. Onalaska is lucky to have such good chain stores.*
- *Lots of malls, big box stores – not enough specialty shops*
- *In the mall areas there was generally a good mix of big box, national chains, etc. and a few specialty (especially restaurant) shops. I really wasn't impressed with the downtown mix at all. You didn't seem to have anything interesting downtown unless you were a bicyclist.*

What retail goods do local residents appear to need to travel to surrounding communities for?

- *None – you have everything.*
- *Night life in LaCrosse, cultural opportunities*
- *A couple of people mentioned that they go to LaCrosse to go to restaurants. You have some fairly nice restaurants in Onalaska. I loved Seven Bridges and the food at Ciatti's and Maggie's was very good. Ciatti's was a bit pricey, but Seven Bridges and Maggie's was very reasonable. So, I didn't understand your residents' reasons for going out of town for restaurant food. On the other hand, if they wanted glassware, giftware, specialty jewelry or clothing, upscale shoes or accessories, a variety store or old fashioned meat market and/or deli, where would they go? It's true that some of those items may be purchased at the mall, but they aren't genuinely Onalaska items. Isn't there anything like gloves, or baskets, or fishing lures that's locally produced in Onalaska and could hold its own in a retail shop?*

What stores or services were missing that you would expect to find?

- *Didn't see a Walgreens or CVS type pharmacy.*
- *Cafes, restaurants downtown, no Walgreens?*
- *Specialty, novelty stores and shops, giftware and glassware, wine and bakery shops, boutiques, antiques, handmade items such as sweaters, quilts and pottery were all missing.*
- *Neighborhood-based hardware store; tough competing with Menards, etc., but these are convenience goods and one shouldn't have to drive far to get them.*

What retail stores or services did you find that were unusual or unexpected for a town of this size?

- *Lots of healthcare*

- *Skate store, bicycle store, dance shop.*



What store(s) in this community would you travel a distance of more than 30 miles to patronize?

- *If I skated and biked, the skate and bike stores. All of the Valley View Mall with its anchor stores and shops.*
- *None. If I'm coming to Onalaska, and my reason for coming is to enjoy the Mississippi and shop for the day, I've got to tell you that I'm not coming. There's nothing there to attract me. If you added some cute shops, had transportation to take me from spot to spot (since it's so spread-out) and offered tours of the town by horse-and-buggy or van, pointing out whatever it is you're proud of in Onalaska, and wrapped it in a package deal with a paddle wheel boat ride on the River or Lake Onalaska, then I might consider coming back.*

Rate and comment on the overall condition of the retail sector

- *I hate to beat a dead horse but, what retail sector downtown? A few services, service stations, two restaurants, a sports shop and a non-operating theater do not a Retail Sector make. Now, if you're talking about the mall areas, then you're talking retail sectors. But I can see and get that anywhere. Why would I travel to Onalaska for that?*

Other Retail Shopping Areas (e.g. Malls, Big Box stores, etc.):

If applicable, explore other retail shopping areas outside of the downtown business district and visit as many businesses as possible.

I didn't visit any stores, but lunched at Ciatti's & 7 Bridges

Retail Area #1

Type (Shopping mall etc.):



Location: *Mall area, Hwy. 16.*

Rate and comment on the overall appearance.

- *No sidewalks!*
- *Nice landscaping to break up hardscape at mall.*
- *Unique design for chain buildings, i.e. McDonalds, etc. Signs lower to ground, multi-*

business signs look better – could be anywhere

- *Neat, well signed.*
- *Very nice and upscale.*
- *As much as I complained of too little signage in the downtown, I can complain of too much congestion of signage in the mall and retail areas. For the most part, buildings ride up and down, helter-skelter, with signs pointing in all different directions. It's your standard, conglomerate, ugly. But, I will say that the backdrop (green, rolling tree-filled hills) make it almost bearable. It's too bad Onalaska didn't get a hold on this before the building started, limiting the size, structure and number of stories buildings could be built. If there was some uniformity, allowing uniqueness and identification, I think it could be a class act. We did see one McDonald's that was exquisite and fit right into the motif. That's the kind of thing people latch on to. If Onalaska does this in their downtown, getting the variety of shops it needs, all the better.*

Rate and comment on the variety of shopping.

- *Almost everything you would need is available.*
- *12th Street retail area was poorly signed or located, and we found it only because we were driving around.*
- *Better than passable. If I lived in Onalaska, I probably wouldn't have to go outside of the town for much. There are grocery stores, big box stores, and national chains to suit most needs.*

Rate and comment on the customer service of businesses you visited.

- *The staff at Ciatti's was very personable. Gave me dining elsewhere advice. Another talked favorably about Onalaska.*
- *Good almost everywhere*
- *For the most part, people were kind and attentive. The hotel clerk was a bit stoic but professional and friendly, the restaurants we visited bent over backwards to be of service and kind, sometimes entertaining as well. The women at the Visitor's Bureau answered every question they could, gave me names and numbers of people to call for my fictitious business, supplied me with possibly more information than I needed in an effort to be helpful, gave me an Onalaska pin (over and above the call of duty) and, despite the fact I was there right before closing, never batted an eye or made me feel as if I was infringing on their time. Anyone I stopped to talk to and ask questions of was very friendly and helpful. Toward the end of my questions, I got some "why do you want to know that?" looks, but they still answered the questions. So, for the most part, Onalaska gets an "A." But, then, there was that sporting goods/skate shop that made me feel as if I were intruding on their private conversation and that my question was dumb, or maybe I was. And, that was near the beginning of the tour. That brought it down quite a bit.*

Rate and comment on the variety and quality of merchandise.

- *Most of the merchandise I saw was in the mall areas and was pretty much standard compared to what I can get back home. Only, back home at the Fox River Mall, there are a lot more special sales.*

Retail Area #2

Leave this section blank if there is not a second retail shopping area.

Type (Shopping mall etc.): *Center 90 Mall*

Location:



Rate and comment on the overall appearance.

