

This program was first developed by Andrew Lewis and James Schneider in 1991. It was revised in 2002 by Andrew Lewis with further revisions in 2007. This guide booklet format was developed by the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing Rural Development Division, Ontario, Canada, in 2004. Questions about the program should be directed to:

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First Impressions:

A Program for Community Assessment & Improvement

Farmington, Minnesota

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

Purpose

The purpose of the First Impressions Survey is to help a community to learn about existing strengths and weaknesses as seen through the eyes of the first time or infrequent visitor.

Date of Visit and Weather Conditions

The visit occurred on Friday, June 18, 2010, from 10 AM to 12 PM. Five Planners joined the City's Planning Staff and toured the community for almost 2 hours. The weather on the date of the visit was warm and sunny.

First Impressions Team

- Maggie Dykes, City Planner, Apple Valley
- Joe Hogeboom, City Planner, Golden Valley
- Deb Garross, City Planner, Burnsville
- Patrick Boylan, Senior Planner, Metropolitan Council
- Peter Hellegers, City Planner, South St. Paul

Process

The Team received the survey a week before the tour occurred and were asked to review the City's website and observe information offered on it. On the date of the visit, the Team met to review the City's street and comprehensive plan maps along with the First Impressions Survey. The tour was performed by the Planning staff with the planners in a City van. After the tour, the Planning staff and the City Administrator met with the planners to discuss any lingering issues. The planners were directed to submit the survey responses to the City on the following Tuesday after the tour.

Prior To Your Visit

Summary of comments: Team members anticipated the farms, small town charm, and the park system.

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

- Farmington is generally rural, with a central downtown, older homes, and limited multi-family housing. It's a large community with larger farms.
- I have only been through Farmington a couple of times, both times being on Highway 3. I looked forward to seeing Farmington's Main Street area and hearing about the city's history.
- I visit Farmington often and am familiar with the city. Farmington is a great small city with a downtown and beautiful park system. The city seems to be a friendly place and has a great variety of homes. I especially appreciate some of the older homes close to the downtown area. The city has recently done a number of improvements to downtown streets, new city hall and also has constructed several nice bridges with decorative lights over the past couple of years.
- My impression: small city on the urban/rural fringe. Small town charm. Farms. Big, new high school.
- My first impression was that Farmington was a mixture of an older town that has now become a 3rd ring suburban community. I expected to see areas of the community that are the older town and areas that are more typically suburban.

Please review Farmington’s website (www.ci.farmington.mn.us) and rate and comment on Farmington’s online web materials and information. Did you find information on this community on state and regional tourism web sites?

Quality of online materials:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Poor	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	Excellent

Observations:

Summary of comments: Team members found the website to be excellent, classy, easy to read and navigate.

- The website is very good. The quality of material and information is excellent, the layout makes the site easy to read and navigate. Very well done!
- For a relatively smaller community, Farmington sure has a classy website! It is very helpful and informative, and looks very “clean” and orderly.
- The city’s website is great! It is very easy to understand and has all of the information that I would typically look up or research as a planner or resident of the community. I like that it is easy to use, very intuitive and also I liked all of the maps that are available. I wish the city of Burnsville website were more like Farmington’s!
- Website: Overall, very easy to navigate. I liked the calendar functions. Homepage sort of “busy.” Too much information on homepage?
- I thought the online materials were excellent. The overall look of the site is appealing, easy to read, and looks professionally done; not the standard government template website. The materials are organized to easily navigate the site and there’s a lot of information out there too! It conveys the message that Farmington is a community that is keeping up with the times and is there to work with businesses, developers, and residents. In fact, I would suggest that my community should use that site as an example of what we should be doing.

The Five Minute Impression

After entering Farmington on your way to City Hall, what was your first impression? As you exit Farmington, pull over to the side of the road and write down what you felt about it based on your visit today.

Summary of comments: Team members found an overall positive impression of the

community, but they were concerned about the Dew Days banners hung over the City's entrance monuments.

- **There are some very nice areas of Farmington and some areas that could use some work. I'm concerned that some of the older housing stock is not receiving the attention it deserves. Perhaps there is a way to encourage homeowners to reinvest. There are also some parts of downtown that are tired and clear code violations drag down the area (Dakota Motors), specifically the auto repair shop that has cars parked on grass, and a pile of old tires outside the building (Car Quest). It doesn't give a favorable impression of the area. However, there are some lovely old houses and businesses downtown, and these really add value!**
- **I entered Farmington coming from the west on County Road 50. Farmington seemed larger than I anticipated. The plastic banner (Dew Days) that covered Farmington's welcome sign did not look very attractive.**
- **As I crossed into the older section of town, it felt very pleasant and quaint. Properties as well as roads, sidewalks, and parks appeared very well-kept. I would have rated this "10," but I felt that the banners that were hung over the monument welcome signs looked very unattractive and uninviting (Dew Days). I would not suggest hanging banners in front of your city's ports of entry.**
- **I followed google maps and came from Lakeville to Farmington. The west entrance to the city is very rural and I knew that I was in the city by the nice entrance monument. However, the monument was covered by a banner sign for a community event which hid the name of the community (Dew Days). I have seen the entrance monument signs before so I knew that this was a community entrance monument.**

As I exited the city, I took Pilot Knob Road and there was not really a distinction leaving the city – I knew I was in Lakeville by the Lakeville Parks signs. My impressions about the city are that it is a great time for Farmington because it is poised for the next growth period following the end of this current recession. The city has the opportunity to learn from the last development boom and to prepare and plan for future development. I would suggest for the community that it hold onto its heritage and history rather than succumb to becoming just an addition to the other suburbs that it adjoins. To me Farmington is known for its downtown, great and beautiful parks and location on the Vermillion River. It also seems like a great place to live and I hope that as the community continues to grow, it can maintain those themes. I suggest trying to set the city apart by continuing what you are already doing very well. Continue to emphasize Farmington by the distinctive bridge, lighting and other designs. I think that it is essential to provide pedestrian and natural links that provide connection to the great park system and downtown area. Wherever it is possible (schools, churches, business, neighborhoods etc.) to provide these

links and preserve open spaces for the public do so rather than catering to developers who would rather privatize distinct areas like lake/river frontages etc. Make development – especially commercial/industrial areas, provide links to community facilities and natural areas and also work in alternative modes of transportation (bikes etc.), early rather than try to retrofit these in the future. Try to view planning for these corridors from the perspective of the user and look to make the trail/path enjoyable for the user as opposed to the standard sidewalk/trail along a heavily traveled highway. These are the things that make a community an attractive place to live and conduct business and they are sustainable. Woodbury established community priorities while still rural to require land around community lakes to be public. Today, the city has a great park and natural open space system that is supported by the community – not just the few that live next to the lakes and it has been a very successful strategy. I suggest this for Farmington as well.

- Overall, I had a positive impression of the City. There are a few areas the city can work on (ie. more multi-family options), but overall, seems like a nice place to live and work.
- **Enter**
The general impression coming in was that this was a rural town that has seen suburban style development due to proximity to other suburban area development (Lakeville, Apple Valley, Rosemount, etc.). The residential development off CR-66 gives a feel that this is a very typical suburban area. The area on Chippendale is a weird mixture, some okay & nice on the west side of the street, and not so nice on the east side of Chippendale. Driving down Chippendale the feel is that this is a small town further removed from the Twin Cities. Things like the vast amount of setback and the road layout certainly contribute to that sense of a rural center/small town. 3rd Street and the downtown area give you the feel of a typical small town, which should be positives for this community – particularly since the trend in many communities is to attempt to recreate that sense with artificial town centers. The buildings built up to the sidewalk, angled parking, and people walking around downtown give a real positive impression of the town.
- **Exit**
I was surprised by the amount of suburban residential development and frankly the quality (positive) of that development too. I had not expected to see that level of development or that level of quality from the residential development. The institutional buildings were very impressive. There was also more commercial than I expected. However, there still isn't a large amount of industrial development or a sufficient amount of commercial development to allow people to stay within Farmington for most of their needs. Additionally, there wasn't much multi-family housing and what was there was not to the quality/standards of the single-family. I think the mixture of the old downtown area, new development, and available land for development put Farmington in a good position for the future. That

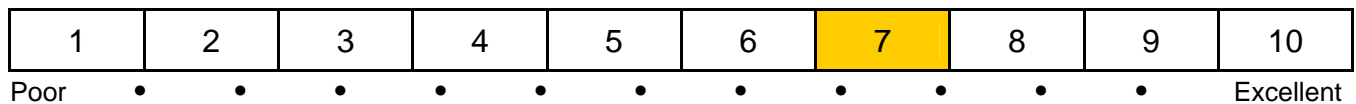
being said special care should be taken in locating new commercial to help reinforce existing industrial/commercial areas instead of having them located in a decentralized fashion (which can harm individual commercial areas and lead to future issues with adjacent non-commercial land uses).

