Tourism Development Opportunities in Hastings, Minnesota

Authored by Cynthia C. Messer and Tammy Koerte

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Hastings Area Chamber of Commerce and Tourism Bureau partnered with the University of Minnesota Tourism Center to assist with its tourism development efforts. The 12-month process began in late 2016 and engaged the community, tourism experts, and visitors to provide a 360° snapshot of current tourism in Hastings and identify opportunities for the community to enhance or expand tourism.

Data gathered during the project was coupled with research compiled by the Tourism Center on tourism trends and secondary information provided by the Hastings Area Chamber of Commerce and Tourism Bureau. Eleven tourism experts from the University of Minnesota, Explore Minnesota Tourism, and private industry participated in a two-day community visit to assess current and potential tourism. Two community meetings were also held to gather resident input. Finally, select individuals representing current or potential visitor markets made mystery visits to the community to assess tourism from a visitor perspective.

The most pressing need and opportunity for Hastings is to create **a compelling, shared vision for tourism** that is fully supported by the community's organizations, local government leaders and residents. The community must see Hastings as a **tourism destination** with unique visitor offerings that are showcased through targeted marketing tactics. The following actions are critical to strengthen tourism in Hastings.

Short-term Ideas and Strategies

- Recognize the overlap of efforts by each organization or entity involved in tourism
- Differentiate tourism bureau roles and responsibilities from Chamber activities
- Consolidate efforts to maximize resources (human, time, and financial)
- Identify a single organization to lead tourism
- Adopt Visit Hastings as the official tourism marketing name and website
- Create a clear vision for tourism
  - Compelling, shared, supported, and widely communicated
  - Reflects the community's vision and values
  - Connects with the city's comprehensive plan
- Develop a written plan for tourism development and marketing

Long-term Ideas and Strategies

- Embed tourism within the long-term plans for each organization and the community
- Recognize the unique talents and ideas of tourism leaders
- Identify others who can/should be involved in tourism
- Develop tourism marketing to include all regional attractions and amenities
- Develop strategies to inform residents about tourism and its benefits to Hastings
- Strengthen collaboration and support for tourism across the community/region
- Establish Visit Hastings as an independent entity to market tourism
  - See www.visitwinona.com example

For Hastings to more fully leverage its assets and potential tourism opportunities, it is important to align them with relevant travel trends. Understanding, evaluating, and adapting is essential to successful target marketing and tourism expansion. No destination can address all trends, so

focusing on those that best fit with current assets is suggested. Two overarching trends relevant for both destination and tourism businesses include:

- A desire for authentic experiences
- An increased use of social media and user-driven information

This report explores tourism opportunities in Hastings from a supply and demand perspective, based on the trends above. For Hastings, this requires focus on:

1) **Maintaining and enhancing attractions and services**
   a. Trend: Cultural/heritage tourism
   b. Trend: Active lifestyle tourism
   c. Trend: Nature-based tourism

2) **Marketing**
   a. Trend: Multi-generational travel
   b. Trend: Niche markets
   c. Online presence and social media

Hastings' investment in infrastructure and amenities, development and maintenance of green spaces, and preservation of its historic downtown and residential districts creates a positive environment for both visitors and residents. The city's entrepreneurial businesses and welcoming attitude add to the positive environment. The city's built assets include its historic downtown, emerging arts focus, Le Duc Mansion, and other historic buildings. Additional assets include the Alexis Bailly Winery, Extreme Sandbox, Little Log House Pioneer Village, Hastings Family Aquatic Center, Lock & Dam Eatery, and Carpenter Nature Center. Important events in Hastings include the Cruise-In Car Show and Riverwalk Days.

Natural assets in Hastings include the Mississippi, St. Croix, and Vermillion Rivers, the recently revitalized riverfront, marina, 35 city parks and 400 acres of green space, lakes, golf and disc golf courses, and more than 30 miles of biking trails. These tangible assets, coupled with community pride and strong human and social capital, provide a solid foundation for tourism.

Harnessing these opportunities more fully will be accomplished by building on existing efforts, rather than changing direction or requiring significant new capital development. Several short- and long-term ideas and strategies are listed below. They are also explored in greater detail throughout the report, accompanied by specific findings that support these ideas.

Short-Term Ideas and Strategies

1) **Maintaining and enhancing attractions and services**
   - Make the walking tour map of historic buildings downtown more widely available.
   - Redesign or reorganize information on Hastings' tourism website (www.visithastingsmn.org)
   - Work with MNDOT to place additional signage for the Historic District on the north side of the bridge on Highway 61.
   - Provide regular customer service/hospitality training to businesses across the community.
   - Consider tours of key tourism attractions for those employed in the local economy to familiarize them with what there is to do and see in Hastings.
   - Use notice boards more intentionally to promote events and other regional attractions.
   - Enlarge maps on information boards, and use larger text for visitors with visual limitations.

- Tap local artists, including authors and actors, to offer book readings, demonstrations, etc., in collaboration with downtown businesses and galleries.
- Create 1, 2 or half day itineraries around themes (e.g. family-oriented activities, outdoor adventure, biking, regional history, etc).
- Review and enhance signage visibility and content for trails and attractions.
- Highlight trailhead locations.
- Improve bike trail maps and place them around town and at gas stations/convenience stores.
- Create and market packages for winter opportunities.
- Develop seasonal packages and itineraries targeted toward birders.
- Enhance bird viewing maps for smart phones.
- Consider adding locations for bike rentals, bike repairs, and trailhead amenities.
- Enhance visibility and promotion of the public bike rentals downtown.
- Expand bike rentals to offer unique bikes for families, including multi-passenger versions.

2) Marketing

- Conduct an audit of current tourism marketing materials across organizations to identify duplication and opportunities to collaborate.
- Target one or two current niche markets and create a focused marketing campaign. Track its Return on Investment (ROI).
- Create packages targeted toward niche markets such as birders, history buffs, cyclists, snowboarders, and multi-generational markets.
- Promote local "*Staycation experiences*" to residents that will also reach the Visiting Friends and Relatives (VFR) market.
- Build stronger relationships with local/regional attractions.
- Put local marketing materials at key regional locations.
- Expand community involvement with group tours via volunteer guides and storytelling opportunities.
- Enhance the historic walking tour map on the Visit Hastings and Downtown Hastings websites.
- Identify and follow targeted niche markets on social media platforms to gain insight about their interests. This can also lead to advertising opportunities.
- Reach out to Extreme Sandbox and Treasure Island, among others, to invite perspective about Hastings' tourism and to solicit marketing or partnering ideas.
- Enhance search engine optimization (SEO) to elevate www.visithastingsmn.org in searches.
- Encourage business owners to claim their business on Google Places and Yelp to add information (e.g., location, hours, photos, menus), as well as to respond to reviews.
- Utilize the free resources available from Explore Minnesota Tourism.
- Use social media to market or promote packages to targeted markets.
- Explore location-based digital marketing strategies to reach in-town visitors or pass-through travelers.
- Encourage and utilize user-generated content.
- Utilize social media analytics tools to gain insight into potential visitors.
- Use the #OnlyinMN hashtag on social media posts and collaborate with Explore Minnesota Tourism's social media coordinator to share posts about Hastings from their account.

Long-Term Ideas and Strategies

1) **Maintaining and enhancing attractions and services**
   - Develop a long-term economic development plan for downtown as a tourism destination with boutique shops, art galleries, dining, and lodging.
   - Support the Historic District with funding, zoning, and planning to establish and sustain it as a historic and cultural destination.
   - Expand the arts, including public art.
   - Enhance wayfinding and interpretation signage.
   - Add distances to/between attractions to signs.
   - Create a sequenced walking tour using the interpretive signs to tell the story of Hasting's development.
   - Establish a visitor center downtown and staff it at peak times, such as weekends.
   - Explore development of camping facilities near bike trails.
   - Explore a cruise boat and dock near downtown.
   - Develop an event to utilize local sport resources, such as biking, kayaking, and canoeing.
   - Host a fat tire bike event during winter.
   - Partner with other communities on a regional biking event.
   - Work with PedalMN (www.exploreminnesota.com/pedal-mn/).
   - Explore development of a birding interpretive center.
   - Enhance trail maps with more service details regarding bathrooms, drinking fountains, etc.
   - Explore the creation of a regional biking event with neighboring communities.
   - Explore ways to provide written input for consumer travel guides, such as Lonely Planet, Fodors, etc.
   - Work with Explore Minnesota Tourism to expand group tour opportunities.
   - Consider organizing a media familiarization trip to gain media exposure. Explore Minnesota Tourism can assist with planning media familiarization trips.

2) **Marketing**
   - Conduct a visitor profile for Hastings.
   - Create a marketing plan to reach targeted markets.
   - Build a systematic data collection process with lodging properties and attractions. This can begin with zip code data.
   - Track and regularly report outcomes to stakeholders and residents using multiple methods such as social media, quarterly newsletters, and newspaper articles.
   - Encourage businesses to make their website mobile-friendly.
   - Consider opportunities to tell stories about Hastings.
   - Consider hosting an InstaMeet to source user-generated content.

INTRODUCTION

The Hastings Area Chamber of Commerce and Tourism Bureau partnered with the University of Minnesota Tourism Center to assist with its tourism development efforts. The 12-month process gathered input from the community, experts, and visitors to provide a 360° snapshot of current tourism in Hastings and identify opportunities for the community to enhance or expand tourism.

Data gathered during the project was coupled with research compiled by the Tourism Center on tourism trends and information provided by the Hastings Area Chamber of Commerce and Tourism Bureau. Eleven experts from the University of Minnesota, Explore Minnesota Tourism and private industry participated in a two-day community visit to assess current and potential tourism. Two community meetings were also held to gather resident input. Finally, select individuals representing current or potential visitor markets made mystery visits to the community to assess tourism from a visitor perspective.

This report examines the current state of tourism in Hastings as well as future possibilities. It shares the collective findings from experts and visitors aligned with relevant tourism trends and the existing data and information provided by the community.

PROJECT METHODOLOGY

The tourism assessment process began in late fall 2016 with the creation of a local project leadership team headed by the president of the Hastings Area Chamber of Commerce and Tourism Bureau. The team included representatives from lodging, retail, attractions, and local government. The leadership team had an initial meeting with representatives from the University of Minnesota Tourism Center to establish the project goals, expectations, and process.

Next, the community leadership team gathered secondary data and used worksheets provided by the Tourism Center to examine the current status of tourism in Hastings and to inventory key tourism assets. On February 25, 2017 the Chamber hosted a community meeting to invite residents to identify key tourism assets as well. More than 40 residents and community leaders attended the meeting.

In the spring, the Tourism Center sent a team of 11 tourism and community development specialists to the community for two days to assess existing products and services. The team included University of Minnesota faculty, Tourism Center specialists, Extension educators, the Metro regional manager from Explore Minnesota Tourism, and a private consultant. The team visited Hastings May 17-18, 2017. The first morning, the team received current marketing materials and met briefly with the president of the Hastings Area Chamber of Commerce and Tourism Bureau. They then divided into pairs to study various aspects of the community both by their area of expertise and by community-identified assets. Team members visited multiple sites in the community, talked with local business operators and residents, and experienced the community's tourism and hospitality offerings.

Team members completed an assessment tool provided by the Tourism Center to document their findings. They took photos and recorded their experiences walking and driving in Hastings during these visits. They spent time visiting businesses and local attractions, the historic downtown, parks and outdoor spaces, and other areas. They evaluated characteristics including appearance, amenities, and access, examining what the community is presently providing and looking for opportunities to enhance tourism. Several expert team members returned to the community independently for further assessment.

On the evening of May 17, the team also facilitated a community meeting to invite additional community input. Approximately 35 residents and local officials participated. Participants identified tourism strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats in Hastings. They were then asked to explore potential ways to maximize opportunities and strengths while also reducing weaknesses and threats. Data was collected on individual worksheets and flipcharts.

The final step of the process was a series of "mystery" visits by six individuals from current or potential market groups. These individuals represented different demographics and interests including the arts, cultural/ heritage tourism, biking, and outdoor recreationists. They were recruited within the Twin Cities area and asked to spend a day in Hastings, visiting several facilities and locations. Each mystery visitor documented their experiences using a written assessment tool provided by the Tourism Center. The mystery visitors, while not a sufficient sample size for decision-making, provided real visitor perspectives.

An attempt was also made to collect guest zip codes from all Hastings lodging properties, but not enough were collected to be useable. Using data provided by some properties, however, enabled researchers to identify the geographic origins of some visitors. This suggests geographic areas to help target community marketing efforts.

TOURISM AND ITS IMPORTANCE

One of the first steps to develop tourism in communities is to establish a shared understanding of tourism and its value. There are many definitions of tourism, but the most widely accepted is by the U.S. Travel Association: "One person on a trip away from home overnight in paid accommodations or on a day or overnight trip to places 50 miles or more (one-way) away from home."

This definition meets the goal of a destination marketing organization to generate overnight stays and includes the specific criteria of measurable distance, time, and paid accommodations. It does not, however, describe the purpose of travel. According to the U.S. Travel Association, nearly 4 out of 5 domestic trips by U.S. travelers are for leisure purposes. The top leisure travel activities for U.S. domestic travelers are 1) visiting relatives, 2) shopping, 3) visiting friends, 4) fine dining and 5) rural sightseeing.

Research by Destination Analysts (2016) suggests that American leisure travelers, on average, take 4.4 trips annually. The second most frequented destination type is small towns or rural destinations/attractions.

Identifying and differentiating current and potential visitors is an important step for Hastings. Travelers visiting friends and relatives (VFR), pass-through visitors, and day trippers from the Twin Cities and regional communities within 50 miles are also considered leisure visitors to Hastings. Strategies to reach these visitors should be explored as part of Hastings' tourism marketing efforts.

- **Visiting friends and relatives**

    The Visiting Friends and Relatives (VFR) market is a significant segment of tourists. According to the U.S. Travel Association, more than 3 out of 4 domestic trips are taken for leisure purposes, accounting for 1.7 billion person trips in 2016.

