First Impressions
Firth, NE

Report from Deshler, NE Visiting Team
Program sponsored by
University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension
Deshler Chamber of Commerce
Visiting Team
*September 22, 2006*

- Diane Bartling - Real estate broker/insurance
- Naomi Grupe - Reinke Accounting
- Eric Leichty – Bank Ag Loan Officer
- Kris Miesner – Bank data entry/telework
This evening is a conversation about the visiting team’s observation

- intended for positive improvement
- no intentions of negative or harmful statements about individuals, businesses or community
- visited many businesses, but not all
- drove through town several times, but did not take pictures of all homes, businesses or other highlights
Past Perceptions

- No previous perception
- Expected small deteriorating town
- Did not know what to expect
First “Five Minute” Impression

- Streets well cared for
- Nice mixture of homes
- Business district and park – well maintained
- Churches looked nice
Community Entrances - West

- Neat and tidy surroundings
- Rolling hills and neat farmsteads
- Acreages with newer homes
- Nice homes, mowed lawns
- Noticed “Norris” sign
- Saw water tower
- **NO WELCOME SIGNS**
Community Entrances - East

- Attractive Watershed area
- Neat well tended homes
- Well taken care of acreages
Community Entrances - South

- Elevator area – rough RR tracks
- Propane tanks
- Piles of tires
- Nice two story building
South View

- Piles of tires & propane tanks
  - Unattractive - Hide by fence?
  - Safety issue?
Downtown Business Area

- City park - pleasant
- Nice – well taken care of
- Most buildings neat, clean, well painted
- Minimal businesses
- Curve between Main & Nemaha – fairly busy & wondered about safety of street
General Appearance of Downtown

- Impressive Co-op office
- Most buildings – neat appearance
- Wondered about rearrangement of inventory at Andy’s
Historical Architecture

- Some historical commercial buildings and homes
- Bank has done a nice job of preservation
Downtown Signage

Most buildings with appropriate signage

Not sure I found sign for Countryside Cooperative

Wasn’t sure what fitness center was at first
Variety of Shopping

- Nice variety of businesses for small town
  - minimal but good variety of quick shop items
Customer Service

- People very friendly - helpful
- Answered questions
- Would find someone if they didn’t have answers
Public Amenities

- Pay phones – didn’t see any
- Benches – park only
- Drinking fountains - park
Industrial Parks/Commercial

- No defined industrial area
Manufacturing and Potential

- Co-op & NE Tire seem to be backbone for employment
- Some vacant buildings can be potential for growth
- No printed information/data to help make decision about business location
Health Care Services

• None found
• Good nursing home
Housing

- Residents take a lot of pride
- Nice mix of older & new
Multiple Units

Updating or Moving?
Norris School
First Class Setup
Dream school...
Faith and Religion

Attractive & welcoming

Church sponsored activities
Residents

- People expressed pride in community
- Knowledgeable about the community
- Hopeful that newer residents would come to share that pride
- Some lived in Lincoln and worked in Firth
- Didn’t sense ethnic diversity
Public Infrastructure

- Impressive Recycling Center – best I’ve seen
- Most streets okay
- Didn’t notice public lighting -- daytime visit
Public Infrastructure

• Plenty of public parking (but limited by Co-op)
• Concerned by main street by NE tire – semi blocked road...mud puddle to get around...wondered about children’s safety when out of school.
  – Saw one stop sign at corner – was told more were to be put up (comment by another visitor)
Public Infrastructure

- Village Hall very attractive
- Nice flag pole, but no flag flying
- Didn’t see library
Police/Fire Emergency

• Dedicated volunteer fire
• Impressed with sheriff’s involvement at school (not guard)
Environmental

- Nice trees & plantings around town
- Walking paths at school
- Watershed area – a “jewel”
  - Wonder if available for “Kids Fishing Contest” as held during Deshler Daze
  - Could be developed into great recreation for town
Recreation/Tourism

• “Firth Days”
• Annual car show
• No obvious Visitor’s Center
• “Papa D’s Pizzeria” – if your nose doesn’t tell you where it is – there are signs
Great Parks & Ball Field
Significant Man-made Attractions?

- Pond
- Dairy outside of town
Using Senses in Remembering

- **Taste** – remembered spaghetti sauce
- **Smell** – clean country air
  - Pizza sauce
- **Hear** - quiet town, congenial chatting
  - Heard trucks at south end of town
  - Didn’t hear trains when visiting
Positive Observations

- Neatness of homes, churches, yards & park
- Excellent school
- Recycling center
- Thriving Co-op, tire & pasta business
- Nursing home
- “Somewhere I would like to live”
Community Obstacles/Challenges

• Location (bedroom community)
  – Involving and uniting people living on acreages with town
  – Lincoln/Beatrice so close – impacts businesses in Firth

• Make sure there is “gathering place” for daily socialization

• Safety issue on main street

• Zoning; business growth
What I’ll Remember in 6 Months

• Friendliness of Norris faculty/staff

• Mick d-Angelo’s Pizza sauce

• Peaceful, quiet and clean community – now not just a “sign” as I drive by
Ideas to Borrow

- Excellent recycling center

- Push for cleaner properties with more landscaping to make our community more inviting.
Thank you for the opportunity to visit your community, and for cooperating in this “First Impressions” effort.