



FIRST IMPRESSIONS

A Program for Community Improvement

For

Philippi, W.Va.

Sponsored by the Recrutable Communities Project

**Prepared by Alison Chisholm Hanham
West Virginia University Extension Service
Community Resources & Economic Development**

February 2009

Introduction

The Recruitable Community Project is a cooperative effort of the WVU Extension Service, the WVU Department of Family Medicine and the West Virginia Bureau of Public Health, Division of Rural Health. The main objective of the project is to help rural West Virginia communities recruit and retain health care providers, particularly family physicians. The project emphasizes the community's role in recruitment.

One part of the Recruitable Community Project involves a community assessment. How do others see our community? What are the community's good traits? Its negative traits? What can we do to improve and develop our community? These are some questions and issues the town of Philippi, W.Va., explored through a WVU Extension Service community assessment program called First Impressions¹. This is a summary report of the First Impressions program carried out by WVU Extension Service in Philippi during December 2008 and January 2009.

Communities often attempt to improve themselves with very little outside evaluation. Often, this type of approach overlooks real problems and opportunities. The purpose of the First Impressions Program is to help communities raise local awareness of community strengths and

weaknesses as seen through the eyes of a first-time visitor. The program provides a fresh, unbiased perspective that can help communities act on problem areas and build upon their strengths and assets, thereby making them more attractive places to live and work.

Visitors to the town of Philippi included volunteers from the towns of Morgantown, Grafton, and Charleston, West Virginia.

Perceptions Before Visiting

People's perceptions of places are often influenced by factors such as media reports, marketing, and their own past experiences and associations. Several of the First Impressions visitors were aware that Philippi is a college town and home to Alderson-Broadus College. They were also aware that the town has a scenic covered bridge and other public spaces which are assets for the town. Before their visits to Philippi the visitors said they expected to find a quiet, sleepy, small town, a bit lacking in industry and other commercial businesses and perhaps a place that had been a bustling industrial center in its prime but like many other small towns, had fallen on hard times. Because of the presence of a college in town, they also expected to find some student-oriented businesses and recreational opportunities in the area.

- *"We have had the opportunity to visit Philippi many times over the 15 plus years*

¹ First Impressions was developed by Andy Lewis, University of Wisconsin Extension associate professor, and James Schneider, Grant County (WI) economic development director. The West Virginia University Extension Service program was revised and adapted by Alison Hanham, Community Development Specialist.

that we have lived in West Virginia. Because we lived near Grafton for a number of years in the mid 1990s, we would often visit Philippi on weekend drives. We always have thought Philippi to be an attractive town with many attributes, including the courthouse and the covered bridge. However, it has been a number of years since we have spent considerable time in Philippi, so our trip in late January 2009 afforded an opportunity to compare a new “first impression” with lasting impressions that we have over the years.”

- *“I expected that Philippi would be a sleepy and quiet town lacking of industry or commercial businesses. I felt that it would be like many towns in West Virginia that were once bustling industrial centers but have now fallen on hard times due to businesses moving to other areas. I also felt that there would probably be some sort of attempt to capitalize on Philippi’s Civil War history.”*
- *“I did not know much about Philippi, I had only known of the covered bridge.”*
- *“I expected to see a small rural community much like all others that I have visited. This is a college town so I expected to see college student oriented businesses and recreational facilities.”*

Driving Through Town

Quick 5-minute first impression

After a quick drive through Philippi, visitors were asked to form a five-minute impression of the town. A community’s ability to capture people’s attention as they drive through is critical. First time visitors notice

town entrances and quickly form opinions about other aspects of the community such as the appearance of residential, commercial, and industrial areas. They also notice other characteristics such as the presence and condition of schools, parks, and hospitals and they respond to directional signs, street conditions and traffic patterns. This “drive through” viewing provides the initial impression – and can often be a determining factor in whether or not someone decides to stop or continues to “drive through.”

As the visitors drove through Philippi, they were extremely impressed with what they saw. They commented that the town has some attractive assets such as the covered bridge, the courthouse, many other well-kept historic buildings downtown, and some nicely preserved older homes used as both residential and office space for local professionals. They also noted that the Civil War history of the area is an obvious source of pride and provides an important cultural identity for the town. After this initial look at the town, one visitor quickly developed the impression that the town’s leadership has been successful in engaging the community and business leaders in creating a viable and sustainable community.

- *“One immediately notes the Covered Bridge, followed by the impressive Courthouse that was designed and built in the Richardsonian style of the late 19th century, followed by historic and intriguing downtown business district architecture, followed by what are*

generally well-kept and attractive homes of late 19th and early 20th century that are used as residencies and offices for attorneys and professions.”

- *“Interspersed among these attractive and historic structures are artifacts of late 20th century design that focused on the functional rather than aesthetic. At its most benign, this gives us buildings like the DHHR office and the new post office and DEP office. At its most distracting, it gives us some of the fast food restaurants, gas stations, chain drug stores, and some of the new banks that lie within the city.”*
- *“We recognize that any functioning community must have a mix of the old and the new, the stylistic and the functional. In general, we found that the attractive offset the unattractive. We also recognized that the close proximity of fast-food restaurants, drug stores, and public services provide a sense of support and vitality to the community.”*
- *“Based upon the ‘five-minute’ impression, I felt that my initial perception was correct. Philippi did seem like a sleepy little town. Clearly the town has been somewhat of a railroad center in the past, and it seems likely that the river has had a great deal to do with its history. The covered bridge is a major fixture in the town, and there seems to be a great deal of pride in Civil War history. However, there was nothing to guide the casual visitor to important points.”*
- *“Entering from the North and then from the South, a nice welcome signs lets you know that you are in Philippi and that Philippi takes pride in its history. There are also some nicely preserved older buildings and houses. As I drove through town I saw several monuments paying respect to our country’s war veterans. I got the feeling of town filled with pride.”*

- *“I really liked this community. It is a very pleasant place full of historical homes and other points of interest. It appears that this community has a well structured leadership base along with community and business members that appear to be interested in their community.”*

After the visitors formed a five-minute impression of Philippi they were asked to comment on the overall appearance of the area. The visitors were very pleasantly surprised with what they found in Philippi and had only positive comments about the town. Positive aspects noted by the visitors are the town’s location on the Tygart River; an aesthetically pretty community with an impressive number of historic residential, business, and public buildings; a welcoming, well-kept downtown that manages to create an overall positive impression of the central business district in spite of the fact that there are a few empty buildings; and a town that beckons you to get out of your car, have lunch, enjoy the historic sites, and come back for another visit.

- *“We were pleasantly surprised by what we found in Philippi. When we knew it best in the mid 1990s, the town was a bit down on its luck. Things are looking better in 2009, though we also appreciate that there are challenges that persist to local community and economic development.”*
- *“Philippi is fortunate to be well situated on the banks of the Tygart River and to have an impressive stock of historic residential, public, and business buildings. Coming in from the north on 250/119 one is able to capture Philippi spreading out below along*

the Tygart. Because we visited on a day where there was snow cover, the harder features of barren trees and brown lawns and waste areas were softened by a wintry sheath."

- *"Aesthetically, Philippi is a pretty community. It sits in the Tygart River valley, and the downtown area is relatively flat. When approaching from US 119/250 one is able to look down the hill and see the community sitting at the bottom. This is very attractive to a visitor, and this represents the best visual entrance into the town in that particular respect."*
- *"The downtown area is well kept; especially the courthouse which sets back from Main Street is a stereotypical "courthouse square." This is a pleasant sight when driving through the town. Also, there are many historic homes and buildings throughout the area. Many of these look nice and present a positive visual impression for the community. Like many other towns, there appear to be many vacant businesses in the downtown area, but the business district still retains its positive downtown feeling."*
- *"When I visited in mid December, the downtown area was dressed with holiday decorations. The decorations and historic buildings gave a welcoming feeling for a visitor."*
- *"A small rural community that was a really nice place to visit and one that you wanted to visit again. Nice place to get out of the car and walk around, have lunch, see historical points."*

Town entrances

Impressions of a community often begin at this point. Visitors had very positive impressions about the entrances to Philippi. For the most part, they found each major entrance to town to have a scenic approach, particularly Route 250/119 South which affords a scenic view of the town spreading out below. This entrance to town takes you through the covered bridge and past some of the town's historic assets. Several visitors mentioned that it is unfortunate that the historic covered bridge is surrounded by convenience stores and gas stations which create a jarring picture; a clashing of the unique and historic with the commonplace, homogenous chain store facades. Luckily, there are other public spaces which draw one's attention back to the historic character of the area such as the Blue and Gray Park and the Visitor's Center and Museum housed in the old railway depot.

Of particular note, the First Impressions visitors commented that the city of Philippi has not experienced the ad-hoc, sprawling, strip development typically found on the outskirts of many small communities. This type of development is often unattractive and deprives a community of its unique identity and also tends to blur a visitor's sense of arrival in a community.

Visitors noted that the by-pass route, approximately one-half mile before the covered bridge which loops back to Route 250 takes a large amount of traffic and there is no signage to help visitors to the central business district.

- *“There are various entries into town, but the most attractive of course is the Covered Bridge. It is unfortunate that much of the space around this area has been taken over by convenience stores and gas stations. The Covered Bridge must compete with these and it is somewhat of a jarring picture. Nonetheless, we also noticed the Blue Gray Park and the park area on both sides of the river. We noted also the Railroad Depot that serves as visitors’ center and museum. We exited town on Route 250 toward Belington. Here the town thins out in less dramatic fashion than is encountered from the north and west. Nonetheless, it is largely pleasant drive past well kept houses that give way to automobile dealers and service centers and other trades. Past the Route 38 interchange, one comes to the impressive Barbour High School complex with its buildings and playing fields.”*



Gas station located near the covered bridge.

- *“Philippi has a number of points of access. From Route 250 alone there are various ways to cross the river into downtown proper. We chose to concentrate on the main north and south routes that enter the town via the Covered Bridge and exit the town on 250 south toward Belington.”*



The most attractive entrance to Philippi is the covered bridge.

- *“The area surrounding Philippi has not suffered to the same degree from the ad-hoc strip development that often robs communities of identity and borders that are too often found in other parts of rural West Virginia and America. From our northern approaches on Route 250 we first realized that we were in Philippi when we saw an old-style chain link backed sign welcoming us to the town. This is customary in many small towns where the sign lists the various social and civic organizations that bid welcome to the town. We thought that this could use a little sprucing up. More importantly, it is hardly as impressive as the excellent welcome sign for Philippi placed closer into town. We saw a similar sign in Grafton and thought that this provided a nice integrated approach to linking these communities.”*
- *“Because Route 250 descends into town from a substantial height, there is the temptation for the interested traveler to pull over and survey the town spreading out below. While there is a right hand turn out on the side of the road from which can look down – this is not well situated and does not offer a promising view. The better view can be found from the Alderson-Broaddus (AB) College. There is an excellent overlook between the chapel and a student dormitory. An interpretive marker has been*

conveniently placed here as well. However, this is one of those secrets that a casual observer would be unaware of. One of our party knew of this vantage point because of previous visit to AB some years past. (Note, later in our visit, we noted that some mention of this overlook is given in the Historic Tour Guide, however a newcomer would not know this without first visiting the Depot). We recommend that some thought be given to pulling AB into partnership with Philippi in coordinating a visitors' kiosk on campus. This would have the mutually beneficial aspect of attracting folks to campus and to town."