    Marketing to the VFR market is done primarily through community residents. Building awareness of local tourism activities and events gives residents information to share with their friends and family. It also offers other positive benefits, such as increasing community pride and involvement. Hastings appears to do an effective job of promoting local festivals and events to residents. A more intentional ask (bring a friend) effort may boost attendance.
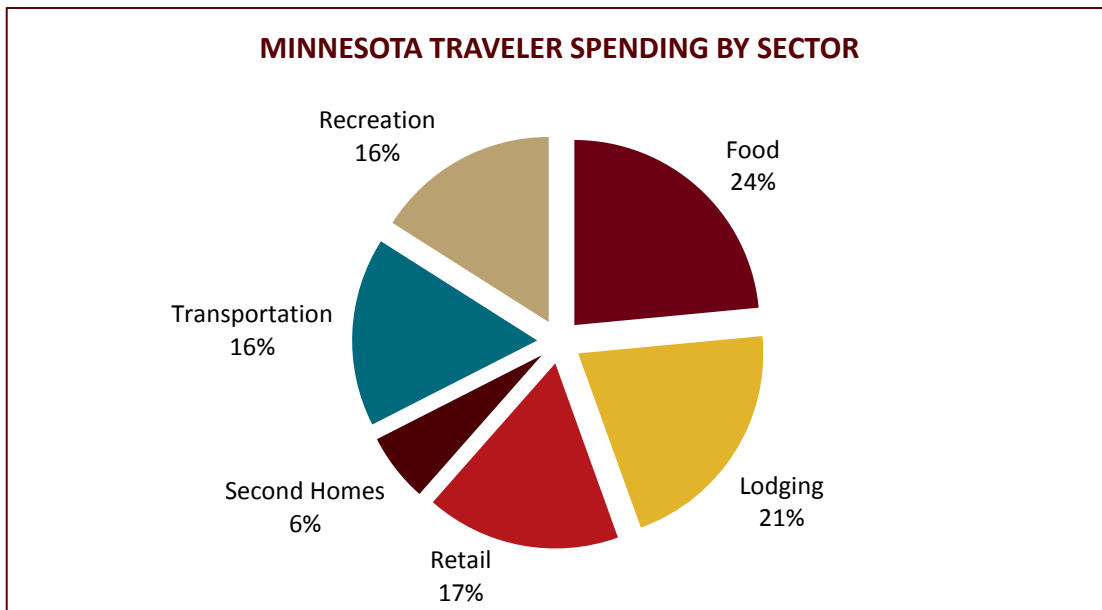
- **Pass-through visitors**

    Enticing travelers who drive through Hastings on Highways 61 or 55 to stop, stay a while, and spend money is a priority opportunity. These visitors are already in the community. Location-based marketing may be an effective strategy to reach them using mobile technology. Clear way-finding signs and placing maps and literature in key locations, such as gas stations and convenience stores can reach these visitors. Train staff to cross-sell the community so that no visitor leaves without a personal invitation to further explore Hastings.

- **Day trippers**

    While day trippers do not fit the formal definition of a tourist (as described above), they are an important segment of visitors for most communities. Hastings' location within 30 minutes of the Twin Cities Metro at the confluence of the Mississippi and St. Croix Rivers, as well as at the crossroads of Highways 61 and 55, positions it well for tourism. At present, many of the community's attractions and assets lend themselves to day trippers from the Twin Cities. Events such as the Saturday Night Cruise-In and attractions, such as the winery, golf course, and downtown riverfront draw day trippers who are critical income generators. Day trippers are a part of Hastings tourism, but competing for day trippers is not the goal and is not a sustainable strategy long-term. Continue promoting events and attractions but explore ways to convert day trippers to future overnight stays.

Minnesota and Regional Tourism

Tourism is a major economic driver in Minnesota. As of 2017, it is a $14.4 billion industry that generates 17 percent of state sales tax revenue and almost 260,000 full- and part-time jobs from entry level to executive level. Spending is distributed throughout the economy. The figure on the next page shows how that spending is divided.

MINNESOTA TRAVELER SPENDING BY SECTOR

- Recreation 16%
- Food 24%
- Transportation 16%
- Lodging 21%
- Second Homes 6%
- Retail 17%

Source: Explore Minnesota Tourism 2017, based on 2015 revenue data

Tourism happens in virtually every county of the state. In Dakota County, for instance, 2015 tourism gross sales were $865,286,243, generating $57,065,025 in sales tax and employing 17,924 people in full-time, part-time, or seasonal jobs (Explore Minnesota, 2017).

Hastings' historic retail sales give an indication of its comparable strength in drawing visitors from outside the city. According to the most recent Retail Trade Analysis conducted by the University of Minnesota Extension using 2015 sales, eating and drinking establishments generate about 24 percent of the taxable sales in Hastings' consumer-oriented businesses. The total amount of eating and drinking sales meets the expectations for the population of Hastings but does not reach a level that indicates that visitors are traveling to Hastings as a dining destination. When compared to 19 similarly sized cities in and around the metro area, Hastings ranked 7th for sales per capita.

Total retail performance in Hastings is about 82 percent of what is expected for a city of its population. Leisure goods sales cannot be measured since there are fewer than four stores of that type in Hastings. Amusement business sales dropped approximately 75 percent between 2013 and 2105. Accommodation sales were weak in many of the 19 comparable cities. Hastings achieved about 77 percent of what would be expected based on these comparable cities. These figures suggest that enhancing tourism opportunities can benefit the local economy.

DEVELOPING TOURISM OPPORTUNITIES

In his book, *Marketing for Entrepreneurs*, Frederick Crane (2013) says that opportunities can be "recognized, discovered, or created." This is particularly true of tourism opportunities because tourism is about individual experiences.

Recognizing opportunities means matching existing assets—supply—with current or potential tourist markets—demand. For example, bike tourism is a growing trend in Minnesota and nationally. The proximity of Hastings to the Twin Cities Metro Area and its location on the Mississippi River Trail are strengths of the city that help promote Hastings as a biking destination. Packages targeted toward biking and outdoor enthusiasts, and even multi-generational groups, will draw more visitors to the community and entice them to stay longer.

Discovering opportunities means either supply or demand exists, and the other must be found or "discovered." For example, what opportunities exist to better leverage the historic downtown district in Hastings? Enhancing current boutique shopping and dining options downtown will help build downtown Hastings as a destination for visitors and residents. For example, could a craft brewery or tasting room for regional wines/products be a draw?

Creating opportunities is necessary when neither supply nor demand exists in an obvious manner. Hastings has a diverse population and a unique geographic location. Are there opportunities to market the community to diverse populations? This could involve tapping local experts to assist the community with cultural awareness and appropriate bilingual signage and communications.

Enhancing tourism in Hastings requires recognizing, discovering and creating opportunities for long-term success. The findings, ideas and strategies in this report address both tourism supply and demand in Hastings. It begins by looking at the current structure for tourism, the community's assets and finally, marketing ideas to create quality visitor experiences that match assets to market demand.

HASTINGS' TOURISM STRUCTURE

Hastings has a group of passionate and dedicated tourism supporters in both the private and public sectors. This type of support is a true asset for the community and critical to advancing tourism efforts. Several organizations promote tourism in Hastings, which is valuable for the community, but it is also important to ensure differing perspectives and opinions are balanced and that efforts do not overlap. Striving for increased collaboration will be key.

The most pressing need and opportunity for Hastings is to create **a compelling, shared vision for tourism** that is fully supported by the community's organizations, local government leaders and residents. The community must see Hastings as **a tourism destination** with unique visitor offerings that are showcased through targeted marketing tactics.

One mystery visitor stated, "There doesn't seem to be a theme or tourism reason for existence – is Hastings a history town, a working river town? A government center town?"

Multiple organizations are currently marketing Hastings, but a shared vision and coordinated approach will maximize the efforts of, and benefits for, all. Strong leadership by a single organization to coordinate tourism efforts is needed.

The Hastings Area Chamber of Commerce and Tourism Bureau is the primary destination marketing organization for the community. It is supported by chamber membership dues and a 3 percent transient lodging tax. Its mission is "*To lead, promote and advocate for the Hastings area business community to reinforce a strong local economy.*"

The Downtown Hastings Business Association also actively promotes tourism in the city's historic downtown area and supports events, such as the successful Cruise-In Car Show. The association's website (www.downtownHastingsMN.com) states:

"The Downtown Hastings Business Association is a non-profit business association dedicated to provide the businesses of downtown Hastings and its customers with a successful business environment. We give back to the community through the planning and promotion of events within the downtown and throughout the city of Hastings. We also preserve and protect the historic downtown area, and provide networking opportunities to our members."

The City of Hastings supports tourism as part of its economic development strategies, as evidenced in documents, such as the Comprehensive Plan, the Heart of Hastings Plan (2003) and the Community Development Annual Report (2016). Staff and elected officials have also engaged throughout this tourism assessment project. The city promotes tourism using social media and information on its website. It also provides a direct link to the Visit Hastings webpage managed by the Chamber.

Other groups with an interest in promoting tourism in Hastings include Hastings Prescott Area Arts Council (www.hpaac.org), A Toast to the Valley (http://www.atoasttothevalley.org/), and the Great Rivers Confluence Group (www.greatriversconfluence.org).

Presently, it is not financially feasible for the tourism bureau to be a stand-alone entity. However, the tourism bureau, as the city's destination marketing organization, is the logical leader for a coordinated approach to tourism. Clearly, delineating the tourism bureau using the name Visit Hastings would be beneficial. The following actions are critical to strengthen tourism in Hastings.

Short-term Ideas and Strategies

- Recognize the overlap of efforts by each organization or entity involved in tourism
- Differentiate tourism bureau roles and responsibilities from Chamber activities
- Consolidate efforts to maximize resources (human, time, and financial)
- Identify a single organization to lead tourism
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While beyond the scope of this study to assess resident support for tourism, the expert team saw evidence of support across the community. This support took many shapes, including welcoming attitudes and positive customer service experiences, local responses to social media about the Chamber's project, and online reviews of local attractions and businesses on sites such as TripAdvisor. A 2014 resident survey showed that Hastings' residents are engaged. Seventy-nine percent of the 2014 survey respondents indicated they received the *Rivertown News*, and 89 percent of those read it. Additionally, residents accessed the city website (71 percent) and social media accounts (22 percent). Keeping residents informed of tourism's value to the community will continue to enhance their support.

What are the opportunities for Hastings to more fully harness its tourism potential?

Hastings has an abundance of tourism assets that also enhance residents' quality of life. The community has done a good job of identifying and investing in these assets. Based on the input at community meetings, and the knowledge and documents shared with the research team, it is clear local leaders are aware of Hastings' tourism assets. Key local assets include the historic downtown and other historic facilities, natural resources (e.g., rivers, parks, and lakes), as well as cultural resources (e.g., the arts, events, and volunteer networks). The area also has outdoor adventure businesses, proximity to two ski and snowboarding hills, wineries, orchards, and the casino.

For Hastings to more fully leverage these assets and potential tourism opportunities, it is important to align them with relevant travel trends. Understanding, evaluating, and adapting is essential to successful target marketing and tourism expansion. No destination can address all trends, so focusing on those that best fit with current assets is suggested. Two overarching trends relevant for both destination and tourism businesses include:

- A desire for authentic experiences
- An increased use of social media and user-driven information

The following discussion explores tourism opportunities in Hastings from a supply and demand perspective, based on the trends above. For Hastings, this requires focus on:

1) **Maintaining and enhancing attractions and services**
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MAINTAINING AND ENHANCING ATTRACTIONS AND SERVICES: FINDINGS AND STRATEGIES TO CONSIDER

Hastings' investment in infrastructure and amenities, development and maintenance of green spaces, and preservation of its historic downtown and residential districts creates a positive environment for both visitors and residents. The city's entrepreneurial businesses and welcoming attitude add to the positive environment. The city's built assets include its historic downtown, emerging arts focus, Le Duc Mansion, and other historic buildings. Additional assets include the Alexis Bailly Winery, Extreme Sandbox, Little Log House Pioneer Village, Hastings Family Aquatic Center, Lock & Dam Eatery, and Carpenter Nature Center. Important events in Hastings include the Cruise-In Car Show and Riverwalk Days.

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Harnessing these opportunities more fully will be accomplished by building on existing efforts, rather than changing direction or requiring significant new capital development.

Hastings' Tourism Assets

Average on scale of 1-6 where 6 = strongly agree
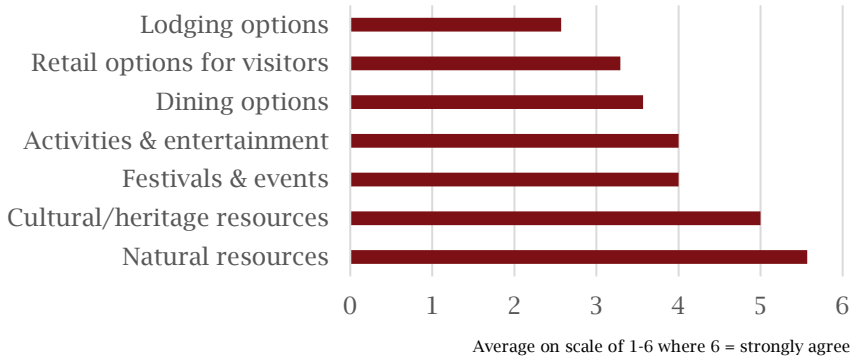
Trend: Cultural/Heritage Tourism

Cultural/heritage tourism is defined by the National Trust for Historic Preservation as "traveling to experience the places, artifacts, and activities that authentically represent the stories and people of the past and present. It includes cultural, historic, and natural resources."

Cultural/heritage visitors like to engage with locals to learn about the community and its assets. They visit:

- Historic sites
- Museums
- Art galleries
- Theaters
- Events or festivals

> *"Regardless of how cultural tourism is precisely defined, it clearly reflects three strong trends in tourism: the search for authenticity, visitors' desire for immersive experiences, and heightened industry focus on diverse markets."*
>
> (Source: Mandala, L. (2015) *Arts, Tourism, & Cultural Diplomacy*. Americans for the Arts, Washington, D.C.)