Community Entrances

As you approach Farmington rate and comment on your entrance into the City. While there may be an obvious main entrance to the community there are typically multiple ways to enter the community.

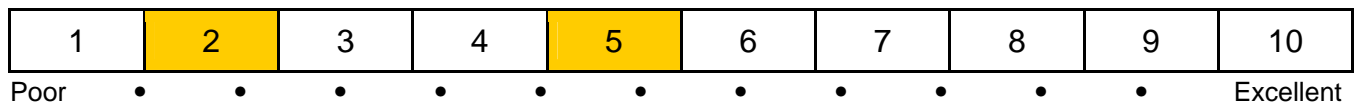
Summary of comments: Team members especially liked the entrance into the City from the west on CSAH 50. One team member discussed the need for an entrance sign on 195th St and TH 3. The entrance on TH 3 was not perceived well.

ENTRANCE #1 (Road name and direction): **Pilot Knob Road at 160th**



- It's difficult to determine when you leave Apple Valley and when you enter Farmington. Perhaps a marker of some kind would better differentiate the area. However, the stretch of Pilot Knob from 160th to 212th St. is well maintained and very attractive.

ENTRANCE #2 (Road name and direction): **Mn State Hwy. 3**



Observations:

- My first impression:** I drove south on Hwy. 3; there was a lot of vehicles for sale in the highway right-of-way and a truck on blocks. Not a positive image. Found out later that these parcels were in Empire Township and not in Farmington. Turning west along Highway 50, I saw more positive images: tended lawns, sidewalks, boulevard trees.
- The impression on CR-66 is typical suburban; the impression on Chippendale is rural center. Also, the shared/close proximity border with Castle Rock makes it difficult to tell what is within Farmington and what's

not. This was the least impressive of the 3 entrances that I saw.

- Nice entry monument on northbound TH 3; gives great impression as a gateway into community.

•
ENTRANCE #3 (Road name and direction): **CSAH 50 – from the west**

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Poor	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	Excellent

Observations:

- I would have rated this “10,” but I felt that the banners that were hung over the monument welcome signs looked very unattractive and uninviting. I would not suggest hanging banners in front of your city’s ports of entry.
- I like the rural feeling when entering the city – I believe that the farming economy has been a large part of the city’s history and it would be nice to see if there is a way to continue the feeling either by setting aside open space or perhaps like Woodbury – utilizing some existing farmsteads or barns for future public facilities. The Naperville, Illinois Park District has successfully done this and uses a barn area for public events and it is one way of preserving some sense of heritage as well as a great re-use of buildings. Perhaps if there are some well kept farms the city could initiate contact with the owners early to discuss future building and/or active “living farm” opportunities.

Some entrance areas are not quite as nice and apparently a lot of the sites are actually under another Township jurisdiction. From the north for example, some Township properties have visible junk or other materials, gravel parking, poorly maintained buildings etc. I have worked with many townships during my career and know that the relationships between City and Township leaders can be difficult. Perhaps there may be a way to begin to have joint work sessions or other meetings to open communications and to discuss existing conditions and see if there is a way to address some of the maintenance issues. Perhaps something could be done in a neighborhood forum for neighborhood improvement or maybe there could be some type of agreement of how to handle the properties that abut the city (if the city could do code enforcement if the Township does not have the staff or possibly come to an agreement on some ordinance standards to alleviate some of the issues?) I know that any work in this area will need delicate negotiations but it couldn’t hurt to extend an olive branch per say and identify a positive way to discuss the issues.

ENTRANCE #4 (Road name and direction): **195th St from east**

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Poor	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	Excellent

Observations:

- **195th – Enter into the area via a nice looking bridge and what feels like rural area; crossing the bridge it moves into a more suburban feel with very nice single-family residential homes. Perhaps a more defined entrance with signage would be helpful.**

Housing and Residential Areas

As you drive through neighborhoods, please answer the following question.

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

Summary of comments: Team members found the housing options to be limited in apartments, but the homes were mostly well-kept and attractive. One planner even suggested a rental licensing program to maintain the rental housing.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Poor	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	Excellent

Observation:

- **There’s a range of single family homes and townhomes, which allow for a variety of pricing. There is still single family construction occurring, which is great for this market! However, there doesn’t appear to be much in the way of higher density multi-family housing. The little bit that does exist is not very good quality.**
- **Most housing areas appeared very well-manicured and attractive. Most neighborhoods looked like desirable places to live. There were neighborhoods that appeared to be affordable, yet high quality housing. The neighborhood in the southeastern section of the City, centered around 12th Street an Spruce Street, appeared to be in the most need of improvements to individual properties.**
- **It appears that Farmington has a nice mix of housing for all age groups and**

family types. There is older housing stock and also new development with a variety of sizes and values. The one issue from my perspective is that the neighborhoods are so separated from new areas in the north to the older downtown areas. If possible, it would be good to look at a staging plan for the city and to work with property owners to identify timelines when they believe they will want to develop. I am sure that the city has infrastructure plans and CIP's to address this from a utility/cost standpoint. It may be good to meet with the owners/developers to have them identify how they can design the project and make connections or plan for future connections to community facilities, schools, parks, downtown and other commercial/industrial areas – have them provide a plan for how they will integrate the development so that future residents will know that they are a part of the Farmington community.

The city may want to investigate a rental licensing program for all rental properties. This has really worked well in Burnsville and the police and maintenance code inspectors have found that it has been a beneficial program as well as the property owners who participate. In Burnsville it is the STAR program and more information is available on the city's website if you are interested in this as an option.

- Some solid housing options in the city; however, there are some developments that seem to have poor design. Some blank walls and streetscape issues. Vinyl siding is okay, with the right amount of windows and other exterior architectural treatments. Love the older part of town and the sidewalks.
- High marks on quality and availability for new detached single-family and maintaining nice, livable older neighborhoods of single-family. However there wasn't much for multi-family. Some existing apartment buildings 20-30 years old but is not what you would expect for that period. Observed a few townhouse developments; the CDA townhomes were attractive but the others (Heritage Way) I observed were not well done. I would imagine the existing neighborhoods and multi-family provide most of the affordability, while the newer housing (save for the CDA townhomes) looked to be above affordability standards.

Quality

Rate using a 1-10 scale (10 is best/highest)

Average ratings for each:

5, 9, 7, 8, 6

Existing/Older Homes

9, 10, 9, 5, 9

New Homes

7, 8, 9, 4, 4

Housing for Seniors

2, 8, 8, 4, 3

Apartments/Rental

Observations:

Summary of comments: Team members found that the northern section of the City was well planned and most desirable compared to some areas in the southern section of the City.

- **Newer neighborhoods toward the northwestern part of the City seemed the most desirable. There seemed to be more natural features (trees, water, prairies, etc.) as well as more high-quality homes. The newer developments in the southeastern area of the City appeared less desirable.**
- **There are pockets where code enforcement is needed to make sure that the neighborhoods do not fall into disrepair. The city may want to consider doing a periodic housing survey to identify potential problem areas before they become large problems. Burnsville and Dakota County have a pilot program that has operated for two years to make an architect available to advise property owners and work with them (either free or at low cost) to help them with structure upgrades. There are 100 or so hours that are funded by CDA and the City and both years, this program has been very well used and successful. We can provide additional information if this is something the City is interested in. Also, Burnsville Inspections has 1 code enforcement officer who works with a team of senior volunteers who go out and identify illegal signs, weeds, junk etc., and work with our inspector to do much more code enforcement than he could accomplish on his own. The volunteers really like their work, and we have had a consistent team of people working with our code enforcement officer for many years and this has been a great success and money saving effort for Burnsville.**
- **Again, some residential neighborhoods in the city were well thought out and have good pedestrian and “livability” design elements. Other neighborhoods seem less like places to live and more like places where a bunch of houses were plopped down.**

Affordability

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

- **It appears that there is adequate affordability.**
- **Yes**
- **I believe so, see answer above.**
- **Probably – hard to say with a windshield survey only.**

- **No, there needs to be a better mixture of types and price points to provide more opportunities for seniors and for young adults. The common housing types seemed focused on middle to upper class families.**

Observations:

- **It appears there is a good mix of moderate to higher-income housing.**
- **There seem to be high-end, middle income, and affordable housing options available in the City of Farmington.**
- **I believe so, see answer above.**
- **To give a better observation, I'd have to know that for the people who live in Farmington, where are the jobs they go to? What kind of jobs are they (salary levels, etc.)**

Availability

Rate using a 1-10 scale (10 is best/highest)

Average ratings for each:

<u>9, 9, 1, 4</u> Existing/Older Homes	<u>9, 10, 3, 9</u> New Homes
<u>6, 8, 9, 2</u> Housing for Seniors	<u>2, 8, 5, 3</u> Apartments/Rental
<u>9, 10, 10, 9</u> Vacant lots for new homes	

Observations:

- **There doesn't seem to be much high density housing. This may be necessary in the future.**
- **While touring the City, I've noticed many homes for sale in many different neighborhoods.**
- **Didn't appear to be many opportunities for seniors or to accommodate young adults.**

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

Summary of comments: Team members found that the most appealing features of the housing is the mix, affordability, easy access to the Twin Cities, and the proximity of parks, trails, and ponds to the housing.