- "We also note that there is a long chain link that follows Route 250 as the road descends the hill into town. One of our party has long thought that this is a distraction. It gives the false impression that Philippi is somehow fenced in and does not give a good "first impression." If this somehow could be removed or replaced with a less imposing and institutional fence, that would be for the better."
- "The beginning and end of Philippi is less well-defined toward the south than from the north. We arbitrarily place it at the Barbour High School which we realize is a few miles outside of town. This is a very impressive facility and those in both the county and the city should be proud of it. We were also happy to see that the same modern welcome signage welcomed visitors from the south."
- "I entered Philippi from Grafton via US 119/250 South. This entrance provides a driver with a curvy, but pleasant, drive through rural Taylor and Barbour Counties passing some farms, a coal mine, and crossing the railroad on several occasions. Philippi sort of "springs upon" a visitor from this entrance. Upon cresting a hill, one immediately sees a ball diamond, several homes, and the outline of buildings related to the college. This entrance also gives the

visitor the most direct access to Alderson-Broaddus (AB) College, which sits atop the hill overlooking the town below. One then descends the hill, passing through a stoplight, and is able to enter the town proper via the Philippi Covered Bridge. It is at this point that US 119 and US 250 split from one another. US 250 crosses the covered bridge, goes through the downtown, and leads on toward Belington. US 119 continues south and eventually leads to Buckhannon. This drive is nice, but the hill coming into town is very steep. It might be treacherous on a bad winter day. This entrance also drives visitors past two historic highway markers (for "First Land Battle" and "W. D. Zinn"), but there is not really a place to stop and read these, and one could easily overlook their presence. One can also enter Philippi from the south by traveling up US 119 or US 250. On US 119 the road travels along some rolling hills, going past the Division of Highways, Broaddus Hospital, and the local golf course. This drive is not an unpleasant one, but there is one significant drawback. From this perspective, a visitor approaches Philippi and comes upon the US 250 Truck Route before the covered bridge. This could lead visitors into town without passing over the historic bridge, and also inadvertently bypassing a large amount of the downtown historic district. Currently there is very little signage to encourage visitors to go a little further and cross into town on US 250 via the covered bridge."

- "The other entrance into Philippi is via US 250 north. This approach comes from the Belington area. This route takes one past Philip Barbour High School, the Barbour County Fairgrounds, and the West Virginia State Police barracks. This route follows a long and mostly gentle descent into town and brings visitors directly onto Main Street. Much the same as the problem on US 119 North, automobiles come upon the bypass route before really entering the historic district. It seems that a large amount of

cars use this bypass route now, and there is no signage on the Philippi side of the river to help visitors onto Main Street.”

- *“Entering from the North on Rt. 250 East, the welcome sign near the intersection of North Walnut Street is nice and I could see down the hill into town. The town looks small but clean, however, the some of the houses look a bit run down. Further North on Rt. 250 East, as I approached the baseball field for A and B College, the entrance sign looked old and not well kept. The university was quiet (I am assuming it was winter break) but the campus was attractive. As I left town on Rt. 250 East, there was a thank you for visiting sign. Upon turning around and heading back to town, I noticed the front of the thank you for visiting sign identically matched the entrance sign on the other side of town. This established a sense of uniformity in welcoming visitors to the town.”*
- *“Took exit 115 Stonewood/Nutter Fort from I-79 – WV 20, WV 57, US 119N, approximately 16 miles from interstate to Philippi. Driving along a 2 lane county road we passed some small communities and farmlands. It was out of the way, but still an enjoyable drive. Broaddus Hospital was located on this road about a mile from the bridge. There is a by-pass about half a mile before the Philippi Bridge, that loops back to US 250 Junior-Philippi-Grafton Road/Main Street) “The Loop”. Crossing the Philippi Bridge Covered Bridge you enter town on Junior-Philippi-Grafton-(Main Street). Beyond the Philippi Bridge still on US 119N is North Philippi on the right and down further is Broaddus Hospital on a hill above the town.”*



North entrance to Philippi.



South entrance to Philippi.

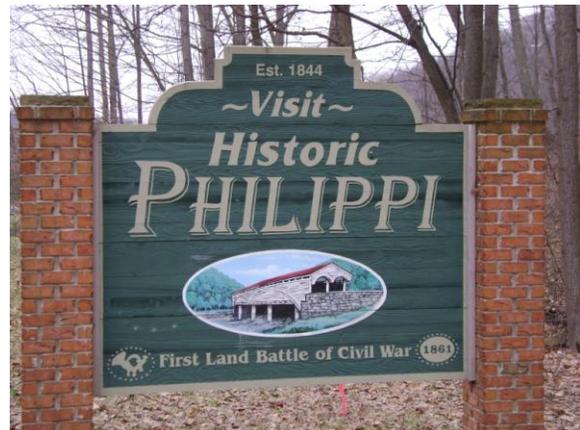
Welcome signs

A sign welcoming people to a place is typically one of the first things visitors see. Welcome signs not only create a sense of arrival to a place, but they also provide an opportunity for communities to create a positive impression of their town -- a unique identity -- and exhibit community pride.

Visitors were very impressed with the city's welcome signs. They commented that the signs are well designed and easy to read. Similar signs have also been adopted by other towns along the Fairmont-Beverly Turnpike creating an attractive uniformity in design. As mentioned earlier, visitors also noticed an old-style chain link-backed sign with civic organization logos typically found in many small towns. They commented that this sign could use some improvement to make it more attractive.

- *"The new welcome signs are very impressive. We liked their design and the fact that they were of a similar type found in the neighboring town of Grafton."*
- *"The welcome signs coming into Philippi are well designed, and quite easy to read. These signs are wooden in appearance with large 'Welcome to Philippi' wording, and a nice picture of the covered bridge. These signs also create somewhat of a uniform look to towns along the old Fairmont-Beverly Turnpike, as similar welcome signs have been adopted by Grafton, Belington, and Elkins."*
- *"Yes, they established the history of the area."*
- *"There were welcome signs in various entrances of the community, however, one is a little confused exactly where the town*

ends and begins. It is much larger than I thought."



Welcome signs attractive, well designed, and easy to read.



Good use has been made of the backs of the welcome signs to invite visitor back again soon.



The welcome sign could be improved.

Downtown Business Area

Overall appearance, business signs, window displays, etc.

The viability of the downtown business district is of paramount concern to West Virginia communities. With the advent of shopping malls and big box retailers, the health and vitality of traditional downtown business districts have deteriorated. The downward spiral of decreased rents, property values, and tax revenues has played out in varying degrees in West Virginia's communities. Many cities and towns across the state are taking on the challenge of reestablishing their downtowns as vibrant centers of community life and commerce. There is a downtown renaissance and a growing understanding that the vitality of downtown has a huge influence on the overall health of a small town (See the research report, "The Vitality of West Virginia's Downtowns" at http://www.wvu.edu/~exten/10xSummit/wva_downtown_vitality.htm).

For the most part visitors had very positive impressions of Philippi's downtown business area. In fact, one visitor commented that the quality and condition of the buildings downtown makes Philippi one of the most attractive downtowns in West Virginia and in the U.S. The visitors found the downtown to be aesthetically pleasing and were quite impressed with the number of historic buildings that seem to be in good condition as well as the diversity of businesses downtown. They also had very positive comments about the Courthouse

and the grounds surrounding it. One visitor summed his impression up saying the downtown looked rich in history, clean, with businesses that have very professional looking signage and appealing window displays.

The visitors noticed a few empty storefronts downtown but commented that there are very few compared to other small towns. One conspicuous vacancy noted by the visitors is that of the old theater. Several visitors suggested that the city could really benefit if there was some reinvestment in this building.

Visitors expressed strong views about certain "improvements" to buildings facades that have been made in the past. For example, one visitor said the addition of aluminum and other materials creates a jarring effect. Such improvements, while well-intentioned, actually rob historic buildings of their unique, original character.

- *"Philippi has a very well defined business district. The quality and condition of the downtown buildings makes this, in our opinion, one of the most attractive downtowns that we have encountered in West Virginia and in many of the other small rural towns that we have visited across the United States. There are a number of blocks of historic business structures that appear to be in sound condition. In addition the Courthouse is very impressive. Unlike courthouses found in many other small West Virginia towns, it does not sit upon a hill or occupy a cramped lot. Instead, Philippi's courthouse occupies a full city block with its building and grounds. This creates a village square and a natural public space. This is*

not to say that we are concerned with some wear and tear on some of the buildings on main street (e.g., both the Grand Theater building and the red brick building opposite on Main Street) are in need of some care. We also noted that there are some abandoned store fronts. And, as is found in some many other small towns, we noted that ‘improvements’ made over the years to building fronts have resulted in jarring facades made of aluminum and other materials.”

- “The downtown business district is aesthetically pleasing. Most of the buildings appear to have been constructed in the early to mid 20th Century. There are very few vacant lots, and also very few vacant storefronts. The district itself is a nice size, and it is flat since it is built along the river. One notable vacancy was the old theatre; it seemed conspicuously vacant amid the other businesses. It would be great if it could be utilized for some purpose. Also, while there is parking available on Main Street, and in some parking lots, it may not be a bad idea to erect signage to point visitors to other parking available on secondary streets.”



Downtown streetscape looking up Main Street from the Courthouse.



Looking down Main Street from Sheetz.

- *“The town looked rich in history and clean. The displays and signs for businesses along Main Street looked professional. I also liked the decorations put on the parking meters (the parking fee was waived during the holiday season), I had never seen anything like that before and it was a unique idea to beautify the town.”*
- *“I felt downtown Main Street was quite simple and pleasant. I was surprised by the diversity of the businesses; some of the old buildings have been restored and are absolutely beautiful, (if you like older buildings). The Movie Theater is for sale and some of the people in the town are hoping that someone will purchase and reopen it. During the Christmas season the town was decorated, even the parking meters were decorated. There was a contest in the town for the best decorated business.”*



There are many examples of businesses with professional looking business signs and window displays.



Philippi has an impressive number of historic structures in good condition.

Downtown streetscape enhancements and green space

Streetscape enhancements and green space are important attributes which contribute to a downtown’s identity and “sense of place.” A downtown that has successfully developed its identity and a strong sense of place is more able to provide visitors and residents with an attractive and interesting environment where people feel comfortable, safe, and want to spend their time and money. These qualities are what make a downtown vibrant and attractive to visitors. Developing an identity and enhancing a downtown’s sense of place involves much more than just planting trees, hanging colorful planters, and adding benches around the downtown. A sense of place can be strengthened by first identifying the key places that draw people to the downtown and then by developing strategies for creating a network of public spaces, cultural destinations, and retail areas in the downtown.

Appearance and comfort are crucial elements in creating a vibrant downtown. Equally important characteristics of successful downtowns are access and linkages to other places, the degree of sociability of a place, the uses and activities that attract people to each of the key places, and how these activities work together to support adjacent buildings and commercial uses.

The First Impressions visitors made their visits to Philippi during the middle of winter. They commented that streetscape

enhancements were not in as much evidence as they might be in mid-summer.

Nevertheless, they did notice several positive aspects such as the historic clock on the courthouse square, holiday decorations, banners, and flowerbeds in the sidewalks. One visitor remarked that the downtown would be an excellent place to walk and enjoy all that the city has to offer.