A 2013 study on cultural/heritage travelers by Mandala Research, LLC found that more than 129 million U.S. travelers participated in cultural/heritage activities on their most recent trip or during the previous three years. For approximately 23 percent of these travelers, cultural/heritage activities are drivers of destination choice.

Based on self-reported spending data, the study found that cultural/heritage travelers spend significantly more per trip than non-cultural/heritage travelers. They spend an average of $1,319 per trip compared to $820 spent by non-cultural/heritage travelers. Of additional significance is that cultural/heritage travelers seek experiences that

Spending Per Trip

Source: Mandala Research
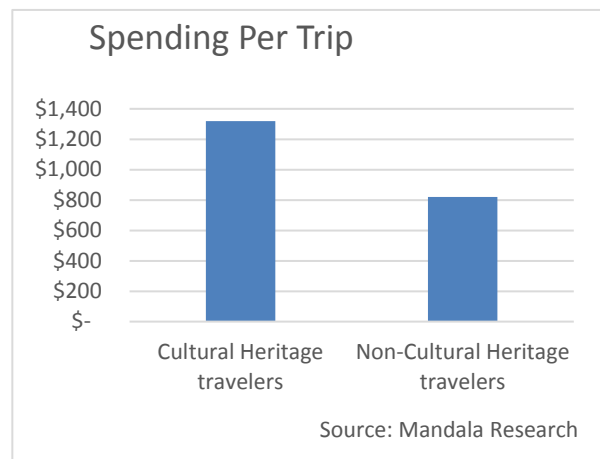
combine a variety of activities including culture, shopping, nature, dining, and recreation.

Aligned with cultural/heritage tourism is creative placemaking. "In creative placemaking, partners from public, private, non-profit, and community sectors strategically shape the physical and social character of a neighborhood, town, city, or region around arts and cultural activities" (Markusen and Gadwa, 2010).

Creative placemaking, according to Borrup (2016), includes the following:

- Enhancement of the unique qualities and identity of place
- Connections between and among people, and between people and place
- Processes that include planning; animation of spaces and actions to secure permanent places for living, working, creating, socializing, recreating; and exchanging goods and ideas
- Capacity building for local civic sector and organizations to maintain engagement of the community and to exercise local stewardship and governance

Findings from Observations of Expert Team and Mystery Visitors
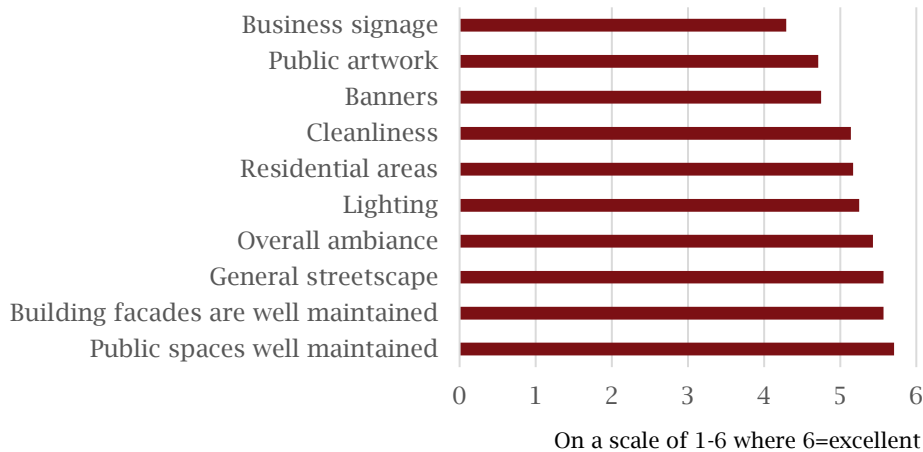
Historic Downtown

Hastings' historic downtown is a gem and should be the focal point for tourism development. The city's investment in the infrastructure has established the necessary foundation upon which to reinvent this area into a vibrant tourism destination. The city and Downtown Hastings Business Association have done an excellent job creating and maintaining an appealing streetscape with seating, broad sidewalks, trash receptacles, flower baskets, and an overall sense of place. The murals and Oliver's Grove pocket park invite engagement and reflect the unique character of Hastings.

One underutilized aspect of the downtown is its Historic District designation. The East Second Street Commercial Historic District and the West Second Street Residential Historic District are unique assets. Explore how other U.S. cities, such as Charleston, South Carolina, Springfield, Missouri, Rupert, Idaho or Savannah, Georgia have developed and promoted their historic districts as tourism destinations.

Overall, the downtown feels safe, the streetscape is inviting, and the city's proximity to the river is stunning. Sidewalks are in good condition and easily navigable. Even during events, pedestrians have ample room to move about and enter businesses. Free parking is available downtown in municipal lots and on the street. Public parking is well signed, and appears to be sufficient for current needs. During multiple visits, parking was never a problem, even for a busy event like the Saturday Cruise-In. Traffic flow around downtown appeared functional and sufficient during project visits. Public toilets, trash receptacles, and bike racks are readily available.

Appearance Quality

Category	Rating (1-6)
Business signage	4.3
Public artwork	4.7
Banners	4.7
Cleanliness	5.1
Residential areas	5.1
Lighting	5.2
Overall ambiance	5.4
General streetscape	5.5
Building facades are well maintained	5.5
Public spaces well maintained	5.6

On a scale of 1-6 where 6=excellent

An easy opportunity to encourage visitors to spend more time downtown is to increase the availability of information on the historic district. Several team members and visitors noted a desire for historic walking tours, maps, or brochures with information about each building and the community's history, but could not find information while in town. Use community poster boards, kiosks, or literature racks more strategically to provide visitors with information on the city's walking tour and other attractions. The map on the Visit Hastings website is informative but not easy to find or navigate. Explore the use of a mobile app (with audio descriptions) or a podcast for the walking tour.

Collaborate on print materials and extend access to information. Several businesses displayed the Downtown Hastings Business Association brochure, as well as other business brochures. Develop a mobile guide for visitors that includes business hours and photos. Local businesses could then use signage that encourages visitors to click a "download it here" link.

Several empty storefronts or buildings create an opportunity to relocate the Chamber office downtown to elevate its visibility or to establish a visitor center. This will help identify Hastings' downtown as a primary destination for visitors and make visitor information more accessible. Use a 24-hour kiosk or a brochure rack so information is available during non-business hours. Several mystery visitors noted the visitor center/chamber office was closed on weekends.

Visitor comments included:

- "So much potential to tap into"
- "Need to convince people it is more than a bridge on the way to Red Wing"
- 'Need more shops that aren't antiques"
- "Inconsistency of retail store hours should be addressed"
- "It was surprising how many things were closed down in the afternoon on Father's Day"

Hospitality Quality

Category	Score
Opportunities to provide feedback are available	~2.4
Staff appears to have been trained in hospitality	~3.9
Business hours accommodate visitors	~4.1
Local residents are friendly	~5.4
My needs were met/ questions answered	~5.4
I was treated with respect	~5.4
Felt safe & secure	~5.7

(Scale axis: 0.00, 1.00, 2.00, 3.00, 4.00, 5.00, 6.00)
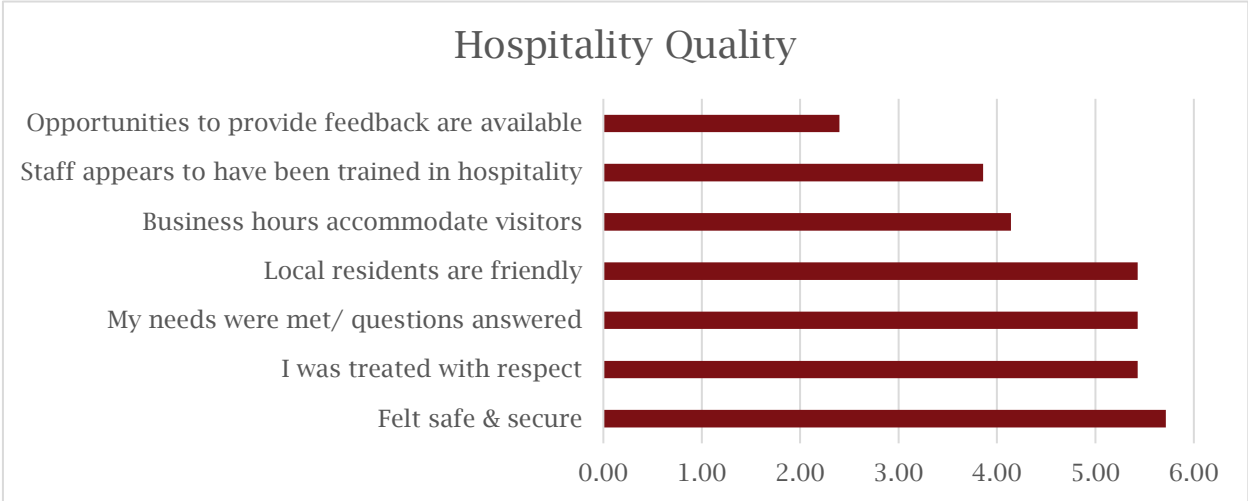
On a scale of 1-6 where 6=excellent

Expert and mystery visitors also had mixed comments about the customer service at various businesses and attractions across the city. Most experienced welcoming attitudes and positive customer service and felt locals were very hospitable. One commented, "Every business person was friendly and welcoming; I could feel the pride they have about their community."

Good customer service, however, is more than a welcoming attitude. One expert noted, "…when asking the waitress about possible places to visit in Hastings, she said 'I don't really know, I just work in Hastings and live elsewhere.' That seemed like a missed opportunity." Another expert visitor stated, "…shops I went into either had staff that didn't come out while I was there or, in one case, complained the entire time I was in there about how the construction had ruined business. It was an interesting take on the situation, but if that bad attitude is projected, it reflects poorly on the way visitors see the community."

Additional customer service opportunities include expanding business hours to include peak visitation times and offering an environment that meets visitor needs. Two mystery visitors pointed out they could not enter some downtown businesses because of cat allergies, while another indicated having cats in the store was "a cute touch." These businesses did have signs that cats were present.

Offering regular customer service training will maintain the level of service offered across the community. The chamber and tourism businesses can also invite residents who routinely interact with visitors to take a familiarization tour of tourism attractions and services in Hastings. This internal marketing effort will inform residents of the tourism offerings in Hastings and enable them to offer recommendations to visitors.

Expert team members felt a priority for Hastings is to determine the primary audience of its downtown. It is difficult to identify the audience, given the variety of businesses. The antique stores, art galleries, gift shops, and restaurants attract visitors. Others are targeted to locals, including a second-hand shop and home decor business. Services such as the beauty school and insurance agency also target locals, and could relocate to another area of town so that the buildings could be repurposed to tourism-oriented facilities.

Focusing future downtown development on tourism and clustering businesses that appeal to visitors will present Hastings as a tourism destination. According to the Harvard Institute for Strategy and Competitiveness, clustering is an economic development strategy used by communities and regions. An intentional development strategy to recruit and cluster complementary visitor-focused businesses (e.g., boutiques, culinary stores, art galleries, attractions, lodging) can establish Hastings' historic downtown as a tourism destination.

Expanded shopping and dining options complete the experience for both visitors and residents, and encourage people to stay longer. Businesses turnover provides an opportunity to identify and encourage targeted complementary businesses, but a solid recruitment plan is needed as well. A clear tourism vision will help drive this evolution and guide collaboration between the Downtown Hastings Business Association, the Chamber of Commerce, the city, and business and property owners. The city, along with county or state resources, such as Dakota County Economic Development Agency can provide assistance, resources, and funding for entrepreneurs.

Dining options downtown were considered good, but several visitors cited the need for greater variety and a high-end restaurant. Visitor comments included:

American Legion outdoor patio

- "Needs a great restaurant that I am willing to make the drive to just for dinner."
- "Dinner choices, especially upscale, are meager."
- "Needs decent restaurants—every local we asked wanted to send us to Prescott for dinner!"

Visitors also sought outdoor dining options to enjoy the river, noting the American Legion is the only facility with a river view patio. One visitor stated, "The patio is wonderful and the view can't be beat, but it smelled like old cooking oil. It was also hard to tell if we were welcome in there. Can anyone can go in there and enjoy a meal?"

Until tenants are found, explore ways to utilize empty storefronts downtown and in strip malls along Highway 61. Developing pop-up retail stores, art galleries, and craft fairs may be a wise strategy. Pop-ups are a temporary short-term use of space and increasingly popular trend. The photos to the right are examples in Princeton, New Jersey and New York City.

Storefronts can also be a canvas for telling Hastings' stories both past and present. Photo story boards, historic artifacts, and creative displays can become community projects that engage residents in telling their story. This type of activity also builds community pride and involvement.

The current murals and interpretation signs downtown help connect visitors and residents to the city's history and heritage, but they do need stronger interpretation. Filling empty stores with additional visual storytelling or interactive performances can offer interesting experiences for both visitors and residents.

There is an opportunity to strengthen the relationship between downtown commerce and the river. This could include expanded outdoor dining or developing a paddleboat river cruise. Several experts suggested developing opportunities for boaters including adding a pier, transient docks, a shuttle to the marina, or a "concierge service" for boaters where they could get off at downtown and their boat would be driven to the marina for them. Ideas shared by local residents at the community meeting included an event focused on the river, a juried art show about the river, bringing back the fireworks and flotilla during Rivertown Days, and offering an app that allows people to watch boats go through the lock and dam.

In addition to the downtown commercial district, there is potential to tap resident involvement with the adjacent historic neighborhood. Several visitors noted the nice homes with pretty gardens within walking distance of downtown and suggested a garden or historic homes tour.

Enhancing the downtown and riverfront was identified as a priority in the 2030 Hastings Comprehensive Plan (2010), and clearly this has helped guide development of the downtown to date. Expanding hospitality facilities was also cited then and remains a key opportunity. Locals noted hospitality facilities and new lodging options are under consideration. The 2018 update of the comprehensive plan (Comprehensive Plan 2040) can again establish clear goals for the next phase of the downtown revitalization.

The Arts

The combination of Hastings' historic district with an arts focus is cultural/heritage tourism.