- **Most appealing: Good mix of townhomes and single-family.**
- **Least appealing: Some of the older housing needs updating.**
- **The most appealing feature of housing in Farmington, to me, is the affordability combined with easy access to the twin cities. The least appealing feature is the lack of retail options (this seems to go for most of the southeastern metro area.)**
- **The planning for the new residential developments looks great. I believe that the city and developers have created nice amenities in the neighborhoods with the deep ponds, surrounding open space and trails. These neighborhoods will be very nice places to live and should recover when the economy improves.**
- **Most appealing is the proximity to trails and neighborhood parks. My current time of life probably colors this the most (two school-age kids in my home). There seems to be decent schools in the city as well (again, just an impression – I have no quantitative data to back this up . . .)**
- **The layout and quality, particularly of the newer neighborhood up by 195th was very impressive. The quality of the design, the access to the trail, and somewhat unique ponding/site design make this very appealing.**

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):

Summary of comments: Team members found that the parks, light standards, bridges, and boulevard trees were well done.

- **Excellent parks and open space! Roads are in good shape, most neighborhoods have sidewalks, there are great bike trails, and most people take good care of their yards.**
- **All of the infrastructure that I have seen appears to be in good shape. I did not notice public transportation options. I really liked the inclusion of green space in the new neighborhoods in the northwestern portion of the city.**
- **I think that the city is doing a great job with infrastructure improvements and I really like and suggest that you continue to incorporate the light standards, bridge designs etc., throughout the community as it develops. These are things that people become familiar with and that will not only set Farmington apart from other adjacent communities but will also continue to promote the community and sense of place. These coordinated efforts are great and there is a really good start and if these are continued with future development, will really enhance and set Farmington apart from the typical suburban developments to the north.**

- I like the boulevard trees and hope they remain part of the subdivision design (assuming curb to sidewalk green space widths are maintained). I was there during the day, so hard to comment on lighting. Seems like there is a great trail system to get to other parts of the city and other parts of Dakota County.
- I didn't notice many trails or bike lanes. The infrastructure looked adequate but not necessarily appealing. Access to public transportation? There was an area north of 195th which had a stark contrast between two neighborhoods; one with better building design, lot layouts and street trees, the other had very standard design levels, cookie cutter lot layouts and did not have the street trees. This contrast between the two neighborhoods provided a good example of why the street trees, green spaces, and similar amenities are so important – they give a completely different feel to the area and convey a higher sense of quality. Another appealing feature of the housing (albeit indirect) was the quality of the parks. The parks were attractive, well maintained, and had new play structures and recreational equipment. Quality parks can go a long way to improving the sense of quality for the nearby housing (particularly to young families that are likely to use the parks).

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:

<u>2, 7, 7, 1, 9</u>	Single young adults	<u>5, 7, 8, 3, 5</u>	Senior citizen
<u>7, 10, 8, 9, 9</u>	Young families	<u>4, 7, 9, 5, 7</u>	Upscale/professional
<u>6, 10, 8, 9, 8</u>	Middle income		

Please comment on your observations:

Summary of comments: Team members found that the community was exceptional for families, but younger adults required more entertainment opportunities.

- Farmington seems to be a community for young families with school-age children. There isn't much of a reason for young professionals to live in the community, and there doesn't seem to be many cultural amenities to get this group to stay.
- Farmington seemed to have a family-appeal. It seemed like there were many schools, parks, sidewalks, etc. to attract young families. I don't know

that it would be the first choice for many new seniors or single young adults, because there doesn't seem to be enough activities geared for those demographics.

- The city appears to have a nice mix of housing for people of various ages and income levels.
- Didn't seem like there was a lot of "night life" opportunities for single young adults.
- There needs to be a better mixture of types and price points to provide more opportunities for seniors and for young adults. The common housing types seemed focused on middle to upper class families.

Education, Health, Social and Emergency Services

Education

Comment on the availability and appearance of schools.

Summary of comments: Team members found that the schools were well done.

Pre-school/Kindergarten/Head Start

- I did not observe any facilities for very young children.
- The grade school we drove by looked very nice.
- Pre-school on Chippendale (Anna's Bananas – seemed nice enough.

Primary/Elementary/Middle School

- From the exterior, it appears the schools are in good shape.
- The re-use of the former high school for the new middle school seemed appropriate.
- Former high school turned middle school looked okay – sort of institutional looking . . . could use some help with revisiting the landscape plan.
- Newer elementary school (Meadowcreek), nice enough but the location was out in the middle of an agricultural area which would require parents to drop off or have the children bussed in. Opportunities for walking to school would've been a positive. The middle school (former high school) – appearance was okay, closer to established portions of town so would appear to be in a better location for walking to school.

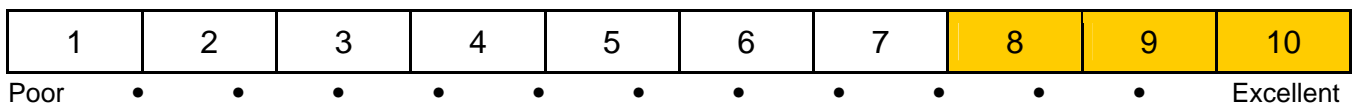
High School

- **The new high school is beautiful!**
- **Farmington Senior High School was beautiful. I especially liked the football field. The school seems to have a convenient location to County Road 50.**
- **A nice, impressive facility. However, seems like way too much land for a high school. More appropriate scale for a junior college or something and not for 14 – 18 year-olds. Can land where the soccer fields (east side) be subdivided at a later date to provide housing or future commercial? School district can see future proceeds?**
- **Wow! The appearance and quality of the school look to be on par with some colleges I've seen. Again, the location was out in the middle of an agricultural area so no opportunities for walking. Also, the substantial setback from the main road would be a barrier to pedestrians even if the surrounding area was more conducive to walking.**

College/University

- **I did not observe any college or university facilities.**

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



Observations:

- **I don't feel qualified to comment on the adequacy of schools.**

Health Care Services

Comment on the availability and apparent quality of healthcare facilities

Summary of comments: Team members found that the healthcare facilities were mostly adequate.

- **There appeared to be several new healthcare facilities, which seems to indicate there is a strong demand for these types of services.**
- **There are two nice sized clinics in Farmington that seem large enough to serve the entire community. Fairview Ridges seems close enough to serve as the main hospital for the area.**

- **One clinic and one memory care facility observed. Enough for current population, but probably not enough for growth in next 20 years. Did not see any optometrist or dental clinics.**
- **Fairview, dentist office – all appeared to be of high quality (Charleswood Marketplace). Availability of clinics was adequate. It would be nice to have better access to a hospital.**

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

- **I did not observe specific practices, but there were some new clinics around the downtown area.**

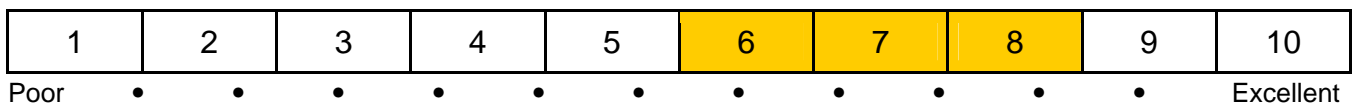
Long-term care, assisted living, and nursing home facilities:

- **I observed one or two of these types of facilities. I am sure the community will need more of them in the future.**
- **Trinity looked to be only such facility – appeared okay.**

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

- **I did not observe these types of facilities.**
- **Seems like the downtown area could try to attract this kind of services, which would in turn help support the other commercial entities.**

Overall, how would you rate the adequacy of health care services for Farmington’s 20,000 people?