The Barbour County Courthouse is an obvious “anchor” for the downtown. The visitors also think the courthouse and its grounds provide Philippi’s downtown with an excellent green space. They also think the nearby Veterans Park near the Covered Bridge provides attractive green space for the downtown.

- *“The town has an excellent green space in the form of the Courthouse Square. The city appears to have recognized this by constructing a gazebo on the grounds. In addition, there is park space near the river at the Covered Bridge.”*
- *“We did not notice many streetscape improvements, but this observation must be tempered by the fact that it was deep winter when we visited.”*
- *“I noticed some banners in the downtown area. Main Street seemed like an excellent place to walk and enjoy all that Philippi has to offer. Changing the streetlights to appear like the ones at the courthouse might be a nice idea.”*
- *“The flower beds on the sidewalks had a nice appearance. The downtown area was well decorated for the holidays with lights and decorations in business windows.”*

- *“I did not notice a lot of enhancements on Main Street, however it is winter. The town was decorated for Christmas.”*



Old style lampposts on the courthouse square also add to the appeal of the downtown.



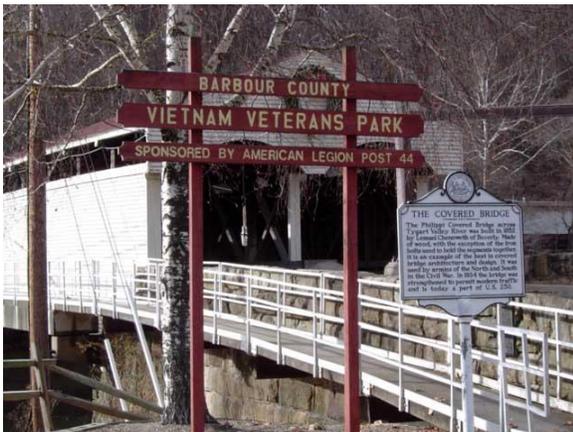
The antique clock on the courthouse square adds charm to the downtown.



Holiday decorations are attractive.



The courthouse grounds provide excellent green space for the downtown.



The Veterans Park also provides additional green space for the downtown.

According to the visitors, the focal point downtown is the Barbour County Courthouse. This structure is the most prominent building downtown and creates a town square-like atmosphere. Because of its location and the fact that it occupies an entire block, the courthouse serves as a central hub downtown. Visitors also mentioned that the covered bridge is unique and draws attention to the downtown and that Veterans Park provides a comfortable spot to enjoy a relaxing view of the city's natural beauty.

- *“We would observe that the fundamental anchor and focal point of Philippi is the Courthouse. While the covered bridge is unique and draws our attention to the town, it is the courthouse that serves as the central hub.”*
- *“Without question, the focal point of the downtown area is the Barbour County Courthouse. The courthouse is a large stone structure, which sets back from Main Street to create a beautiful square-like atmosphere. This has a very positive effect on the downtown. The courthouse square also contains a war memorial that was erected by the American Legion following the First World War. This memorial contains the ‘standard’ look of the World War I doughboy, but it is also significant in its detail. The statue actually shows the American soldier stepping across the barricades and barbed wire into No Man’s Land. Interpretation and promotion of the courthouse area would be very positive.”*
- *“I felt the focal point of the downtown area was the Barbour County Courthouse. The architecture and the veterans’ statue in front of the courthouse give a historic atmosphere. Another focal point is the*

covered bridge and Veterans Park. The benches overlooking the river offer a relaxing view of the town's natural beauty."

- *"I feel the huge historical Court House is the focal point of the town, it has benches and a gazebo, in the summer I would think the residents may just come around and enjoy the town. There are several really nice restaurants that have evening activities. There is a nice senior's facility and several small stores. They did have an ice cream parlor but that closed at the same time as the movie theater."*



Barbour County Courthouse in a focal point and serves as a central hub downtown.

Public amenities downtown (benches, payphones, water fountains, etc.)

Sometimes the little things, those small services that meet the needs of everyday life, get overlooked when a community is seeking to improve its image. These are the aspects of a place that could turn an otherwise memorable trip into a miserable one.

Visitors were not able to locate public restrooms downtown but suggested that such facilities could probably be found in the courthouse, the library, and area

convenience stores. Visitors found attractive benches on the courthouse square. One visitor was very impressed with the antique-looking pay phones on the courthouse square.

- *"We saw a number of attractive benches around the courthouse square. We did not see any public restrooms per se, though they were readily available in the library and we presume in the Courthouse."*
- *"There are very nice payphones located in antique looking boxes on the courthouse square. I did not encounter any water fountains or public restrooms in the immediate downtown area."*
- *"The parks had benches, but not many on the sidewalks of Main Street. The sidewalks had trash receptacles and payphones. I do not recall seeing public restrooms or water fountains."*
- *"There were benches around the court house area; there was a Sheetz Convenience Store at the beginning of Main Street which could be used for restroom and telephone purposes."*



Antique boxes housing the payphones on the courthouse square are eye-catching.



Attractive benches on the courthouse square create a welcoming atmosphere downtown.

Downtown parking

Visitors found ample parking available downtown, both on-street and in two parking lots. Much of the parking spaces in Philippi are metered but the visitors got the distinct impression that the town is very lenient about the enforcement of fines for expired meters. Visitors were pleased to find that parking was free during the holiday season.

- *“There is ample parking downtown – and perhaps too much at the DEP and Post Office building which has an expansive metered parking lot that we could not quite fathom. Like so many other towns, Philippi has metered parking in its downtown business district. And like so many other communities, we were uncertain as to whether the metered parking was enforced. We played it safe and paid, but noticed that most other cars were parked at expired meters.”*
- *“There is ample parking available in Philippi, with parallel parking available on Main Street and pull-in parking available on the streets next to the courthouse. Also some*

businesses (like IGA) have their own parking lots. All of this parking is very convenient, and while Main Street is metered parking, meters appear to have been removed on Walnut Street.”

- *“There was parking on one side of Main Street as well as two metered lots, one at the Court House and one across the street from City Hall. The lots were nearly filled to capacity, but I was still able to find a spot. The location of the spaces was convenient for access the nearby businesses.”*
- *“Parking on Main Street was sufficient however all parking that I saw was metered. It was .25 per hour parking. Parking was free during Christmas season. I really didn’t notice free parking areas in the heart of town. However, I was told the town did not give tickets for unpaid meter usage.”*



Free holiday parking is a nice enticement to shop downtown.

Sidewalks

Although pedestrian traffic ranged from very low to moderate, visitors commented that the downtown area seems to be very pedestrian-friendly. Sidewalks appear to be in good condition and some are handicapped accessible. Several visitors noted that some

sidewalks are raised above street level. They felt this was an attractive holdover from bygone days but expressed some concern that this situation might cause safety issues.

- *“We found the sidewalks on Main Street to be in generally good repair. The sidewalks on the east side of Main Street are raised significantly above street level – this is likely a holdover from the old days of the town’s origins. We find this anomaly to be attractive, but it might pose some safety issues.”*
- *“We noted that there are number of crosswalks in the immediate downtown area and we give positive marks for this. However, more adequate standard signage is needed to warn motorists that there are crosswalks ahead. We found only one such sign and it was not, we believe, to be of standard and its sight line was partially obscured by a building.”*
- *“Sidewalks appear to be in good condition, although I did not notice handicap accessibility on the sidewalks. Downtown Philippi appears to be a very pedestrian friendly town, although there is not an enormous amount of pedestrian traffic there.”*
- *“The sidewalks where in fairly good repair and where wide enough to accommodate the pedestrian traffic as well as offer a comfortable path for the disabled. There was a low volume of pedestrian traffic during my visit.”*
- *“Sidewalks were in good repair except for a couple of places that I saw and handicapped accessible. The downtown was very pedestrian friendly and there was moderate pedestrian traffic.”*



Downtown sidewalks are in fairly good repair and wide enough to accommodate pedestrian traffic as well as offer a comfortable path for the disabled.



Some downtown sidewalks have been replaced with brick and complement the historic character of the downtown.

Downtown business mix

The health of a downtown business district is highly dependent upon its composition, or “business mix.” The better the business mix the more likely that money will be spent locally. Each time a dollar is spent in the community it has a positive effect on the creation of wealth. And the more times that dollar is passed from one locally owned business to another its value to the community is multiplied. Keeping those dollars in the community is critical to supporting local business owners and their employees. If that dollar is spent in another community it does nothing for the local economy.

The general impression of the visitors is that the current business mix in downtown Philippi is very good for a town this size and that it probably meets the needs of local residents. Visitors found a range of restaurant options from fine dining at the Medallion Restaurant to several fast food establishments such as Hardees, Subway, and KFC. They also identified a furniture store, several clothing stores, banks, and specialty shops. Since Philippi is in fairly close proximity to larger retail centers, the visitors assumed local residents would travel to places such as Bridgeport and Morgantown for larger ticket item purchases. One visitor mentioned that the town could be more proactive in capturing student dollars by recruiting some student-related businesses downtown.

- *“America’s shoppers, be they residents of rural or urban communities, now increasingly rely on malls or collections of*

big box stores located on barren landscapes of asphalt and concrete. We should surmise that such consumer expectations are different in Philippi than we would for Morgantown, Charleston, or larger towns and cities in West Virginia and beyond. Thus, we imagine that those in Philippi drive to Bridgeport, Fairmont, Elkins, and even Morgantown for the purchase of the broad array of consumer products that define our age. Thus, the question becomes does Philippi and its surrounding area provide a reasonable range and choice of services and stores? Our answer is a qualified yes. We noted that the downtown has a number of dining options, ranging from an excellent diner to a varied assortment of well-known fast food chains close into downtown. We also noted a furniture store, a craft shop, a discount store, various law practices, insurance agencies, and realtors in the immediate downtown area. There were also ample banking services in the downtown and adjacent area. There is a small IGA grocery store near the downtown and just outside of town there is large grocery store on the road to Belington.”

- *“We also noted that there were some vacant store fronts and we were a little disappointed that a number of the downtown shops were closed on the Saturday that we visited. We also noted that all, if not most, have early closing hours on Saturday.”*
- *“There is an above average mix of retail businesses in the downtown area for a town of this size and location. There are several banks, a bar (Li’l Moe’s), and the Medallion Restaurant (a Philippi landmark). There are also several fast food establishments including Hardees, Subway, and Kentucky Fried Chicken. An IGA and the library are located on Main Street, and a new Shop-n-Save Express has recently opened on the bypass route. These businesses seem to meet the needs of a community this size,*

because Philippi is also in close proximity to larger shopping areas.”

- *“Philippi had a good mix of businesses. There were plentiful restaurants, some clothing stores, banks a Sheetz gas station and some specialty stores. I felt both the number and types of businesses meet the needs of the community. The merchandise and services seemed to be of good quality.”*
- *“The downtown area was alright, I feel the town needs to be more proactive in getting the dollars from the students. I notice the same thing in Glenville, the college and the town are separate entities. Other than a pub and some restaurants there was not much that would probably interest the young students at Broadus.”*

Potential downtown development

Visitors were asked to pose as prospective entrepreneurs looking to start, expand, or relocate their business in a downtown business district. Specifically, visitors were asked to comment on whether or not they thought downtown Philippi would be an attractive place to locate a business.

