MASTER PLANNING FOR TOURISM IN MICHIGAN

Belle Isle State Park. Photo courtesy of MDNR.

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Cover photo: Kayaker by Finn Terman Frederiksen

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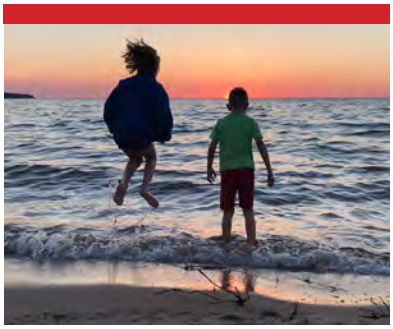
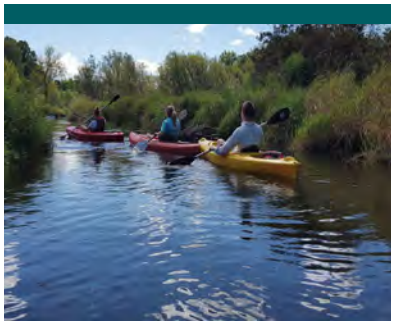
CONTENTS

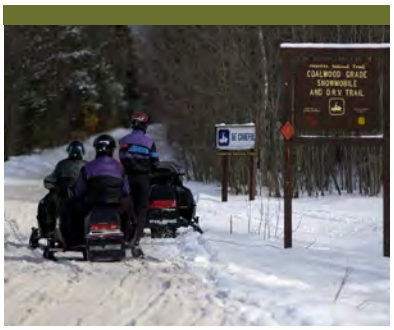


TOURISM AS AN ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT TOOL Page 6



CREATING A TOURISM ASSET INVENTORY Page 44

ENGAGING THE COMMUNITY IN TOURISM PLANNING Page 58



INFRASTRUCTURE PLANNING FOR TOURISM Page 76

Wilderness State Park.
Photo courtesy of MDNR.

CHAPTER 1
MASTER PLANNING FOR TOURISM IN MICHIGAN

ANDREA BROWN, AICP, MICHIGAN ASSOCIATION OF PLANNING

Michiganders are well acquainted with the natural and cultural features of our Water Winter Wonderland: freshwater coastlines, marine preserves, historic downtowns, trails, rivers, lighthouses, and acres of forests. And now, thanks to the far-reaching Pure Michigan marketing campaign, the rest of the country wants to explore our unique and inviting peninsulas.

While tourism has bolstered the economies of many Michigan communities for years, its importance has increased with the loss of traditional manufacturing and extraction industries. Communities may welcome tourist dollars, but they often struggle with visitor impacts on municipal services and infrastructure. In some cases, these impacts threaten the same natural and cultural assets that draw tourists to their community in the first place.

The state's tourism industry is critically important, but also fragile. The COVID-19 pandemic made clear how an unanticipated global emergency impacted the industry, but other less catastrophic events, like a winter without snow or a recession, could have equally devastating effects. While these are difficult times, they can provide an opportunity for communities to press the reset button, understand the challenges, and thoughtfully plan for a tourism economy that supports, and is supported by, their community vision and goals.

MAP, with a grant from the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Admission (NOAA) and the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes and Energy (EGLE), has convened experts throughout the state to identify best practices for "sustainable" tourism. The United Nations World Tourism Organization defines sustainable tourism as "Tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social/cultural and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities."

Patiently Waiting by Don and Janet Beasley.

Whether you call it sustainable tourism, community-driven tourism or just tourism, there is a growing body of knowledge about how communities could – and should – incorporate concepts of sound economics and natural and cultural resource stewardship into their master plans. In this guide, we periodically use the term "community-driven tourism" as a way to characterize this approach, in contrast with the marketing and "destination management" methods common to the tourism industry.

Master Planning for Tourism in Michigan is a tool that will help communities identify their unique tourism assets; find ways to balance economic opportunity with quality of life; and protect their valuable assets from being loved to death.

PURPOSE OF THE GUIDE

Promotion and management of tourism lies squarely within local government's duty to plan and control land use to safeguard public health, safety, and welfare. This guide has been created to help elected and appointed municipal leaders and their professional staff understand how to incorporate community-driven tourism into their master plans. It also provides guidance on how to work with tourism industry professionals to plan for tourism that supports the community's economy and quality of life while protecting and enhancing the unique cultural and natural assets that attract these visitors.

This document will help elected and appointed officials and planners:

1. Understand how the tourism industry operates
2. Identify the economic benefits and impacts of tourism in their community
3. Find useful tools and practices to incorporate community-driven tourism approaches into their master plan

To create this resource, MAP engaged with tourism professionals and local officials in coastal regions throughout the state, using a combination of surveys, interviews and focus groups. MAP also convened an advisory committee of tourism and planning professionals from across the state and consulted with Dr. Sarah Nicholls, an expert on the tourism industry.

The project team researched the tourism literature and searched for plans and case studies that would provide direction for Michigan communities.

In the end, this project identified a gap between traditional tourism marketing efforts and the master plans for economic development, land use, and public infrastructure that provide communities with the foundation for a beneficial tourism economy. This guide is a first attempt to close the gap.

The following chapters were written by experts in the fields of business, natural resources, marketing, resiliency, and land use planning. Their work provides helpful insights into many aspects of a traditional master planning process, including data collection, stakeholder engagement, goal identification and plan implementation. For a deeper look at each topic, a list of resources is provided at the end of each chapter and in the Appendices.

By Dawn's Early Light
by Ken Bosma.

Downtown Holland, Michigan.
Photo courtesy of LIAA.

Photo courtesy of MDNR.

CHAPTER 2
TOURISM AS AN ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT TOOL

SARAH NICHOLLS, PHD,
SWANSEA UNIVERSITY

Tourism in Michigan is big business. In 2018, there were 124.8 million visitors to the state (including in-state travelers) who spent $25.7 billion. The industry accounts for about 6% of all Michigan jobs and generates $2.8 billion in state and local taxes annually (Tourism Economics, 2019). Tourism is the second-largest industry in the state, behind only manufacturing.

Tourism covers a range of activities – typically leisure, business, or visiting friends and relatives (VFR) – and can take place in a variety of settings, from urban to rural to waterfront. Though about three-quarters of Michigan's tourism spending is generated by leisure and VFR visitors, business travelers are valued for their typically larger per person/night spends on lodging, food/beverage and entertainment.

The vast majority (over 90%) of visitors to Michigan come from within the US. Canada is the state's largest international market, followed by Germany, China and the United Kingdom (Detroit Metropolitan Airport, 2017).

Accommodation types vary from one-of-a-kind destination properties (e.g., Mackinac Island's Grand Hotel) to a range of chain-branded hotels and motels, independent B&Bs and guest houses and publicly- and privately-owned campgrounds. While Michigan has a long tradition of second or vacation home ownership, in recent years the state has seen a rise in short-term vacation rentals, including Vacation Rental by Owner (VRBO) and Airbnb offerings.

Though accommodations and attractions commonly come to mind, tourism is a much more complex industry. While attractions and events represent the primary draw for most leisure visitors, transportation, food and beverage, and shopping are all vital components of most trips. The key providers of these services are supported by a host of intermediary activities, including planning and development, financing and insurance, advertising and marketing, arrangements and sales, and health, safety and security.

Taken together, these primary and secondary providers are owned, managed and operated by a wide variety of public, private and not-for-profit entities working at all scales, from the local to the international, and each with different mandates and missions/visions/values.