Please comment:

Summary of comments: Team members determined that an emergency or urgent care facility should be located in the community.

- **It appears there are a number of facilities, but I did not observe an emergency or urgent care facility. This may be something that is desired in the future.**
- **I did not witness some of these facilities mentioned above, so I do not feel comfortable in providing a rating for this exercise.**

- This is difficult to rate as I am not familiar with the community's needs. However, there appears to be available space for clinics and services throughout the community in business districts. Perhaps coordinate if possible to ensure good access, connectedness to neighborhoods, employment centers and multi-family housing areas as well as parks and downtown.

Local Economy

What is your impression of the health of Farmington's economy?

Summary of comments: Team members found that the City looked like it was thriving and it had a charming appeal, but vacant store fronts may need some work. Commercial development should not deter from the downtown area.

- Generally, it appears to be based on surrounding agricultural uses, and I saw one distribution center in the business park.
- Farmington seemed to have a strong economy and a thriving main street. When commercial development occurs, it should be well planned so it does not detract from the downtown area.
- There are some vacant store fronts but this is common with this economy. It appears that downtown is doing ok and the city should take care in its future development to provide for commercial that does not directly compete with downtown. Working with Dakota County on retail and other market studies may be of help. It will be important to continue to bring business to downtown for it to succeed over time. Perhaps some meetings with other similar communities (Shakopee, Stillwater, Afton, Hastings, Red Wing etc.) may be helpful to continue or develop other strategies that work for these communities to avoid pitfalls.
- Downtown seems nice, but like many places, probably needs help. A few vacant store fronts but over all, very charming.
- Good diversity of businesses, industrial.

Downtown

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

- Yes, downtown is easy to locate.
- I was able to easily locate downtown. Still, additional signage encourage

people to turn down 3rd Street may not be a bad idea.

- Yes.
- Easy to locate, but I've been here many times. Some signage along Hwy. 50 would help?
- No, coming in off Chippendale it's not clear where the downtown is. Perhaps wayfinding signage would be helpful.

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

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Poor	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	Excellent

Observation:

Summary of comments: Team members agreed that the downtown was charming, but maintenance on buildings and property should be considered to maintain the charm.

- There has been a good effort to preserve some of the historical buildings, but there are businesses in the downtown that detract from the overall appearance.
- Downtown was charming. Perhaps a few pieces of public art or additional signage might help to enhance the area and encourage "local tourists" to visit.
- Downtown along the main street(s) looks pretty good, there are some signs and building maintenance that can still be accomplished for better appearance but overall the area is clean and inviting. Behind the main street(s) there are some weed, exterior storage and unsurfaced parking areas that could be improved with mowing and screening and/or general site cleanup (2nd Street). These sites really detract from the work that has been done by other businesses and the city and should be brought into code compliance at a minimum. Perhaps the city and landowners could consider an assessment agreement or work with the owners when the city has paving projects in the community where the owners could work with the paving company and perhaps receive lower estimates for paving or have the city do the project and assess it over time?
- Several fantastic buildings with great architecture, some nice streets and nice older buildings; also some buildings that were not well maintained and some code enforcement issues as well.

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

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Poor	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	Excellent

Observation:

Summary of comments: Team members did not see much variety in stores. They recommended that more restaurants, service providers, and mom/pop shops be located here. A consolidation of new commercial near the downtown to reinforce it was also suggested.

- I didn't see very many stores, mostly restaurants. It was difficult to determine where clothing or basic necessities are purchased.
- A couple more restaurants would be nice to have, as they could help attract more people to the area.
- It would be good to continue to work with service providers (post office, phone company, etc) to keep them in downtown as they bring in customers. I come to Farmington for the local restaurants and mom/pop operations. There are not a lot of retail establishments that I would shop at. This is probably due to the economy and hopefully will grow. There are some nice buildings for re-use but I know that retrofitting them to current code requirements is costly.
- Did not see a hardware store . . . is there one in downtown?
- It looked like there was some decent variety. Again, it would be helpful to consolidate commercial around/near downtown so that new commercial can reinforce the downtown area.

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

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Poor	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	Excellent

Observation:

- I ate at a downtown restaurant, and service was fine. I couldn't comment on the customer service of other businesses in downtown.
- Customer service has always been good at the restaurants and businesses that I have visited. People are friendly and the service is good.
- I had an enjoyable lunch at the Long Branch.

Rate and comment on the signage in the downtown.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Poor	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	Excellent

Observation:

Summary of comments: Team members suggested unique signing for the downtown area and less cluttered signage in the windows would help.

- The electronic changeable signage is very jarring!
- I feel that unique signage signifying “downtown” would be helpful.
- Signage varies in every community as do local ordinance standards. Something that has been beneficial in Burnsville is that the city does not allow cabinet type signs as wall signs with the exception of logos. Otherwise Burnsville requires individual letters on a raceway which has helped community signage look better in appearance. Burnsville does not allow hand painted signs and also limits the amount of window signage to help with the appearance of properties. Signs are staff intensive and Burnsville successfully uses volunteers with our code compliance officer for enforcement. We also offer incentives using signage for other purposes – for example, multi-family buildings get larger signage for rentals if they participate in the STAR rental licensing program. The incentive approach has worked well for Burnsville.
- Too many temporary signs on windows. Cluttered signage related to Dew Days that was not coordinated and not attractive. Somewhat cheesy.

Rate and comment on the window displays in the downtown.

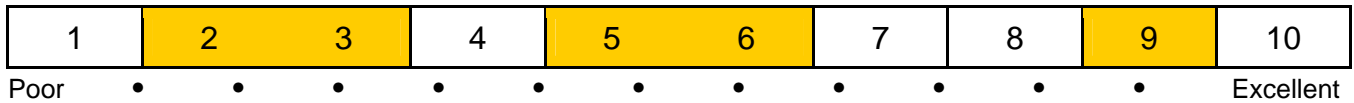
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Poor	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	Excellent

Observation:

- I didn’t actually see any window displays in downtown. I’m not sure if that’s because there aren’t many displays, or if I just didn’t get those stores that have these types of displays.
- There are some window painted signs that remain on buildings that no longer have the use. Burnsville requires sign removal within a period of time following the closure of a business – this has helped with code enforcement and also appearance issues.
- Hard to see window displays on store fronts with temporary banner signage.

- **Not enough information on this one to provide a better answer.**

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



Observation:

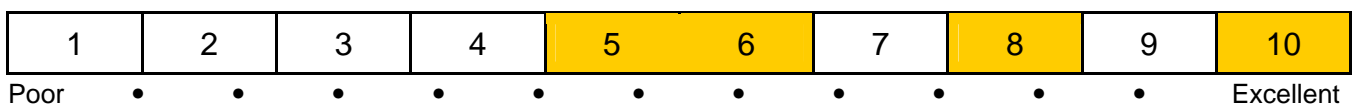
Summary of comments: Team members suggested more restaurants and unique retail shops should be located downtown. They also suggested that the business community should be more present and this issue should be discussed with the FDBA.

- **Again, I mostly observed restaurants in the downtown area. I didn't see much else.**
- **There does not seem to be a lot of merchants downtown. It would be great if there were a hometown industry/service like Red wing pottery, Red Wing Shoes, or some type of retail that is unique – maybe local fashion studio, apparel, things that are not readily available anywhere close by.**
- **Business community would be well served to have a more cohesive presence in downtown. Can overall community design / friendliness issues and this survey be on the next Farmington Chamber of Commerce meeting agenda?**
- **Not enough information on this one to provide a better answer.**

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

- **A couple more restaurants may be helpful.**
- **Seems to be a good mix but just not a lot of choices for any one type of retail.**
- **Additional housing, perhaps multi-family or higher density single-family could help reinforce the downtown area. It appeared that the downtown was mostly professional services and retail.**

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



Observation:

- There appears to be a good amount of on-street parking. Are there any shared surface lots?
- Parking was easy to find.
- Have not had issues parking downtown over the years. There seems to be enough parking.

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

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Poor	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	Excellent

Observation:

- I visited Farmington in the day and cannot comment on the lighting.
- Was not there during night hours.
- Daytime visit – hard to rate.

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

Summary of comments: Team members suggested that the City promote its small-town feel, mom/pop shops, and parks. During the tour it was mentioned that the Vermillion River should be promoted as a trophy trout stream.

