What is First Impressions?

1. FI volunteers are trained to become “secret shoppers” for a group visit to discover Kenosha and vice versa.

2. Volunteers observe, record their findings in a participants guide and create a final report reflecting impressions.

3. Community Sharing Event conveys a powerful message to motivate, engage and inspire action by local Kenosha stakeholders—YOU!
the Scoop:

✓ Share Executive Summary
✓ Consider special opportunities
✓ Use your notecards to jot down implementation ideas
✓ Discuss ‘What’s next?’
What is UW-Extension?

I am a UW faculty member in the area of Community Resource Development to enhance economic development capacity more broadly through the county.

We are a branch of the University WI in Kenosha County Government.
Why Joliet?
The Report
Visit Components

Prior to arrival
Gateways
Central Business District
Residential
Community Services
Professional Services
Public infrastructure
Planning & land use
Recreation

Tourism
Culture & heritage
Overnight accommodations
Nightlife and entertainment
Residents’ comments
Using your senses
Wrap-Up and reflections

Using your senses
Wrap-Up and reflections
Prior to arrival

...Associated it with its lakefront location.

...Used Downtown Kenosha website, its Facebook page and Convention and Visitors Bureau website.

...Learned auto manufacturing historically shaped Kenosha. Retail, tourism and services, healthcare sector are driving its economy today.

...Made comparisons to other ‘rust belt’ cities and Kenosha’s commuter culture as a ‘bedroom community.’
Visitors followed Highways 158 or 50 or Sheridan Road. Sheridan Road from north was thought to be the preferred route overall. Signage was lacking on all routes.
No one could identify a formal slogan or brand. Some equated the lakefront, museums and marina as a brand.

Others noted with confusion the co-branding of Downtown Kenosha and Convention Visitors Bureau.
“...Sprayed on to a historic building—uhh!!”
Central Business District

B for vibrant, “alive” lakefront near “deteriorated and neglected” spots of downtown.

C Pleased with restaurant options and unimpressed with the quality of food served.

D limited merchandise, limited variety, high prices ...though products appeared to be high quality.

C Mix of residential and business development balanced with lakefront amenities and museums. More lodging mentioned.
**Opportunities: Central Business District**

Lakefront is most outstanding feature of downtown... though “downtown is neglected.”
B retail segment of downtown appeared varied and dispersed.

Downtown appears to be a tourism-based economy. “While I envy Kenosha's proximity to the lake and the ability to attract tourists, I wonder how much the community sees downtown as the ‘Heart of the Community’ when the investment goals appears to be attracting outside consumers rather than local residents.”
Retail

...indicated that “retail is spread out.”

They did not purchase anything.

One would have to travel outside of downtown for grocery, banking, apparel shops, pharmacy, hardware, etc.
**Opportunities: Retail**

To a larger degree, tapping locals as downtown consumers.
There was a ‘healthy mix’ of housing in the downtown. Others noted the ‘lifelessness’ of the condo area, prompting them to wonder if the condos were affordably priced.
Residential:

Lakefront condo **location and orientation** was most appealing feature.

**Blighted housing west of downtown, lack of downtown amenities, and cost of the condos** were least appealing features.

“...There were **no safe, middle-income neighborhoods** that were close to downtown.”

“...I would want to be **away from downtown for housing for conveniences not available to me**...”
**Opportunities: Residential**

Capture a greater residential base with **more affordable housing**.

Connecting **residential development to downtown amenities**

Creating more **rental housing**
Community Services/Professional Services

“...I truly only saw 1 bank in downtown Kenosha...it concerns me.”