Many entities that are not frequented primarily by tourists may not even realize that they are an essential part of the tourism industry, such as retail stores and gas stations. Interestingly, the U.S. government does not recognize tourism as a stand-alone industry in the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS). Thus, the industry lacks legitimacy and lobbying power relative to more coherent and better-organized sectors, and it is infrequently mentioned in municipal master plans.

Though traditionally considered strong and resilient at the international level (notwithstanding the yet to be determined the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic), tourism has always shown sensitivity to market fluctuations at national, state and local levels. As a discretionary activity engaged in during our free time and at our own cost, leisure travel is susceptible to variations in economic measures including prices (especially of fuel/transportation and accommodations), consumer confidence and exchange rates. The industry is highly seasonal

Harbor Springs Marina by Erik Przekop.

and dependent on necessary/desirable weather conditions. It can also be influenced by institutional factors such as the timing of holidays, political instability and conflict, image, and fashion.

Despite its positive connotations – for participants and for destination economies – tourism has increasingly become associated with a much wider range of positive and negative effects. Typically, these effects are divided into four categories: economic, sociocultural, environmental and physical (Figure 2-1).

FIGURE 2-1: IMPACTS OF TOURISM

	POSITIVE	NEGATIVE
Economic	New spending from outside the local area represents income to a community, which is further increased via the multiplier effect A thriving tourism industry supports new and stronger linkages with other sectors such as agriculture Visitors and their spending generate additional taxes, investment, jobs, and entrepreneurial activity Tourism helps diversify places traditionally dependent on primary or secondary economic activity	Increased imports necessary to meet visitors' tastes offset earnings (leakages) Repatriation of profits to out-of-state corporations offset earnings Jobs created tend to be part-time, seasonal, and/or lower paid Tourism can cause inflation and real estate speculation Spending on tourism infrastructure and services can divert funds from other important categories Over-dependence on tourism can lead to high sensitivity to industry shocks
Sociocultural	Residents appreciate the opportunity to interact with new people Showcasing the community increases spirit and pride Tourism encourages new/greater respect for – and generates funding for the protection of – heritage/cultural resources	Real and perceived crowding diminishes the experience for residents and/or visitors Local housing markets can be negatively impacted by the proliferation of short-term rentals and vacation homes
Environmental	Tourism encourages new/greater respect for – and generates funding for the protection of – natural resources and nature-based amenities, e.g., new trails and preserves	Travel to/around destinations generates greenhouse gas emissions Overuse damages the aesthetic value and other qualities of natural resources (via litter, trail erosion, increased noise, etc.) Tourists inadvertently help to spread invasive species
Physical	The increased taxes generated by visitors can be spent on improvements to community infrastructure and essential services	Excessive numbers of visitors can overwhelm key infrastructure (e.g., roads, car parks, sewer) and services (e.g., police and medical)

OVERTOURISM = CARRYING CAPACITY

Recognizing the variety and magnitude of tourism's impacts is best described by the term "carrying capacity". The media often labels what academics have long recognized as the concept of carrying capacity by the more evocative term of "overtourism".

There are at least four types of carrying capacity:

Physical carrying capacity = the maximum number of tourists that an area (individual site or attraction, or entire destination) can physically support. This might be based on the number of beds in an individual lodging property or available across an entire destination's lodging options, or by fire codes relating to numbers of guests allowed within a certain building.

Economic carrying capacity = the level of acceptable change within a local economy as a result of tourism, the extent to which a destination can accommodate tourism without negative impacts on local activities, or the point at which inflation caused by tourism exceeds the increased revenue generated by it.

Social carrying capacity = the level of acceptable change within a local community as a result of tourism, e.g., in terms of residents' perceptions of the appropriate number of visitors, reductions in the visitor experience, and measures such as rate of crime. Doxey's Index of Irritation (Figure 2-2) suggests that communities move through up to four stages of resident feeling towards visitors as the latter's numbers increase, from initial euphoria to apathy to irritation to antagonism.

Biophysical or natural carrying capacity = the extent to which the natural environment can tolerate interference/regenerate from tourists and their activities. Natural carrying capacity varies widely with the fragility and resilience of the ecosystem under consideration.

FIGURE 2-2: DOXEY'S IRRIDEX MODEL OF HOST IRRITATION (1975)

	SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS	POWER RELATIONSHIPS
Stage 1: Euphoria	Visitors and investors welcome	Little planning or formalized control
Stage 2: Apathy	Visitors taken for granted Formal relationships between hosts and guests	Marketing is the prime focus
Stage 3: Annoyance	Resident misgivings about tourism Range of saturation points approached	Planners attempt to control by increasing infrastructure rather than limiting growth Local protest groups develop to challenge institutionalized tourism power
Stage 4: Antagonism (as observed recently in places such as Venice and Barcelona)	Irritations openly expressed Residents perceive tourists as cause of problems	Remedial planning fighting against pressures of increased promotion to offset declining reputation of destination Power struggle between interest groups

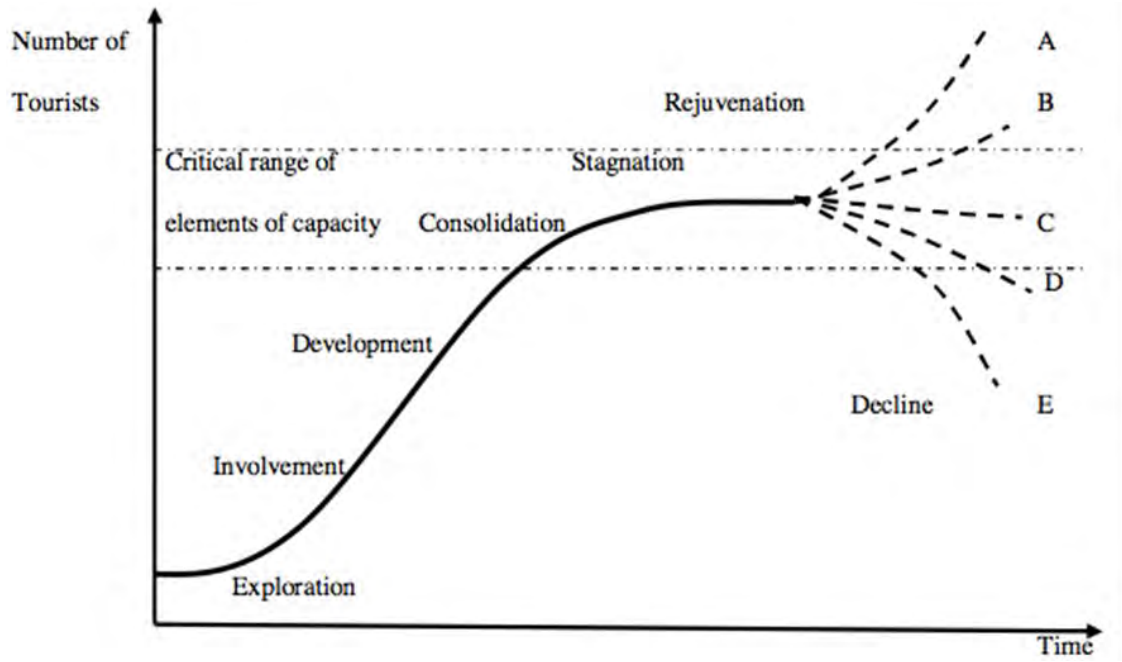
Source: Travel and Tourism Research Association Sixth Annual Conference Proceedings

Unfortunately, few of these types of carrying capacity (besides the physical ones imposed by law) are easy to calculate, and many destinations learn only by experience when they have exceeded their limits.