Hastings is well-suited to effectively target visitors interested in the arts as well as those interested in history. Existing businesses like Breakaway Arts and Cafe, Hastings Arts Center, and Black Dirt Theater offer experiences that bring visitors downtown. In addition, the Artspace Hastings River Lofts being built in downtown Hastings will likely create additional opportunities.

Locals advised there are several arts organizations and more than 100 artists living in the area. This vibrant arts community offers opportunities. The list of individual assets in the community compiled by the leadership team includes musicians, artists, ice sculptors, historians, cooks, and event planners. This talent within the community can be tapped to provide shows, exhibits, classes, art strolls and walking tours, or to develop new events. There seems to be strong collaboration between arts organizations, a vision and passion for the emerging arts emphasis, and effort being made to engage local and regional talent. That hundreds of people attended the opening of the Breakaway Café indicates strong local support for growing cultural/heritage tourism.

Breakaway Arts and Café, the murals, theater, art galleries, and the artist lofts bring a concentration of art to downtown Hastings. Expand and further integrate these into tourism development efforts. An example of a community that has successfully built on the arts with galleries and public art is Sioux Falls, South Dakota (http://sculpturewalksiouxfalls.com/).

Use the combination of art and history to create a unique tourism theme for Hastings that sets the city apart from its competitors. As one expert visitor stated, "There are some places in Hastings, such as the Breakaway Cafe, that have a very strong sense of aesthetic quality, a sense of place that is evolving. It is a kind of hub that attracts people from great distances because of the nature of the activities in that place." This was reiterated by several mystery visitors who are artists. Their comments included:

- "We need an art-town in the area, and Hastings could be it."
- "Art shows that draw artists and friends are suggested."
- "Artists in the Twin Cities need more places to exhibit. A 'call-for- entry' would do wonders."

Promote Hastings as an arts destination. Forty-five percent of adults in Minnesota participate in creating and performing arts. This is 10 percent greater than the United States overall. Research indicates many Minnesotans enjoy attending art and cultural events. Fifty-five percent reported attending an arts or culture event in 2015. This ranks Minnesota as fifth nationally in terms of arts and culture attendance (Minnesota Compass, 2017). Current data also suggests that existing art galleries are likely supported by visitors rather than residents, as only 7 percent of adults in the Hastings zip code visited an art gallery in the past 12 months (ESRI Sports and Leisure Market Potential, 2017).

It is important to note that motivations for attending art-related events differ based on life stages. According to the National Endowment for the Arts (2015), "Empty-nesters and retirees typically are motivated by wanting to experience high-quality art, visiting the event's location or venue, supporting community, and celebrating cultural heritage" (p. 3). On the other hand, parents with young children are interested in the social and learning aspects (National Endowment of the Arts, 2015). Understanding the unique motivations of different life segments interested in the arts is critical to effectively meet market needs.

Events

Anecdotal evidence suggests that events primarily attract locals and day trippers from the Twin Cities Metro Area. Offering a mix of events can generate revenue for local businesses, help build awareness of Hastings as a destination and increase overnight stays. Research on who is attending events in Hastings is needed to guide marketing and future event efforts. Two major events were visited during this study.

Classic Car Cruise-In

Members of the research team attended the Classic Car Cruise-In on July 16, 2017, and mystery visitors attended during two weekends in July and August. The event is very well-organized with good participation by both car owners and attendees. Attendees represented a broad spectrum of demographics, from seniors to families with children under five. Event organizers have tried to attract different age groups with a variety of music and vendors. A key question, however, is how many attendees visit from outside Hastings. Measuring this number and learning more about these visitors would give a clear understanding of who is attending the event and their needs to better inform planning and marketing decisions.

Researchers spoke with attendees, vendors, sponsors, and local business owners. Vendors included food trucks, musicians, and booths located along three blocks of 2nd Street, side streets, and Jaycee Park. One car owner/sponsor indicated he grew up in the area, lives in the Twin Cities Metro and has participated in the event for years. He praised organizers and said this was one of the best car shows he has attended. He also indicated the number of attendees appeared low that day but felt it was because of the heat and another classic car event in the metro.

Local businesses owners noted similar observations regarding attendance. Most of the stores on 2nd Street were open and cash registers were ringing. One owner reported sales are approximately 50 percent higher on weekends when the Cruise-In occurs, as compared to non-event weekends. The business owner works with other members of the Downtown Hastings Business Association to promote the car show and cross-sell each other's businesses.

Approximately a dozen food trucks experienced good business, but they did not appear to take business away from local restaurant and bars, which also appeared to experience brisk business.

The city has made an effort to enhance the event by encouraging attendees to enjoy the riverfront and Depot Park. There was also live music under the bridge and at the Riverwalk Pavilion. Unfortunately, researchers noted that attendance was light at the Pavilion.

Rivertown Days

Research team members and mystery visitors also attended Rivertown Days. This, too, is a well-organized event but primarily for residents. Events occur around the community and are hosted by various organizations. The craft fair at the Le Duc Mansion was well managed with approximately 30+ vendor tents and booths. Parking was limited onsite, but street parking was available. The carnival and boat races attracted a good crowd with entertainment and food vendors available. Rivertown Days is marketed online and in print, targeted primarily toward residents. The event draws day visitors and perhaps overnight stays from vendors and out-of-town race participants, but these are not the event's main audience. Maintaining current marketing efforts towards visitors is suggested.

Le Duc Estate and Other Cultural Attractions

The Le Duc Estate and Little Log House Pioneer Village both share a valuable piece of Hastings history. Both currently draw visitors and host events. Explore how collaborative marketing with the tourism bureau can be enhanced to lengthen visitor stays. Develop itineraries or experiential packages that more closely connect these attractions to downtown, inviting visitors to actively engage with Hastings' history. Brainstorm ideas, such as an art class using traditional and natural materials, a buggy ride from downtown to the village, or a "step back in time" experience like a costume tea party. The staff of these attractions have expertise in what can draw visitors interested in historic attractions.

Signage

Hastings has invested in attractive interpretive and wayfinding signage across the community. An expert in intepretation who visited the community provided the following comments and suggestions:

1) Hastings has invested in interpretive signs that reflect the town's history, but an opportunity exists to create a better sequence to the signs. This will help the community more effectively tell its story. Several signs exist along the river, but you must read them with your back to the water. A thorough assessment of the city's intepretive signage would help identify the best placement and sequence of information.

2) Signs could include information about who was responsible for their development, similar to the adopt-a-park signs. Doing so provides an opportunity to increase interest in local museums, the Hastings Historical Society, and Chamber of Commerce. Consider partnering on future sign replacements to share costs. When possible, include recognition and visiblity for the different groups who provided interpretation. If not already in place, establish a community-wide plan for signs to ensure a consistent and cohesive look with those in the Historic District and wider Hastings community.

3) The Mississippi River Trail (MRT) bike path seemed well signposted, and MRT signage was consistent. There was some confusion, however, about where the MRT connected with local walk/bike paths. Consider an assessment to ensure all city paths are consistently and cohesively signed. If possible, consider posting an informational sign for MRT, as not all visitors will know what it is, where it goes, or the length of different sections.

4) There are a number of informational maps downtown. Consider placing a kiosk with these maps in one location to help visitors better plan their walk/bike/run. Also, consider including distances between points of interest to assist visitors in planning their routes.

Cultural/Heritage Tourism: Next Steps for Consideration

Short-Term Ideas and Strategies

- Make the walking tour map of historic buildings downtown more widely available.
- Redesign or reorganize information on Hastings' tourism website (www.visithastingsmn.org) about the downtown area, as well as sections about what to do in the community and region. Right now, it feels more like a chamber website and appeared to only list members. For example, there is a photo of downtown with a link that says shopping, but most of the options listed are for dining establishments. Additionally, many shops downtown are not included on the list.
- Work with MNDOT to place additional signage for the Historic District on the north side of the bridge on Highway 61. Seek a spot that gives drivers time to make decisions, for example, near the stoplight about a mile north of the bridge.
- Provide regular customer service/hospitality training to businesses across the community.

- Consider tours of key tourism attractions for those employed in the local economy to familiarize them with what there is to do and see in Hastings.
- Use notice boards more intentionally to promote events and other regional attractions.
- Enlarge maps on information boards, and use larger text for visitors with visual limitations.
- Tap local artists, including authors and actors, to offer book readings, demonstrations, etc., in collaboration with downtown businesses and galleries.
- Create 1, 2 or half day itineraries around themes (e.g. family-oriented activities, outdoor adventure, biking, regional history, etc) and post them on www.visithastingsmn.org An example is found at https://visitowatonna.org/itineraries/

Long-Term Ideas and Strategies

- Develop a long-term economic development plan for downtown as a tourism destination with boutique shops, art galleries, dining, and lodging.
- Support the Historic District with funding, zoning, and planning to establish and sustain it as a historic and cultural destination.
- Expand the arts, including public art.
- Enhance wayfinding and interpretation signage.
- Add distances to/between attractions to signs.
- Create a sequenced walking tour using the interpretive signs to tell the story of Hastings' development.
- Establish a visitor center downtown and staff it at peak times, such as weekends.
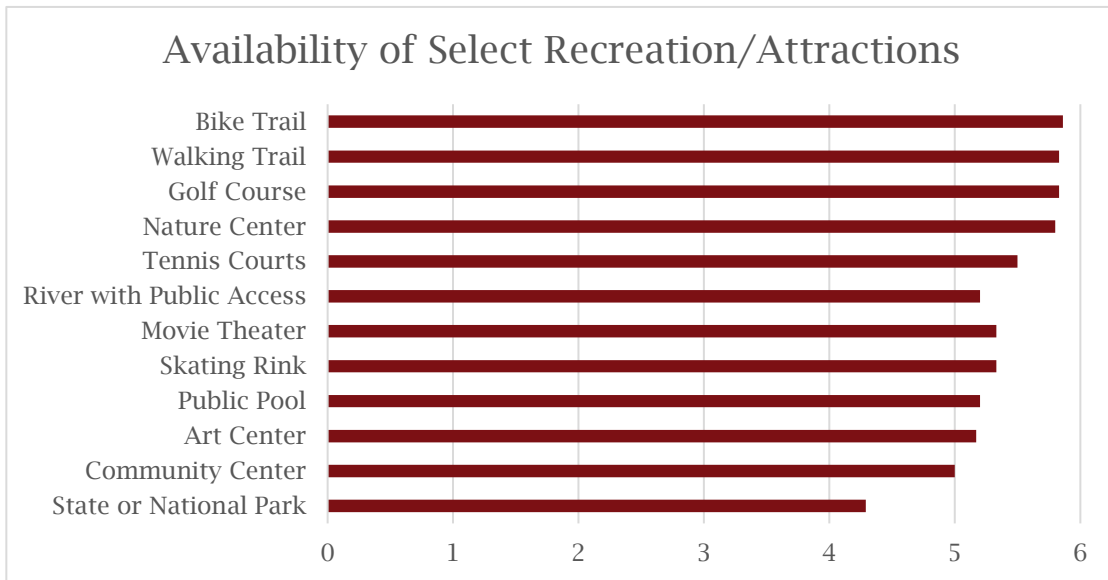
Trend: Active Lifestyle and Nature-based Tourism

Travelers today are interested in participating in some type of physical activity, recreation, or other activity. The "2014 Global Wellness Economy Monitor," conducted by SRI International, found that wellness tourism accounted for $494 billion in revenue in 2013, an increase of nearly 13 percent since 2012. According to the study, wellness travel encompasses two types of trips—those specifically designed to maintain and improve health and those in which travelers keep their healthy habits while they travel for business or pleasure. In the U.S., it is estimated that one in four adults (41 million people) are consumers of Lifestyles of Health and Sustainability (LOHAS).

Many tourists plan trips specifically for active lifestyle or wellness activities—sports or recreation activities like biking or hiking, or visiting spas and health resorts. They also enjoy yoga retreats, national or state parks, gyms and fitness centers, and even specialty restaurants. Many of these activities are assets that enhance the quality of life for residents as well.

Findings from Observations of Expert Team and Mystery Visitors

Hastings has natural and man-made attractions, both in the community and regionally. These attractions appeal to active lifestyle and nature-based travelers. Facilities like the aquatic center and golf and disc golf courses improve the quality of life for residents and provide opportunities for visitors. The abundance of parks, green spaces, trails, lakes, and rivers encourage recreational pursuits. Visitors and expert team members were very positive about the amount of green space and the quality of parks in the community. They visited several the parks, including Jaycee Park, Levee Park, Lake Rebecca, and Vermillion Falls Park. The trail infrastructure connects many of these parks, inviting residents and visitors to spend time outdoors. These parks and trails also provide an opportunity for greater regional marketing to outdoor and biking enthusiasts.

Availability of Select Recreation/Attractions

Attraction	Value
Bike Trail	~5.85
Walking Trail	~5.8
Golf Course	~5.85
Nature Center	~5.75
Tennis Courts	~5.5
River with Public Access	~5.2
Movie Theater	~5.3
Skating Rink	~5.3
Public Pool	~5.2
Art Center	~5.15
Community Center	~5.0
State or National Park	~4.3

On a scale of 1-6 where 6 = widely available

According to the Hastings Chamber president and information found both online and in print, current tourism marketing targets biking and birding. More discussion of targeted marketing to these audiences is discussed in the marketing section.

Biking

Biking is a growing active lifestyle trend for travelers and residents alike. A recent study by the University of Minnesota Tourism Center (2017) found the number of bicycle trips in Minnesota was estimated to be between 75.2 and 96 million annually. The Twin Cities Metropolitan Area accounts for 69 percent to 72 percent of the total number of trips and miles traveled in Minnesota. More about this trend can be found in Appendix D. Hastings has a good local trail infrastructure and proximity to regional trails that help establish it as a biking area.