- *Hidden area, no signage (actually depends on how you enter the area)*
- *This mall had many empty storefronts, even higher end operations that had left. We did not frequent any of the stores. We drove through trying to assess the reason for the empty storefronts. Again, the stores that were still open were mostly nationally-known chains.*

Rate and comment on the variety of shopping.

- *Would be nice to have essential needs business for the residents in immediate area – bakery, pharmacy, café, etc. (within walking distance)*

Rate and comment on the customer service of businesses you visited.

- None visited

Local Industries

Consider industries only within or adjacent to the community.

What are the major industrial sectors in the community (e.g., manufacturing, construction, transportation)?

- *I didn't really see industry – remember quite a few mini-storage buildings. Little Chute had too many of these and restrict their location with a zoning ordinance change.*
- *Trucking, manufacturing, construction, seemed to be the biggest sectors in the community. We went to one of the industrial areas and found it to be neat in appearance. Ryder Truck, and Freng Water Softeners resided there among others that didn't have signs explaining which industry was housed there.*
- *Construction industry must be big, given the amount and rate of growth (commercial and residential)*

Who do you think are the major employers in the community?

- *City government, Lutheran Clinic*
- *Healthcare*
- *I can only judge by the brochures, not by the tour. If you didn't count the stores in the malls and restaurants, it seemed that most of the "industry" revolved around healthcare and insurance. I did see a few electric companies referenced as sponsors on event brochures as well as equipment and distributors. Without signage in the industrial areas, few as they were in Onalaska, it was difficult to tell.*
- *Major employers include Midwest-Security Insurance and Gunderson Lutheran. Also the school district.*

What are the major types of manufacturing in the community?

- *Again, due to lack of signage, it was difficult to tell what major types of manufacturing there were in the community. It looked like retail in the traditional downtown was trying to build around the bicycle industry due to the bike trails.*
- *Don't know, did not see much in city.*

What are the major types of primary industry in the community (e.g. agriculture, mining, forestry or fishing)?

- *Industry did not seem to be a major part of the local economy.*
- *Unknown. It seems the malls are the primary industry to me. There should be a good amount of commerce around fishing and recreation, but I didn't see it (other than a nice bike shop). In a way, this works for the community. It is very diverse in its scope of employment. I didn't see any one type of industry tower over others.*
- *Primary industries appear to be healthcare, retail and hospitality-tourism.*

Is the community noticeably dependent on any one type of industry? If so please comment:

- *Appears Onalaska is dependent on its retail sector.*
- *Retail sales and lodging appear to dominate the local economy.*

Is there a well defined industrial park or improved land where industries could locate or expand?

- *I wouldn't call the industrial locations well-defined. They, like the "downtown" area(s) are stuck in places where residential areas reside in close proximity. In most cases I didn't see too much room for expansion, unless they build "up."*
- *The city website lists three business parks where light industrial lots exist.*

Are the industrial facilities well maintained?

- *I was impressed with the industrial area(s). They are not only well maintained but neat*

and orderly. Equipment isn't parked in a disorderly fashion, materials are in buildings and, for the most part, grounds are kept swept and clean. One of the employers even did landscaping all around the building and throughout, even to the far edges of the parking lot.

- *They look fairly well-maintained, with exception of several properties in unnamed business area northeast of the middle school.*



Would this community be an attractive location for industrial development? Why or why not?

- *The quality of life is good here. It appears most land is already developed and land on the fringe could be industrial park land.*
- *There wouldn't be any reason why industry would not want to develop here. There seem to be a number of eager, young employees who enjoy a great quality of life from the recreational facilities available. The industrial areas are clean and well structured.*
- *No. The business parks it has seem already populated with higher-end (people oriented) services, that would conflict with manufacturing and related industries.*

Commercial Services

What types of commercial businesses serve the local community (high-speed internet provider, print shops, etc.)?

- *I did not observe this.*
- *Many banks and credit unions, computer service, realtors, printers, financial and insurance services, sign companies, graphic design, HR and temp employment services, and advertising/marketing.*

What commercial services appear to be missing in the community?

- *Although I found listings for graphic firms, printers, etc., I really didn't see that many service agencies (aside from healthcare and insurance). I didn't see a place that makes signs. (Very much needed!)*
- *None that stick out.*

Professional Services

Are banks and ATMs conveniently located? Do the banks have convenient hours of service?

- *There appeared to be very nice banks well located.*
- *There seemed to be a sufficient number of banks in various locations to serve the community. As far as the hours go, I didn't have a chance to check them out.*
- *Except for a few, they mostly are located in the southern commercial districts of city.*

How would you rate the adequacy of financial services for a community of this size?

- *Appears to be more than adequate.*

Please Comment:

- *Many financial businesses are located here.*
- *In addition to insurance, I saw many investment and financial firms in the town. All looked to be relatively healthy in the current economy. Between the banks and financial service firms, the population appears to be enjoying a great service level.*
- *There appear to be many banks and credit unions in the city. There must be a lot of money in the community!*

What other professional services are available (accounting, insurance, legal, etc.)? Are there any apparent gaps?

- *I didn't observe gaps.*
- *Aside from healthcare and insurance, many of the professional services (i.e., tax preparation, accounting, etc.) were nearly invisible. I spotted a couple but not as many as should be available in a community this size.*
- *I saw accounting and insurance services. Is there a business packaging/shipping service? Onalaska Area Business Association website shows no realtors as members.*

Tourism

Does the community have a strong tourism sector? Please comment:

- *Yes, its location on the Mississippi River with beautiful bluffs, forests and scenery attracts tourists.*
- *Lots of resources, trails, nature. Could be developed more, lots of opportunities*
- *I think Onalaska would like to think of itself as a tourist location. The problem is that, until you hear of the plans to build the complex on Highway 35 and Main, you don't even identify the traditional downtown as being located on the Mississippi. If you come in on 35 from 90, you have to go past Main to view the Mississippi and nowhere downtown does it say anything about the River being there. Additionally, bike trails (although well marked) are not all that attractive at the entrances. True, there is greenery with trees, shrubs, etc., but the bike trail starting by the armory isn't appealing at all. The armory has a big yard of soil cut out around a park and green area. And, it's restricted. So, where's the attraction there? You have wonderful parks (the skate park is awesome!) and centers, but in the same vicinity, there can be streets or buildings that take away from the affect.*

- *It appears to have a strong lodging and restaurant sector, but a less strong attraction base (unless retail is the main attraction).*

Does the community have a slogan/brand?