- I'm not sure that Farmington is a tourist destination. I think it can attract residents and people from Dakota County, but I don't think there are sufficient attractions currently to entice people from the greater Twin Cities region to Farmington. That said, a movie theater downtown could create more of a nightlife.
- I think people who live in the cities enjoy coming out to small towns on mini-weekend trips. They seem to enjoy small towns that are not very far from the cities. Stillwater, for example, attracts many "local tourists." I think downtown Farmington could be a place where people like to come and visit, but it would need to self-promote in order for that to happen.
- I think that there is the potential for downtown to play a greater role and suggest trying to emphasize both downtown and nearby parks to draw people to the area. Continue to plan civic events in the area and perhaps create recreation programs in the parks and also have some of the businesses cater to park and rec. program users. Promote mom/pop type businesses – things that are unique, wood crafts, artisans, local

entrepreneurs etc. Maybe some milk box boat races on the river or other type of events to encourage people to come to the downtown area for neighborhood and other festivals – similar to some of the water related festivals in places like Mpls etc.

- **Yes. Farmington can bill itself as a quaint, small-town feel and probably profit from it. Nice brick buildings, love the ginko trees and lamp posts. Sidewalks and other streetscape details are awesome.**
- **Yes, the downtown hosts community events (Dew Days, Farmer’s Market) and provides one of the few opportunities for tourism.**

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

- **Detached single-family is the dominant type of housing.**
- **I saw only a couple of older, tired apartment buildings.**
- **Not sure, did not notice apartments or housing when in downtown.**
- **Not observed**
- **Some 3-story walk-up apartments and standard single-detached. Additionally some really nice older homes on the edge of downtown which provide more character than typical suburban communities.**

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

- **No, not really. There are some nice single-family homes, but not much else.**
- **Yes. It seemed very quaint.**
- **My personal opinion is that I would not like to live in a downtown area – not any downtown. I don’t think that there is any particular issue with Farmington; it is just not the residential setting I personally desire.**
- **Yes; probably with the right place to live . . . townhouse style perhaps.**
- **I think the downtown could be a desirable place to be. The existing housing seems adequate and the close proximity to downtown would make walking to services easy enough. However, there needs to be a better mix of housing to accommodate seniors and young adults. Also, providing more retail, services in the downtown area would help make the downtown a desirable place to live.**

Were there any government or nonprofit organization activities that are serving as traffic

generators for the downtown (city hall, post office, YMCA)? What other types of traffic generators could be located downtown?

- **Movie theater, farmer’s market, festivals.**
- **The new City Hall in downtown is a very nice facility. It blends in very well with the architecture and the feel of the area. An additional draw would be a health club. Perhaps something like the YMCA would be too big. However, a Snap Fitness or a Curves would be just the right size and would draw quite a few folks to the area.**
- **Post office, library and City hall are good generators. . . .however, more generators are needed. Café/coffee house?**
- **The City Hall and senior center seemed to be functioning as traffic generators. Facilities such as the local library could generate downtown activity. Additionally, additional commercial and multi-family residential would be good traffic generators as well.**

General Information About Overall Retail

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

Summary of comments: Team members found that there were a few retail shopping options while there was an abundance of service businesses.

- **I did not observe any malls or big box retail.**
- **There were relatively few shopping options. It would seem that the city could benefit from more retail.**
- **There appears to be a good mix of service business but not much for larger retail or higher paying job types of commercial. I believe this is partly due to the proximity of Farmington to other communities and the number of rooftops. It will take some time to grow to a point where larger retail will locate in the city. For example, Apple Valley just received a Super Target on the east side. I believe Farmington has a while to go before it will hit the density/population needed to support some of the larger retail.**
- **Nothing nearby . . .**
- **Didn’t appear to be much for big-box stores (however, in many places the big box stores have had a negative impact on downtowns so their absence could be interpreted to be as much of a plus as a minus). The downtown appeared to be mostly specialty shops while the newer outlying commercial areas appeared to be strip malls.**

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

- **Clothing, personal goods, office supplies.**
- **I would imagine that most shopping would occur in Apple Valley or Burnsville.**
- **Clothes, vehicles, appliances, home products, perhaps cheaper groceries?**
- **Most discount big-box type activity**
- **Grocery, big-box retail, regional mall**

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

- **A larger grocery store.**
- **I did not see a grocery store in Farmington.**
- **I would have thought there might be a few more local specialty shops, wood working, cabinetry etc?**
- **Hardware store.**
- **None (would expect that most of that being in Lakeville and Apple Valley already would mean you're not likely to find that in Farmington)**

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

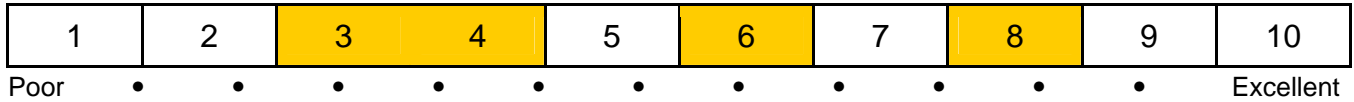
- **None.**
- **Unsure.**

What store(s) in Farmington would you travel a distance of more than 10 miles to patronize?

- **None.**
- **I live in Prior Lake and work in Burnsville so I can easily get to all of the franchise type shopping. To go to Farmington, there would need to be some type of unique shop or goods such as the local greenhouse that has some unique plants and offerings that the franchise stores do not carry.**
- **None.**

- **None, and since most of the retail appears to be service type or community scale that seems just fine.**

Rate and comment on the overall condition of the retail sector



Observation:

Summary of comments: **Team members suggested that stores should lean towards local residents while insuring that additional strip malls should be limited. Walkable retail centers should be planned instead of the strip malls.**

- **Generally looks fine, but perhaps more stores geared towards the local residents.**
- **The appearance of the retail buildings is nice and the city seems to be doing a good job with land use, appearance codes etc. The biggest struggle is trying to get the buildings occupied. Take it from Burnsville, try not to overbuild strip malls that only bring in traffic from the highway. The oversupply of these strip centers in Burnsville is a problem for us in that the buildings are now paid for but there is no incentive to keep them up. They only need a small number of tenants because the buildings are paid for. However, many have poor visual appearance and there is not much incentive any longer for them to invest in their properties. If Farmington can develop these centers so they are oriented toward neighborhoods, well connected to other employment centers, schools, downtown etc., their long term sustainability may be better in the long run. Work to promote walkability and biking access from the service areas as opposed to the owner/developer only providing a quick car stop along the highway.**

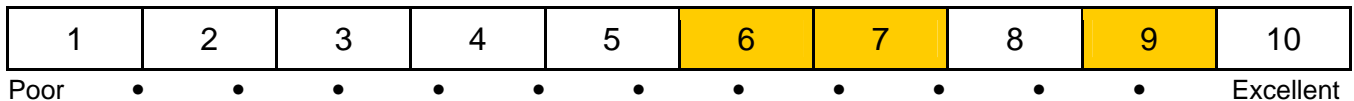
Other Retail Shopping Areas

Explore other retail shopping areas outside of the downtown business district.

North Farmington (east of Pilot Knob Road)

Type (Shopping mall etc.):

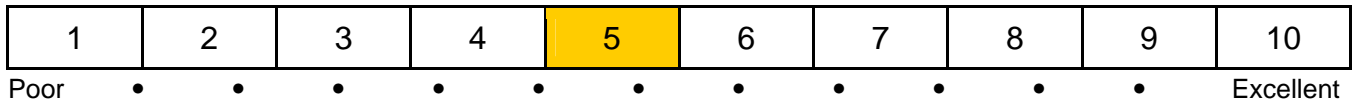
Rate and comment on the overall appearance.



Observation:

- **Very attractive.**
- **Seems far away from the core of Farmington . . . can retail activity be concentrated better?**

Rate and comment on the variety of shopping.



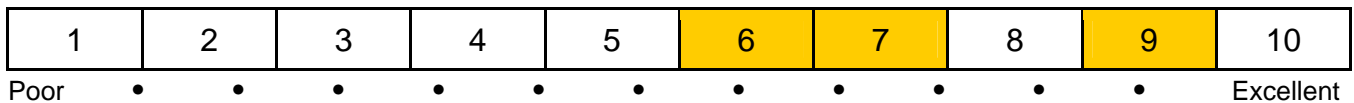
Observation:

- **Did not see much of this but seemed okay.**

Charleswood Marketplace (195th and Pilot Knob Road)

Type (Shopping mall etc.):

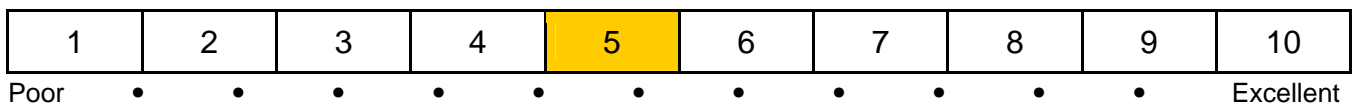
Rate and comment on the overall appearance.