The nationally designated Mississippi River Trail (MRT) connects 700 miles of paved surface (road and trail) in Minnesota from the headwaters in north central Minnesota to the Iowa border and will ultimately run the entire 3,000 - mile length of the Mississippi River to New Orleans. The MRT includes 27 miles within Dakota County, connecting South St. Paul to Spring Lake Park Reserve and Hastings. Two trailheads are in Spring Lake Park, and the trail is designated for biking, walking, and inline skating. With the May 2017 addition of the trail in Spring Lake Park Reserve, Hastings now has more bike trail options offering a unique experience along the Mississippi River. Completion of the eastern section of the trail is expected in 2018/19, according to MRT's update on the Dakota County website.

The current Hastings Trail System map does not show the location of trailheads or places to park to access the MRT. Additionally, maps of the MRT do not show places in Hastings for bikers to stop. The outdoor trail map at Spring Lake Park Preserve, for example, only highlights the trail's route through Hastings. No information connects bikers to resources or the city's extensive trails. A kiosk or map of the MRT located at the entrance to Hastings welcoming bikers to the city might be helpful.

Expert team members and mystery visitors rode the trails and had positive comments about the asphalt surface, the availability of public toilets, bike racks, and drinking fountains. One mystery visitor missed signs for toilets but did find a porta-potty at the tennis court. This mystery visitor stated, "I wasn't aware of Hastings prior to my visit. The Riverwalk/bike trail is a hidden gem. I will be back to complete the trail, although some parts are probably more interesting to local residents than visitors."

Given the increasing interest in biking, work with Dakota County Parks and others to establish Hastings as a cycling center with access the various trails regionally. Understanding cyclists' needs, and enhancing amenities to meet those needs, can guide marketing strategies for this audience.

Birding

Hastings is on the Mississippi River Flyway bird migration route and has more than 300 bird species. The city is also part of three Important Birding Areas (IBAs), according to Audubon. This is a significant and unique opportunity for Hastings. In 2016, the community was designated the first official Bird City by Audubon Minnesota. The city and Chamber currently capitalize on this fact by providing information and a birding guide on the visithastingsmn.org and city websites. The Carpenter Nature Center also hosts a birding event, but there is potential to do more.
Explore additional ways to enhance the online map to make it more user friendly on smartphones, and make print copies of maps and guide more available in local establishments.

With Hastings' proximity to the International Crane Center outside of Eau Claire, Wisconsin, the Raptor Center in St. Paul, and the National Eagle Center in Wabasha, Hastings could become a destination that appeals to multiple demographic markets of bird enthusiasts. Potential for collaboration and partnership with leading resources is extensive, including Audubon, Cornell Ornithology Lab, Nature Conservancy, American Birding Assocation, National Park Service, and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, etc.

Hastings could become Minnesota's primary resource for migratory bird watching and education. Explore development of a "Birding Education and Interpretive Center" to educate visitors. A model of this type of center might be the World Birding Center in Mission, Texas. It offers information about bird trails, blinds for bird watching, board walks, expert knowledge from naturalists, and activities for visitors.

Carpenter Nature Center

The Carpenter Nature Center is a nice facility offering many opportunities for visitors. Classes and seasonal events, like the Earth Day Birding Festival or Apple Festival (concurrent with the nearby

Fischer's Croix Farm Orchard), attract day trippers. Packaging these events with other services (e.g., lodging and food) and occasions can increase overnight stays for targeted niche markets. The location of the Carpenter Nature Center, however, is somewhat isolated from the commercial core of Hastings and presents some challenges in linking it to other opportunities in other areas of the city.

Seek ways to more closely align the Carpenter Nature Center and Spring Lake Park Preserve to activities in Hastings. For example, the Carpenter Nature Center has an entire brochure rack of maps and activity information, but only one is for Hastings. Establish a plan to keep the rack stocked with current information about local attractions and visitor guides. This is an easy strategy to enhance visitor awareness of what else there is to do and see in Hastings.

Rivers

Hastings' location at the junction of the Mississippi and St. Croix Rivers is another unique advantage. Numerous ponds, side channels, streams, and smaller rivers flow into the Mississippi, including the Vermillion River. These landscapes and ecosystems invite interaction. Access to these areas is good, including the Riverfront, Spring Lake Park, and Lake Rebecca. These assets can be more fully integrated into tourism experiences. For example, canoe or kayak rentals can be offered at places like Lake Rebecca.

The beautiful revitalization of the Riverfront and Jaycee Park areas invites visitors to enjoy the space. Continue to encourage visitors to engage with the river. Examples to consider include offering transient boat slips at the marina, expanding the existing boat launch and dock to allow a commercial boat to serve visitors, or creating additional boating events.

Ideas shared by community members include creating an event focused on the river or an app allowing people to watch boats going through the Mississippi Lock and Dam.

One expert team member suggested reframing how Hastings thinks about its position at the confluence of the Mississippi and St. Croix Rivers may invite new ideas to attract visitors. For example, the city could further highlight its location as a gateway - perfectly positioned to explore either river.

Hastings is a partner in the Great Rivers Confluence group (http://www.greatriversconfluence.org) — how can the community work more effectively with other towns and organization members, including the National Park Service, to leverage opportunities or funding for tourism projects?

Vermillion Falls Park

Several experts and mystery visitors commented on the beauty of Vermillion Falls Park. One suggestion mentioned was the need for signage pointing visitors in the right direction to the falls. Additionally, providing information about the plant across the river and its history was suggested because of its prominence on the river. Several experts and mystery visitors used the Chamber's map to locate the park, but one person noted, "… Once we got there, we didn't know where the falls were, how far down the trail they were, or what kind of path we would be walking on—especially important for people with a disability." Another stated, "…The path was a little slippery where there was a small but steep hill to walk down because of the spray from the falls and the rain. We couldn't walk down the path very far because the trail was flooded."

Kayaking near the falls was also mentioned as a potential visitor attraction. Is this an activity that could be better developed and marketed? Kayaking could fit well as part of a nature-based adventure package with other attractions like the Extreme Sandbox and biking.

Regional Experiences

Hastings is well positioned as a suburb of the Minneapolis/St. Paul Metro Area and near several regional attractions. Strengthening relationships with nearby activity and nature-based attractions can expand marketing opportunities. Create targeted activity packages and experiences that will attract visitors for one or two days.   Key regional attractions include:

- Extreme Sandbox
- Afton and Welch ski areas
- Little Log House Pioneer Village
- Spring Lake Park
- Treasure Island Resort and Casino

Active Lifestyle and Nature-based Tourism: Next Steps for Consideration

Short-Term Ideas and Strategies

- Review and enhance signage visibility and content for trails and attractions.
- Highlight trailhead locations.
- Improve bike trail maps and place them around town and at gas stations/convenience stores.
- Create and market packages for winter opportunities, such as ski/snowboarding at Afton or Welch. Include lift tickets, lodging, and dining options to target niche markets.
- Develop seasonal packages and itineraries targeted toward birders that include lodging, guided walks, and meals.
- Enhance bird viewing maps for smart phones.
- Consider adding locations for bike rentals, bike repairs, and trailhead amenities.
- Enhance visibility and promotion of the public bike rentals downtown.
- Expand bike rentals to offer unique bikes for families, including multi-passenger versions that could be painted and "named."

Long-Term Ideas and Strategies

- Explore development of camping facilities near bike trails.
- Explore a cruise boat and dock near downtown.
- Develop an event to utilize local sport resources, such as biking, kayaking, and canoeing.
- Host a fat tire bike event during winter.
- Partner with other communities on a regional biking event.
- Work with PedalMN (www.exploreminnesota.com/pedal-mn/).
- Explore development of a birding interpretive center.

MARKETING TOURISM IN HASTINGS: FINDINGS AND STRATEGIES TO CONSIDER

Current Marketing Efforts

Hastings' current marketing efforts include websites, social media, advertising, and collateral print materials. The 2017 visitor guide is a combination visitor and new resident guide highlighting the community's amenities, businesses, and attractions.

The community guide and other printed marketing materials are available at the Chamber office and locations around the community. Marketing materials are focused primarily on businesses and activities within the city limits. Visitors are motivated by the opportunity to experience new places, activities and events, and they are not limited by geo-political boundaries. Look for ways to collaborate on or promote regional opportunities based on unique experiences to meet the needs of targeted visitor markets. Facilities like Extreme Sandbox, Alexis Bailly Winery, and Treasure Island draw visitors from across Minnesota and beyond because of the experiences they offer. Visitors are also traveling the Mississippi River Scenic Byway (https://experiencemississippiriver.com/the-great-river-road-the-best-drive-in-america/) which brings them through Hastings. Explore and strengthen marketing relationships with these businesses and organizations to extend marketing reach to shared audiences.

The Visit Hastings, Chamber of Commerce, City of Hastings websites and printed materials use a consistent look that creates an attractive first impression. The Downtown Hastings Business Association website also promotes a positive first impression. Although these websites create positive first impressions, multiple resources for marketing collateral creates confusion for visitors and requires those searching online to visit multiple webpages. It is unclear what resources a visitor should use when visiting Hastings. Once in the community, visitors need multiple brochures, maps and flyers to navigate the breadth of attractions, events and businesses. Conduct an audit of all current marketing materials across the organizations. Collaborating and pooling resources will lead to clearer, consistent and more effective tourism marketing materials.
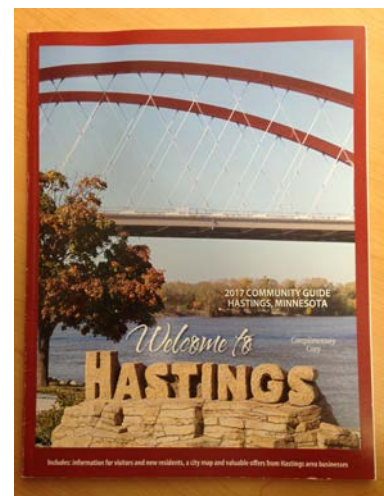
Information and resources for residents and visitors should be separate. For example, the 2017 community guide includes information for both visitors and new residents. Although there may be some overlap in information, current marketing efforts (e.g., visitor guide, website), which combine

information for visitors and residents creates a confusing message for visitors. The first several pages of the community guide are specific to new residents. Investing in a visitor guide that focuses specifically on visitors will also help create clear and effective tourism marketing materials. If this is not feasible at this time, consider reversing the order of information to place visitor information first.

There are several short-term, inexpensive ways to enhance Hastings' visibility and marketing strategies. Utilizing the free resources offered through Explore Minnesota Tourism is a short-term opportunity, but market research on current and potential visitors, and data on the impact of tourism marketing, is also needed to inform future decisions.

In addition to paid marketing, word-of-mouth is still the most important way people learn about and choose to visit a destination. According to the 2017 State of the American Traveler report, 66.4 percent say they rely on the opinions of friends and relatives as their primary inspiration for selecting a destination. Creating positive experiences not only meets the expectations of the current visitor, but it will also generate positive word-of-mouth that will reach others.

The following section of the report looks at three aspects of a marketing effort: market research, key trends for Hastings, and online presence and social media strategies.

Market Research

Focusing on Hastings' current visitors should be a priority. While the community has an anecdotal understanding of them, only limited data exists about who is visiting and staying in the city. Gaining more information about who Hastings' visitors are, where they come from, their average spending, and their needs and wants is needed. This will provide a stronger platform to develop an informed tourism development strategy and a baseline from which to measure growth and success.

A first step to determining this information is for the tourism bureau to work with local businesses to identify where visitors are coming from based on registration forms, guest books, and purchase receipts. For example, systematically gather guest zip codes from lodging properties, attractions or restaurants on a monthly or quarterly basis. Zip codes provide immediate information to both businesses and the tourism bureau about the geographic origin of guests without individually identifying them. Zip code data also enables businesses and the community to further segment their markets, based on the demographic and psychographic information available about residents in selected zip codes.

The map on the next page represents the origins of some overnight visitors to Hastings based on zip code input from select lodging establishments during a multi-year period. Based on this limited data, the core of Hastings' visitors are from Minnesota and neighboring states. Systematically gathering a more robust set of zip codes from local businesses will enable the community to identify prime zip codes for marketing and adjust over time if these change.
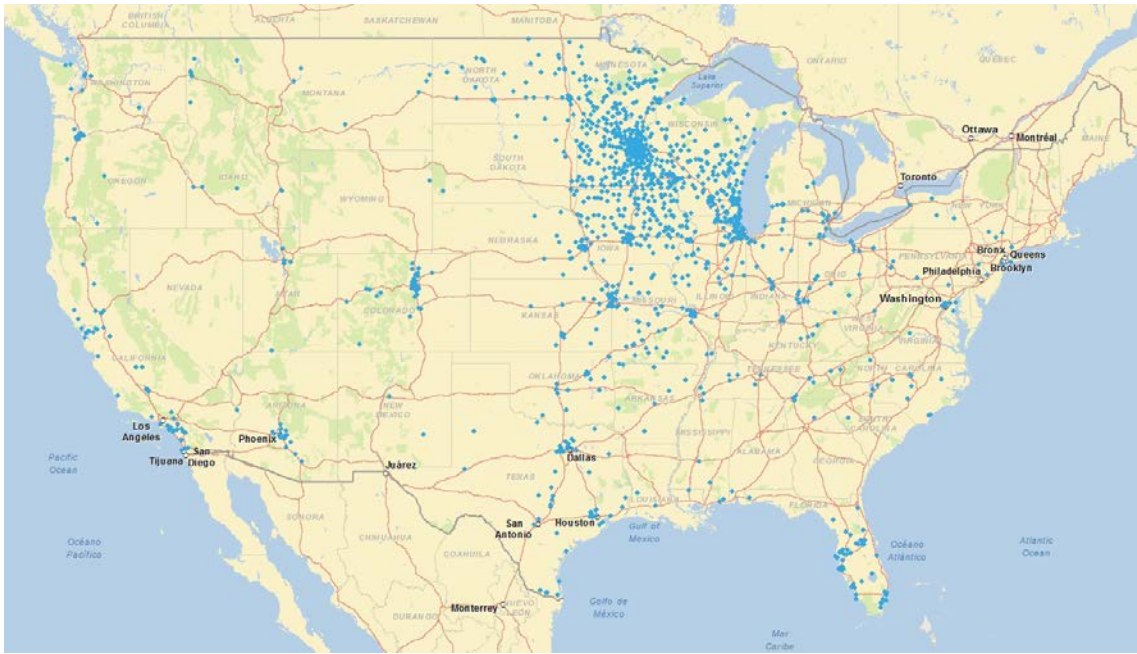
A second step is to conduct a visitor profile. While individual businesses likely have a sense of who their customers are, investing in a visitor profile study for the community will deepen understanding about who is coming and why. Knowing Hastings' market will help match the right target audiences for current services/products and inform potential business development.