- *Visit awhile. Stay forever (or something similar).*
- *The only tag lines I could identify were those on the CD given to me by the Visitor's Bureau: "A great place to raise a family. A great place to make a living. A great place to make a life." One of those would have been enough. And, it should be on banners or displayed in windows or, at the very least, on brochures. I didn't see any slogans or tag lines until, on my last day (at the Visitor's Bureau), I received the CD about Onalaska.*
- *Sunfish Capital of the World*

Is the community well known for an attraction or event?

- *Sunfish days. I didn't see the words Mississippi River anywhere and it seems this is your major attraction.*
- *Sunfish Festival*
- *Mississippi River recreation, including the Sunfish Festival.*

What have you seen that could be developed into a tourist attraction (natural or man-made)?

- *The strong retail sector should be developed in conjunction with tourism, fishing, biking. The Fox Cities has become known for shopping – see Fox Cities Convention & Visitors Bureau website.*
- *Nature areas*
- *I would clear the highway and make all of Highway 35 overlook the River and have shops that look out over the river (just as your new complex will do). Make all signs point to the downtown area. Have river boat tours, fishing excursions, quaint shops, boutiques and novelty stores, Native American baskets and crafts and plenty of restaurants featuring various types of cuisine. Dress up the streets with flowers and color. If you have historic buildings, renovate and modernize them; restore them to serve their original purpose. Set-up soda fountains, candy stores, family-oriented delis or entertainment and put the auto and tire garages further into the interior. Make existing houses charming and give them new life by making them art galleries, handmade jewelry and craft showplaces.*
- *Great River Trail and adjacent waterfront natural areas have much potential.*



Rate and comment on the quality and appearance of existing tourist attractions.

- *The bike and hiking trails were very nice. The Omni Center and Aquatic Center were very nice, too.*
- *The only real tourist attractions that I saw were the bike trails which, if you are a bike enthusiast and happen to hear about the trails along the water, could draw interest and the big, plastic sunfish denoting that Onalaska has a sunfish festival. (Later I was told Onalaska is the sunfish capital of the world. But, I couldn't guess that by passing the fish.)*

Do you consider any of the attractions to be underdeveloped? Please comment.

- *The tourism and natural features could be more developed. The future Cultural Center seems perfect for this. A meeting place and a hub would be developed with the Cultural Center.*
- *Natural assets. Better signage, more supporting businesses (outfitters, bait shops, bike shops, etc.). Places to go after recreating (bars, restaurants)*
- *I believe in green. The less "development," the better it is as an attraction. At the same time, however, there has to be safety and order. From what I can see of the complex to be built, Onalaska is striking a balance between improvement (progress) and naturalism. Still, the downtown needs work to be a vital tourist destination.*
- *The Great River Trail appears poorly signed for access, inadequate for parking, and somewhat unwelcoming of visitors.*

Are there any community events that could be expanded/developed to be a tourist attraction? Please specify:

- *There were no community events going on when I visited Onalaska. To make the traditional downtown more attractive, there should be something going on every weekend. Sunfish Days look like fun but are located at the Omni Center and Van Riper Park location. Can you fish for sunfish there? What are the festivities on or by the water? I couldn't find them in the Sunfish Days brochure? It sounds like a good time, but I would expect Sunfish Days to include children's fishing contests, master fishermen catching fish for grand prizes and boating exhibitions.*

Comment on the availability and selection of overnight accommodations in the community (hotels, motels, campgrounds, B&Bs).

- *The hotel selection seems adequate. The Holiday Express was very nice. I thought the B&B with the blue roof was beautiful. Every city needs more B&B's.*
- *There doesn't appear to be a problem with the types or amount of overnight accommodations. I found a neat B&B on the Mississippi which looked cozy and inviting. If you like to "rough it," the resort hotels on 35 didn't seem too bad. From the outside, though, they appeared to be the kind of rooms we called cottage rooms in the 50's with few, if any, amenities. We stayed at the Holiday Inn Express which was wonderful. The rooms were "roomy" and clean with a microwave and refrigerator. More than we hoped for and breakfast, too!*
- *Lots of hotels and motels are present, but didn't see a campground within the city. Where do "roughing-it" type bicyclists and fisherman stay?*



Are there facilities to accommodate a conference and/or a large number of visitors?

- *Yes. The Omni Center. Really impressed with the center and all the donors on the wall. There's another shown in the Visitor's Guide that I didn't visit.*
- *It appeared to me that the Omni Center could go a long way for conferences and conventions in the area. I didn't explore any more, but there are a couple of really nice high schools that probably have facilities as well.*
- *Facilities like Omni Center can serve moderately large conventions and conferences, but it is not within walking distance of motels – have you considered a shuttle service or “trolley” bus?*

Is there a Visitor's Center, Chamber of Commerce office, or other facility serving the needs of tourists? Please comment on staff, facilities, signage, marketing material, maps, etc.

- *Loved the staff. Really impressed with the number of brochures and would like Little Chute to have a brochure rack like theirs.*
- *Staff friendly and knowledgeable. GREAT brochure display, tons of info organized very well.*



- *I found my visit to the Visitor's Bureau delightful. All personnel were very helpful and gave me the name and number of the City Planner to call about my business plan. I was given an 8 ½ by 11 map with many locations marked (by a numbering series), brochures on the bicycle trails and Sunfish Days. A CD telling about Onalaska and an*

official visitor guide with many of the trails, another map and highlights of the city. Events were given for every month, interesting places to visit and details about businesses. What really struck me is that the center was closing in 15 minutes when I arrived. I asked question after question, was interrupted by another tourist to get his question answered and I didn't see one apprehensive gesture or hear one word to rush me along. Both ladies treated me with kindness and enthusiasm. They introduced me to a retired policeman who added levity to the conversation. I thanked them and, even though I ran over the time limit, I told them I wished I had brought money in with me to purchase an Onalaska pin. They gifted me with a pin and, because my business would have involved children, gave me statistics from the school district and the 2008 annual report from the Onalaska school district. I would say, even though I purposely went to the wrong office (I should have gone to the City Planner's office), their treatment of me rated a solid 10.