Observation:

- **I don't remember anything else except the CVS.**
- **Did not observe**

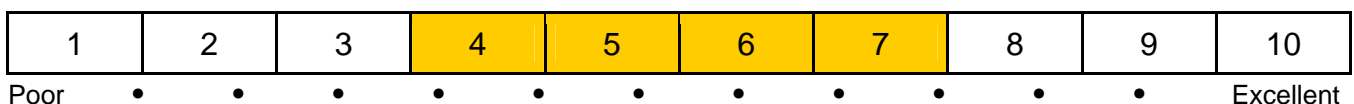
Rate and comment on the variety of shopping.



Tamarack Retail Center (east of TH 3)

Type (Shopping mall etc.):

Rate and comment on the overall appearance.



Observation:

- **Only drove by . . . seemed inviting.**

Rate and comment on the variety of shopping.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Poor	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	Excellent

Farmington Mall (TH 3 and TH 50)

Type (Shopping mall etc.):

Rate and comment on the overall appearance.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Poor	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	Excellent

Observation:

Rate and comment on the variety of shopping.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Poor	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	Excellent

Observation:

Local Industries

Comment on existing Farmington Industrial Park?

Summary of comments: Team members liked the existing park. They suggested that buffers be maintained between industrial sites and residential areas.

- **I observed a truck distribution center and some smaller buildings.**
- **The existing Industrial Park seemed to be successful, but there was definitely room to grow. Speaking from experience working with a fully-built community, you will want to be very careful where you place industrial development. In Golden Valley, as industry leaves the City, large warehouses are sitting vacant in very prominent locations.**

- **Farmington has a nice little industrial park and has done a good job of siting the area. A couple of tips – be sure to keep enough area around the industrial park to allow for future expansion and also to buffer the park from residential and commercial uses. Over the years, Burnsville has allowed developers to subdivide residential properties too close to industrial and commercial sites which have caused many difficulties. The industrial users need large spaces and they also need exterior storage and to use loud equipment which does not provide a conducive environment for homeowners. We have a couple of industrial users where odor is an issue due to mixing food grade herbs/spices that are sometimes strong and blow over residential neighborhoods. The more distance and screening you can provide in between these types of uses and also the trash handling, loading and snow storage of commercial and residential, the better you will be in the long run. This is important for maintaining good industrial and business work environments also. It is important not to allow commercial uses to encroach into industrial areas (typically industrial space is cheaper than commercial space). For example, where Burnsville has allowed sports performance, gyms, dance schools, etc., in industrial areas sometimes has a negative impact on the industrial users because people taking kids to sports programs sometimes do not like the industrial activities or want higher aesthetic controls on the industrial operators than they can provide – conflict occurs occasionally between uses that are not compatible.**
- **Seems to be in good shape – can it expand? Seems to have a good “street feel” and location near and access to County road is great.**
- **Adequate; focused on warehousing and some manufacturing. The older elements such as the cross dock detract from the higher level of quality exhibited in other portions of the industrial park.**

Comment on proposed extension of Farmington Industrial Park?

- **I would make sure there is a need before doing any extension.**
- **Don't have enough details on proposal to comment beyond what I wrote above**
- **Appears to be adequate space for expansion – location makes sense. Expansion of the industrial and/or addition office facilities will provide opportunities for employment opportunities within Farmington.**

Are the industrial facilities well maintained?

- **Yes, they appear to be.**
- **Yes.**

- **For the most part yes. Continue to require screening and landscaping especially for outdoor storage areas, as well as hard surface requirements. The infrastructure costs are typically higher for industrial areas due to larger, heavier equipment use. The city may want to take advantage of locations close to county and state roads/highways and have a large enough industrial area to allow for future expansion and larger facilities that may want to locate close to but not in a suburb. Burnsville's biggest dilemma with regard to industrial now is that we have such limited space for industrial development.**
- **Yes**
- **Mostly.**

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

- **Yes, good highway access, good labor force.**
- **Yes, particularly argri-industry.**
- **Yes, with proximity to connections to US Hwy. 52 to the east and I-35 to the west, Farmington has potential.**
- **I would not expect this community to be competitive for industries that are location sensitive; it's just too far outside of the beltway area. The land prices should be attractive so that could help attract those industries where location is not as big of a factor. Also, there may not be adequate infrastructure for heavy water usage industries.**

Tourism

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

- **No, I didn't observe much of a tourism sector.**
- **The community could be seen as having a strong tourism sector with the presence of the Dakota County Fair.**
- **There are efforts w/in downtown, but it seems fragmented. Are there bed and breakfast options?**
- **I'd have to say no. Also, there's not anything that stands out on the website about tourism in Farmington.**

Does the community have a slogan/brand?

Summary of comments: Team members suggested that a brand or identifier be generated to show the assets of the community.

- I could not find it.
- Not to my knowledge.
- I believe Farmington has a great opportunity as a brand or community identifier due to many factors: Excellent parks, location on the Vermillion River, the Dakota County Fairgrounds, Historic downtown, proximity to the metro but yet far enough to still maintain an independent small town character with all of its positive connotations!
- No. this should / could be developed.
- The slogan “A proud past – a promising future” suits its purpose but it does seem a little generic. Also, I don’t know that there truly is a brand as without the City’s name in conjunction with the slogan you wouldn’t know which community this was or for that matter if it was a community or business, etcetera.

Is the community well known for an attraction or event?

- Dakota County fair, Dew days.
- Yes, the Dakota County Fair.
- Historic downtown and Dakota County Fair.
- Dakota County fair.
- Unsure – so I’d assume no. Well know for the Dakota County Fair?

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

- Maybe the river for trout fishing?
- Main Street, as well as areas along the Vermillion River could be developed into local tourist attractions.
- Yes; trout fishing on Vermillion River, probably some potential for quaint small-town shopping.
- The Village at the Dakota County Fairgrounds. Downtown Farmington.

Maybe capitalize on the trout streams.

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

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Poor	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	Excellent

Observation:

- **The Dakota County fairgrounds look well-maintained.**
- **Great potential**
- **Do you consider any of the attractions to be underdeveloped? Please comment.**
- **The Dakota County Fairgrounds seemed well-developed.**

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

- **Cannot comment, unaware of any other events besides Dew Days and Dakota County fair.**
- **Not to my knowledge.**
- **Not sure.**
- **Dew Days; Farmer's Market (expand it into a bigger event – do community events in conjunction with Farmer's Market days)**

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

- **I observed only one hotel, and no B&Bs or other accommodations.**
- **I did not see any hotels or motels.**
- **Did not observe campgrounds, but I would be interested in this.**

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

- I did not see any conference facilities.
- Not to my knowledge.
- Dakota County Fairgrounds seems to be a good venue.

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.

- I did not observe any center or offices of this type. I saw no maps or other marketing materials specifically geared towards promoting Farmington.
- Not to my knowledge.

Restaurants

Comment and rate the quality of restaurants:

Quality

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Poor	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	Excellent

Comments:

- I ate at only one restaurant. It was fine, but nothing spectacular.
- I did not visit any restaurants in Farmington.

Variety/Mix of Restaurants

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Poor	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	Excellent

Comments:

- I don’t know if there is a good, white tablecloth restaurant – I couldn’t find one. It seems like with the quality of produce and meat in the area, there could be a good, chef-driven restaurant in the area.
- I wish there were more mom and pop type restaurants – maybe something along the river or other scenic unique setting in Farmington.
- I had lunch at the Long Branch. Decent lunchtime crowd.

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

the near future?

- **Maybe the Dakota County fair.**
- **Long Branch Saloon**
- **The community could use something other than soup / sandwich / burger options. Asian?**

Government/Public Services

Local Government Information

Are municipal offices conveniently located?