Visitors’ responses were very positive. They think downtown Philippi would be a great place to open a small business due to its existing businesses, its many well kept older buildings, its pleasant atmosphere, and flat topography.

As mentioned above, a couple of visitors think the students at Alderson-Broadus College represented an “untapped” market for potential new businesses downtown such as a café or coffee shop. They also mentioned the need for more cooperation and coordination between downtown

businesses. For example, store hours vary, particularly on a Saturday, with some businesses open and others closed. This does not make for a productive shopping experience for tourists. For this reason, several of the visitors said they would want to know how well the local downtown organization coordinates and secures cooperation among local merchants and in joint marketing efforts.

- *“We saw a number of possibilities in Philippi for the entrepreneur. We thought about the possibility of “un-tapped” markets and we asked the question whether the students from AB are being attracted sufficiently to the downtown. We thought that a coffee shop catering to students and professionals would be a possibility. We also noted that given the number of professional offices in the immediate area, that these individuals might also be attracted to such a shop.”*
- *“We try to be realistic in our assessment of possibilities. Niche activities, such as restaurants, flower shops, and coffee shops can serve the immediate needs of a small community. More expansive involvement in services that are in direct competition with larger firms in adjacent markets poses greater risk to market entry.”*
- *“We also would keep in mind that demand can be literally fleeting. Those who operate craft shops, for example, are more likely to cater to the tourist and traveler than the local resident. If they can use a physical location as a base or operations but then reach out to other markets through the internet, cooperative marketing, and other means – they can reach a larger audience.”*
- *“As a potential entrepreneur, we would be very interested in knowing how well coordinated the main street or chamber of*

commerce organization is in coordinating and securing cooperation among local merchants. For example, we would be interested in mutual agreements about store hours, etc. on Saturdays and in joint marketing efforts. Walking down a street where stores are alternatively opened and closed does not make for a productive shopping experience.”

- “As we noted to ourselves on our visit, a good thing about Philippi is that there are places where you can spend money. Unfortunately, this is not always the case in West Virginia’s rural communities.”
- “Yes, I would locate a business in this downtown area. First, the downtown is very flat and easy to navigate. There are many nice buildings that do not seem dilapidated. It is a very pleasant atmosphere. However, the town is a fair distance from a major roadway, and is in somewhat of a remote location. Depending upon the type of business, this could be problematic for entrepreneurs.”
- “It would depend on what business that is. Philippi seems like a place where a small specialty shop could thrive, but based on the population, a big business would probably not find Philippi as an attractive business location.”
- “I would consider locating a business in this community because the community has a well kept atmosphere and a potential customer base. Residents come to town after hours.”

Other Business Areas

The town of Philippi has not seen the development of big box retailers and large areas of strip development that many communities have experienced. Visitors

identified only one small strip mall outside of town that contains a grocery store and fast food restaurant as well as a handful of other small businesses located outside the central business district downtown.

- “As noted earlier, we noted a number of automobile dealers, parts suppliers, etc. on the south side of town. There is also a small shopping center on the road to Belington. As noted earlier, the downtown and immediate community features a mix of fast food stores, drug stores, a few banks that appear to be overbuilt, and other architectural features that if not attractive, are necessary to the functioning of a community.”
- “There is a strip mall outside of town on US 250 South that contains a grocery store and a McDonald’s. There is also a new Shop-n-Save Express on the US 250 bypass near the pool/park. These have an average appearance for their type of establishment, and look planned to some extent. They are also compatible with adjacent land use, and are far enough away from the downtown area that they do not really serve as a deterrent for those businesses.”
- “Most of the businesses seemed centralized near the downtown area. There are a few other businesses like a hardware store and some restaurants away from downtown that seemed a bit isolated from the town.”
- “I did not see any big box chains; there was a small mini mall with a few stores on US 250 and another area being developed near 119. Grocery Stores, fast food.”



The new Shop-n-Save Express on the US 250 bypass near the pool/park.



Strip mall on the outskirts of town on US 250 South.

When asked about the quantity of these businesses, the visitors indicated that this type of development (outside of the central business district) was about what they expected to find in a small town.

- *“As we have generally noted for other reports, we assume that available stores and services are catering to what the market will bear. However, we wonder if there is some untapped market potential for two groups of consumers. The first being students at AB College and the second being tourists or travelers.”*
- *“The quantity of this type of development was much what I expected. They offer some retail opportunities, and they meet the needs of a town the size of Philippi.”*

- *“For the size of the town, it is good mix of retailers.”*
- *“The businesses would meet the needs of the community but I did not see much in youthful clothing items that would appeal to the college students, such as handbags, shoes, jewelry, jeans, etc.”*

When asked if they would consider the outlying area a good location for a new business, several visitors said they much preferred the downtown due to its attractiveness and existing economic activity.

- *“In many West Virginia communities, be they large or small, the ‘best’ business decisions would be to locate retail or other operations among the cluster of strip mall and box store retailers that are usually located on the periphery of a community. We believe, however, that in the case of Philippi, the story is different. The attractiveness of the downtown and the obvious level of economic activity, as demonstrated by restaurant franchises and drugstores, would make city-center location more attractive.”*
- *“This would depend on exactly what the retail business would be. I would much rather locate a business in the downtown area because of its atmosphere, and also to take possible advantage of items such as historic tax credits.”*
- *“As mentioned above a small specialty shop would do well in Philippi because of the small town reputation and appeal.”*
- *“I think a person could locate a business in any area of the community and do well if that business meets the needs of the community.”*

Industrial parks/areas

Visitors identified several industrial businesses in the vicinity of Philippi. Blackheart International, a tactical gear, weapons, and accessories manufacturer is located in Philippi. In addition, several visitors identified an industrial park nearby. Their impression is that the park has good transportation access, appears to be growing, and looks inviting for potential occupants.

- *“We did not note any on our travels.”*
- *“I did not encounter industrial parks during my visit.”*
- *“There is an industrial park that is growing and had good transportation access. The park looked well kept and inviting for potential buyers/renters.”*
- *“The community had one industrial park with 2 businesses that deal with plastics; this town owns one of the buildings and rents it to the owners. They made it accessible to RR business to meet the needs of the business. I saw this park from North Philippi across the river. Also, there was a huge building at the end of the street coming across the Philippi Covered Bridge (Pike Street) that used to be Myers Clinic. They train army personnel in this building and at one time served as this company’s office (Blackheart International) but they have moved a little further away from the main part of town. The town seems to own a lot of land that was given to them by the coal companies, so they can expand. Also there are 2 coal companies that are still active. The main employers in the town would be the coal company, local government, the plastic companies, the school system, the college and health care. This town seems to have diversity of employment opportunities.”*

The visitors did not notice any problems or issues such as noise, air pollution, or unsightly views associated with Philippi’s industrial businesses. They commented that Philippi might be a promising location for a manufacturing industry.

- *“The industrial park was sufficiently far enough away from the downtown area. I did not notice any noise or air pollution issues when I visited.”*
- *“I really did not notice major unsightly areas in this community.”*
- *“I believe a manufacturing operation would do well in this area. The industrial park is already developed so the relocation processes would be fairly quick.”*
- *“I believe the leadership in this community makes an attempt to work with and accommodate prospective businesses. The city offers high speed wireless internet service.”*



The industrial area near Philippi.

Residential Areas

Visitors had very positive impressions of residential areas in Philippi. They were particularly impressed with the many attractive, older, homes on Main Street, High Street, and other residential areas such as the one in the immediate vicinity of Alderson-Broaddus College. While there is always room for the improvement of a few, the overall impression of residential properties is that they are very well kept and that residents take a great deal of pride in their properties. Philippi is very lucky to have so many beautiful old homes within the downtown historic area. As one visitor pointed out, because this area is flat, it allows for there to be a real neighborhood feel to the residential areas surrounding the downtown. Visitors also commented on the fact that they saw very few dilapidated structures.

- *“We were generally impressed by the residential areas that we saw. Homes radiated out from the central public and business district. We saw many attractive homes on Main Street heading south to the town limits -- many of these were made of brick. We also saw some older and attractive frame homes nestled on High Street and further up above town. In addition, we noted some attractive homes in the immediate vicinity of the AB College Campus.”*
- *“We saw relatively few derelict or dilapidated houses in our visit – though there is a frame structure across from one of the corners of the Courthouse Square (by our reckoning it’s on the southeast corner) that is worse for wear.”*

- *“There appears to be some very nice houses in Philippi. Many of the neighborhoods appear to have been built in the early to mid 20th Century, and are quite well kept. I saw very few dilapidated homes, and there appears to be a great deal of pride in keeping homes up. In the downtown area there are some beautiful old homes that are part of the historic district. Also, since the area is relatively flat, it allows for there to be a real neighborhood feel in the residential areas that surround downtown.”*
- *“There was mix of housing options in Philippi. Some of the older houses that were well kept looked very attractive. However, some houses looked a bit run down and dirty.”*
- *“Most residential areas looked to be well maintained throughout this community. However, as you find in all communities, some areas could be improved.”*



The overall impression of residential properties is that they are very well kept and that residents take a great deal of pride in their properties.

Visitors found a good range of housing options available in Philippi, from older historic homes to more modern ones. They saw many modest-sized homes, a couple of trailer parks and apartment buildings.

Several visitors observed advertisements for rental properties and apartments available, including affordable housing for low-income senior citizens. They also learned from local residents that the old hospital is in the process of being converted into apartments. Other than this conversion, the visitors found little evidence of new home construction in the area.

- *“We had the general assumption that there are adequate housing options in the area. We learned from one citizen that one of the older hospitals was being converted into an apartment complex. Our scan of the local newspaper, The Barbour Democrat, noted a number of rental properties and apartments that were available – including affordable housing for low-income seniors.”*
- *“There appears to be somewhat of a good mix. I noticed one high rise apartment complex. In the downtown area I encountered mostly older single family dwellings (some quite large). There are some smaller and more modern (mid-century) homes on the other side of the river when traveling down US 119. This is also where I saw some trailers, etc. There is not much by way of new housing in the immediate area. There is also one nursing home which is located on US 119 south of town.”*
- *“I saw houses of a variety of sizes and some trailer homes. I do not recall seeing much new construction or apartment complexes.”*
- *“This community has a wide array of housing options. From old historic homes to modern homes that would rival any larger city. Also, there are many average modest homes, trailer parks and apartment buildings. Baughman Towers, Chestnut Street, housing for disabled and elderly located near the river. Some of the historic*

properties on Main Street have been victim to vandalism. There are several residential areas in this community that would appeal to a variety of people.”



The number of distinctive, historic homes in Philippi is quite impressive!



More modern homes were also found in the area.



Many medium-sized homes were also found in the community.



A few properties could use just a little "TLC".



Apartments are also available in Philippi.



More modest housing is also available in the community.

The visitors were asked if they thought the housing market provided an adequate range of choices for prospective business people who might want to relocate a business in Philippi. Their responses would lead one to believe that the housing market in Philippi would be adequate and definitely has the potential to attract buyers. They noticed several properties for sale and a couple of real estate brokers. One visitor took the time to stop in and talk to a real estate agent who confirmed that the local housing market has been doing very well.