- *Directional signage to center for tourism and commerce is small, widely spaced, and spotty in coverage from various approaches. Good locational sign at the site, however.*

Rate and comment on the customer service of Chamber/Visitor Center staff:

- *I received literature quickly. They were friendly and helpful.*

Restaurants

Comment and rate the quality of restaurants:

- *Ciatti's was delicious. Seven Bridges was good – my check was \$6.64 and the waitress charged me \$6.00 to make it even. Maggie's french fries were great.*
- *Manny's is good. 7 Bridges was OK/average for a supper club. Fun, retro atmosphere. Best pink squirrel EVER! Staff very friendly.*
- *Every restaurant at which I had the pleasure of dining was a great experience. For lunch I ate at Ciatti's and enjoyed a wonderful pasta dish with the type of pasta I requested (not the menu pasta). It was a little pricey but the food, atmosphere and wait staff were wonderful. Dinner was enjoyed at Seven Bridges. I took a picture of the sunset view. The relatively low price for the delicious food and salad bar was surprising. Everything from soup to salad to entrée was prepared well and we were all happy with the final bill. Plus, the waitress was delightful. Because we ate a complimentary breakfast at the hotel the next morning, we waited to have our next meal at lunch. Maggie's (now that we had found it) proved to have an inexpensive, scrumptious fish fry with the best French fries I've had in years. Again, an energetic and courteous waitress took our order and served our food. We were all very happy with our choice of food and there was plenty of it.*
- *Restaurants at which we ate have great quality!*

Variety/Mix of Restaurants

Comments:

- *Selection is good, but could use a café or coffee shop Downtown.*
- *Not enough non-chain, unique restaurants. Upscale choices not present. Ethnic choices very minimal.*

- *Although we had a hard time finding the restaurants in the traditional downtown area, there is no doubt that just about any cuisine or type of food desired is served somewhere in Onalaska. There's every type of fast food, Italian, Mexican, Supper Club, subs, and sandwiches. I did not see much in the way of Thai, Japanese, Korean, Chinese, or Mongolian food, but I'm sure it is somewhere out in one of the mall areas. There were many of the nationally known chains such as Red Lobster, Perkins, etc., but we chose to eat at local establishments in Onalaska, only.*
- *Seems to be a nice mix. Didn't hear of or see a seafood restaurant, though.*

What do local residents recommend on where to stay, eat, and visit? One way to do this is to ask questions: "I have only one hour (half a day, etc.) in this community, what would you recommend?" or "where would you recommend we stay/eat?"

- *Ciatti's staff recommended restaurants and bars on 3rd Street which we couldn't find.*
- *7 Bridges recommended*
- *The only places suggested were Maggie's (by two residents) and Seven Bridges (at the hotel). We were pleased with both recommendations.*
- *Manny's Mexican Cocina, Seven Bridges, and Maggies on Main. With all the big chain restaurants present, have locally-owned non-chain restaurants considered banding together to jointly market their unique qualities?*

What local restaurant, specialty shop or attraction would bring you back to this community in the near future?

- *The B & B on Hwy 35. Sunfish Days.*
- *Bike shop, trails, fishing*
- *If the Highway 35 had shops or restaurants that overlooked the River and made it more accessible, I would come back for that view and I would come back to eat at Seven Bridges again.*
- *Seven Bridges Restaurant. Imagine the view out its windows with sail boats plying Lake Onalaska or the Mississippi River pool (can't remember which water body there).*



Government/Public Services

Local Government Information

Are municipal offices conveniently located?

- *Yes, in the Downtown.*
- *City Hall is beautiful. The landscaping amenities like signs and columns and lighting is beautiful.*
- *Yes. Lovely new building. Historical info. Lots of info in Park & Rec office.*
- *Very conveniently located, and in fact, they appear to anchor the downtown.*



How would you rate the availability and quality of the following information provided by the municipal government?

Community brochure/guide:

- *Visitors Guide and map were available.*
- *Map too vague, needs to show small streets. Visitor guide is great!*
- *Didn't actually find a community brochure, except for Park & Rec Department's booklet.*

Business Directory:

- *I looked on website, Visitors Guide for which retail stores Onalaska has, but couldn't find it anywhere. Retail sectors not located on map and some are hard to find.*
- *Could not find one. Tourism/Commerce center CLOSED over lunch hour! None at City Hall.*
- *Onalaska Visitor Guide has the only such listing I found.*

Community Profile (including business and industrial sites):

- *Never did find one produced by the community.*

If applicable, were you able to find adequate information to make informed retail, commercial and/or industrial business investment decisions? (Answer only if you played the role of a potential business investor).

- *The Center for Commerce and Tourism did its best to give me the information they thought I needed to start a business in Onalaska. Most of what I really needed, however, should have been obtained from the city planner and I knew this going in. Still, the two ladies loaded me down with everything they thought I could possibly read to help with making the decision. Again, I would give them a 10.*
- *The city's website has much of this info, but I never found a hard copy brochure.*

How would you rate the helpfulness of government employees?

- *When asked "where is a good place to lunch in Onalaska", a government employee said he didn't know as he only eats in LaCrosse. But he was helpful and asked another employee where to eat. They suggested Maggie's, then pointed me in wrong direction.*
- *Asked if I needed help in Park & Rec office. Gave me a free map (usually \$1 charge). Very nice.*
- *Staff of planning department (receptionist) was very helpful. Library staff was also helpful.*

Public Infrastructure

Comment on and rate each of the following for quality accessibility, or availability where relevant.