Butler's Tourism Area Life Cycle model (Figure 2-3) suggests that places move through six stages of tourism development as growth in visitor numbers continues, from exploration, to involvement, to development, to consolidation, to stagnation, to rejuvenation or decline (Butler, 1980).

Importantly, discussion of capacity and overuse highlights the critical need to consider residents and their perceptions of tourism levels. Most destination assets are also used by local people who are not on vacation. In seasonal destinations, local residents provide the most – or at least more consistent –visitor/customer, and so their attitudes toward increased non-local use are critical to assess.

FIGURE 2-3: BUTLER'S TOURISM AREA LIFE CYCLE MODEL



Source: Tourism Area Life Cycle Volumes 1 and 2: Conceptual and Theoretical Issues (Butler, 2006)

It is also essential to recognize that different local people experience tourism/tourists in different ways: some benefit directly from tourism via business or jobs, whereas others do not; some like to showcase and share their local assets with visitors, while others do not. Accommodating this diversity of attitudes and perceptions is challenging! Therefore, a key principle is that active inclusion and involvement of all constituencies currently or likely to be impacted by tourism in a community – individuals and public, private and not-for-profit organizations, whether involved in tourism or not – is essential to the kind of comprehensive and strategic planning needed to maximize the benefits and minimize the costs of tourism.

Ideally, this approach will allow communities to consciously reframe tourism from a tool of economic development to one of broader community development, thereby recognizing the contributions of tourism to placemaking, quality of life, and the stewardship of our natural and cultural resources.

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Tourism Economics (2019) Economic impact of tourism in Michigan

Bridge on Manistee River Trail.
Photo courtesy of MDNR.

VASA Trail, Traverse City, Michigan.
Photo by Gary Howe.

CHAPTER 3
TOURISM AND MASTER PLANS

WENDY RAMPSON, AICP, MICHIGAN ASSOCIATION OF PLANNING

In the initial phase of this project, the project team looked for examples of local land use master plans or plan elements that addressed tourism and its impacts, both positive and negative. While there are many examples of country- or state-level "ecotourism" plans, there are very few examples of municipal master plans that directly address tourism, and fewer that incorporate the concepts of sustainable or community-driven tourism.

In reviewing plans from across the United States, three communities stood out for their efforts to plan for tourism: Sedona, Arizona; Kauai County, Hawaii; and Charleston, South Carolina. Highlights of their plans are provided in this chapter.

SEDONA, ARIZONA

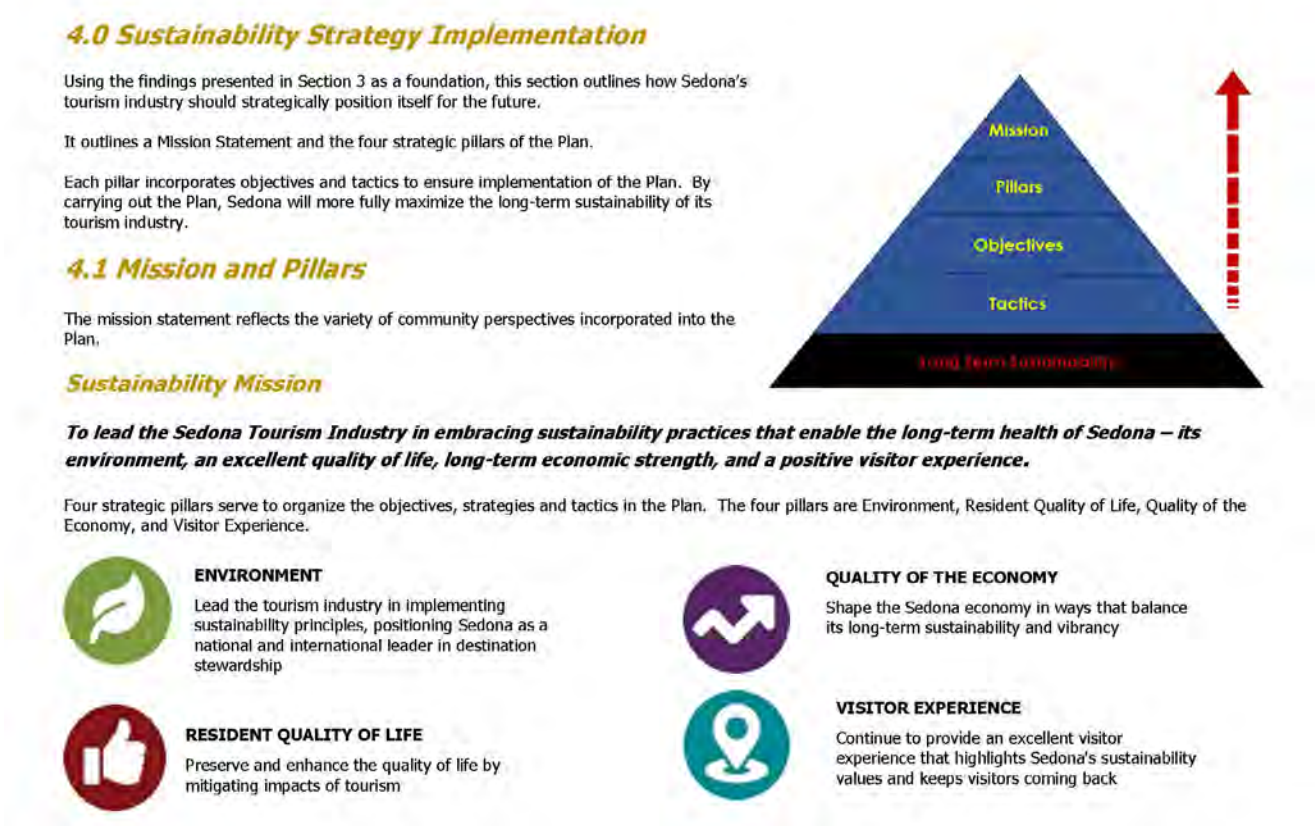
The ***Sedona (Arizona) Sustainable Tourism Plan (2018)*** started as a strategic planning effort for the local tourism organization, the Sedona Chamber of Commerce & Tourism Bureau (SCC&TB). After undergoing a destination assessment through the Global Sustainable Tourism Council, an organization that sets standards for sustainability of tourism operations and destination development, the SCC&TB partnered with the city of Sedona to address the assessment findings.

The planning effort started off by collecting information on the state of the industry and conducting resident, business and visitor surveys of attitudes about tourism and potential sustainable practices. The resulting plan is a stand-alone tourism master plan based on four goals, called "pillars," around which the plan's objectives and actions were framed (Figure 3-4). The goals are:

- Environment: Lead the tourism industry in implementing sustainability principles, positioning Sedona as a national and international leader in destination stewardship.
- Resident Quality of Life: Preserve and enhance the quality of life by mitigating impacts of tourism.
- Quality of the Economy: Shape the Sedona economy in ways that balance its long-term sustainability and vibrancy.
- Visitor Experience: Continue to provide an excellent visitor experience that highlights Sedona's sustainability values and keeps visitors coming back.

For each goal, the plan provides several objectives, and these objectives in turn identify specific "tactics" for action. For example, under the Environment goal is an objective to "Launch initiatives that lessen impacts to lands (including noise, air and light pollution), and stimulate efforts for long-term sustainability." One of the tactics to address this objective is "Investigate approaches to limit impacts of trailhead parking in Sedona neighborhoods." The plan sets out responsible parties and a timeframe for implementation.