- *“This would be a possibility. There seems to be a lot of houses in the area, and I noticed several that were for sale. I did not really notice any advertising for rental units. I also did not encounter a local realty office. However, like many small towns, spending some time and asking around might prove to be a gold mine of information on this topic. It would not surprise me if many real properties (both to rent and own) are publicized via word-of-mouth.”*
- *“Some houses had potential to attract buyers. Also, outside of town there may be opportunities to purchase land and develop if the opportunity would arise.”*
- *“I saw a couple Real Estate offices in and around town. I stopped to visit and spoke to one agent and was told that the housing market in the town of Philippi has been doing very well. I also purchased a local newspaper.”*

Visitors were asked if the housing options and residential areas in Philippi looked attractive to them and why. The visitors were generally very impressed with the quality of the housing in Philippi and found

the older, historic homes particularly attractive. Due to West Virginia’s reputation for poor land-use planning and enforcement codes, one visitor expressed the opinion that one would want to know more about the local land-use regulations and their enforcement before investing in local real estate.

- *“We were impressed by the quality of many of the houses that we saw in Philippi. In general, we impressed by many of the homes that we saw. However, as a potential homeowner we would want to have a better understanding of land-use regulations and their enforcement within the town. Unfortunately, West Virginia has a reputation for poor land-use planning and poor enforcement of codes. This serves as a brake on business relocation and home ownership and can dampen community and economic development prospects. Without adequate controls neither individual nor public interest can be served.”*
- *“The housing options in Philippi would look very attractive to me if I wanted to own a large, somewhat older home. It would also be attractive to live in a pleasant and quiet community. However, this would be prefaced by saying that the attractiveness would only extend as far as I was able to have a reasonable commute to my place of business.”*
- *“Possibly, it would depend on what houses were on the market and what the price was. Some of the houses have a lot of potential.”*
- *“For me, I love older homes and this community has a great selection. Some of them need work but they have a lot of potential.”*



The visitors were found the older, historic homes particularly attractive.

Finally, visitors were asked if they planned to move to another community upon retirement whether or not they would consider moving to Philippi and why. The overwhelming opinion expressed by all of the visitors was “yes,” this would be a wonderful community to move to after retirement. According to the visitors, the factors which make Philippi so attractive as a retirement destination are the natural beauty of the surrounding area, that the community is very peaceful and pedestrian-friendly, has adequate medical services nearby, is not too far from larger centers, and the many opportunities for cultural enrichment and entertainment provided by Alderson-Broaddus College. One visitor went even further, saying the community would also be a great place to raise a family.

- *“We noted adequate services near-by for medical and other care. The road to the Clarksburg-Fairmont metro area is good and not too long. The proximity of a solid liberal arts college provides the opportunity for cultural enrichment and entertainment. The natural beauty is apparent and attractive.”*

- *“We had the opportunity to talk to a retired person who moved to Philippi from far away. She has been here many years and greatly enjoys the community and its surroundings. To us, this was a solid endorsement for the quality of life in Philippi and Barbour County.”*
- *“Philippi looks to me like it would be a nice retirement community. I have not seen the demographics, but I assume that the population of the town is somewhat older. It appears to be a very peaceful community which is pedestrian friendly and rich in history. This might be a perfect place to establish a retirement center.”*
- *“Yes, everyone in town seemed friendly. As evident with the veteran memorials, the town respects and takes pride in those who have contributed to this country.”*
- *“Yes, I would consider this community to retire but not only for retirement. I think this is a great community to raise a family. It is not far from Clarksburg and other larger communities and about a 2.5 hour drive to Charleston.”*

Educational Facilities

Schools are an important component of any community and one of the first things people investigate if making a permanent move to the community. Visitors had positive impressions of the schools they found in Philippi. They commented that the Barbour County High School, just south of town, is an impressive facility; impressive in size, architectural design, and recreational areas. Visitors were somewhat less impressed with

the elementary and middle schools but thought they were well maintained. One visitor commented that there are no directional signs to the schools and consequently, the elementary and middle schools are difficult to find.

- *“We had the opportunity to travel past the Barbour County High School. While we did not visit inside, from the outside this looks like a very impressive facility. The architectural design is attractive, the size of the school is significant, and the playing fields around the school are impressive.”*
- *“We noted a great deal of high school loyalty in Philippi and throughout Barbour County – we saw plenty of signs rooting the “Colts” on to success.”*
- *“Although the two schools located in the town appear adequate, they are not really easy to find in my opinion. Philippi Elementary School and Philippi Middle School both appear to have been built in the 1970s, and seem fairly well maintained. There is only one high school for the county and it is located a few miles south of town on US 250. The elementary and middle schools are located off of US 119, and are on a back road south of town. I encountered no directional signs pointing me to these schools, and they were difficult to find. The schools appear to be adequate for the area.”*
- *“I visited the elementary and middle schools. The buildings looked to be in good repair from the outside. The soccer field and playground looked pretty good, but the baseball field looked overgrown.”*
- *“The High School (Route 250 beyond motel straight down Main Street) is a new facility and the Middle and Grade Schools are located the Mansfield area. Very nice.”*



Barbour County High School is impressive in size, architectural design, and recreational areas.

The visitors agreed that the town of Philippi is very lucky to have Alderson-Broaddus College in close proximity. The college not only offers employment for local residents, it helps infuse the local economy with outside dollars. One visitor suggested that the community should maximize potential joint partnerships with the college in future community and economic development initiatives.

Visitors also noted that the community has a very active vocational technical school at the high school. The visitors reported that the vocational center offers an impressive list of course offerings and operates a busy evening and summer training schedule for both adults and youth.

- *“Philippi is fortunate to be in close proximity to Alderson-Broaddus College. The College sits high above Philippi on a hill across the river. Aesthetically, it makes for a pleasing skyline. We know from previous visits with AB faculty and administrators that the college has a commitment to the surrounding community. Both the city and the college should maximize all opportunities to interact in community and economic development efforts. Even though AB has less than 700 students, but we believe it to be a major part of the Philippi community.”*
- *“There is a vocational/technical center south of town that is part of the high school complex. Alderson-Broaddus College is also located in Philippi. While this Baptist affiliated college has a very small student population, it still remains an asset for the town. It employs local people in a variety of jobs, it brings in some students and families to use the local economy, and some of the buildings are quite visually attractive setting on the hill overlooking the town. A-B is known regionally for its physician assistant and nursing programs.”*
- *“Yes, Alderson-Broaddus College.”*
- *“Alderson-Broaddus College, Full time students 733, Private, not-for-profit, offers Master’s degree. You can see Broaddus Campus from Main Street up on the hill. Very nice.”*



The town of Philippi is very lucky to have Alderson-Broaddus College in close proximity.

Recreation and Tourism Assets

Recreation and other cultural amenities are important factors to visitors and potential residents. Visitors were asked if they could find any parks or playgrounds in the community. According to the visitors, Philippi has quite a few recreational assets. Blue and Gray Park, located next to the covered bridge, is a nice riverside picnic area. The city-owned Dayton Park has picnic sites in addition to a swimming pool, playground, and outdoor basketball court. The visitors also learned that the city operates two playgrounds, tennis courts, basketball courts, and two Little League baseball diamonds. They also found that the Philippi City Building has a gymnasium and youth center, and meeting space for community groups. The town also has a nine-hole golf course and a ten-lane bowling alley nearby. In addition, many recreational opportunities are available to the public at Alderson-Broadus College Coliseum.

- *“As noted earlier, Philippi has a riverside park adjacent to the Covered Bridge. Philippi is well-known across West Virginia for the covered bridge and for the fact that it is actually used for regular traffic on a U.S. highway. The bridge is in good repair and one never tires of traveling through it. We also believe that the Courthouse Square serves as a park or green space that serves as a natural anchor for both the resident and the visitor.”*
- *“I saw two park areas on my visit. The first is the Blue & Gray park, located next to the covered bridge. This park area pretty much consisted of a parking lot with a few flagpoles. There was a sign for the park as*

one turned into it, but no other directional or interpretive signage leading one to it. The other park I saw was one that contained the local swimming pool. Again, I saw no signs for this park, and I only noticed it because it was visible behind the Shop-n-Save. I drove around a bit, and I was never able to figure out precisely how to get to this park.”

- *“The veteran’s park and courthouse park are very nice. The gazebo at the courthouse is very attractive. I did not see many parks oriented for children other than at the school.”*



Attractive sign for the Blue & Gray Park.



Veteran’s Park and the covered bridge combine to make a peaceful place to sit and relax.



The courthouse grounds, complete with gazebo, provide additional recreational space downtown.



Alderson-Broadus Coliseum offers archery, swimming, weightlifting, and racquetball to the community.

- *“Dayton Park is very nice with a swimming pool. The community has a soft ball and a soccer field. The college has some facilities open to the public. Also the Blue and Gray Park located at the covered bridge is a nice park on the river. Since the town of Philippi is the site of the first Civil War land battle, each year the town has a reenactment. The town also has an annual Chili Cook-off usually held in June.”*



The City Building includes a gymnasium and youth center.



Dayton Park is a nice outdoor swimming facility for the community.

Visitors were also asked to identify any tourist attractions or special events that the community is known for. As mentioned earlier, Philippi is known for its covered bridge which was built pre-Civil War and is the only covered bridge still serving a federal highway. The town is also known for its Civil War history, as the site of Battle of the Philippi Races, the first land battle of the war. Each year the town is host to civil war reenactments. The visitors also learned that the town is known for its mummies which are on display at the Museum.

The visitors mentioned other aspects of Philippi that are draws for tourists. For example, the downtown is very interesting due to its distinctive architectural styles representing a variety of time periods from the Richardsonian-Romanesque style courthouse and the many historic homes to the Art Deco style of the Myers Clinic. Another example is Adaland Mansion, a historic farm just four miles north of Philippi. The mansion and barn have been authentically restored. The house and farm reflect the early history of West Virginia.

- *“As noted above, Philippi is known for the covered bridge. But it is and can be known for much more. Much is made of Philippi’s distinctive place of being the site of the first land battle of the Civil War. It also is host to some excellent architectural structures, especially the Barbour County Courthouse which was designed and constructed in the Richardsonian - Romanesque style. In brief, there is a dazzling array of architectural styles in the town from a wide variety of time periods. The Courthouse is one example, but so too are the various buildings in the downtown district and many of the homes nearby. We were also very*

impressed by the Art Deco style of the Myers Clinic. However, it would serve the building and the community well if the small modern addition to the front of this building could be removed, the facade refurbished, and the old main door restored.”

- *“The community is somewhat well known for its Civil War heritage, as the first land battle of the conflict took place in Philippi (the Battle of the Philippi Races). The town is also known for the covered bridge which was built pre-Civil War and remains the only covered bridge still serving a federal highway.”*
- *The Main Street Chili Cook-off and the Blue and Gray Reunion.”*
- *“The town of Philippi is famous for its mummies. They are on display at the Museum that was the old Rail Road Depot.”*
- *“Adaland Mansion, on the National Register of Historic Places, is a local historic attraction just four miles north of Philippi.”*



Nearby Adaland Mansion is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Easy access to information about local events, recreation, and tourism attractions is critical for marketing these assets to visitors passing through the community. The visitors found local information available at the Visitor's Center and Museum at the old railroad depot. They commented that one can see some very interesting artifacts and that this facility is a valuable resource and an asset for the community. However, they suggested the need for more interpretive guidance and better organization of the museum exhibits. The visitors were able to obtain an informative brochure for a Historic Philippi Tour. They found the brochure to be very impressive but suggested that charging a fee for the brochure creates a barrier and disincentive for visitors touring the town. The visitors think it would be more effective to find local support for the brochure and eliminate the fee. They contend that the town would make up for the lost revenue through an increase in people looking around town and spending money in local businesses. They also suggested that the brochure should be more prominently displayed in the museum.