Public Transportation:

- *Saw MTV bus stops in the Downtown.*
- *Bus, not a lot of stops*
- *Bus (apparently from LaCrosse) and local van transport available; I saw the metro bus twice and the van three times in an afternoon*
- *Noticed bus service (frequent) in southern part of city, but less so in northern half.*

Sidewalks:

- *Sidewalks were clean and even. I liked the water fountain on the corner and the benches.*
- *Generally, on most streets. Nice sidewalks Downtown. I liked the Onalaska logo imprint on the handicapped ramps.*
- *No sidewalks in mall area, excellent in downtown, none along 35 entering from north*
- *In very good shape for most part. Some older neighborhoods and newer subdivisions lack sidewalks, however.*

Streets:

- *Main Street reconstruction is beautiful. Other streets except Hwy 35 were very good.*
- *Streets seemed to be in good repair, for the most part. I didn't see a lot of construction or disruption of traffic.*
- *In very good shape.*

Landscaping, Street Trees:

- *Street trees in grates are great. Not any flowers, but I saw the hoses for hanging baskets for summer flowers. Very few bulbs blooming throughout the whole city and I really missed them.*
- *Trees on Main Street look nice, grates are attractive*
- *The trees planted in the grates of the sidewalks was a nice touch.*
- *The city has some outstanding examples of tree-lined residential streets. Other streets need landscaping or trees in their terraces.*

Public Restrooms:

- *All restrooms I used were nice and clean.*
- *Hard to locate and, when I did, they did not accommodate a large frame. Even the handicapped facilities did not allow sufficient room. This happened in several places. Only one public bathroom allowed enough room for comfort and ease.*
- *Had to use restaurants, City Hall or tourism center when downtown.*

Street Signage:

- *It seems more directional signs are needed especially to point to the Downtown.*
- *Nice lamp posts with banners and iron work*
- *Little to none.*
- *Street signs are adequate, if not large. Directional signage, however, is inconsistent, inadequate, and sometimes confusing. City should consider a signage study and follow up implementation.*



Pay phones, drinking fountains, benches, public Internet access points, other misc:

- *Impressed with the water fountains and benches. Although, at this time, there may be a few too many benches especially in front of old theatre where they reduce sidewalk width. Benches could use a fresh coat of paint.*
- *Drinking fountains, benches available and conveniently located. Not sure about internet?*
- *As mentioned before, the drinking fountain and benches on Main were very well appreciated. As for pay phones, I don't recall seeing one and was fortunate to have a cell phone and not need one. The only public internet access point I saw was the one at the hotel. I never saw any signage telling us of internet accessibility.*
- *Found drinking fountains and benches downtown and in some parks.*

Planning

Do you see conflicting land uses in the community (e.g., a residential subdivision next to a pulp mill)? Please comment:

- *The big ugly building on Hwy 35 at the end of Downtown and billboards are incompatible.*
- *In my estimation, Onalaska is a hodge-podge of residential mixed with commercial next to some industries. There are some very well maintained and isolated industrial areas, but they are close to or right next to residential neighborhoods. The same goes for retail shops. You can identify one, steady, downtown retail district (with exception to the malls, which I don't consider a "downtown").*
- *There are overhead power lines in one neighborhood on north side. Also, billboards next to restored historical building downtown.*



Are all land uses appropriate (commercial, residential, green space etc.)? Specify where land uses are not appropriate:

- *Properties abutting Hwy 35 need to be buffered from the traffic. Other land use appeared appropriate. Some places commercial and mini storage abut residential – additional buffering could soften this transition.*

- *There is a good use of green space in Onalaska. Other than that, most everything seems out of place because it all runs together and little groups of this or that show up in unexpected areas.*
- *The city is making a valiant attempt to create mixed-use development. However, some building designs clash with ambience desired for adjacent neighborhood eg. the Crayola building. One hillside commercial development seems to have new tenants that don't meet needs of the neighborhood, or which are "out in left field".*

Did you experience traffic congestion anywhere?

- *No – traffic moved along smoothly wherever we were.*
- *Did not experience that I can recall. Busy around the mall but it was not necessarily congested.*
- *Yes, Hwy 35 near downtown and Hwy 16 entrance – at rush hour, anyway.*

Are community facilities and infrastructure generally accessible for people with disabilities?

Please comment.

- *Most buildings appear new and therefore ADA requirements appear to be met throughout Onalaska.*
- *There aren't stairs leading into the City Center of Visitor's Bureau, but the bathrooms can create an issue.*
- *An elderly or disabled pedestrian would have a difficult time crossing Hwy 35 during the rush hour, based on amount of traffic I saw then. Crossing Hwy 16 could be downright frightening.*

Does the community appear to be pedestrian/bike friendly?

- *Very impressed with all the bike lanes and most streets had sidewalks. However, did not observe any bicyclists and very few pedestrians.*
- *YES! Bike lanes, nice sidewalks (except in mall area)*
- *As for bike friendly, yes. Pedestrians have way too far to walk from one business place to another in most cases. I couldn't walk from one little island of business places downtown, through residential to another, through more residential and then back to my car again. My ankles and knees couldn't take it. You almost have to drive and park, drive and park, to see all of the businesses up close or know where you're going.*
- *Yes, for the most part. But, there could be more designated bike lanes in city. Also, flashing lights could warn motorists of pedestrians using crosswalks along Hwy 16. Is there a bike map of area?*



Recreation, Faith, Culture and Heritage

Recreation

Facilities

Comment on the availability & appearance of each of the following types of recreational facilities. Rate each type of facility.

Parks:

- *Parks were clean and lovely. The trails along the Mississippi are great.*
- *Many nice parks, very clean and well maintained*
- *I liked seeing the green of the parks in various locations.*
- *Very nice parks are present. While walking Rowe Park's gently rolling hills, I was struck by how clean it looked. Greens Coulee Trail beckoned, but we didn't have time to walk it.*

Public recreation facilities:

- *Skateboard park, aquatic facilities are so new and beautiful. Bike trails are great. All seemed underutilized, but it was a school weekday.*
- *Many facilities, appear well-maintained*
- *Your skateboard park is fantastic! Perhaps it isn't a recreation area per se but the number of computers and area set-out for them is also awesome in the Library. There seemed to be lots of play equipment for children. I liked the green and yellow colors more than the multicolored units. The green and yellow blended in with the surroundings better.*
- *The city's aquatic center looked outstanding, even without water in it! There appear to be lots of active recreation areas – ball fields, etc. Very nice skateboard facility.*



Private recreation facilities:

- *The golf and bowling facility are so centrally located we rode by them at least 8 times.*
- *I didn't get to view many of them. The Omni Center is magnificent.*
- *Didn't really see any?*

Based on your impression, what do people in this community appear to do for recreation/fun?