FIGURE 3-4: SUSTAINABILITY MISSION AND PILLARS, SEDONA



Source: Sedona Sustainable Tourism Plan (2018)

CHARLESTON, SOUTH CAROLINA

While not a traditional master plan, the ***Charleston Tourism Management Plan*** is an example of a targeted municipal planning approach to issues of overtourism. The 2015 update was developed in response to the community vision of "… maintaining the critical and delicate balance between Charleston's residential quality of life and the tourism economy, while preserving Charleston's authenticity and sense of place, especially its architectural and cultural heritage."

The plan identifies five goals:

- Tourism Management & Enforcement Goal: To manage and monitor tourism for the benefit of residents, industry, and visitors
- Visitor Orientation Goal: To make visiting the City of Charleston a seamless process
- Quality of Life Goal: To sustain a reasonable balance between tourism and the quality of life in Charleston's historic residential neighborhoods
- Special Events Goal: To ensure that special events enhance and respect the community
- Mobility/Transportation Goal: To create a safe, efficient, simple-to-use transportation network that serves both residents and visitors throughout the City

One of the objectives cited for the Special Events goal is "Manage special events to reduce impact on neighborhoods to an appropriate level. Figure 3-5 shows the strategies for this objective.

FIGURE 3-5: SPECIAL EVENT GOALS AND STRATEGIES, CHARLESTON SC

SPECIAL EVENTS

Strategies	Completion Milestones	Owner
Manage special events to reduce impact on neighborhoods to an appropriate level		
Limit the number of Special Events south of the Septima Clark Parkway to the current level	6 Months	City- SEC
Employ a full time Special Events Coordinator	6 Months	City- Mayor
Provide adequate restrooms and parking for events	Ongoing	City- SEC
Provide new locations and identify underutilized sites throughout the City for events	Ongoing	City- SEC
The Special Events Committee should evaluate each event (post event) to include a self-evaluation report by the sponsor	1 Year	City- SEC
Amend ordinance to exclude exceptions to events- all events must go to the Special Events Committee	1 Year	City- SEC & Legal
Minimize street closures	Ongoing	City- SEC

Source: Charleston Tourism Management Plan (2015)

KAUA'I COUNTY, HAWAII

The Kaua'i Kakuo (Hawaii) General Plan, adopted in 2018, is an example of a comprehensive plan that integrates tourism throughout the document. In its introductory narrative, the plan acknowledges that the island's economy is vulnerable to overdependence on tourism, especially considering its impacts on traffic, housing and the island's natural and cultural resources.

The plan is organized around four overarching goals (Figure 3-6):

- A Sustainable Island: Growing responsibly to meet the needs of current and future generations without depleting resources.
- A Healthy and Resilient People: Increasing health, vitality, and resilience of communities through improving the natural, built, and social environment and responding to impacts from climate change.
- An Equitable Place, with Opportunity for All: Fostering diverse and equitable communities with vibrant economies, access to jobs and housing, and a high quality of life.
- A Unique and Beautiful Place: Stewardship and protection of the natural, cultural, social, and built environment assets that are of value to the community.

The Kaua'i plan notes that the vision upon which the goals are based reflects and clarifies the community values articulated in their previous general plan, with the main difference being the sense of urgency for recommended land use actions to be pursued. In other words, there often is no need to reinvent the wheel in the goal-setting process.

In the plan's chapter on Economy is a section devoted to tourism. The recommendations in this section acknowledge and build upon the business community's Tourism Strategic Plan. The tourism section outlines the employment data for this sector, which accounts for a third of the island's economic output and contrasts it with cost of living and income data.

Using this data, the plan sets forth strategies for focusing resort development in certain areas designated for visitor use. The plan notes "This shifts the focus from expansion of the visitor industry to implementing a model of high value, low impact tourism that puts protection of the qualities and values that visitors come to experience as a high priority." The plan goes on to provide permitting and code change recommendations to implement this approach.

FIGURE 3-6: VISION AND GOALS, KAUA'I HI

Source: Kaua'i Kakuo County General Plan (2018)

LESSONS FOR MICHIGAN COMMUNITIES

The Michigan Planning Enabling Act gives communities broad latitude to plan for issues they deem important. This research effort found a handful of Michigan master plans that acknowledge or mention tourism, but very few have specific goals or recommendations for addressing tourism as an economic development strategy or for tempering negative impacts.

One approach municipalities interested in community-driven tourism planning can take is to create a dedicated chapter in their master plan and integrate these goals and recommendations throughout the plan to create linkages with other areas, for instance, future land use or housing.

If tourism is the community's main economic base, then a separate tourism plan may be the best way to address long-term planning. While a non-traditional approach, a stand-alone tourism plan or element of a plan, similar to what has been done in Sedona, could focus attention most directly on the community's most important issues, including strategic land use policy, public infrastructure investment and protection and enhancement of natural and cultural tourism resources.

Because tourism activity often spreads over municipal boundaries, a stand-alone approach might be best applied in a multi-jurisdictional or regional planning effort for the greatest impact. Note that this planning is distinct from a destination management plan, which may come from recommendations in a master plan, but is operational in nature.

SETTING GOALS FOR TOURISM

One of the most challenging tasks in a master planning process is identifying shared community goals. To do this well, the planning process must start with a thoughtful community engagement strategy that pulls in a wide and representative array of voices from the community.

Photo courtesy of MDNR.

Goals are broad statements that describe a desired future or course of action envisioned by the community. In the case of master planning for tourism, these goals largely will be targeted to the community's economy, land development, recreation and infrastructure.

In developing community goals for tourism, it can be helpful to start with an organizing framework. The Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC) provides criteria and a checklist for tourism "destinations" (i.e., communities) that can provide a helpful starting point. Some relevant examples include:

A6 INVENTORY OF TOURISM ASSETS AND ATTRACTIONS

The destination has an up-to-date, publicly available inventory and assessment of its tourism assets and attractions, including natural and cultural sites.

A7 PLANNING REGULATIONS

The destination has planning guidelines, regulations and/or policies that require environmental, economic, and social impact assessment and integrate sustainable land use, design, construction, and demolition. The guidelines, regulations and/or policies are designed to protect natural and cultural resources, were created with local inputs from the public and a thorough review process, are publicly communicated, and are enforced.

B2 LOCAL CAREER OPPORTUNITIES

The destination's enterprises provide equal employment, training opportunities, occupational safety, and fair wages for all.

B3 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The destination has a system that encourages public participation in destination planning and decision making on an ongoing basis.

B5 LOCAL ACCESS

The destination monitors, protects, and when necessary rehabilitates or restores local community access to natural and cultural sites.

C1 ATTRACTION PROTECTION

The destination has a policy and system to evaluate, rehabilitate, and conserve natural and cultural sites, including built heritage (historic and archaeological) and rural and urban scenic views.

RESOURCES

Sedona Sustainable Tourism Plan: visitsedona.com/sustainable-tourism-plan/

Sedona Fact Sheet: www.sedonaaz.gov/home/showdocument?id=40026

The End of Tourism as We Know It: visitsedona.com/sustainable-tourism-plan/the-end-of-tourism-as-we-know-it/

Charleston Tourism Management Plan: www.charleston-sc.gov/DocumentCenter/View/10419/Tourism-Management-Plan-2015?bidId=

Kaua'i Kakuo General Plan: plankauai.com/

Global Sustainable Tourism Council Goals: www.gstcouncil.org/gstc-destination-criteria-and-the-sdgs/

Hiker on Manistee River Trail.
Photo courtesy of the MDNR.