As mentioned above, Philippi is also known for its two mummies which are on display at the museum for an admission fee. Several visitors expressed the opinion that the mummies have brought unneeded notoriety and negative publicity to the town and museum due to the perception that the display is a desecration of the dead and imparts a carnival sideshow quality to the museum. Further, they suggested the town

could earn significant goodwill by facilitating the interment of these individuals.

- *"We visited the Visitor's Center and Museum at the old railroad depot and were happy to see that it kept Saturday afternoon hours. This is a valuable resource and asset for the community that we believe serves its mission well. However, we also recognized that some improvements could be made – perhaps in partnership with AB College or others.*
 - *First, the museum artifacts are interesting but are in need of some more interpretive guidance and organization. The depot is more like a visit to someone's attic than to a museum.*
 - *Second, the museum offers a brochure for a Historic Philippi Tour. This is a very impressive brochure and we noted the well-placed numbered signs at various sites around town that correspond to features in the brochure. However, the brochure is not prominently displayed in the museum. One must ask for it and it is placed in display shelf at the main counter in the depot. In addition, there is a \$5 dollar charge for the brochure. While a nominal fee that we certainly did not mind paying, this can create a barrier or disincentive for others touring the town. It would be better to find funds to subsidize the tour brochure to either eliminate or reduce its price. The community as a whole would make up for the lost revenue through the increase of individuals stopping to look and spend about town.*
 - *Third, we learned that the museum is the home of two mummified individuals. Admission is charged to view these mummies – we passed on the*

opportunity. Further, we learned that this has brought unneeded notoriety and bad publicity to Philippi and the museum. Indeed we recently read about this in the magazine, *Blue Ridge Country* (January/February 2009, p. 19). We strongly suggest that Philippi cease the display of these individuals. It is seen by many as a desecration of the departed and imparts upon the museum the negative connotation of a carnival sideshow. Further, we suggest that Philippi might earn significant good will by facilitating the interment of these individuals in a suitable location.”



The Visitor's Center and Museum at the old railroad depot is a valuable resource and asset for the community.

- *“There is a tourist information center located in the museum (old train depot), and there was signage to indicate this. I did not go into the museum because I had been there before, and the last time the volunteer that was working talked to me for over an hour. However, on that visit, she was very friendly and knew a lot about the town.”*
- *“Yes, there is a museum and information center located near the covered bridge. However, during the winter it has limited hours and was closed on my visit.”*
- *“They use the Museum, however had tried to secure a building right off to the right of the covered bridge but were unable to acquire it; this building is now a Smoker Friendly Store. Many of the Main Street Businesses have information.”*

Visitors were asked to find out if the town hosts any fairs or festivals and if these events would be of interest to visitors. The visitors learned that the town hosts the Blue & Gray Festival and also has an annual Main Street Chili Cook-off. The visitors think both events would be of interest to visitors and assume that both events draw in many people from outside the community.

- *“We were told that Philippi hosts a re-enactment of the first land battle of the Civil War.”*
- *“The community hosts the Blue & Gray festival each June, celebrating its Civil War heritage. This has become a well attended annual event. While I have never attended the festival, from reports I have received, this seems like it may be of interest to visitors passing through the town.”*
- *“The Main Street Chili Cook-off and the Blue and Gray Reunion.”*
- *“Blue and Gray Festival and Annual Chili Cook-off.”*

- *“We assume that this event does draw individuals from outside the community.”*
- *“I believe that the Blue & Gray festival draws many people from outside the town, mostly for day usage. Also, I think that the permanent fixtures (like the covered bridge) probably draw some outsiders in on a much more limited basis.”*
- *“Yes, they draw people from across the state.”*

Visitors were asked to comment on any natural resources such as mountains, waterfalls, lakes, and rivers that might draw people to the area. In their opinion, the town of Philippi is fortunate to have a scenic river location. Philippi’s proximity to the Monongahela Forest and other attractions along the historic Beverly-Fairmont Turnpike is also a plus according to the visitors. The covered bridge also complements the natural beauty of the river and surrounding area. Visitors think this may in fact be one of the most photographed bridges in the state.

- *“Philippi is located on the Tygart River which is a substantial tributary of the Monongahela River. The town is well situated on the river and there are many vantage points to see its natural beauty and how it complements the layout of the community and the covered bridge. We seek to convey this in one of the photographs that we took. More professional, and competent, images can be found in any number of posters and postcards that feature the covered bridge! It’s our guess that this may be one of the most photographed bridges in the state.”*

- *“The town’s physical location is a source of natural beauty. The river and nearby mountains are quite breathtaking to behold. Also, Philippi is located very near to the Monongahela National Forrest, and other attractions along the Beverly-Fairmont Turnpike. It would be wise to exploit these, and draw folks to the area based upon a variety of features.”*
- *“Yes, the river and waterfalls are good natural attraction.”*
- *“The River.”*



Philippi’s scenic river location draws people to the area.

When asked if there were any restaurants, specialty shops or other features of the community that would entice them back to town, visitors indicated that they would likely return for a variety of reasons. They said they would return to visit the covered bridge, the courthouse, the Medallion Restaurant, and attend the Blue & Gray Festival. They also developed memories and gained a greater appreciation for certain characteristics of the community such as the variety and quality of the homes in the area,

the beauty of the old Art Deco style Myers Clinic, and several of the small shops they visited.

- *“We had a very pleasant visit to Philippi. We looked forward to a return visit for at least three reasons. First, to see the Covered Bridge. Second, to see the Courthouse. And third, to eat at one of our favorite West Virginia diners – the Medallion Restaurant which is located in the downtown district. In all of these we were not disappointed. The views were fine and we had a great lunch at the diner. But on this visit, we found other attractions and memories as well. We gathered a greater appreciation for the variety and quality of homes in the area. We were struck by the Art Deco beauty of the old Myers Clinic. In addition, we enjoyed the shops that we visited – such as the Mountain Treasures store that we visited. We were also impressed by the library.”*
- *“The Medallion Restaurant on Main Street is a local landmark for home-cooking, and seems to be very well visited. The Philippi Inn restaurant is also located just south of town. Besides that, there are several fast food establishments. I feel that there is enough variety in this regard to sustain a town of this size. I did not really encounter any specialty shops, although they might not be a bad addition to the downtown area.”*
- *“Yes, the many home cooking restaurants will bring me back.”*
- *“Yes, I intend to visit the Blue and Gray event.”*



Visitors would return to visit the covered bridge, the courthouse, the Medallion Restaurant, and attend the Blue & Gray Festival.

When asked about overnight accommodations, visitors reported that they were able to find a chain motel on the outskirts of town as well as an attractive bed & breakfast establishment with three bedrooms in the main house and a carriage house for overnight accommodation in Philippi.

- *“We noted an economy level national chain motel on the outskirts of town. In addition, we found a Bed & Breakfast in town that was attractive and welcoming.”*
- *“I saw one hotel located south of town, adjacent to the Philippi Inn. This looked to be a modern, small-scale hotel (much like the Super 8 variety). It appeared to be newer (mid-1990s), and clean looking.”*
- *“Yes, the inn looked like a clean and comfortable place to stay.”*
- *“The Budget Inn is on US 250 was a small two story motel. It was not fancy, but satisfactory. I also visited the Blue and Gray B&B; they have 3 bedrooms in the main house and a carriage house that is rented.”*



The Covered Bridge Bed & Breakfast is an attractive and welcoming overnight option.

- *“We noticed a conveniently located family clinic south of town. We also noted signs indicating a hospital. However, we did not conduct a full review of these services.”*
- *“Healthcare facilities are available, but most appear to be part of the Broaddus Hospital complex. I did not really notice an abundance of professional medical offices in the downtown area. Small but good appearance.”*

Health Care

Hospitals and access to quality medical care also are important to visitors and potential residents. Furthermore, the relationship between health care and economic development is an important one. The viability of the health care delivery system is an economic infrastructure issue. Recent literature suggests that accessible, quality health care enhances and augments a community’s ability to attract new residents and businesses and retain existing ones. In other words, economic development is supported by a strong health care delivery system.

Visitors learned that the town of Philippi has one hospital, five medical clinics, eleven physicians, two dentists, one optometrist, and one chiropractor. They found the family clinic south of town to be conveniently located and an attractive facility.



Attractive sign for Barbour County Family Medicine.



Barbour County Family Medicine is conveniently located south of town.

Visitors were also asked if they could locate a hospital in the community. As mentioned above, Broaddus Hospital is located just outside of town. The visitors also learned that Myers Clinic is now located in the same complex as the hospital. They commented that the hospital complex appears to have been built in the late 1990s and looks clean and very well maintained with adequate signage to direct people to the facility and at the facility itself.

- *“There is a hospital and a medical clinic in the community. Broaddus Hospital is located just outside of town on US 119 going south. This is the hospital associated with the college, and it is also part of the Davis Health System out of Elkins. The Myers Clinic, a private medical office, is also located in the same complex. The hospital appears to have been built in the late 1990s, and it looks clean and well maintained. Signage around the hospital campus is adequate, and directional signs to the hospital are well located.”*
- *“Yes one hospital and a few emergency clinics. They appeared to be good.”*



Broaddus Hospital is the main component of the Broaddus Healthcare Complex and one of the newest hospital facilities in West Virginia.



Myers Clinic is also conveniently located at the hospital complex.

The hospital has an impressive array of services including acute care, emergency services, an in-house clinic, diagnostic and therapeutic services, skilled nursing, and specialty clinics. One visitor mentioned that patients are probably stabilized at this facility and then transported to larger area hospitals if need be.

- *“The hospital appears to have all the services of a small town hospital – mostly general practitioner care. It did not appear that major medical incidents are treated here, but that patients are probably stabilized in the Broaddus Hospital emergency room for transport to larger area hospitals (such as United Hospital Center in Clarksburg or Ruby Memorial Hospital in Morgantown). The hospital appears to meet the needs of the community.”*
- *“The hospital services include emergency and basic care.”*

Visitors were also asked if they could identify any assisted living, nursing home, hospice care, or long-term care facilities in the community. They found Baughman Towers for senior living arrangements and

Mansfield Place, a nursing care facility attached to the hospital. They also saw a Senior Center for activities.

- *"We did not."*
- *"There appears to be one nursing care facility, Mansfield Place, which is part of Broaddus Hospital. This seemed more like a wing of the hospital rather than a separate facility. Again, this appeared to be clean and well maintained."*
- *"Baughman Towers. I also noticed a Senior Center in town which offers a variety of activities and transportation."*



The Senior Center in Philippi offers a range of social services and transportation.

Faith-based Community

Visitors were asked to assess the presence and diversity of churches and other faith-based organizations in Philippi and to comment on the appearance of these facilities. Visitors found a variety of churches and denominations in town. They found the churches to be in good condition

and well maintained and commented that it appears that great pride is taken in the appearance of the churches in town.