Generational Marketing

Several community members expressed a strong interest in attracting the millennial market. Others suggested baby boomers are Hastings' primary target audience. Generational cohorts do share some common attitudes and preferences. For example, according to Destination Analysts Traveler Psychographic Intensity (2014), millennials are active, highly connected travelers with a desire for urban culture and culinary experiences. Baby boomers are more interested in less active, rural experiences that yield a sense of exploration. Both generations place a high value (65 percent) on authenticity and engaging with a destination's arts and cultural assets (65 percent for boomers and 72 percent for millennials).

There is a great deal of difference, however, within generational cohorts as well. Marketers are recognizing the need to segment even within generations to address specific market needs. For example, a retired baby boomer with no children at home may have different needs or preferences than one with college-aged children living at home. Similarly, a married millennial couple with small children will have different needs than a single millennial. While generational marketing to baby boomers or millennials may be a strategy for some communities, targeting a single generation as a market it is not a recommended strategy for Hastings now. Instead, focusing on multi-generational travel and niche markets is suggested.

Trend: Multi-generational Travel

One of the strongest tourism trends in the 21st century is multi-generational travel. A multi-generational trip is defined by AARP as a family trip that includes three or more generations traveling to a destination to vacation together.

According to research conducted in 2011 by Preferred Hotel Group, more than 40 percent of all active U.S. leisure travelers took at least one multi-generational trip during the previous 12 months. Making memories and spending time with family are cited as the primary reasons for multi-generational travel. American Automobile Association (AAA) research in 2014 found that more than one-quarter of Americans took multi-generational trips that included three generations, and an additional 15 percent were grandparents planning to take their grandchildren on vacation. This research is supported by Destination Analysts (2016), which suggests that approximately 45 percent of multigenerational travelers plan to travel more this year. Multi-generational travel fits well with Hastings' current assets and experiences.

Experiences that allow families to spend time together and create memories is important to this market (Preferred Hotel Group, 2011). At the same time, not all activities will meet the needs and desires of each generation. When designing experiences and marketing Hastings as a destination for multi-generational travel, highlight activities the entire family can participate in, as well as activities that are attractive to each generation. For example, the close proximity of Hastings' historic downtown to the river and bike trail presents opportunities to target families. They may all enjoy a bike ride, and as an expert team member suggested, "Retirees could enjoy the downtown buildings while the children enjoy the fantastic park amenities." Another expert team member noted the affordable lodging options in Hastings are well-suited for multi-generational travel.

Targeting multi-generational travel can include a strategy to engage residents in tourism marketing efforts. Asking residents about the experiences and activities they recommend to their own family (e.g., grandchildren or grandparents) can help develop experiences for this market. This also builds resident awareness and support for tourism.

Trend: Niche Market Opportunities

Expert team members collectively agreed the best strategy for boosting tourism in Hastings is to concentrate on niche markets. A niche market is a focused, targetable part of the greater market consisting of individuals with a shared interest. Niche markets cross demographics and can be clearly defined. This enables the community to laser-focus marketing efforts by creating and offering experiences that cater specifically to the needs and preferences of specific audiences. Hastings can use this approach to focus on the experiences with the greatest possible value to visitors and local businesses.

Hastings' current assets attract several niche markets: Cruise-In attendees, birders, and bicycle enthusiasts, along with those interested in antiques, history, and the arts. These niche markets are a

strong core in which to market local heritage/cultural, nature-based, and active-lifestyle tourism. Use limited marketing resources to reach smaller groups with a shared passion, such as history, the arts, or an activity like biking or birding. People engage in activities and topics that interest them, and knowing what these are helps build a long-term destination vision.

Cruise-In Car Show enthusiasts are a good example of a niche market. It is targeted to those with a passion for older classic cars. The number of cars displayed each week, and the long-term success of the event, is evidence the event is reaching its intended audience. Researchers observed that attendees cross all generations, with a good number of families and multi-generational groups present.

Niche Marketing: Next Steps for Consideration

Short-Term Ideas and Strategies

- Conduct an audit of current tourism marketing materials across organizations to identify duplication and opportunities to collaborate.
- Target one or two current niche markets and create a focused marketing campaign. Track its Return on Investment (ROI).
- Create packages targeted toward niche markets such as birders, history buffs, cyclists, snowboarders, and multi-generational markets. Packages could include a bike or kayak rental, lift tickets for winter sports, an art or nature class, lodging, and a meal.
- Promote local "*Staycation experiences*" to residents that will also reach the Visiting Friends and Relatives (VFR) market.
- Put local marketing materials at key regional locations. For example, the Carpenter Nature Center has an entire brochure rack of maps, activities, and events, but only one brochure was for Hastings.
- Expand community involvement with group tours via volunteer guides and storytelling opportunities.
- Enhance the historic walking tour map on the Visit Hastings and Downtown Hastings websites.
- Identify and follow targeted niche markets on social media platforms to gain insight about their interests. This can also lead to advertising opportunities.
- Reach out to Extreme Sandbox and Treasure Island, among others, to invite perspective about Hastings' tourism and to solicit marketing or partnering ideas.

Long-Term Ideas and Strategies

- Conduct a visitor profile for Hastings.
- Create a marketing plan to reach targeted markets.
- Build stronger relationships with local/regional attractions (e.g., Carpenter Nature Center, Spring Lake Park Preserve, Alexis Bailly Winery, Extreme Sandbox, Little Log House Pioneer Village, and the ski facilities).
- Enhance trail maps with more service details regarding bathrooms, drinking fountains, etc.
- Explore the creation of a regional biking event with neighboring communities.
- Explore ways to provide written input for consumer travel guides, such as Lonely Planet, Fodors, etc.

- Work with Explore Minnesota Tourism to expand group tour opportunities.
- Consider organizing a media familiarization trip to gain media exposure. Explore Minnesota Tourism can assist with planning media familiarization trips.
- Build a systematic data collection process with lodging properties and attractions. This can begin with zip code data and other available data.
- Track and regularly report outcomes to stakeholders and residents using multiple methods such as social media, quarterly newsletters, and newspaper articles.

Online Presence and Social Media

A critical component of successful marketing today is a strong online presence and strategic use of social media. According to the 2017 "State of the American Traveler" report by Destination Analysts, 54.7 percent of U.S. travelers reported using social media for trip planning in the previous 12 months, and 65 percent utilized user-generated content when planning their trips. This indicates the need for businesses, attractions, and destination marketing organizations to be on social media platforms. It is also important to monitor and respond to comments on social media in a timely manner.

> *The key characteristic of the modern, hyper-informed traveler is demand for traveler content across media and distribution methods.*
>
> State of the American Traveler, 2017, p.6

Destination Analysts also found that 54.5 percent of travelers used mobile phones to access travel information but only 36.2 percent reported using a destination marketing organization's website for trip planning. Marketing campaigns increasingly require strong social media strategies, in addition to website and traditional print literature, to reach current and potential visitors.

Reaching travelers enroute and during their visit should also be a key component of marketing efforts. A Google/NielsenLife360 study in 2013 showed that 3 out of 4 mobile searches triggered follow-up actions, such as a store visit, a phone call, or further research; more than half of these actions occur within one hour. This was further supported by 2015 research from Kleiner Perkins Caufield Byers indicating that 51 percent of digital media is now via mobile devices.

According to research by Google (2016), individuals using mobile devices to search for travel-related information are most likely to search for destination activities, such as tickets for an event, dining options, things to do nearby, and car services and taxi services.

User-generated content is widely used by tourism destinations (Peltier, 2017). According to Daugherty, Eastin, and Bright (2008), user-generated content is "media content created or produced by the general public rather than by paid professionals and primarily distributed on the Internet" (p. 16). Within a tourism context, this often involves users posting photos of travel experiences on social media platforms like Instagram. Customers and visitors tend to trust user-generated content more than content and advertisements created by businesses or organizations. User-generated content also provides valuable insight into customers' needs and wants. According to Rendler-Kaplan (2017), "by watching what your users are sharing, you're able to get a better understanding of your target market, and perhaps even expand your target audience" (para 6).

Findings from Observations of Expert Team Visitors

The expert team reviewed the Visit Hastings website (www.visithastingsmn.org) and social media presence, as well as the Downtown Hasting Business Association and City of Hastings websites. Both the expert team and mystery visitors reported difficulty finding the Visit Hastings website, as it was

not one of the top Google search results. Implementing search engine optimization (SEO) strategies can help improve Visit Hastings ranking in search engine results. SEO "involves using methods that help improve the ranking of a website when a user types in relevant keywords in a search engine" and is, in part, linked to a website's content and structure (Pan, Xiang, Law, & Fesenmaier, 2011, p.366). Internet marketing consultants can help develop SEO strategies.

The Visit Hastings website is an attractive site and appears to be mobile-friendly, but mystery visitors did experience difficulties navigating the site on their mobile devices. While reviewing the website, the expert team noticed the events listed on the Visit Hastings site include events for both visitors and residents. For example, events for a ribbon cutting at Walmart, local book club meetings, and breathing classes are aimed at residents. In addition, the business directory included businesses clearly targeted toward residents (e.g., apartments, assisted living, nursing care facilities, and office equipment, supplies and services) rather than those focused on visitor services. The mix of visitor and resident services may create a confusing experience for visitors using the Visit Hastings website. It is recommended that events and businesses listed on the Visit Hastings website include only those targeted toward visitors.

The expert team also suggested enhancing the maps page of the Visit Hastings website. Currently, the only map on the page is a parks and trail map, which also identifies community facilities and points of interest. Although the map offers a visual overview of Hastings, only select streets are identified, making it difficult for visitors to use the map to find points of interest. Consider creating a map designed specifically for visitor needs. It is also recommended that each listing on the website include a link to its location on Google Maps that is more visible. The current 'View on Map' link on the directory page does not readily draw a user's attention.

In addition to the Visiting Hastings website, the expert team also reviewed the city's social media accounts. The Visit Hastings Facebook page is updated often with information for visitors, but its Instagram account has not been updated since April 29, 2017. The City of Hastings is using social media to share bike trail information. This type of information is appealing to visitors. Can the Chamber and city share resources and links to more effectively reach potential visitors?

Creating new social media content takes time and resources. Encouraging residents and visitors to share photos on social media can help the tourism bureau source new content. It also shares residents' pride in their community and builds social capital. The expert team observed current efforts to source user-generated content with the 'Get Social' signs near the river walk and on a community board downtown. To supplement this effort, an expert team member suggested: "Partner with local Instagrammers or businesses that are on Instagram and invite them to post on the Hastings account to get another perspective. Regram (repost) photos from visitors that highlight the best of the community."

Encouraging and utilizing user-generated content provides the tourism bureau with valuable content that visitors will likely trust more since it came from residents and actual visitors.

Online Presence and Social Media: Next Steps for Consideration

Short-Term Ideas and Strategies

- Enhance search engine optimization (SEO) to elevate www.visithastingsmn.org in searches.
- Encourage business owners to claim their business on Google Places and Yelp to add information (e.g., location, hours, photos, menus), as well as to respond to reviews.
- Utilize the free resources available from Explore Minnesota Tourism. Use social media to market or promote packages to targeted markets.
- Explore location-based digital marketing strategies to reach in-town visitors or pass-through travelers.
- Encourage and utilize user-generated content.
- Utilize social media analytics tools (e.g., Facebook audience insights and page insights) to gain insight into potential visitors.
- Use the #OnlyinMN hashtag on social media posts and collaborate with Explore Minnesota Tourism's social media coordinator to share posts about Hastings from their account.

Long-Term Ideas and Strategies

- Encourage businesses to make their website mobile-friendly.
- Consider opportunities to tell stories about Hastings. Local schools and classes can be enlisted to develop this project, conduct interviews, and produce videos. This will also build social capital in the community.
- Consider hosting an InstaMeet to source user-generated content.

CONCLUSION

Hastings has many assets that are currently utilized and marketed for tourism. Creating a clear and compelling tourism vision, more intentionally delineating the goals and responsibilities of the Chamber and tourism bureau, and positioning the tourism bureau to lead the area's tourism marketing efforts, will help Hastings move forward. Establishing the city's historic downtown as a cultural/heritage and arts district will help draw visitors and provide an opportunity to engage businesses, residents, and local government in the process. This tourism development will require expanding unique shopping, dining, entertainment, and lodging options. Doing so will take time, but a vibrant historic and arts district will draw key target audiences and enhance the quality of life for residents. Linking the historic district to the region's range of cultural and recreational amenities will further create a quality leisure experience for visitors and encourage return trips.

Conducting a visitor profile will also help the community understand who is coming and better align marketing and tourism offerings with visitor interests and needs. Work with local lodging properties and attractions to create a systematic data gathering process, and concentrate on two or three niche markets that match the city's current assets. This will enhance targeted messaging and maximize marketing spending. Increasing visitation will also increase revenue. Clear tracking methods will allow the community to both measure tourism marketing effectiveness and communicate its value to residents and key stakeholders.

RESOURCES

- Explore Minnesota Tourism offers a variety of information, marketing opportunities, assistance, and grants.

  o www.industry.exploreminnesota.com

  o Lori Peterson, Metro Regional Manager, (651) 757-1876, Lori.A.Peterson@state.mn.us

  o They also offer a free, custom-built Minnesota travel information feed for your website that includes listings for area lodging, things to do, or events in your area. See more at exploreminnesota.com/feed.