- **Yes, very.**
- **Yes. City Hall is a very prominent building on the main road.**
- **Yes; beautiful city hall. Nicely done on the exterior and interior. Fits in very well with the downtown streetscape.**
- **They're in downtown, so they're convenient for area residents. However they're a bit hard to find coming from outside of the community.**

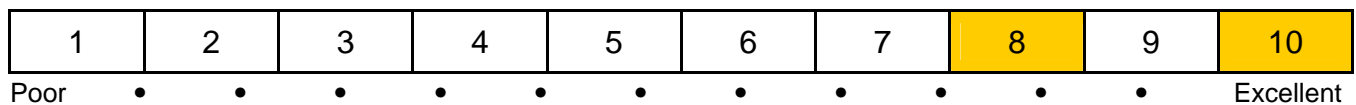
Please comment:

- **The downtown location is excellent.**

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

Community brochure/guide:

- **I did not see any guide.**
- **Don't know**



Comments:

- **Don't know**

- **Did not see / use**

Business Directory:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Poor	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	Excellent

Comments:

- **It's good and it's online which is very good.**
- **Good**
- **What business directory?**

Community Profile (including business and industrial sites):

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Poor	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	Excellent

Comments:

- **It's the standard information from DEED. It's fine.**

Were you able to find adequate information to make informed retail, commercial and/or industrial business investment decisions via Farmington's website)?

- **It's a little difficult to find on the website, but there is information about grants and programs for businesses.**
- **Yes.**
- **Yes, the website is great!**
- **I did not look for this.**
- **The website provided some basic information to get you started. It might be helpful to have links to websites for the developments if there are any (I didn't see anything like that on the website).**

Public Infrastructure

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

relevant.

Public Transportation:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Poor	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	Excellent

Comment:

- **Did not observe.**
- **I did not witness any evidence of a public transportation system.**
- **I did not look for this.**
- **Didn't notice any bus service or dial-a-ride vehicles while I was there.**

Sidewalks:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Poor	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	Excellent

Comment:

- **Available in downtown, did not observe elsewhere.**
- **Sidewalks seemed plentiful and well-maintained.**
- **Excellent in downtown and some of the residential neighborhoods; too narrow in some neighborhoods and some were too close to the houses/parked cars.**
- **Many of the areas didn't have trails or sidewalks. Where present they appeared to be adequate.**

Streets:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Poor	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	Excellent

Comment:

- **Good network, in good shape.**

- **The streets seemed in good condition. In fact, several streets were being reconstructed during the tour.**
- **Streets appeared to be well maintained.**

Landscaping, Street Trees:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Poor	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	Excellent

Comment:

- **Appears to be fine.**
- **Landscaping appears nice, but more could be done to enhance the landscaping along public roads.**
- **I like the boulevard trees, city entrance monuments and the lighting/bridge and use of sandstone features, very nice and unique!**
- **I loved the ginko trees in downtown.**
- **There's a lack of street trees in some of the newer residential areas.**

Street Signage:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Poor	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	Excellent

Comment:

- **Can't comment, didn't take notice of street signs.**
- **Decent**
- **Street signs were adequate. Wayfinding signage would be helpful.**

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

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Poor	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	Excellent

Comment:

- **Did not observe.**
- **I noticed the use of some nice sandstone appearing waste receptacles either near downtown or perhaps a park. Very nice. This shows a community commitment to quality and also demonstrates that Farmington has a lot of pride.**
- **I did not look for this.**

Planning

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

- **Overall, I think Farmington is a well-planned community. Planning staff is professional and aware of the needs of the community.**
- **No. The city appears to be very thoughtfully planned out.**
- **Conflicting uses observed along south border (Castle Rock Twp.) hard to control because I think the parcels that were unattractive were actually within Castle Rock.**
- **Yes, the industrial in close proximity to residential seemed to present some conflicts. It might have been better to have that develop on the outer edge of town, allowing the residential to tie together with the downtown.**

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

- **Can't comment, it appears to be well-reasoned plan.**
- **Yes. I would be cautious with having too much industrial development.**
- **Yes. Scale of land consumed for high school seems inappropriate. Too big.**
- **The schools off at the edge of the community, in the agricultural area seems not appropriate. However, land prices are also a factor...**

Did you experience traffic congestion anywhere?

- **No.**

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

Please comment.

- **Cannot comment – did not observe.**
- **Sidewalks appear to be accessible.**
- **Did not observe.**

Does the community appear to be pedestrian/bike friendly?

- **There seems to be a good network of trails and sidewalks.**
- **The community appears to have many opportunities for bikers and for walkers.**
- **Yes except in areas w/out sidewalks or sidewalks that are too narrow.**
- **No, it's separated into distinct parts so it did not appear to be pedestrian/bike friendly for going about daily activities without a car. There are opportunities for purely recreational trails but they didn't appear to link different uses within the community.**

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:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Poor	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	Excellent

Comment:

Summary of comments: Team members were impressed with the park and trail system. One planner suggested that HOA's provide private parks for neighborhoods rather than the City.

- Excellent parks with well maintained infrastructure.
- I think Farmington has beautiful parks and athletic facilities – something to be very proud of and to flaunt to the rest of the world! In my opinion and experience, I would suggest that the city stay away from the small mini parks as you grow, these will become maintenance and cost intensive and really do not provide community parks and recreation but rather, extend private back yards. Instead, require the developer to provide these for the neighborhood and establish a homeowner association, especially for multi-family projects. Let the individual projects provide for some of their own recreation needs. The city will then be better able to provide for the overall community parks and recreation system. This will also give neighborhoods the incentive to work together to provide for and maintain their own little recreation areas.
- I was very impressed with all of the small, local neighborhood-scale parks. Great job

Public recreation facilities:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Poor	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	Excellent

Comment:

- The pool and hockey rink are good amenities.

Private recreation facilities:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Poor	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	Excellent

Comment:

- Did not observe.
- I did not look for this.

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

- Play hockey, ride their bikes.

- **Farmington has many well-maintained parks and open spaces. It is also home to the County Fairgrounds. I would imagine that people in Farmington take advantage of these opportunities.**
- **Hard to determine . . . no opinion**
- **Use parks, school recreational facilities, recreational trails, fishing?**

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

- **I didn't know about the extensive trail network.**
- **The football field at Farmington High School was very impressive. I was also impressed the city had a community pool.**
- **The "square-about" west of Denmark Ave. Might be a great future monument / memorial site.**
- **Maybe more recreational ballfields, soccer facilities, facilities for seniors?**

What recreational activities or facilities seemed to be missing?

- **None that I can think of.**

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

Rating Category

<u>8, 3, 7</u>	Senior citizens
<u>10, 9, 9</u>	Families
<u>10, 1, 7</u>	Singles, young adults
<u>6, 1, 9</u>	Teens
<u>10, 10, 10</u>	Children (12 and under)

Entertainment

What does the community do for entertainment?

- **Can't comment, not clear from tour of area.**
- **I would imagine that, aside from entertainment opportunities in the city, residents of Farmington take advantage of entertainment options in neighboring communities.**

- Surf the web?
- Didn't appear to be many options (outside of the high school events and recreation mentioned above)

What entertainment opportunities are lacking?

- **Movie theater.**
- **A movie theater, more shopping options, public beach, and other various gathering places appear to be lacking.**
- **Maybe a movie theater?**
- **Performing Arts, Music, Movies, bowling, etc.**

Does the community have a vibrant nightlife? Please comment:

- **Can't comment, but I would be surprised if it did.**
- **I wouldn't think so.**
- **I did not look for this / came during daytime.**
- **The visit was during the daytime, but there was nothing to suggest that there was a vibrant nightlife.**

Faith/Religion

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

- **Did not observe.**
- **All of the churches seemed very well-maintained.**
- **A few Catholic sites. Did not see much of this.**
- **There appeared to be a sufficient number of churches though I didn't note the different denominations**

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

- **Did not observe.**
- **None come to mind.**
- **Impressive St. Michael's facility.**
- **The rebuilt church (St. Michael's) was well done, had a prairie/rural feel to it.**

Please rate the religious buildings and denominations represented in this community.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Poor	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	Excellent

Comments:

- **Can't comment, did not observe.**

Culture and Heritage

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

- **Dew Days, Dakota County Fair. Both are annual.**
- **The Dakota County Fair as well as the local festival are both held in Farmington.**
- **Dew Drop days was getting underway the day I visited. I want to go to the 2011 Soybean festival – sounds like fun**
- **Dew Days, Farmer's Market, Dakota County Fair**

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

- **I saw a few well-maintained historical buildings downtown.**
- **Yes. Most interesting is the historical village located on the County Fairgrounds.**
- **Former St. Michaels? A few historic homes and neat brick buildings in downtown. Seem to be well maintained.**
- **Some of the buildings in downtown and homes adjacent to downtown appear to have historical significance. Yes, they were well maintained.**