- *"We noticed a number of attractive churches in and around the downtown."*
- *"I noticed several churches dotted throughout the community, but they did not seem to overwhelm the town, as is the case in some locales. I noticed Presbyterian, Methodist, and Baptist denominations, but there is little doubt that there are others there. I did not seem to notice any Catholic or Episcopal churches, but it could easily be that I just overlooked them."*
- *"I saw mostly denominations of Christianity."*
- *"There were many churches with a variety of denominations."*
- *"These all appeared to be in good repair."*
- *"As in many small and rural towns, it appears that there is great pride taken in the churches. Most seemed to be well maintained, and well used. As with the housing, there did not seem to be any vacant or dilapidated churches marring the cityscape."*
- *"The church on the top of the hill was very attractive."*
- *"I didn't visit all of them but the ones I saw were well maintained."*



The churches in Philippi are attractive and well maintained.



Philippi also has some historic churches such as this one, built during the Civil War era.

Visitors were asked if they could find any evidence of church-sponsored programs such as soup kitchens, day care, or adult education. They discovered that local churches offer a variety of activities from bible study to day care and child development. They also mentioned that Philippi is known for being the headquarters of the regional offices of World Vision, a faith-based organization involved in international community development and education projects.

- *“Philippi is the headquarters for the regional offices of World Vision, a faith-based organization that is involved in community-*

based development and education projects across the globe. In recent years, it has initiated an Appalachian initiative. It has considerable presence in Barbour County and is well known by those involved in community development activities outside of the region.”

- *“There seemed to be evidence from notices near the churches of church-sponsored activities, but there did not appear to be any one activity of this nature that was completely church related.”*
- *“Yes, bible studies.”*
- *“Day Care, Kids Care Child Development, North Central Health Start, Heart and Hand.”*

Getting from A to B

Directional signs

A common failing of many small cities and towns is the lack good directional signage to local attractions and services. Visitors reported finding the traditional blue library hospital signs but thought the town of Philippi could improve their directional signage. One visitor mentioned that directional signs are adequate for automobile travel in and around the area and to the college. However, little or no signage exists for public parks, historic sites, and other community assets of interest to visitors.

- *“We noted a number of useful signs guiding individuals. We were pleased to see signs identifying that a historic district was ahead. We saw a hospital sign as well.”*
- *“Directional signs are good inasmuch as they point travelers in automobiles through the area. Thus, the major roadways are well marked. Signage for the hospital and A-B college is also readily available and easy to see. However, there is little or no signage for public parks, historic sites, etc. There is one faded sign on US 119 North signifying that the historic district is across the river. Other than that, the directional signage for points of interest is quite poor.”*
- *“I did not notice many directional or service signs. Some signs to the museum, the Veterans Park and library may be something to consider.”*
- *“I saw signs for parks, hospital, college and other points of interest. All historical places were indicated on a numbered post.”*



Although the visitors found several good directional signs, they think the town could really improve signs to points of interest and other community assets.

Street signs

Many small cities and towns also lack effective street signs. Visitors think the street signs in Philippi are distinctive in design and easy to read. They commented that the signs are also well placed and in good condition.

- *“We were impressed by the ample provision of street signs that had a distinctive Philippi logo and design. We were quickly able to learn the grid of the town because of these signs (e.g. Main Street, Walnut and High Street creating major parallels, with cross streets like Court and Wabash defining portions of the town).”*
- *“The street signs in Philippi are easy to read. The city utilizes blue street signs with white lettering, and the city seal on its signs. This is different from many West Virginia towns that use standard green with white embossed lettering (made much like license plates). It is nice to see a town with a different look.”*
- *“Street signs were well placed and in good repair.”*
- *“The street signs are well placed and easy to read but not quite enough to let you know places would need to find in town, but most places of significance were easy to find.”*



Street signs are well placed and easy to read.

Traffic patterns and street conditions

Overall, traffic patterns in Philippi are straightforward according to the visitors. They commented that the traffic patterns are easy to follow and seemed safe. One potential trouble spot they identified was at the entrance to the covered bridge from downtown. They thought this area might be a bit daunting for newcomers because of the activity and number of cars in this vicinity.

- *“Philippi is generally well laid out as a town. We did not have difficulty with one-way streets or counter-intuitive intersections found in other communities. The approach to the Covered Bridge from the town itself is a bit busy and confusing. Our sense is that the Sheetz, along with other convenience stores and the angled position of the Depot, make traffic flow somewhat confusing. The railroad crossing further contributes to this confusion. For the uninitiated, this might all seem somewhat daunting.”*
- *“The traffic patterns in Philippi seem to make sense. It is not hard to drive through the town. As stated above, traffic directional signage is appropriate. One potential trouble spot could occur at the end of the covered bridge where traffic turns onto US 119. This is in a curve, and it could possibly be hard to see at different times. Also, the traffic signal by Sheetz has some lights that are very hard to see when the afternoon sun is shining upon them. By and large, the traffic patterns in and around the town seem quite safe.”*
- *“The traffic patterns were easy to follow and seemed safe. There also seemed to be sufficient crosswalks to accommodate pedestrians.”*

- *“It was easy to maneuver throughout the town. Some places were difficult to see on-coming traffic when pulling out onto the road.”*

Visitors found street conditions to be very good in Philippi. They commented that the roads appear to be in good repair and of reasonable width.

- *“We found the streets and sidewalks to be in generally good condition. We noted that the sidewalks were mostly clear of snow in the downtown district, though there were spots where the sidewalks had not been cleared.”*
- *“The street conditions in Philippi are good. They appear to be in good repair, and main thoroughfares are adequately wide. Some other streets (like Walnut Street) are much narrower, but still appear to be in good repair.”*
- *“The streets were in good shape.”*
- *“The roads on the lower part of town were wider and in better repair than the roads on the hill side residential areas.”*

Public and civic infrastructure

Town Hall, Police, EMS, Library, etc.

As mentioned many times in the body of this report, visitors found the Barbour County Courthouse and its grounds to be very impressive and think the facility is definitely an asset for the town. The visitors also identified City Hall on Main Street and commented that the building appears to be in

good condition and is staffed with friendly, helpful people. In addition, the visitors found the local police department next to the courthouse and the fire department and EMS services, both on the outskirts of town. They commented that each of these facilities is well marked and in good condition.

- *“As we have noted throughout this report, we were very impressed by the Courthouse and its grounds. This is a beautiful building and is certainly an asset to Philippi, Barbour County, and the state. In general the building is in very good condition. However, on closer inspection we noted a few areas that are in need of upkeep on the exterior. This includes flaking and peeling paint on the alcove at entrance of the Courthouse. In addition, we believe the bulletin boards at the alcove to be a distraction.”*
- *“We noted that there has been community effort to make improvements to the Courthouse in terms of its maintenance and upkeep. The January 28 edition of the Barbour Democrat features a story on youth serving with Community Corrections providing help in painting the interior of the Courthouse.”*
- *“I know that there is a city hall, because when I inquired where I might get tourist materials, most people told me to check city hall. However, even though I did not do an extensive search, I did not appear to find it readily. The phone book listing for the City of Philippi lists the address as Main Street, so I must have just overlooked this facility.”*
- *“Yes, small but at a good location in the downtown area on Main Street.”*

- *“City Hall is located on Main Street. Very nice building. The people working at this facility were very nice.”*
- *“We noted that the police department is located in a former home residence on the corner of Walnut and Church Street. It is an unassuming structure.”*
- *“The police station is located beside and to the rear of the courthouse, in an older structure. It appears to be in good condition and it is very well marked. The Fire Department is also located on Main Street, but it is down the road just a bit closer to the bypass route. This building appears to have been built in the 1980s, and it well kept and well marked. The EMS building is located on US 250 south of town, going toward the state police barracks.”*
- *“Yes, both on Main Street. The fire department was a nice building.”*
- *“The EMS Office appeared poorly maintain on the outside of the Building. Fire Dept was very nice as well as the police station.”*



City Hall appears to be in good condition and is staffed with friendly, helpful people.

The visitors agreed that the public library in Philippi is an impressive facility. It appears as though the building once served as the town’s post office. The visitors noticed a significant number of holdings at the library, a number of computer work stations, and an impressive number of patrons. They were also pleased to find that the library is open during the evening and on Saturdays.

- *“Among other public and civic infrastructure, we visited the Library. We assume that the Library is the site of the former post-office. We were impressed by the facility. There were significant holdings and the facility has a number of computer work stations. On the cold Saturday afternoon that we visited, we saw that the traffic through the library was considerable.”*

- *“There is a very nice library located on Main Street, near the IGA. This, as with most places in Philippi, appears to be very well kept. It is easily accessible, and I noticed that it is open in the evenings on some days, which is nice for people who work or go to school during the day.”*
- *“Yes, on Main Street but I do not recall seeing guide signs for it.”*
- *“Philippi Public Library is on S. Main Street.”*



The public library is an impressive facility with a significant number of holdings, computer work stations, and an impressive number of patrons.

Although one visitor did notice some areas in which sidewalks are in need of repair, generally the sidewalks were found to be in good condition throughout town and particularly along the main thoroughfares. Visitors were also asked to comment on whether the sidewalks have adequate lighting. Since the visits occurred during the day, it is assumed that adequate lighting exists. Visitors noticed streetlights throughout the town and one person suggested the town consider replacing older street lights with antique ones perhaps matching those around the courthouse.

- *“We found that the sidewalks were generally in good repair.”*
- *“The town seems to have nice sidewalks along its main thoroughfares. The street lighting is adequate on Main Street, and looks like it would provide an abundance of light. However, the city does still employ the older ‘high’ streetlights. The city might consider changing these to the ‘antique’ looking streetlights that have become very popular, in the event that a streetscape project is ever undertaken.”*
- *“Sidewalks in mostly good repair and though I visited during the day, it seemed lighting would be sufficient.”*
- *“Sidewalks needed repair in some areas.”*

Civic organizations

Visitors were asked if they could find evidence of active civic organizations, non-profits, or clubs in the community. Visitors commented that these types of organizations are well represented in Philippi. One gets their first indication of local civic groups as you drive into town past the sign with organizational logos. As one looks more carefully you also notice the Senior Center and World Vision locations, both downtown, in addition to other common community organizations and clubs such as the VFW, Lions, Kiwanis, and 4-H.

- *“Civic organizations and non-profits are well represented in Philippi. Entering into town, there is a welcome sign that identifies the various civic organizations that are present in the community. A drive down Main Street highlights some of the organizations present in the community – these include a Senior*

Center adjacent on Church Street, as well as the American Legion Hall and the regional headquarters of World Vision. In addition, a review of the most recent edition of the Barbour Democrat suggests that various non-profits and civic organizations are active in the life and events of the community.”

- “On the sign into town, I noticed notifications of several different civic organizations (Kiwanis and the like). Other than that, there did not seem to be an abundance of evidence of these organizations. However, it should be noted that many times the activities of these types of organizations are not those which would be readily seen from a quick visit through town, but more long-term ‘behind the scenes’ are possible.”
- “Lions Club and MADD.”
- “VFW, Philippi Senior Citizens, 4-H.”

The People

Friendliness, helpfulness, and appearance

Just as important as the appearance of a community are the people who live there. After all, people make a place. A visitor’s interactions with local people can uncover a lot about how residents view their community and its resources, whether or not they are good ambassadors for the area, and how open and welcoming they are to newcomers. Visitors found local residents to be very friendly and welcoming. They said residents were quick to nod and say hello on the street and were helpful in recommending

local restaurants and directions to various places in the community.