- *Fishing, boating, swimming*
- *Not many people out and about, actually. Hard to tell. Parks, trails?*
- *Ride bikes*
- *Fish, boat, walk trails or track, and “hang out” in public parks, at coffee shops and downtown. When bored with this regimen, they go to LaCrosse.*

What recreational facility (private or public) in this community surprised you?

- *The great skateboard facility*
- *YMCA – WOW!*
- *Skate Park*
- *The Aquatic Center*



What recreational activities or facilities seemed to be missing?

- *Better access to Lake Onalaska*
- *Not as many taverns as I’m used to – probably a good thing.*

Rate the overall suitability of the recreational facilities for each of the following populations using a 1-10 scale (10 is best):

Rating Category

- | | |
|---------|-------------------------|
| 3-8-8-6 | Senior citizens |
| 7-8-9-8 | Families |
| 6-8-8-5 | Singles, young adults |
| 9-8-9-7 | Teens |
| 7-8-9-9 | Children (12 and under) |

Entertainment

What does the community do for entertainment?

- *Movie theaters, dining, hiking, biking*
- *Shopping?*
- *Sunfish Days seem to be the biggest event going for the year. On a day-to-day basis, the skate park and bike trails seem to be the ticket.*
- *Go to LaCrosse (if you are young); go to supper clubs (middle-aged and older).*

What entertainment opportunities do residents feel they lack?

- *I didn't hear any complaints and this is one question I didn't ask.*
- *Young adults feel there is a lack of places to socialize.*

Does the community have a vibrant nightlife? Please comment:

- *Karaoke at Seven Bridges. Saw signs for a Reggae Party.*
- *No. Seems like people go to LaCrosse. Visitor Center staff actually told us to go to LC for night life! Said Onalaska is more "quiet".*
- *We were treated to a little of karaoke night at Seven Bridges which, like most places, had some good and some bad "performers." I don't see Onalaska as a town that loves the nightlife. But then, I only stayed overnight one evening.*
- *No. Karakoe at Seven Bridges and bands on Hwy 16 strip are the hottest action.*

Faith/Religion

Comment on the number, appearance, and selection of denominations in the community.

- *The churches were new and beautiful*
- *There was a healthy mix of Christian churches and denominations in the town. All looked as if they were doing well. I did not see any temples or mosques, neither Islamic, Jewish or B'hai. So, I'm not sure if all faiths are represented.*

Are there any outstanding architectural or design features found on the religious buildings you visited?

- *Most all of the churches I viewed were good looking buildings, and different from one another, but not outstanding. I'd say you had a good mix with many choices for those of the Christian Faith.*

Culture and Heritage

Does the community hold any events (festivals)? Which events are held annually?

- *Sunfish days*
- *Sunfish Festival*
- *Sunfish Days, held annually, seems to be the biggest festival and event of the year. Other events listed in the 2009 official visitor guide seem to pale next to it.*

What events are popular with residents?

- *The only event I heard about was Sunfish Days.*

Do the residents feel there is a lack of community events?

- *Not that I could see but, if this were the town in which I lived, I'd want there to be more going on in the traditional downtown area.*

Does the community have historical buildings or places? Are they well maintained?

- *There don't seem to be many historical buildings. The newness of this City really struck me.*
- *Does not appear to be very many historical buildings. Renovation of the Crystal Theatre and re-purpose is creative, but you can't even tell it is a historic building except for signage explaining its history. Not a good restoration.*
- *There were plaques installed on an old theater building, soda fountain and restaurant on the corner of Main and Highway 35. The buildings were in great shape but they weren't being used for the same purpose as their original use and, in the case of a theater, didn't appear to be used at all. That's too bad because Onalaska could definitely use a playhouse or theatre. I only saw cinema theaters in the town and no mention of any live theatrical, symphony or dance company performances.*

General Observations

Role Playing

The following questions may be assigned to individuals. (Record comments and responses from residents.)

Would you consider this community as a suitable location for a young family? Why or why not?

- *Yes as there appears to be wonderful schools and recreational facilities. A waitress told me how much she loved Eagles Bluff School and it was one of the reasons she located here.*
- *Without having to ask, two young people told me they were relocating to Onalaska and looking to the future to raise their families here. It was echoed again on the second day of my visit by a young person and a middle-aged woman who was making an observation about people coming to live in Onalaska.*
- *I talked to one young man who moved here from North Dakota, for combination of job opportunities and quality of life.*

Would you consider locating your retail or service business here? Why or why not?

- *Yes, as this seems to be the retail hub of the area. There is great potential in the Downtown that will most likely be realized when the Cultural Center is built.*
- *I did not ask anyone if they would locate a retail, service or manufacturing business in Onalaska. I was busy talking about setting up my own business.*

Would you consider locating a manufacturing business here? Why or why not?

- *Yes as the quality of life is high, but there doesn't appear to be available industrial land.*

Would you consider this a suitable location for a retired person? Why or why not?

- *Yes, the quality of life is high and there are good recreational and volunteer opportunities.*
- *The only older gentlemen I spoke with was selling his middle class home and moving to*

Arizona (apparently for the climate change). He mentioned how he had loved living, working and raising his family here, but, because we stopped him in the street, we didn't get retirement details. The retirement communities I saw, however, did appear to be nice. I just didn't think that (with the baby boomers coming) there might be enough of them. But I don't know the population/age statistics for Onalaska.

