



Fort Foundation Focus

by Fred A. Rose, Volunteer Publicist

www.fortfoundation.org

I guess that most of us feel, as I do, that Fort is a very special place to live. My wife and I came here, now many years ago, because of a business opportunity, and did not think about whether or not we would “set down roots” or whether career opportunities would take us elsewhere.

Many years later, upon reflection, I realize that if our location had been a conscious choice, Fort would have been among a very small number of “finalists.” After a bit of thought, I think I can cite a number of specific things that seem to make it so attractive.

Many of you are probably aware that an *ad hoc* committee of citizens was assembled recently by the Museum Board to explore creating a common identity for the city’s institutions (the City, the Museum, the Foundation, the Chamber of Commerce, and others all have their own versions of an *identity logo*).

I was not a member of that committee, but I know most of the people on it and therefore have been aware of some of the creative exercises they invoked to stimulate this process. In one such session, “forward thinking” was suggested as being a characteristic of Fort which has created significant advantages for the community. An example cited was the early creation of the Community Foundation, and how it empowers so much of what makes Fort special.

Scott Lastusky, director of the city’s Parks and Recreation Department, contributed an example of how the Foundation’s efforts have set the community apart. He noted that most of the venues used for “Parks and Rec” activities are different from similar venues in other cities because of the additions funded by the Foundation. He gave Jones Park as just one example where the quality of the bleachers, landscaping, and facilities all set it apart from similar facilities in other towns. He further said that he regularly gets comments about the esthetic quality of our facilities from out-of-town visitors.

So the Community Foundation and its work is one thing that sets Fort apart. But the city has some other characteristics that make it appealing. Let me return to my opening remark about a “conscious choice” for a living location. I have mused about that “choice process” on a number of occasions, and those musings go something like the following:

Suppose we would happen to have the unusual situation of being able to choose anyplace in the world

to live. How would we go about that decision? First of all, after having traveled to quite a few places in the world on business, and, because of business, having lived the better part of a year in two European countries, we would choose the U.S. Because we are both from the mid-west, there is some prejudice, but when considering where to raise a family, I think the upper mid-west must be a very high contender.

Let us further narrow the field by deciding that it must be a smaller town, preferably not over 20-30,000 in population. After all, only in a small town can you have that close sense of community, trust, and safety we all feel and cherish here. For professional reasons, I needed ready access to national and international air travel. Also for professional reasons, we should be near at least one major research university. Our personal tastes and pleasures include opera and concert music, so that is on our list. And it is nice to have easy access to fine dining for special occasions.

Where do you find all that? Well, my conclusion is not drawn from a formal survey, but I would venture that within the areas of southern and central Wisconsin, Michigan, and Minnesota; and the northern part of Iowa, and the northern part of Illinois, you might find ten really good candidates. But when you look at the proximity to the educational, cultural, and transportation centers that we have here, I would bet that there are fewer than five really good candidates. Upon a site-visit, you would see the special things about the city cited above.

Its one of those things we don’t always think about: The artful directional signs in the city, the signs along the Bike Trail, historical markers and plaques around the city. Little touches that set Fort apart from the vast majority of similar small towns.

Lets keep it up! Please consider making the Foundation one of your annual beneficiaries. The entire community benefits so much by what we, as a whole, contribute through the vehicle of the Foundation. We can only conclude again that we are all fortunate to live in a community like this!

Anyone needing more information, or who would like to make a donation to the Fort Atkinson Community Foundation, is asked to contact Helen Rose, Program Administrator, at 920-563-3210 (office), 920-563-4926 (home), or visit the Foundation’s Web site at www.fortfoundation.org.