CHAPTER 4
TOURISM PROMOTION AND PLANNING IN MICHIGAN

SARAH NICHOLLS, PHD, SWANSEA UNIVERSITY

WENDY RAMPSON, AICP, MICHIGAN ASSOCIATION OF PLANNING

In preparing this guide, the project team set out to learn how Michigan communities were planning for community-driven tourism, if at all. This research involved surveying local officials and tourism professionals; reviewing legal authority for tourism planning; seeking examples of tourism plans at the state and local levels, and finally, listening to leaders in several Upper and Lower Peninsula coastal areas describe the opportunities and challenges of tourism in their communities.

PROJECT SURVEY FINDINGS

The project team contacted elected and appointed local government officials and tourism directors across Michigan's coastal counties during the summer of 2019 and asked them to complete an online survey. The survey considered their understanding of sustainability; current and desired involvement in tourism planning and other activities; and perception of who holds responsibility for tourism planning. The findings for each group are summarized here, and comparison information is provided in Figures 4-7 and 4-8. Full results to all questions are presented in tabular form in Appendix B.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS

Local elected and appointed officials and municipal planners viewed their current roles in relation to tourism as focusing on place making (creating a better place for residents and visitors) and contributing to economic development and the protection of sensitive natural areas. In addition to these activities, they thought they should in the future focus more on identifying and implementing sustainability

initiatives and contributing to the preservation of cultural heritage. More than four-fifths of officials rated tourism as extremely important to the economy of their county. Nearly three-fifths thought that the size of their tourism industry is about right; about 30% thought that their tourism industry is too small (we need more visitors) while 11% thought it is too large (we receive too many visitors).

Comprehensive understanding of the concept of sustainability was rather limited. When asked "What does the term 'sustainable tourism' mean to you?," the most common response focused solely on the sustainability of visitation (maintaining/growing visitor numbers); another 12% focused more specifically on the reduction of seasonality in the industry; and, 3% referenced the need to maintain/improve visitor satisfaction and likelihood to recommend. Though 12% believed that sustainability relates to not harming resources or the environment, only 6% included reference to the need to protect the environment and society and economy, of which only two also mentioned the need to simultaneously consider visitors and industry and hosts. Sixteen percent of responses mentioned residents/citizens; 16% referenced future conditions or the long term/run, and 7% used the word "balance" or "balancing."

TOURISM PROFESSIONALS

Staff of convention and visitor bureaus and chambers of commerce viewed their current roles in relation to tourism as focusing on tourism marketing, coordinating/building partnerships with tourism stakeholders, and enhancing visitors' experiences. They also perceived their roles to include tourism planning, though lack of community-level tourism plans in existence suggests that this term was interpreted to mean helping plan trips for visitors rather than planning in the sense used in this document. In the future, tourism directors believed they should place additional emphasis on multiple activities, including improving service quality, product development, attracting conventions and other events, conducting market research, and contributing to the protection of sensitive natural areas and preservation of cultural heritage.

Identification and implementation of sustainability initiatives fell relatively low on tourism professionals' priority lists. Nearly 96% rated tourism as extremely important to their county's economy, and 68% thought that the size of the industry is about right; 32% thought that tourism is too small (we need more visitors) while none thought it is too large (we receive too many visitors).

Understanding of sustainability seemed more developed among the tourism professionals than the government officials. Preserving or protecting natural resources and the environment was the most commonly mentioned response to the question pertaining to the meaning of this term, though attracting new/return visitors was the second most common answer (13%). Only two responses referenced the need to consider all three of the environment and society and economy; one other mentioned the need to simultaneously consider visitors and industry and hosts, but none mentioned all of these in a single answer.

FIGURE 4-7: IMPORTANCE OF TOURISM TO LOCAL ECONOMY

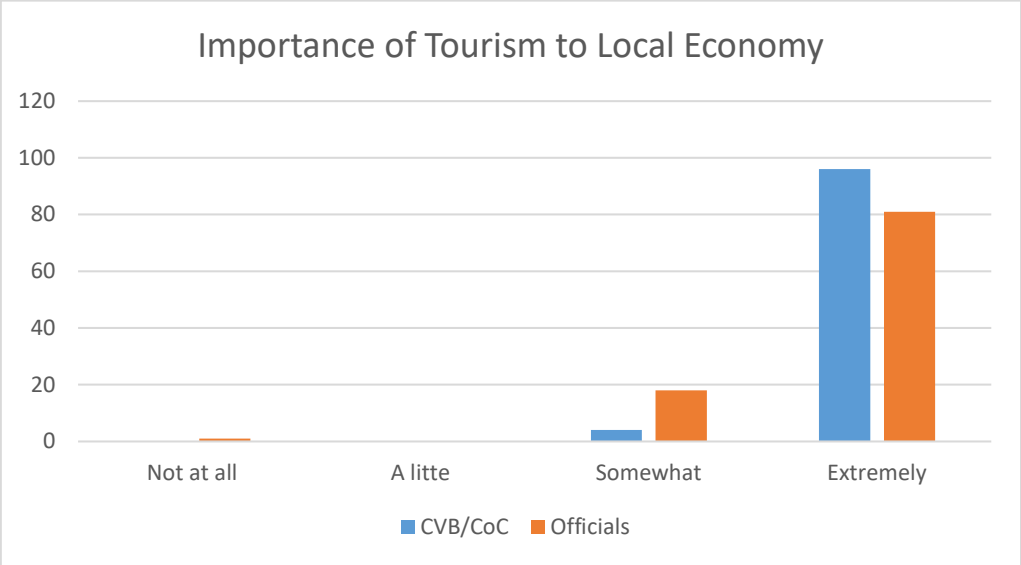
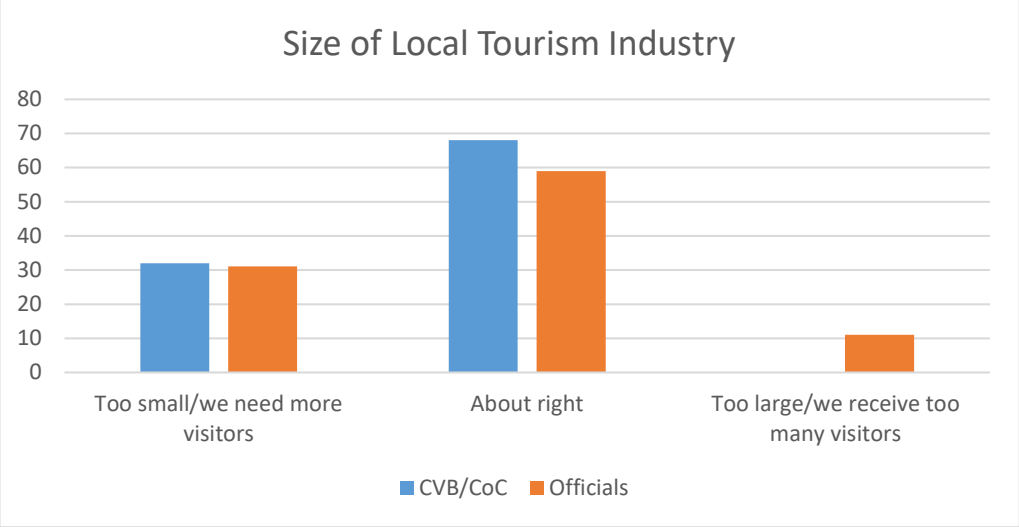


FIGURE 4-8: SIZE OF LOCAL TOURISM INDUSTRY



PLANNING RESPONSIBILITY

Survey respondents agreed that Convention and Visitors Bureaus (CVBs), Chambers of Commerce (CoCs) and local government hold the greatest responsibility for planning for sustainable tourism, while attributing lower levels of responsibility to county and state government and other entities or individuals.