- Yes, given the outstanding health care facilities and natural amenities. However, I would definitely look askance at travelling by foot or bicycle to the Hwy. 16 shopping strip, if I were an elderly person. On a bad day (for traffic), I wouldn't want to drive there, either! Maybe more elderly-oriented services could be located in downtown or at Center 90?

Would you consider this a suitable location for a young adult? Why or why not?

- Yes, quality of life is high and the recreational opportunities and great shopping.
- Every young person I spoke with enjoyed the quality of life in Onalaska.

Would you consider visiting this community as a tourist? Why or why not?

- Yes, mainly to shop and have my partner fish.
- I didn't ask anyone if they thought they might enjoy Onalaska if he/she were a tourist. The closest I came was the retired policeman at the Center for Commerce and Industry. When I commented on how hard it was to figure out where the downtown was to put my business, he jokingly commented that he was lucky he had been a cop for so many years or he might not be able to find his way around either.
- I would visit here again as a tourist, but I would bring 3 things: 1) bicycle, 2) fishing stuff, and 3) binoculars, for watchable wildlife. Oh, and I would bring money too, for shopping and eating out.

Information from Community Residents

Comment on the quality of information and assistance provided by residents and employees of local businesses.

Were community residents knowledgeable about their community?

- I was given incorrect directions to a restaurant twice.
- Yes, very
- When I asked about the heritage of the area, I got a lot of "deer in the headlight" stares. Some of them said fur traders settled in here, others spoke of their own family history, one asked if I meant the Native American culture. There didn't seem to be any common thread.

Did they refer you to someone else who would help?

- Yes, but the info was incorrect.
- No one I asked had any idea where I could find that information. One suggested the Library.

In general, did residents you spoke with have a positive or negative attitude toward their community? Why? Did you sense community pride?

- *I felt a positive attitude and community pride on each occasion.*
- *Positive. Yes, people did seem to have pride in their community in general.*
- *Everyone I spoke to had a positive attitude about Onalaska. Having lived here for awhile, I guess they were used to the cut-up downtown district and lack of clustered specialty shops for tourists. No one put the town down. At the same time, a sense of oneness and community pride seemed to be lacking. No one said “this is the best place I’ve ever lived” or “I’d never live anywhere else” but, on the whole, everyone enthusiastically endorsed Onalaska.*
- *I was surprised by the positive attitude of teens and young adults toward the community. I am used to the “I just gotta get outta’ here” syndrome among this group.*

Did residents identify a particular issue (e.g. safety) to be of major concern?

- *No*
- *I never heard anyone say that something was missing or wrong about the community. And, no one seemed concerned that he/she wasn’t safe or that the community wasn’t healthy and peaceful.*
- *One resident near proposed Hwy. 35 reconfiguration expressed concerns over traffic and impact on property value.*

Overall, how would you rate the quality of information from community residents and business employees?

- *The good Visitor Center info made up for the 2 poor restaurant directions.*
- *Overall, with the exception of the town’s “heritage,” I would say the information obtained from residents and business employees was 7 to 8 on a scale of 10.*

Using Your Senses

What did the community taste like? Was there any specialty food item, bakery, restaurant, or candy store that you will remember?

- *No*
- *Sad to see the bakery was closed*
- *Maggie’s French fries. The fish was great, too, but the fries couldn’t be beat. We couldn’t find a bakery. Amundson Bakery was closed and apparently out-of-business. And, I couldn’t find a candy store. Seven Bridges was luscious! I’d eat there again if I got this way.*

What did the community smell like? Was there any offensive industrial, agricultural, or sewage smells? What about pleasant odors (flowers, food, etc.)?

- *I didn’t smell the community!*
- *No bad smells*
- *I didn’t detect anything*

What sounds did you hear? Please comment on the level of noise in the community (traffic, industrial, birds singing, water falls, music on the streets, trains, noon whistle, etc.).

- *Hwy 35 was noisy – it is so close to the sidewalk and businesses*
- *Quiet*
- *Children at Eagle Bluff and at the Skate Park, Rustling leaves on the Scenic section of Highway 35 by Lake Onalaska.*
- *Sound of bicycles whooshing by on Great River Trail.*

How would describe the overall environmental health of the community (air quality, litter, noise pollution etc.)?

- *Very good*
- *Fresh air, very clean, quiet*
- *Clean streets, no litter. Air was pleasant and seemed healthy. Noise was at a minimum, although there were some traffic noises in the mall areas.*
- *Very clean community, including heavily trafficked areas.*

Did you experience anything that had a strongly negative or positive impact on the way the community felt to you (hateful or angry responses, crowded or deserted streets, safety issues, smiling faces, etc.)?

- *The city was so new! It felt wealthy and clean with great shopping.*
- *Nothing negative. Nice people in general*
- *I liked the friendliness of the residents and the beautiful scenery along the River. I'll also never forget watching the joy of the children enjoying that beautiful skate park.*
- *The hospitality of the family that let me walk through their front yard to see the backyard view of Lake Onalaska.*

Do you think your impression would be different if your visit occurred during evening hours?

- *No, we were there during the evening.*
- *I did experience some evening hours during the visit. At Seven Bridges I noticed the waitress was friendly but the bartender (a female) and the patrons at the bar were not. This wasn't bad, it just didn't fit with the rest of the picture. Most everyone (except the sporting goods store clerk) was friendly, courteous and eager to help. The bar scene didn't fit the mold.*

Wrap-Up

The following questions are to be answered by all team members:

Was your perception prior to the visit accurate? In what ways was the community different from what you expected?

- *No, I didn't expect so many retail stores. The community was more upscale, but the downtown less vital.*
- *More than just the mall shopping area. Wealthy community. Rec opportunities*

- *I wasn't sure what to expect before I journeyed to Onalaska. I did expect that the retail stores identified as "downtown" would be together and easy to get to. That was wrong. I couldn't walk from one group of commercial businesses, through residential, to get to the next group. They were too far apart. I did expect that there would be shops and boutiques in the "downtown" area that would catch my interest. That, too, was wrong. I couldn't find much of anything that interested me as a tourist. It wasn't until we came down Highway 35 toward town that I discovered the beautiful scenery of the River. That was worth seeing.*
- *I didn't expect such a well-off and aesthetically-pleasing community. Where I grew up (western PA), river towns were industrialized, rough-and-tumble kinds of places, home mainly to lower middle class.*

Did the information you collected prior to the visit accurately reflect what you observed/experienced?