General Observations

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

- **Yes. Affordable housing, good schools, convenient location, not too much traffic.**
- **Yes. Farmington has affordable homes, low crime, and offers a peaceful lifestyle.**
- **Yes - somewhat; schools seem nice and there are recreational opportunities for young kids. However as the children become teens, not sure what the entertainment options or part-time job options are like . . . they don't seem to be good.**
- **Yes, positives include: good quality of homes, newer school facilities, great parks. However, it might be a bit of a drive to things like dance class, hockey lessons, etc. Probably long commutes for working parents.**

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

- **Depending on the business, but I'd probably look for a larger market.**
- **That would depend on the nature of the business.**
- **Probably. I'd have to look into income/demographic data and determine the underserved market . . . probably something around teens/young adults may work.**
- **It depends on the type of business. Service businesses would probably do quite well there. Retail, if a big box store then yes because it could essentially capture the entire market since there is no competition. Other retail would likely need that anchor like the big box store to pioneer the area before they would locate there.**

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

- **Perhaps if the land prices were reasonable. Not sure about the education of the workforce, though.**
- **Yes. There is plenty of land availability.**

- **Yes. Decent proximity to Hwy. 52 and I-35.**
- **Land prices are probably better there but I'd assume that many of the manufacturing businesses require better access to the freeway system and this is probably too far outside of the beltway area for many manufacturers.**

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

- **Not clear if there are enough activities for retirees.**
- **Yes. There does appear to be a number of places where a retired person could live in the city.**
- **Not sure.**
- **Probably not, while the downtown would offer some opportunities there needs to be more activities in conjunction with more senior housing.**

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

- **No, definitely not. There isn't enough activity to interest young adults.**
- **Yes. Young adults typically look for the same things that families and seniors look for which include; low crime, affordable housing, and peaceful lifestyles.**
- **Maybe not enough night life for a young adult.**
- **No, lack of activities, distance from core of the Twin Cities employment centers, night life, and cultural activities.**

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

- **Probably not – there doesn't appear to be a "hook" for Farmington.**
- **Yes. I am very interested in coming back to tour the historic village at the fairgrounds and then head over to the main street area and check it out in more detail.**
- **Yes; I like to fish and proximity to Vermillion River might be worth checking out.**
- **Perhaps as part of something destination oriented like the Dakota County Fair.**

Using Your Senses

Was there any specialty food item, bakery, restaurant, or candy store that you will remember?

- **No.**
- **No.**
- **Not really.**

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

- **Smelled like fertilizer, but that's to be expected with the large amount of agricultural land. It wasn't offensive.**
- **Yes. There was an "agricultural smell" as you entered Farmington from the west on County Road 50.**
- **Some animal/ag. smells. But that's to be expected when visiting a smaller community surrounded by agricultural uses. City's name is Farmington after all. So no big deal (for me).**
- **Some agricultural smells but that can be expected in the remaining farming areas of the community.**

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

- **I heard the typical sounds of any small town. I did not hear anything out of the ordinary.**
- **Freight train noise/vibrations. No big deal for me.**
- **Noise level was a low, pleasant level.**

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

- **Very high. Seems like a nice, quiet town. I saw very little garbage (besides the auto repair shop downtown), and thought it was a clean place.**

- **I did not notice high amounts of litter or other detriments. Aside from areas directly adjacent to highways 3 or 50, there didn't seem to be overly-loud noises.**
- **Did not see any litter.**
- **Good.**

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

- **People I encountered were friendly. No traffic issues, no safety issues.**
- **I did not experience anything that had a strong negative or positive impact on the way Farmington felt to me.**
- **No.**
- **I would say more positive than negative and it seemed like a nice, comfortable place. However, there wasn't anything in particular which gave me a strong feeling (one way or the other) about the community.**

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

- **No.**
- **Yes. I would imagine things would have been much quieter.**
- **Yes.**
- **Probably, I expect there would be fewer people on the streets and that would impact the feeling of safety.**

Wrap-Up

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

- **It was more of a suburban community than I thought. I did not know there was as much new single-family housing as there is. I also didn't know the trail network was as extensive as it is.**
- **Yes. As suspected, Farmington was very pleasant. I had a good experience in Farmington. I could certainly see myself living or working in Farmington.**

- **For the most part yes, though there was far more residential than I expected. Also, I was very surprised at the high quality of some of the residential areas.**

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

- **Generally, yes.**
- **The website did a good job of presenting the city in a positive light.**
- **Not entirely. Parts of the City were better off than I imagined.**

What is the most outstanding feature of Farmington?

- **Its location is convenient. It's a nice small town that's located between the larger suburbs of Apple Valley and Lakeville, and historic Northfield.**
- **In my opinion, the most outstanding feature of Farmington is the attractive Main Street (3rd Street.) I think it is neat to see towns like that so close to the Metro Area.**
- **The City planning staff was great hosts/ guides. Their knowledge of the built and planned environment satisfied my curiosity during my visit. Decent professionals always increase the image of a community.**
- **The downtown! Many communities are trying to create artificial "town centers" to develop some sense of place that they lack because most of those communities were originally developed as bedroom communities. Having an established and fully-functioning downtown is an outstanding feature.**

List five positive things you observed about Farmington.

- **Well planned.**
- **Convenient.**
- **Clean.**
- **Friendly people.**
- **Affordable housing.**
- **Thriving and vibrant Main Street.**
- **Wonderful High School facility.**
- **Good connectivity/road network throughout the community.**
- **Attractive and well-maintained parks.**
- **Healthy neighborhoods.**

- Kids doing sidewalk chalk art in downtown
- Proximity to vistas of rolling fields of corn and beans was pretty cool.
- Streetscape / street furniture in downtown is well done.
- Impressive high school football stadium.
- Downtown.
- Farmington High School.
- Great quality parks.
- Some really great quality housing.
- Cultural activities; Dew Days, Farmer's Market.

What are three potential opportunities available to Farmington?

- **More industrial park businesses. Price of land is probably more reasonable than neighboring Lakeville, Eagan.**
- **Dakota County fairgrounds.**
- **Compact downtown**
- **Increase commercial/retail options in a way that benefits and enhances downtown Farmington.**
- **Identify areas to keep as natural preserves.**
- **Increase recreation opportunities along the Vermillion River.**
- **Industrial development to expand tax base and jobs.**
- **Trout fishing in Vermillion River.**
- **Senior Housing (focus in/near downtown).**
- **Develop housing/activities for young single adults – condos, townhouses, etc.**
- **Location to link commercial/industrial with new comm./ind. Development.**

What are the five biggest obstacles/challenges facing Farmington?

- **People perceive to be mostly agricultural, and not connected to the Twin Cities.**
- **No major industry or job generators in the community.**
- **Lack of nightlife or a real "hook" to entice people to move to area.**
- **Lack of attractive, multi-family housing.**
- **Commercial areas are starting to spread away from downtown and that may reduce the attractiveness of the downtown businesses.**
- **Unusual city boundaries/maintaining city identity in areas to the far north.**
- **Aging housing stock in certain areas of the city.**
- **More development occurring on the north and west sides of the city, ignoring areas on the east and south side of the city.**
- **Not enough retail options to sustain people living in the city.**
- **Provide more connections between different neighborhoods.**

- **Retaining young professionals.**
- **Keeping downtown relevant to the needs of locals and attracting tourists.**
- **Location (distance from Mpls./St. Paul).**
- **Boundaries with adjacent townships & impact on development.**
- **Pedestrian connectivity.**
- **Creating opportunities for night life, cultural events, etc.**
- **Continuing development in adjacent communities – development in Lakeville, Rosemount can siphon development potential away from the community.**

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

- **Compact downtown.**
- **I will remember that Farmington is a quaint small town just minutes from the metro area.**
- **Positive: the large football stadium, the brick downtown buildings,**
- **Probably the parks/housing – maybe that phenomenal high school**

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

- **None.**
- **I think Golden Valley is more urban than I originally thought.**
- **My community is fully developed so there aren't as many parallels. However, I probably appreciate the impact of tighter setbacks on establishing more of a small community feel versus a rural center. The Farmington website I think establishes a good template that my community should follow.**

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

- **No.**
- **I would love a "real" main street in my community.**
- **Yes.**

Other comments:

- **The planning and economic development staff was very professional, and is a credit to Farmington.**

On behalf of the Mayor, City Council Members, and City Staff, we want to thank you for your time and effort in assisting us with this First Impression survey!