- Minnesota Historical Society manages the Minnesota Historical & Cultural Heritage Grants. http://legacy/mnhs.org/grants

- University of Minnesota resources:

  o University of Minnesota Extension Center for Community Vitality offers a number of resources and programs related to community economics and leadership. http://www.extension.umn.edu/community/

  o The Center for Urban and Regional Affairs offers a Community Assistantship Program that gives student researchers the opportunity to apply their research and technical skills in real world community challenges; funding is available to help pay students' salaries and expenses. http://www.cura.umn.edu/CAP

  o University of Minnesota College of Design has several centers that offer project opportunities for students and faculty to work with communities on local needs. http://centers.umn.edu/unit/college-design

  - Minnesota Main Street Program: www.mnpreservation.org/services/minnesota-main-street/

  - Location-based Marketing Association: https://thelbma.com/

  - Cultural Districts information: http://www.americansforthearts.org/by-program/reports-and-data/toolkits/national-cultural-districts-exchange-toolkit

  - National Endowment for the Arts: www.arts.gov

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APPENDICES

U.S. TRAVEL ANSWER SHEET
FACTS ABOUT A LEADING AMERICAN INDUSTRY THAT'S MORE THAN JUST FUN

U.S. TRAVEL ASSOCIATION

LEISURE TRAVEL

- Direct spending on leisure travel by domestic and international travelers totaled **$683.1 billion** in 2016.
- Spending on leisure travel generated **$106.4 billion** in tax revenue.
- Nearly 4 out of 5 domestic trips taken are for leisure purposes (79%).
- U.S. residents logged **1.7 billion** person-trips* for leisure purposes in 2016.
- Top leisure travel activities for U.S. domestic travelers: (1) visiting relatives; (2) shopping; (3) visiting friends; (4) fine dining; and (5) rural sightseeing.
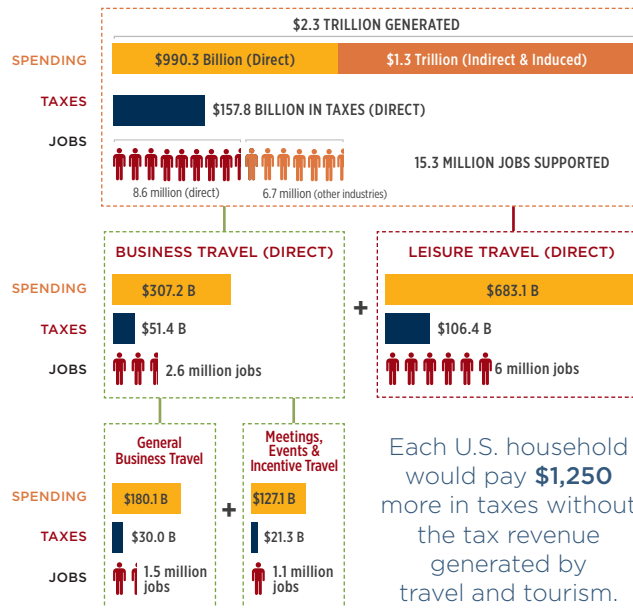
BUSINESS TRAVEL
(Including Meetings, Events and Incentive)

- Direct spending on business travel by domestic and international travelers, including expenditures on meetings, events and incentive programs (ME&I), totaled **$307.2 billion** in 2016.
- ME&I travel accounted for **$127.1 billion** of all business travel spending.
- U.S. residents logged **457.4 million** person-trips* for business purposes in 2016, with 38% for meetings and events.
- For every dollar invested in business travel, businesses benefit from an average of **$9.50** in increased revenue and **$2.90** in new profits *(2012)*.
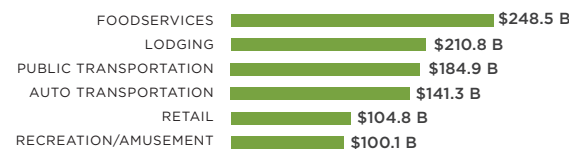
* Person-trip defined as one person on a trip away from home overnight in paid accommodations or on a day or overnight trip to places 50 miles or more [one-way] away from home.

U.S. TRAVEL INDUSTRY IMPACT

$2.3 TRILLION GENERATED

| SPENDING | $990.3 Billion (Direct) | $1.3 Trillion (Indirect & Induced) |

TAXES — $157.8 BILLION IN TAXES (DIRECT)

JOBS — 15.3 MILLION JOBS SUPPORTED
8.6 million (direct)   6.7 million (other industries)

BUSINESS TRAVEL (DIRECT)
- SPENDING: $307.2 B
- TAXES: $51.4 B
- JOBS: 2.6 million jobs

+

LEISURE TRAVEL (DIRECT)
- SPENDING: $683.1 B
- TAXES: $106.4 B
- JOBS: 6 million jobs

General Business Travel
- SPENDING: $180.1 B
- TAXES: $30.0 B
- JOBS: 1.5 million jobs

+

Meetings, Events & Incentive Travel
- SPENDING: $127.1 B
- TAXES: $21.3 B
- JOBS: 1.1 million jobs

Each U.S. household would pay **$1,250** more in taxes without the tax revenue generated by travel and tourism.

Source: U.S. Travel Association
Note: Direct spending totals do not include international passenger fares

= 1 million jobs

SOURCES OF TRAVEL SPENDING

FOODSERVICES	$248.5 B
LODGING	$210.8 B
PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION	$184.9 B
AUTO TRANSPORTATION	$141.3 B
RETAIL	$104.8 B
RECREATION/AMUSEMENT	$100.1 B

TOTAL: $990.3 billion

Source: U.S. Travel Association

INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL

- In 2016, U.S. Travel Exports (includes general travel spending, international passenger fares, as well as international traveler spending on medical, educational and cross-border/seasonal work-related activities) totaled **$246 billion**. International Travel Imports totaled **$159 billion**, creating a **$87 billion** travel trade surplus.
- International arrivals to the U.S. declined by **2.4 percent** and totaled **75.6 million** in 2016. Of those, approximately **37.6 million** came from overseas markets and **38.0 million** were from Canada and Mexico.
- The United States' share of total international arrivals is **6.1%** (down from **7.5%** in 2000).

- International travel spending directly supported about **1.2 million** U.S. jobs and **$32.4 billion** in wages.
- Each overseas traveler spends approximately **$4,360** when they visit the U.S. and stay on average **18 nights**.
- Overseas arrivals represent **50%** of all international arrivals, yet account for **85.3%** of total international travel spending.
- Top leisure travel activities for overseas visitors: (1) shopping; (2) sightseeing; (3) fine dining; (4) national parks/monuments; and (5) amusement/theme parks.

TOP 5 INTERNATIONAL MARKETS TO THE U.S. (2016 ARRIVALS)

ORIGIN OF VISITOR	2016
Canada	19.3 million
Mexico	18.7 million
United Kingdom	4.6 million
Japan	3.6 million
China	3.0 million

TOP 5 HIGH-GROWTH TRAVEL MARKETS THRU 2021 *(forecasted)*

ORIGIN OF VISITOR	ARRIVALS % CHANGE '21/'15
China	121%
India	72%
Argentina	50%
South Korea	43%
Taiwan	40%

Source: U.S. Department of Commerce – National Travel and Tourism Office

Direct spending by resident and international travelers in the U.S. averaged $2.7 billion a day, $113.1 million an hour, $1.9 million a minute and $31,400 a second.

BY THE NUMBERS
(all data 2016 unless indicated otherwise)

$2.3 trillion: Economic output generated by domestic and international visitors (includes $990.3 billion in direct travel expenditures that spurred an additional $1.3 trillion in other industries)

15.3 million: Jobs supported by travel expenditures (includes 8.6 million directly in the travel industry and 6.7 million in other industries)

$248.2 billion: Wages shared by American workers directly employed by travel

$157.8 billion: Tax revenue generated by travel spending for federal, state and local governments

2.7%: Percentage of nation's gross domestic product (GDP) attributed to travel and tourism

1 out of 9: U.S. jobs that depend on travel and tourism

No. 7: Where travel ranks in terms of employment compared to other major private industry sectors

84%: Percentage of travel companies that are considered small businesses *(2012)*

2.2 billion: Number of person-trips* that Americans took for business and leisure purposes

75.6 million: Estimated number of international arrivals in the U.S. in 2016, including 37.6 million from overseas markets

Travel is among the **top 10 industries** in 49 states and D.C. in terms of employment

Tourism & Minnesota's Economy

explore MINNESOTA

Economic Impact: Sales and Jobs

Travel/tourism in Minnesota generates:

SALES
- $14.4 billion in gross sales
- Almost $40 million a day

JOBS
- Almost 260,000 full- and part-time jobs
- 11% of total private sector employment
- $5.1 billion in wages

REVENUE
- $930 million in state sales tax
- 17% of state sales tax revenues

Note: Data for leisure & hospitality sector, 2015

International Travel to Minnesota

Minnesota's appeal as a travel destination extends across the globe, including:

- 505,000 Canadian travelers on overnight trips
- 311,000 additional international travelers from other countries

Note: Canadian estimate is for 2015; estimate for other countries is 2013-2015 annual average

Growth in the Tourism Industry

Sales at leisure and hospitality businesses grew 41% from 2005 to 2015, including 6% annual growth for 2015.

2005 $10.2   **2010** $11.3   **2015** $14.4

Leisure & Hospitality Gross Sales (in billions) 2005-2015

Impacts of State Tourism Advertising

- 3.5 million Minnesota trips
- $388.8 million traveler spending
- $37.3 million direct state and local taxes
- 2.85 million additional intended trips in next 12 months
- $98 to $1 traveler spending return on ad investment
- $9 to $1 state and local tax return on ad investment

Note: Impacts of Explore Minnesota's spring/summer 2016 advertising

Minnesota Ranking Among States

The economic impact of travel & tourism in Minnesota ranks significantly higher compared to other states in:

Traveler Spending	22nd
Travel-Generated Employment	18th
Travel-Generated Payroll	15th
Travel-Generated Tax Receipts	10th

Traveler Expenditures By Season

Winter (Dec-March) **24%**
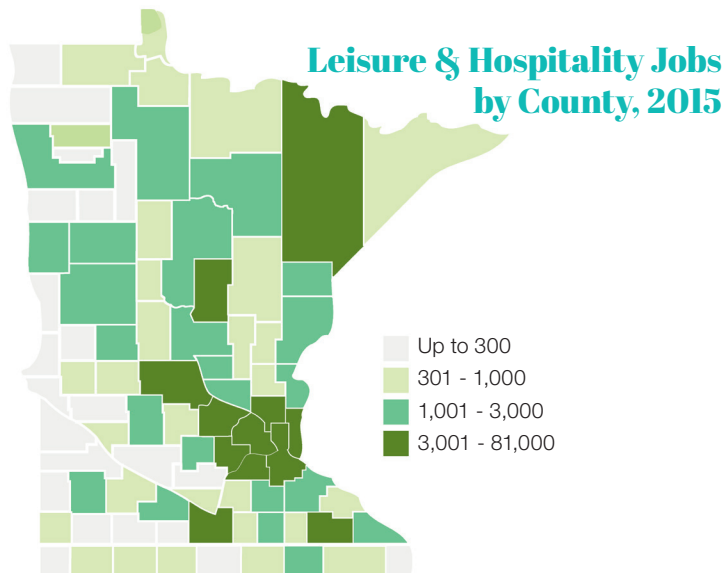
Summer (June-Aug) **37%**

Fall (Sept-Nov) **25%**

Spring (April-May) **14%**

Leisure & Hospitality Jobs by County, 2015

Up to 300
301 - 1,000
1,001 - 3,000
3,001 - 81,000

- Travel & tourism creates jobs and generates sales in every county of Minnesota.
- Tourism jobs represent all levels of employment, from important entry-level service jobs to high-paying executive positions.
- Traveler spending indirectly supports jobs in many other industries, as well, from financial services to printing.

Change in Room Revenue

Source: STR, Inc.

Year	Change
2009	-12.1%
2010	7.7%
2011	8.8%
2012	3.7%
2013	7.8%
2014	7.8%
2015	6.3%
2016	6.2%
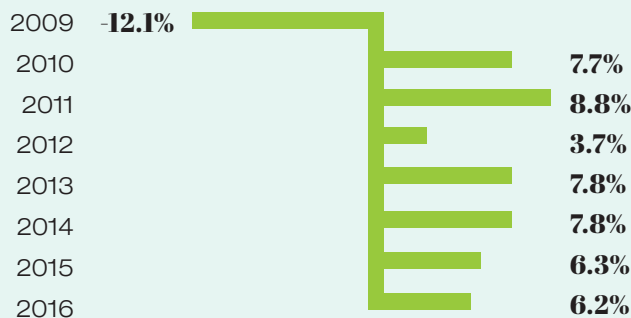
After a decline in room revenue in 2009 due to the recession, Minnesota lodging properties have seen annual increases in room revenue.