- *No – retail shopping isn't featured. I couldn't find a listing of the stores prior to the visit.*
- *Yes, but I expected a more outdoorsy type of crowd to be present after I looked at the website and Visitors Guide*
- *Not exactly. I had checked the Onalaska website and thought that there would be more than I found.*

What is the most outstanding feature of this community?

- *The beautiful public buildings and amenities.*
- *River, trails*
- *The River Views. If you could tear down the buildings currently blocking that view and build new businesses which take advantage of and allow the view, tourists would flock to Onalaska.*
- *The quality recreational facilities, both indoors and outdoors.*

List five positive things you observed about this community.

1 – *It's relationship to the Mississippi*

Nice people

The River View

Biking opportunities

2 – *Many retail stores and services*

Nice public facilities (schools, library, parks, City Hall)

Friendly residents

Laid-back atmosphere, once you get off Hwy. 16

3 – *Beautiful public structures*

Beautiful nature

Family friendly – especially young families

Positive attitudes of teens and young adults toward their community

4 – *Omni Convention Center*

Prosperous

Beautiful public buildings and parks – Omni Center, Skate Park, Schools

Quality of new subdivisions, with some forethought for preserving nature

5 – *All the donors for the Omni and Library and how they were recognized. Lucky Onalaska!*

Tidy

Clean and tidy

Fantastic streetscape downtown

What are three potential opportunities available to the community?

1 – *Rejuvenation of the Downtown to reflect City Hall, the school, the church*

Developing recreation opportunities more

Utilize the Mississippi River

Provision of public and private services to potentially growing elderly population

2 – *Linking Downtown with the Mississippi River*

Revive downtown as a cultural/retail center of community

Revitalize and develop the downtown as well as building the new center

Better tie between Great River Trail and the community, particularly the downtown

3 – *Redo Hwy 35 – could they buy up adjacent property and widen it and buffer it and boulevard it? Could it be rerouted?*

Bring more specialty, boutique, artisan and novelty shops downtown

Capitalize more on the scenic vistas of Mississippi River and Lake Onalaska

What are the five biggest obstacles/challenges facing this community?

1 – *The lack of a vibrant Downtown*

Establishing a “brand” (collective identify)

Relocating most current residents from downtown to build

Over-coming complacency – nice community, but you still have a lot to do

2 – *Old buildings blocking view and access to the Mississippi River*

Getting people on board with proposed Native American Cultural Center

Exposing view of the River/French Island to all Highway 35

Getting out of the shadow of LaCrosse, but without creating animosity

3 – *Hwy 35 – noise, speed, traffic*

Fostering small niche businesses

Design code/guidelines for tourist center and downtown buildings

Achieving clear, understandable signage and functional building/site designs, but while creating visual harmony

4 – *Developing an image, as the City is so new*

Fostering diversity (cultural, ethnic, socio-econ)

Signage to let tourists know where things are located, way to go

Onalaska seems challenged to provide affordable housing for lower-wage laborers who serve in retail and other commercial business. Or, will Onalaska take the attitude “let them live in LaCrosse”.

5 – *Defining heritage and sponsoring more cultural events*

Achieving a consensus vision of what the community can and should be.

What will you remember most about this community six months from now (positive or negative)?

- *City Hall and the Omni Center and Library and the Sunfish sculpture*
- *Nature (I will wonder about the progress on the Native American Cultural Center)*
- *Views of the River (2X)*
- *Friendliness of residents and, for the most part, employees*
- *How disappointed I was to find everything so spread out*

What have you learned here that has changed your impression of your own community?

- *Generous donors can be from chain corporations. Little Chute needs more tourist info and outreach.*
- *That we are not the only community that faces many challenges and have many opportunities*
- *I Love My Town Unconditionally, No Changes Needed – Others Do Not*
- *Now Appreciate the Ability to Walk from Store to Store at Home*

Has this experience given you any new ideas about what is needed in your own community?

- *Yes, we too need to rejuvenate our Downtown. We could use your tourist center with two nice ladies and your wonderful brochure rack.*
- *Yes, many. It also reinforced some ideas I already have about what we need. (Places to gather in downtown, café, bakery, bookstore, cultural opportunities). These were things I felt were missing in Onalaska, too. Authentic experiences/places*
- *Need more signage of where things are located for visitors*
- *Would like benches, trees, planter watering system Like Onalaska’s*
- *Drinking fountains, bike posts on Main Street would be nice*
- *More use of “Green” in planning*
- *Keep residential and commercial somewhat separated*
- *Plan for and allow for people with disabilities*
- *Through design and planning, bring the river closer to town*

Describe one idea that you will borrow for use in your own business/community and describe how you will start to implement it within the next 72 hours!

- *I'd like to develop an 8 ½ x 11 map of Little Chute to help visitors drive around. Also an official tourist brochure for when we get tourists. Also, brochure racks like the Visitor Center or the Library.*
- *Develop a Visitors Guide with map! Work with village, organizations, businesses to promote our community. Doesn't have to be a super-glossy publication, we can start small and grow from there (or walking town brochure..work with Historical Society).*
- *Through Cooperation with Government, Windmill, Community Organizations, begin to put together 2010 Official Visitor Guide listing events, businesses, organizations, facilities, local restaurants and hotels.*
- *I (the extension educator) actually live in Pulaski, WI, home of the annual Polka Days festival. Inspired by Onalaska's giant sunfish, I am going to look into commissioning a realistic statue of a couple dancing the polka! Just kidding. I do like the image the fish gives Onalaska, though.*

Other comments:

- *I liked Onalaska very much. Most of the community is well developed.*
- *There were not very many pedestrians and bicyclists.*
- *You have the real opportunity to capture a cultured yet natural atmosphere, given your natural location and human/cultural assets. Onalaska can be a "cool place" if you continue to work together.*