FOCUS GROUP FINDINGS

In addition to the on-line survey of local government leaders, professional planners, and tourism professionals, the project team conducted focus group discussions in four coastal communities to capture a broader range of perspectives on current tourism planning practice in Michigan. Sessions in Cheboygan and Alpena were conducted in November 2019, and sessions in Marquette and Munising were conducted in December 2019.

Participants in the focus groups were asked about readiness and interest in sustainable tourism; the potential for incorporating tourism in local master plans; and suggestions for resources that could assist communities in planning for tourism. These groups identified several common themes.

Marquette Focus Group.

Grand Haven State Park.
Photo courtesy of the MDNR.

LINK BETWEEN TOURISM AND NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

Participants unanimously agreed that their community recognizes the link between their unique resources and tourism. In Marquette, they spoke of the importance of the trail network and public shoreline along Lake Superior, in addition to historic buildings connected to the iron ore industry. In Munising, the participants highlighted the Pictured Rocks and nearby forests. In Cheboygan, the group identified the municipal marina and inland waterway as assets. In Alpena and the US-23 corridor, participants spoke of the underwater maritime preserve, Huron National Forest and the Lake Huron "sunrise" shoreline. They indicated tourists come to experience these resources as both "lookers" and "doers" and recognized the importance of creating and maintaining a unique sense of "place" to drawing visitors to their community.

IMPACTS OF TOURISM

While there was broad recognition of the importance of tourism to their local economy, participants in all groups cited a host of impacts on their community. These included strains on municipal services, such as trash collection and safety services; "event fatigue" for local volunteers and community members; inadequate infrastructure, such as parking and transit services; seasonality of employment and housing demand; and overuse impacts on beaches, trails and sensitive lands. Throughout these discussions, there was a concern about how dependent a community's economic livelihood should be on tourism. As one participant observed: "We are only one recession away from tourism tanking." Note that these focus groups were conducted prior to the coronavirus pandemic.

ACTORS IN TOURISM PLANNING

Each area the project team visited had Conference and Visitor Bureau or Chamber of Commerce employees actively involved in tourism marketing and event planning. These entities must focus on "heads in beds" due to their statutory funding. Participants talked about the importance of bringing together businesses, government, state agencies, tribal communities and non-profits such as trail organizations to work together, but acknowledged that each set of actors tends to focus on their areas and work in silos. Participants in each focus group pointed to the need for collaboration among these actors as a critical component for effective tourism planning in their communities.

TOURISM PLANNING BEYOND MARKETING

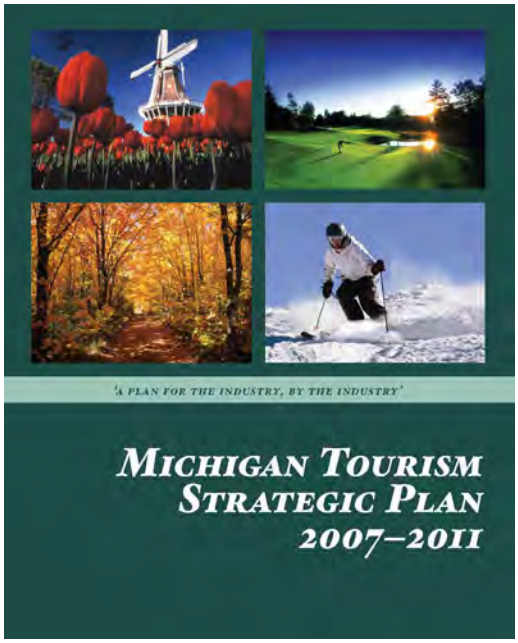
Focus group participants noted the difficulty in navigating local politics and jurisdictional boundaries in doing tourism planning, which typically spans community borders. This is based partially on the fact that economic development planning in Michigan is done by a mix of government and non-profit entities, and the resulting plans often do not incorporate tourism in their strategies. Some current tourism planning approaches communities are using include incorporating tourism into county plans and local parks and recreation plans, in addition to regional initiatives such as the US-23 Heritage Route Management Council. There was concern that calling tourism out in a plan may not be met favorably in a community, as would a specific focus on sustainability or climate impacts. Some pointed out that this support must come organically from the community, rather than be imposed. One participant commented "Planning for tourism might just be saying 'here is what we value, and here is how we protect it'."

RESOURCES NEEDED

While participants acknowledged that planning for tourism is a desirable goal, many noted that their communities do not have the resources or capacity to take this on. There was general agreement a best practices guide would be a useful resource. Other suggestions included technical assistance from the Michigan Economic Development Corporation's Redevelopment Ready Communities program and regional planning agencies. Training programs such as the Conservation Fund's Gateway Communities sessions and Michigan Association of Planning and MSU Extension planning and zoning training were also mentioned. Some noted that resources need to be scalable to rural areas. Other suggestions included grants that could support trained facilitators who could bring together stakeholders, similar to the focus groups for this project.

STATE-LEVEL TOURISM PLANNING

In 2012, a comprehensive new ***Michigan Tourism Strategic Plan*** was developed "for the industry by the industry." The year-long planning process included the development of a new vision for the state's tourism industry, eight goals, and various supporting objectives. Over 900 people participated in the variety of in-person and online activities used to generate these key components. The eight goals and the rationale for each of them are highlighted below.



COLLABORATION, COOPERATION AND PARTNERSHIPS: Foster a culture of public-private collaboration, cooperation, and partnerships – across the state and beyond – to continue to unify the tourism industry and help grow Michigan's economy.

The tourism industry is fragmented in nature, involving a wide variety of types and size of public and private entities. It is hard for any one entity to succeed in isolation. Informal and formal collaboration and cooperation between these entities is increasingly recognized as vital to the success of both individual tourism businesses and entire tourism destinations.

FUNDING: Secure adequate and stable funding for all strategic plan initiatives.

Adequate funding of the Pure Michigan campaign, other promotional and marketing efforts and all other strategic plan initiatives was the most fundamental and critical issue identified during the planning process. The fragility of this funding has again been highlighted over the past year.

PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT: Enhance infrastructure to support the delivery of a world class Pure Michigan travel experience.

An adequate, accessible and interconnected supply of tourism products and services such as accommodations, public and private transportation, and attractions and events is an essential characteristic of a successful tourism destination. Visitors who enjoy a satisfying and seamless stay are more likely to return and to recommend the destination to others based on these positive experiences.

PROMOTION, MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS: Strengthen and grow the Pure Michigan brand through effective mediums at the regional, national and international levels to attract first-time and repeat visitors.

The Pure Michigan campaign has experienced phenomenal success since its inception in 2006. Nevertheless, many more opportunities exist to strengthen and diversify the Pure Michigan brand and to increase the volume and extend the reach of the Michigan tourism industry's promotional, marketing and communications efforts.

PUBLIC POLICY AND GOVERNMENT SUPPORT: Empower the industry to encourage policy-makers at all levels to support the travel industry.

Despite being one of the largest contributors to the state's economy, the fragmented nature of the tourism industry often limits its effectiveness in the policy and governmental arenas. Given the widespread distribution of visitors, and their interactions not only with hospitality employees but also non-tourism businesses and the general population, better understanding of and support for the industry is needed among state legislators, county and local officials, businesses and residents.

RESEARCH AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE: Establish a central, easily accessible and inclusive information system to capture and share timely, relevant and reliable industry research.

The availability of accurate and timely research at appropriate spatial resolutions is critical to the planning and long-term development of individual tourism entities and the broader tourism industry. Currently, the industry lacks access to affordable, relevant, reliable and consistent industry data and research.

RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENT: Be internationally recognized for our stewardship of – and rich opportunities to experience – our natural, cultural, and heritage resources.