- “We felt very welcome in Philippi. In the stores, at the restaurant, at the library, and at the visitors center were treated with great consideration and interest. We had pleasant conversations with all and with some we were able to learn more about the community and town.”
- “The residents appeared to be very friendly – which is not a surprise in West Virginia. I talked for some time with workers at the new Shop-n-Save who were telling me when the store had opened, how excited they were, etc. Also, several people on the street were quick to nod and say hello.”
- “Yes very friendly. They gave recommendations on where to have lunch and how to find the schools.”
- “Residents were really friendly. People greeted me with smiles.”

The visitors definitely think local residents are good ambassadors for their town because they took the time to talk to them about the history of the community and its services and attractions. A telling experience is when local residents direct visitors to other communities for services or points of interest. This was not the case in Philippi. People never directed the visitors to other places and everyone seemed to have a very positive attitude about Philippi.

- “Yes, each of the residents we met were good ambassadors for Philippi. We were given insight on the history of the community and the various services and attractions that were available.”

- *"I feel that the residents were, by and large, good ambassadors for their community. I was never directed to leave the town for basic services, although people at the library seemed not to know exactly where one could get tourist information. The library might be a good place to keep some of this information, as people often go to libraries to find out about towns. When I asked a couple of folks about places to eat, they were quick to point out the Medallion. The attitude in Philippi seemed generally positive."*
- *"They endorsed restaurants in Philippi."*
- *"While visiting the stores and restaurants the staff was extremely friendly and helpful, and took time to answer questions about the community."*
- *"We were able to purchase a very informative and comprehensive Tour Guide for Philippi at the Visitor's Center and Museum. However, as we noted the brochure cost \$5 and that may prove to be a barrier to purchase and use by some. According to the brochure, its costs were underwritten in part by funds from the federal government and were published in 1997."*
- *"We also had access to other brochures about the region. These were available at the depot as well as one of the restaurants that we visited."*
- *"I was not able to find a community brochure. I am sure one was available in the museum, but as noted above, I did not go in the building."*

Community Information

Tourist brochure, business directory, community profile, and maps

One way newcomers find out about what a place has to offer is through information that is made available. This information takes many forms such as tourist brochures, community brochures, business directories, community profiles, and maps. The visitors had mixed impressions about the information available. One visitor thought there was a lot of information available while several others said they found a Tour Guide for Philippi brochure and some information pertaining to other attractions in the region at the Visitor's Center and a local restaurant. Another visitor reported that he could not obtain any information because the Visitor's Center was closed during his visit.

- *"No, tourist center was closed."*
- *"Yes, there is much information about the community and county and surrounding areas."*

Visitors were unable to find a business directory. Several visitors reported that maps of the town are posted at the library and one of the restaurants. In addition, they commented that the map in the tour brochure is very helpful. They also suggested that the town could benefit from the addition of more interpretive signage pertaining to the Civil War history, the covered bridge, and the history of the downtown.

- *"We did not find any."*
- *"I believe that the town could certainly benefit from having more interpretive signage. These could be developed around*

the Civil War, the covered bridge, the river, history of the downtown area, etc. Currently, I only saw two interpretive signs, and they both dealt with the Civil War. There is much more that can be done in this area. Signage of this nature gets people to stop and look around. Plus it provides information that folks can use to gain a greater interest in the area. The development of a broad interpretive plan for Philippi would be a great benefit, in my opinion."

- *"We saw a map of the community posted in various public places including the restaurant and the library. However, this map was not available at the Depot Visitor's Center and Museum. In addition, the Historic Tour brochure provides a very helpful map of the downtown and adjacent area."*
- *"The Visitor's Center and Museum features a kiosk of various brochures for the area and region."*

Lasting Impressions

Using your "senses"...what did the community feel like (emotional or physical response)

The visitors' emotional responses to the town of Philippi were very positive. Overall, visitors found the town to be welcoming, warm, attractive, clean, and safe. As one visitor put it, "this is the kind of town that one could become emotionally attached to very quickly. I hope the residents feel the same way."

- *"Philippi is very welcoming and attractive. Located on a river plain it is generally level and the streets are broad. This makes for a*

visual set up of attractive store fronts. The Courthouse and the courthouse square further opens vistas in the immediate downtown. The surrounding frame and brick houses add a level of comfort and security to the immediate business district. There are very few vacant lots and waste areas that break up the continuity. And while there is the distraction of misplaced convenience stores and fast food franchises, the overall impression of the community is positive."

- *"This felt like a warm community to me. The people were friendly. The town was not crowded, but certainly not deserted by any means. Everything was clean and well kept. I felt very safe in Philippi, and I think that I would feel safe at any time of the day or night. To me, Philippi seemed like the kind of town that one could become emotionally attached to very quickly. I hope the residents feel the same way."*
- *"The community felt warm and welcoming."*
- *"I felt perfectly at ease walking around in this community, it was not super crowded but people were milling around. I felt safe walking the streets during the day."*

When asked if they felt welcome in the community, visitors responded overwhelmingly in the affirmative. Everyone commented that they were made to feel welcome everywhere they stopped.

- *"By all means we felt welcome. In the first store we entered, we had a long discussion with the shop owner. We learned about the town, the nature of her business, and ended up sharing stories about our own experiences and histories. In the restaurant we were served with warmth and friendliness. At the library, the staff wanted to know if we needed help and at the depot the docent was memorable and helpful."*

- *“As noted above, I felt very welcome in Philippi. I cannot imagine that anyone would not feel welcome there.”*
- *“Yes, the people and appearance have a nice appeal.”*
- *“We were made to feel welcome everywhere we visited in this community.”*

The most positive things you observed, the biggest challenges, what idea would you steal, and what will you remember most about the community six months from now

According to the visitors, the town of Philippi has several things going for it. The most common positive aspects mentioned were the rich culture and history of the area; the covered bridge and other historic structures in the community; an active downtown business district; proximity to Alderson-Broaddus College; the location – beautiful, rural but not too far from larger centers; and the friendliness of the residents.

Visitors think the biggest challenges facing Philippi are attracting industry, retail, and other sources of employment to the area; developing greater collaboration with Alderson-Broaddus College; creating a coordinated marketing strategy for the downtown; and the risk of further incompatible land-use development within view of the historic covered bridge.

When asked to describe one idea they would like to steal for use in their own business or community, visitors mentioned having green space around major public structures; the flatness and walkability of the town; the well kept homes; free parking during the holidays; and the great leadership skills of local officials.

Six months from now, visitors indicated they would remember how attractive the town remains; the pleasant atmosphere and clean look of the town; the appearance of the courthouse; and the diversity of this small community and how well it is surviving when most communities are in crisis.

Visitors' Recommendations

One purpose of the First Impressions report is to provide the community with ideas on how it might make improvements to become more attractive to residents and visitors, to promote and market itself more effectively, and to make better use of its resources. Visitors had the following recommendations for the town of Philippi.

1. *Community Development*

- Put together a task force comprising youths and adults with broad representation from community stakeholders (businesses, industry, county and city government, Alderson-Broaddus College, WVU-Extension, seniors, the Historical Society and other civic organizations) to:
 - ✓ identify the community's greatest needs,
 - ✓ pursue the most promising opportunities to enhance the quality of life in Philippi, and
 - ✓ to give future direction for the city and spearhead community development projects.
- Philippi is fortunate to be in close proximity to Alderson-Broaddus College. The College sits high above Philippi on a hill across the river. Aesthetically, it makes for a pleasing skyline. Both the city and the college should maximize all opportunities to interact and partner in community and economic development efforts.
- Consider using Alderson-Broaddus College and the local public and vocational schools as a major source of ideas and manpower. These institutions are probably looking for service learning opportunities to engage students in community projects.
- Consider planned growth practices for future development and effective planning.
 - ✓ Be vigilant in protecting the view shed around the Covered Bridge. The presence of gas stations and convenience stores detract from the setting. We clearly recognize the need for these services, but the tradeoffs need to be considered in future planning.
 - ✓ Be attentive to land use issues in the community. West Virginia has generally poor land-use controls that contribute to uncoordinated residential and business use. This creates a level of uncertainty that may deter business and homeownership investment. Lax controls serve neither individual nor public interest. In general, we found few land-use problems in Philippi and it appears to be much better situated than other communities. Protect this position. For assistance contact: Michael J. Dougherty, WVU Extension Service, 304-293-6131, ext. 4215 or Michael.Dougherty@mail.wvu.edu

2. *Downtown Revitalization*

- Consider a “placemaking” rather than a project oriented approach to downtown improvement. Four key attributes are central to a place-based approach to creating a vibrant downtown: 1) appearance and comfort, 2) access and linkages to other places, 3) the degree of sociability, and 4) the uses and activities that attract people to each of the key places and how these activities work together to support adjacent buildings and commercial uses. Identify the key places that draw people to the downtown and then develop strategies for creating a unified network of public spaces, cultural destinations, and retail in the downtown. This approach is compatible with and compliments the Main Street approach. For assistance contact: Alison Hanham, WVU Extension Service, 304-293-6131, ext. 4207 or ACHanham@mail.wvu.edu.
- Consider a coordinated, cooperative marketing strategy downtown. For example, having uniform business hours would benefit all merchants. During the First Impressions visits some downtown businesses were open on Saturday, some were not. This does not make for a productive shopping experience for tourists. Remember that Saturday’s used to be market days in America’s small communities. Maybe it is time to resurrect that concept.
- A conspicuous downtown vacancy observed by the visitors is that of the old Grand Theater which is in need of some care before it deteriorates any further. This site could become a significant public space downtown.
 - ✓ Continue efforts to secure reinvestment in this building with either a private business or the city and investigate the possible use of historic tax credits for restoration of the building.
 - ✓ Check with state and federal resources for funding for historic preservation.
 - ✓ Consider giving historic preservation awards recognizing successful preservation projects.

<http://www.wvculture.org/shpo/tccommoverview.html>
<http://www.preservationnation.org/resources/find-funding>
- The students at Alderson-Broaddus College represent an “untapped” market for potential new businesses downtown.
 - ✓ The city could be more proactive in capturing student dollars by recruiting some student-related businesses downtown such as a café, coffee shop, or book store.
 - ✓ Conduct a business inventory and track residents’ and students’ purchasing patterns to determine what goods and services are available locally, what is purchased locally, and what is purchased elsewhere. This will help identify opportunities for downtown business development.

- Consider improving directional signage.
 - ✓ Directional signs are adequate for automobile travel in and around the area and to the college. However, little or no signage exists for schools, public parks, historic sites, and other community assets of interest to visitors.
 - ✓ A visitor approaches Philippi and comes upon the US 250 Truck Route before the covered bridge. This could lead visitors into town without passing over the historic bridge, and also inadvertently bypassing a large amount of the downtown historic district. Currently there is very little signage to encourage visitors to go a little further and cross into town on US 250 via the covered bridge. A similar problem exists on US 119 North when automobiles come upon the bypass route before really entering the historic district. A large amount of traffic uses this bypass route, and there is no signage on the Philippi side of the river to help visitors onto Main Street.
- A number of cross-walks in the immediate downtown area were identified and positive marks are given for this. However, consider adding more adequate standard signage to warn motorists that there are crosswalks ahead. Only one such sign was found which did not appear to be a standard sign and its sight line was partially obscured.