...“There seems like there were a ton of attorneys but that was pretty much it.”
Public infrastructure/Planning Land Use

**C** for accessibility and availability of public transportation.

**C** for the condition of sidewalks and streets.

**Yes** Facilities and infrastructure ARE accessible for people with disabilities

**C**-Connections between various modes of public transportation (i.e. bus stops near train depot

**C**- Stops with Shelters

**B**-Availability of Bike Lanes/Paths

**C** Way finding/Street Signage
Planning Land Use

- Benches - A
- Street/Public Art - B
- Landscaping/Streetscaping - A
- Wi-Fi internet access points - B
- Public restrooms - B
- Availability of parking - B
- Way-finding signage for public parking stalls - B
- Compatible land uses in the community (e.g., a park near a museum) - Yes
- Land uses appropriate (commercial, residential, green space etc.) - No
- Traffic congestion - No
While the train station “is accessible to downtown, it is not very well integrated. Signage was lacking…”

4

How are we promoting the good work ‘in progress?’

**Opportunities: Planning & Land Use**

- Bike Paths
- Landscaping/Streetscaping
- WIFI
Recreation

Outdoor activities utilizing the lake/lake front represented local recreation options.

“There is a need for a few more things to do.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parks (open space)</th>
<th>D</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Public recreation facilities</td>
<td>C</td>
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<tr>
<td>Private recreation facilities</td>
<td>C</td>
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<tr>
<td>Senior citizens</td>
<td>C</td>
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<tr>
<td>Families</td>
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<tr>
<td>Singles, young adults</td>
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<tr>
<td>Teens</td>
<td>A</td>
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<tr>
<td>Children (12 and under)</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Opportunities: Recreation**

Downtown appears accessible to all ages, yet graded a D for our parks.

Can we be more innovative in local promotions of our parks, public recreation and private recreation options?
Tourism, Culture, Heritage

Tourism appears strong with a well-developed lakefront—perhaps geared more towards the interest of day trippers than locals.

Lakefront parks, museums, streetcar, paths, boat rentals represented some of the unique tourist features.

Opportunities: developing a small conference facility/lodging downtown, a ferry, and expansion of streetcar service

“historical buildings were neglected in favor of lakefront development"
Tourism, Culture, Heritage

“...It was difficult for me to find any place of true historical significance...”

“No historic buildings.”

“...Maybe a few churches are old but I did not see any signage.”
We have many historical districts and buildings—we just have not promoted them appropriately.
Overnight accommodations

Availability and selection of overnight accommodations.

Did the hotel staff promote downtown events and venues? No

One respondent stated that hotel front desk staff person provided several options and various price points. Whereas another response reflected that the front desk staff person was not helpful.
Nightlife and entertainment

B for perception of safety downtown at night.

B for the appeal of downtown's nightlife and entertainment options.

B for the suitability of street and alley lighting.

“Great selection of dining and nighttime spots”

“Several breweries, wine bar.”

“No theaters were downtown”
First-hand comments from residents

Hotel staff was not knowledgeable about the community though other residents appeared more knowledgeable.

Visitors were advised look outside of downtown for lodging.

Most residents, business owners and museum staff appeared proud of their community.

But locals were friendly and approachable; “One bartender in a popular pizza restaurant was exceptionally friendly and helpful.”

“Some believe that Kenosha has great potential...”
Ice cream shop and sweet shop.

Some eateries downtown provided negative experiences.

Quiet of downtown & lakefront

Sounds of the streetcar and music in the street

Some noticed neglect and felt “appalled.”

Observed a “tension between locals and tourists.... outsiders treated with skepticism or suspicion.”

Other comments were positive, noting the small town, ‘old fashioned’ feel.
Internet and promotional materials “do it no justice”

“I felt much further away than an hour from Chicago, in a good way!”
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Prioritize

1. Central Business District
2. Retail
3. Residential
4. Planning/Land-Use
5. Recreations,
6. Tourism/Culture/Heritage

- Circle you top 2 priorities!
Prioritize your list of thoughts/ideas
Share report/tonight’s updates with City, DKI, KABA
Stay engaged with Main St. Committee
Familiarize yourself with Downtown Strategic Development Plan
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