Michigan offers a rich variety of high quality natural, cultural, agricultural and built resources. These resources serve as attractions for both Michigan residents and visitors. However, these resources are not limitless and they are sensitive to a variety of naturally occurring and human-induced threats. Maintaining access to these resources, while simultaneously preserving their integrity, is critical to their long-term sustainability and integral to conserving the quality of life that makes Michigan a great place to live and a premier travel destination.

SERVICE EXCELLENCE: Foster a culture of service excellence that allows us to deliver on the Pure Michigan promise.

As all hospitality employees well know, Michigan and its tourism industry has only one opportunity to make a positive first impression on its guests, whether these encounters occur at traditional tourism locations or with any individual or business throughout the state. What can the tourism industry do to foster a welcoming atmosphere throughout the state, among all residents and employees? The notion of "southern hospitality" is well-established; what is Michigan's equivalent ethos of service?

Although not explicitly a tourism plan, the ***Michigan Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan*** (SCORP) recognizes the link between state recreation resources and the tourism economy. The SCORP is a 5-year strategic plan that guides state expenditures in outdoor recreation infrastructure and programming. The plan also makes Michigan eligible for Land and Water Conservation Fund Grants from the U.S. National Park Service.

The 2018 SCORP update includes many references to the connection between natural resources, outdoor recreation and tourism as a means to attracting talent and economic investment to the state. For instance, one of the action recommendations for the "Enhance Prosperity" objective states "Connect existing trails and trail networks to create destination trails that provide multiday experiences, tell stories, and drive trail-specific tourism (e.g., Great Allegheny Passage, Katy Trail, etc.)."

LOCAL TOURISM MARKETING PLANS

In accordance with Michigan P.A. 59 of 1984, Community Convention or Tourism Marketing Act, tourism offices must: (1) submit and receive approval of their marketing plan prior to the start of each fiscal year, and (2) submit an audit within 150 days of the end of the year.

A marketing plan is very different from, and much more limited than, a municipality's comprehensive master plan. A search for this sort of strategic tourism planning document at the local (county or city) level revealed no tourism-specific plans in Michigan. For the counties for which master plans were located, none included a stand-alone tourism section; yet 9% of officials and 23% of tourism directors in responding to the survey for this project believed there to be a tourism-specific plan for their community.

Though tourism offices are increasingly reconceptualizing their traditional role as a destination marketing organization to a much broader destination management function, that expansion has yet to manifest itself in terms of more inclusive planning documentation and implementation. Most tourism offices are staffed by professionals trained as marketers rather than with broader destination planning and management experience.

AVAILABLE TOURISM DATA

The tourism industry is notorious for a general lack of accessible, affordable, relevant, reliable and consistent industry data and research. Tourists – especially domestic travellers – are hard to track, and the conduct of representative data collection is expensive and time-consuming. All data sources should be checked to understand how, when and where data were collected, and how they have been collated or generalized across different groups and situations.

Some available sources of data and research are:

FOR US TRAVEL: U.S. TRAVEL ASSOCIATION (USTA)

- Answer sheet: www.ustravel.org/answersheet
- Facts and figures: www.ustravel.org/research/travel-facts-and-figures
- Travel Economic Impact Calculator (TEIC): state-calculator.ustravel.org/

FOR MICHIGAN TRAVEL: PURE MICHIGAN

- www.michigan.org/industry/researchandreports
- Advertising Effectiveness Study
- Economic Impact of Tourism Ad Campaign in Michigan
- Tourism Economic Impact
- Statewide and Region/County reports

FOR COUNTY-LEVEL/CITY-LEVEL TRAVEL

- PA 59 Tourism Marketing Reports: www.michigan.org/industry/researchandreports
- Contact your local CVB for data they collect or studies they commission

RESOURCES

Michigan Convention and Visitor Bureaus: www.visitmichigan.org/memberInformation1.html

Michigan Chambers of Commerce: www.officialusa.com/stateguides/chambers/michigan.html

Michigan Tourism Strategic Plan: www.michigan.org/industry/michigan-tourism-strategic-plan

Michigan Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan: publicsectorconsultants.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/SCORP2018-2022_Final.pdf

CHAPTER 5
BRIDGING THE TOURISM PLANNING GAP

JANET KOCH,
WEXFORD COUNTY

We've all seen it happen. Group X gets excited about a fantastic idea that would draw hundreds, if not thousands, of tourists to their area. The tourists would bring much-needed money, existing businesses would thrive, new businesses would be created and life would be great!

But Group X doesn't have the ultimate decision-making power for bringing the idea to life. Group Y does. And when Group X brings their fantastic idea to Group Y, the response is a wall of objections, reluctance, and outright resistance. Group X walks away muttering about Group Y's lack of vision, Group Y mutters about Group X's lack of understanding about strained municipal resources. The fantastic idea fades into the mists of time, and nothing changes.

WHY DO WE HAVE THIS GAP?

No one "owns" tourism. Stakeholders include the local convention and visitor bureau (CVB), the chamber of commerce, local municipality, the county, the state, tourists themselves… and each and every local resident. The odds that all these entities will agree on a plan for tourism is so small that the technology to measure it probably hasn't been developed yet.

Our theoretical Groups X and Y, even though they live in the same community, have different responsibilities and goals. Group X is likely to be the local CVB, the chamber, or a group of energetic citizens. A CVB's goal is to fill hotel rooms, a chamber's goal is to have its members prosper, and that energetic citizen group's goal is a specific project.

Group Y represents the local unit of government: the township board, the village or city council or the planning commission. These groups are responsible for writing the community's master plans, creating and enforcing zoning ordinances, and complying with state statutes and budget mandates. The people in Group Y must manage the tourism that Group X is pushing for.

Though serving the needs of the public is a priority for Group Y, many things bind a municipality's ability to act on a new idea when it is presented. Municipal leaders are dealing with many, many issues, and they may not have the time, energy or capacity to explore a new idea, no matter how good.

And then there's the reality that Group Y are public leaders who represent the entire community, not just those advocating for the new project, and many community members like things just way they are. More tourism? No, thank you. Those jobs you're saying will magically appear don't pay much and they're seasonal. Plus, the traffic in summer is bad enough as it is. More tourists means more wear and tear on the roads, which are already deteriorating. Next thing you know, property values and taxes will go up and the year-round residents won't be able to afford to live in their own town.

With these stark differences between the goals of Group X and Group Y, is there any chance they can cooperate—maybe even collaborate—on planning for tourism?

Yes. There absolutely is.

Angel Falls. Photo courtesy of MDNR.

HOW TO START BUILDING A BRIDGE

The key component to bridging the tourism planning gap between Group X and Group Y is communication. However, bridge-building can't be accomplished by attending a single meeting, or even two. Deep involvement, not simple attendance, is critical.

If you're part of a CVB or chamber of commerce, or if you're one of those energized citizens, see if your municipality has an opening on the planning commission and consider applying. It's a significant commitment, yes, but you will learn a great deal about planning, zoning, and the appetite that Group Y might have for Group X's project.

If you're on the planning commission or city council and are looking for fresh ideas that might energize the community, get involved with the CVB, chamber of commerce, or that energetic citizen group. If the first group you contact isn't enthusiastic, try another. There are bound to be people out there who share your vision.

Outside of formal meetings of established organizations, gaps can be bridged through informal communication. There are the casual coffee shop, restaurant, golf course, and park bench conversations that proliferate everywhere. (A note for officials: it's important to remember that the limitation on Ex Parte communication applies to applications, such as variances, site plans, and rezonings, rather than policy, ordinance or plan discussions).