Traveler Spending by Sector

Spending during Minnesota's 71 million annual person-trips (including overnight and day trips) is distributed throughout the economy:

Food **24%**   Lodging **21%**   Retail **17%**

Transportation **16%**   Recreation **16%**   Second Homes **6%**

Find more information at: industry.exploreminnesota.com

Economic Impact by County

Minnesota's Leisure and Hospitality Industry, 2015

explore MINNESOTA™

Minneapolis - St. Paul Area	Gross Sales	State Sales Tax	Private Sector Employment
Anoka	$555,085,684	$37,586,179	12,612
Carver	$177,646,414	$11,761,998	4,080
Chisago	$64,355,293	$4,170,602	1,483
Dakota	$865,286,243	$57,065,025	17,924
Hennepin	$4,949,063,447	$321,330,860	80,992
Isanti	$36,193,682	$2,502,376	902
Ramsey	$2,035,892,951	$131,308,147	28,026
Scott	$388,592,224	$21,680,981	6,049
Washington	$524,648,155	$35,137,068	11,148
Wright	$224,508,943	$12,953,710	4,731
Region Total	**$9,821,273,036**	**$635,496,946**	**167,947**

Central Minnesota	Gross Sales	State Sales Tax	Private Sector Employment
Aitkin	$21,328,250	$1,456,078	500
Benton	$56,875,313	$3,785,083	1,277
Crow Wing	$228,963,084	$14,295,461	4,048
Douglas	$111,897,872	$7,427,748	2,263
Grant	$3,662,626	$242,638	49
Kandiyohi	$90,227,213	$5,895,741	1,748
McLeod	$43,971,144	$3,013,929	1,329
Meeker	$18,276,377	$1,228,082	505
Mille Lacs	$51,041,466	$2,833,706	948
Morrison	$43,950,895	$3,011,919	1,043
Otter Tail	$92,340,895	$6,162,674	2,079
Pope	$15,579,732	$1,055,131	333
Sherburne	$86,766,843	$5,799,534	2,281
Stearns	$324,690,734	$21,323,416	7,450
Stevens	$18,096,042	$1,046,661	379
Todd	$22,519,414	$1,490,994	358
Wadena	$17,100,732	$1,153,291	381
Region Total	**$1,247,288,632**	**$81,222,086**	**26,971**

Northwest Minnesota	Gross Sales	State Sales Tax	Private Sector Employment
Becker	$68,593,647	$4,445,630	1,594
Beltrami	$96,437,952	$6,329,245	2,222
Cass	$106,542,041	$6,606,764	1,789
Clay	$89,510,028	$5,696,211	1,888
Clearwater	$6,122,852	$444,346	192
Hubbard	$33,491,167	$2,274,170	742
Kittson	$3,267,496	$202,501	65
Lake of the Woods	$34,808,374	$1,892,762	498
Mahnomen	$13,088,579	$920,982	98
Marshall	$5,271,027	$405,564	122
Norman	$3,666,907	$235,822	77
Pennington	$24,690,332	$1,709,289	583
Polk	$49,227,227	$3,075,930	1,122
Red Lake	$2,331,443	$169,603	71
Roseau	$19,927,976	$1,253,675	360
Wilkin	$4,152,948	$306,779	115
Region Total	**$561,129,996**	**$35,969,273**	**11,538**

Southern Minnesota	Gross Sales	State Sales Tax	Private Sector Employment
Big Stone	$4,630,468	$327,205	106
Blue Earth	$192,778,355	$12,605,146	4,169
Brown	$40,644,628	$2,722,672	1,137
Chippewa	$16,967,013	$1,135,176	379
Cottonwood	$10,343,913	$717,711	284
Dodge	$11,903,238	$850,969	441
Faribault	$11,452,133	$793,771	288
Fillmore	$21,228,649	$1,451,898	617
Freeborn	$45,276,068	$3,030,933	957
Goodhue	$73,115,711	$5,053,181	1,755
Houston	$10,966,289	$769,582	288
Jackson	$12,917,925	$803,395	346
Lac Qui Parle	$4,729,469	$324,887	95
Le Sueur	$29,328,956	$1,868,797	615
Lincoln	$4,026,697	$287,722	112
Lyon	$52,231,902	$3,367,967	1,307
Martin	$33,111,158	$2,229,726	828
Mower	$52,008,472	$3,465,947	1,230
Murray	$8,145,410	$569,673	188
Nicollet	$37,222,466	$2,570,429	933
Nobles	$30,296,335	$2,053,916	677
Olmsted	$472,309,455	$31,339,154	8,688
Pipestone	$11,683,208	$810,290	318
Redwood	$27,257,232	$1,941,979	404
Renville	$7,892,369	$557,726	247
Rice	$144,833,361	$6,824,090	2,326
Rock	$11,119,246	$785,405	288
Sibley	$8,187,971	$601,888	185
Steele	$72,735,555	$4,450,922	1,566
Swift	$9,171,114	$647,568	217
Traverse	$1,806,966	$125,192	N/A
Wabasha	$28,064,314	$1,833,395	737
Waseca	$16,051,141	$1,071,945	430
Watonwan	$8,341,815	$552,156	214
Winona	$103,644,500	$6,997,585	2,298
Yellow Medicine	$13,895,629	$573,614	204
Region Total	**$1,640,319,131**	**$106,113,612**	**34,874**

Northeast Minnesota	Gross Sales	State Sales Tax	Private Sector Employment
Carlton	$71,008,633	$4,254,554	1,091
Cook	$62,042,952	$3,930,955	978
Itasca	$73,892,058	$4,758,588	1,549
Kanabec	$13,749,510	$926,503	331
Koochiching	$30,059,213	$1,944,314	595
Lake	$37,885,053	$2,549,617	827
Pine	$72,937,418	$3,838,868	1,043
St Louis	$552,268,576	$37,225,210	10,726
Region Total	**$913,843,413**	**$59,428,609**	**17,140**

Minnesota Total	**$14,416,991,174**	**$930,275,662**	**259,521**

Notes: State total does not equal the sum of counties or regions because some data is withheld to avoid disclosure of individual businesses; and some state level data is for businesses located outside of Minnesota. The Leisure and Hospitality industry consists of Accommodations; Food Services and Drinking Places; and Arts, Entertainment and Recreation.

Sources: Minnesota Department of Revenue; Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development

HISTORIC DISTRICTS

1. Local districts protect the investments of owners and residents of historic properties. Insensitive or poorly planned development can make an area less attractive to investors and homebuyers, and thus undermine property value. In contrast, historic district designation encourages people to buy and rehabilitate properties because they know their investment is protected over time.

2. Properties within local historic districts appreciate at rates greater than the local market overall as well as faster than similar, non-designated neighborhoods. Findings on this point are consistent across the country. Moreover, recent analysis shows that historic districts are also less vulnerable to market volatility from interest rate fluctuations and economic downturns.

3. Local districts encourage better quality design. In this case, better design equals a greater sense of cohesiveness, more innovative use of materials, and greater public appeal—all of which are shown to occur more often within designated districts than non-designated ones.

4. Local districts help the environment. Historic districts encourage communities to retain and use their existing resources in established neighborhoods. This reduces the need for cars, cuts back on pollution and congestion, and eliminates landfill waste.

5. Local districts are energy-efficient. Many older buildings were designed with energy conservation in mind, taking advantage of natural light, cross-ventilation, and climate-appropriate materials. Preservation commissions are also increasingly improving their design guidelines to make it easier for historic building owners to use renewable-energy technologies.

6. Historic districts are a vehicle for education. They are a tangible link to the past and a way to bring meaning to history and to people's lives. They preserve the original character of buildings and streets, while welcoming growth and innovation within those spaces. They are a living, active record of communities and their residents.

7. Historic districts can positively impact the local economy through tourism. An aesthetically cohesive and well-promoted district can be a community's most important attraction. According to a 2009 report, 78% of all U.S. leisure travelers are cultural and/or heritage travelers who spent, on average, $994 on their most recent trips—compared to $611 spent by non-cultural and heritage travelers.

8. Protecting local historic districts can enhance business recruitment potential. Vibrant commercial cores and charming neighborhoods with character attract new business and quality industry. Companies continually relocate to communities that offer their workers a higher quality of life, which successful preservation programs and stable districts enhance.

9. Local districts provide social and psychological benefits. People living in historic districts enjoy the comfort of a human-scale environment (a mix of aesthetics and functionality that fit the average person's dimensions and capabilities); the opportunity to live and work in attractive surroundings; a recognizable and walkable neighborhood; and the galvanizing effect of community-based group action.

10. Local districts give communities a voice in their future. By participating in the designation process, citizens can help direct their communities' path. Making these decisions together in a structured way—rather than behind closed doors or without public comment—gives everyone involved a sense of empowerment and confidence.

Source: Rocchi, Julia. (2015). National Trust for Historic Preservation. Retrieved from https://savingplaces.org/stories/10-on-tuesday-10-benefits-of-establishing-a-local-historic-district#.WXTBn4TyvX4

TOURISM ASSESSMENT PROGRAM

MARKET OVERVIEW: Bicycle Tourism

By Corryn Bradley, Undergraduate Assistant

INTRODUCTION

Bicycle tourism is a growing aspect of the tourism industry in Minnesota and across the United States. Thousands of people enjoy leisure riding, whether it is a few hours with family or a few days from state to state. Most leisure cyclists will travel to interesting destinations and highly rated trails. As one cyclist describes bicycle tourism, "It is the freedom to go as far as you want to and to go when you want to. There is no better way to connect with people." (Sani, 2014). In a first-ever global survey, the Adventure Travel Trade

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Association (ATTA) studied 200 tour operators and found that bicycle tourism has become more organized and more important for consumers who travel worldwide. Jim Sayer Adventure Cycling Association's executive director (Sani, 2014) points out that more states and regions are calculating the economic benefits of bicycle tourism, as well as single and multi-day events. Many people, especially at the state level, are advocating for bicycle tourism.

Bicycle tourism is defined as, "Any travel-related activity for the purpose of pleasure which incorporates a bicycle" (Building Bike Tourism, 2015). This definition is broad, but purposefully so, because bicycle use is so varied. Bicycle tourism is an emerging way of understanding the array of economic activities that involve a bicycle. It is where business, tourism, and advocacy meet.

Bicycle tourism takes many forms including road touring and day trail rides. There is also some difficulty defining exactly what bicycle tourism *is*. The generally accepted definition of tourism classifies a tourist as someone who travels more than 50 miles from their home and stays overnight (Sani, 2014). However, for communities day travelers can also be an important market and this is true in developing local bicycle tourism. In order to increase bike tourism, considerations and accommodations need to be made for cyclists.

Bicyclist Demographics

A study of touring cyclists in Montana (Nickerson et al, 2013) found that:

- Touring cyclists have a median age of 53 years old, 56% of cyclists have a median household income of $75,000-150,000, with 10% earning over $200,000, and 76% of respondents were male.

- 86% of touring cyclists indicated they bring a form of wireless technology with them during their trip. The most common uses for their wireless technology is for weather reports, directions/maps, lodging availability, sharing trip experiences online, and finding hours of operations.

- 92% of respondents indicated they were planning a multi-day cycle trip in the next three years with only 1% stating they were not planning a trip.

- Cyclists engaged in other related activities during the past three years such as: day road rides (87%), taking bikes on vacation (85%), independent bike touring (82%), casual riding in town (80%), and road racing (76%). Additionally, 46% of cyclists were spectators at a cycling-related event.

- Cyclists touring in Montana spend on average $75.75/person/day and stay 8 nights or more in the state on average. Forty-one percent of those nights were spent in either hotels/motels or bed and breakfasts.

- Other activities participated in during their Montana multi-day cycling trip included visiting historical sites (40%), visiting Lewis & Clark sites (38%), wildlife watching (37%), day hiking (33%), and experiencing local breweries (29%).

Additionally, a 2013 study of users of the Illinois Prairie Path, a 61-mile multi-use trail connecting 18 communities in west suburban Chicago (Trails for Illinois, 2013) found:

- Nearly 66% of respondents traveled five miles or less to use the trail. Overall, survey respondents came from 100 different zip codes, including a handful from Michigan, Iowa, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Missouri, Colorado, Washington, Texas, and one from South Korea. (N=679)
- 54% of respondents identified as male, 46% as female. (N=657)
- 56% of respondents were over the age of 45 and 19% were younger than 35.
- 91% of respondents identified themselves as Caucasian, 2.4% Latino, 2% Asian, and 1% African American. (N=662)
- 30% of respondents who live outside the immediate area reported spending money during their trail visit on the day they were surveyed.
- The average amount spent by those reporting a purchase was $41.50.
- Restaurants and bars (21%), grocery and convenience stores (10%) and vehicle expenses (8%) were the most common expenditures.
- For nearly 60% of respondents across all demographics, cycling was their primary activity on the trail. Walking, nature enjoyment running and socializing as additional reasons for using the trail.

Bicycle Events

A very visible form of bicycle tourism that draws visitors from out of town is a bicycle ride, event or festival. There are many examples of community or regional bicycle rides as well as professional events such as races or competitions. For example, the Register's Annual Great Bike Ride Across Iowa (RAGBRAI) is a one week ride across the state on routes that change annually. According to the RAGBRAI website, it is the oldest and longest bike riding tour in the world. Started in 1973, RAGBRAI attracts participants and spectators from around the world. In 1997, an estimated 20,000 riders participated. The popularity of the ride has forced RAGBRAI officials to limit the number of riders to 8,500 each year. These events attract not only riders but also their family and friends who usually explore the town while attending the event.

Bicycle Tours

Organized bike tours are another popular aspect of bike tourism globally. A number of tour companies specialize in arranging bicycle tours. These companies put together itineraries and routes that include interesting destinations and scenic rides. Bike tours establish routes and organized events, and they account for a large majority of the bike tourism industry (PedalMN, n.d.). Regional examples include the Family Fun Minnesota tour, a six-day group bike tour of Northern Minnesota.

Opportunities for Communities

Heidi Beierle (2011), a bike tourism expert from the University of Oregon provides the following ideas for making communities cyclist friendly:

- Use "Cyclists Welcome" or "Bikers Welcome" signage at community gateways and at key visitor services, such as restaurants or motels.
- Have public restrooms available or ensure that at least one business offers free water and restroom access.
- Provide inexpensive lodging options, such as camping or hostel, along with hotel accommodations.
- Keep key destinations open at convenient times. Bicycle tourists travel every day of the week and usually begin riding early in the morning.
- Ensure restaurants and lodging either have Wi-Fi or know where cyclists may access it. If the area has poor cell coverage, know the best locations to find a signal.
- Educate local residents to develop friendly rapport with visitors, particularly cyclists, within the community and on the road. Every cyclist is a potential customer, and local residents can have a significant effect on whether or not the cyclist spends money in a community.
- Provide visible bike parking outside of restaurants, coffee shops, and cafes and understand that cyclists may want to sit within the business where they can see their bikes.
- For lodging establishments, allow cyclists to bring bicycles inside their room. Provide rags for use on bikes or other dirty items. Let cyclists know what time services (such as food, laundry, or entertainment) close for the evening and open in the morning.

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Assessing the economic impact and health benefits of bicycling in Minnesota

A 2016 study coordinated by the University of Minnesota Tourism Center

for Minnesota Department of Transportation

Report, fact sheets and videos available at

http://www.dot.state.mn.us/bike/research/economic-health-impact.html

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STRENGTHENING MINNESOTA'S TOURISM

The University of Minnesota Tourism Center is a collaboration of University of Minnesota Extension and the College of Food, Agricultural and Natural Resource Sciences.

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