PLANS FOR BRIDGE BUILDING

The bridge that will carry your ideas across the tourism collaboration gap needs a good foundation. Foundations are built with plans, and municipalities have plans.

Michigan's Planning Enabling Act, Public Act 33 of 2008, allows for master plans to include topics that "reasonably can be considered as pertinent to the future development of the planning jurisdiction". This leaves the door open for a municipality to incorporate tourism strategies and infrastructure recommendations in its master plan.

The goals and objectives section of the adopted master plan will provide a good way to get a sense of community priorities. Review what your community has already identified as important and consider how tourism might—or might not—fit into the existing framework.

At the same time, explore the local CVB's plans. Under the Community Convention or Tourism Marketing Act, Public Act 59 of 1984, CVBs that collect assessments are required to report their activities and submit their marketing plan annually. These marketing or "destination management" plans can be found on the Travel Michigan website: www.michigan.org/industry/researchandreports.

Common goals are a great starting point for collaboration. Since the master plan must be reviewed by the municipality every five years, this could be an excellent opportunity for Group X to bring their idea forward, and have it specifically included in the new master plan.

The Community Park, Recreation, Open Space and Greenways Plan is another possibility for Groups X and Y to work together. Commonly called a "rec plan," Michigan's Department of Natural Resources (DNR) requires that this document be updated every five years to be eligible for DNR grants. Most communities consider their rec plan to be an element of their master plan.

The responsibility for creating a rec plan varies and includes the Planning Commission, a Recreation Committee, or the governing body itself. But no matter who creates the plan, the governing body must approve it.

Recommendations in a master plan or recreation plan can be powerful. They create a broad vision that stakeholders buy into and adopt. The plan can be the springboard for the idea that Group X is so enthused about and address the concerns about long-term impacts expressed by Group Y. It can, and does, guide decisions about the community's future.

WE'VE CROSSED THE BRIDGE – NOW WHAT?

Once Group X and Group Y establish a collaboration, whether formally or informally, the work begins. First, establish a method for Group X to keep Group Y informed. Approaches include a written report or something less formal. Either way, the burden will be on Group X to bring information back to Group Y. As noted above, our Y municipal leaders tend to have a lot on their collective plates. Regularly bringing information to these leaders, even if it's a "no progress" update, will help nurture a sense of collaboration between the groups.

Also, if Group X is working primarily with the planning commission, don't assume the planning commission will communicate the tourism planning details to its governing body. And even if the planning commission is communicating via minutes or a report, Group X will want to know what, exactly, is being communicated, just to ensure there hasn't been a shift in the vision along the way.

Creating and implementing a plan for tourism, whether it's a municipal comprehensive plan that will span decades, or a smaller plan focused on a single project, will take time, money, energy, and serious amounts of cooperation and collaboration.

WHY SHOULD WE TRY TO BRIDGE THE GAP?

Bridging the gap takes a tremendous amount of work, but every new person who becomes involved and invested in planning for tourism increases the chance of success. A substantial level of mutual trust between the public and private sectors is a contributing factor to successful tourism planning. Though a plan's details may shift and evolve, if the vision is solid, it can indeed become reality.

And, if due to the personalities/circumstances/financial realities involved, there's absolutely no way to build a bridge between Groups X and Y, remember what time can do. One new face in an organization can be a catalyst. One large grant may spur donations. One missing piece of property may eventually go on the market.

In other words, creating an infrastructure plan for tourism will require patience. To quote Margaret Mead: "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed, citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has."

RESOURCES

Michigan's Travel Industry/Pure Michigan tourism marketing reports: "http://www.michigan.org/industry/researchandreports" www.michigan.org/industry/researchandreports

Michigan Planning Enabling Act: "http://www.legislature.mi.gov/documents/mcl/pdf/mcl-Act-33-of-2008.pdf" www.legislature.mi.gov/documents/mcl/pdf/mcl-Act-33-of-2008.pdf

Michigan DNR Five Year Recreation Plan: "http://www.michigan.gov/dnr/0,8817,7-350-79134_81684_79209_81658---,00.html" www.michigan.gov/dnr/0,8817,7-350-79134_81684_79209_81658---,00.html

Torch Lake Sandbar. Photo courtesy of Coast Guard News.

Huron River Water Trail Sign.
Photo courtesy of LIAA.

CHAPTER 6
LEVERAGING FIRST-TIME VISITOR PERSPECTIVES TO STRENGTHEN COMMUNITY-DRIVEN TOURISM

ANDY NORTHROP, MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY EXTENSION

Have you ever wondered what first-time visitors think of your community? Have you considered their perspective(s) might just be the catalyst needed to spawn community-driven tourism? It is not every day that a small-town community has the ability to capture first-time visitors' perspectives for the purpose of enhancing community assets and sustaining community-driven tourism. Having this type of data not only validates existing knowledge of strengths and current master plan recommendations, but also inspires leaders and residents to act on improving weaknesses identified by a fresh set of eyes in their downtowns, businesses, and places to recreate.

In addition to generating action from residents, first-time visitor data can be the catalyst needed for community leaders to get dormant projects moving again or for the very first time. This chapter highlights how identifying a community's strengths and weaknesses via first-time visitors has proven to be the needed momentum to spawn community-driven tourism for Michigan communities.

Based on extensive interaction with smaller, lesser-known Michigan destinations and communities, Michigan State University Extension (MSUE) Tourism faculty determined a solution was needed to assist communities interested in capturing benefits of the widely successful "Pure Michigan" tourism campaign responsible for generating billions in state and local tax revenue each year.

Photos courtesy of MSU Extension, unless otherwise noted.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS TOURISM ASSESSMENT PROGRAM

Launched in 2016, MSUE's First Impressions Tourism (FIT) assessment program was introduced as a tourism development solution to this growing need for community assistance, with the caveat that communities first need to understand themselves and their assets better before engaging in tourism planning. After all, how can you attract tourism if you aren't quite sure what is attractive?

First Impressions Tourism Brochure.

FIT is a comprehensive community tourism assessment conducted by unannounced visitors in a host community that is positioned to act on the results. Each FIT program involves developing community partnerships between local government and organizations, assessing the host community with a diverse visiting team new to the area, sharing the results in an inclusive open community forum organized by local community leaders, and providing a comprehensive list of suggestions generated by first-time visitors to spawn community-driven tourism. Overall, FIT helps communities learn about their strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities through the eyes of first-time visitors.

FIT has six objectives:

- Learn about community assets and opportunities from first-time visitors
- Strengthen an existing cohort of leaders and residents by providing them an opportunity to organize based on valuable feedback about their community.
- Develop a list of action items for community improvement
- Integrate action items into community plans
- Act on community improvements and strengthen their image
- Improve community well-being and quality of life for residents and visitors

Since its inception, FIT has been applied to 14 communities across Michigan. Collaborations resulting from FIT and the outside visitor perspective build support for implementing dormant plans and driving new developments, as seen with the two community examples highlighted below.

CITY OF EAST JORDAN, MICHIGAN

The City of East Jordan received five first-time visitors during summer 2018, and results from their assessment were shared later that season with community leaders and residents. East Jordan's community leadership team (CLT), which included members of the East Jordan Arts Council, Public Schools, Chamber of Commerce, Downtown Development Authority, and the City of East Jordan, immediately acted to incorporate first-time visitor feedback into their community plans.

Based on follow-up feedback from the CLT, FIT helped East Jordan prioritize multiple community projects. The East Jordan CLT later reported an "increased engagement with organizations, chamber, municipality, and citizens resulting in better communication and greater enthusiasm to share best practices and ideas seen in other communities."

For example, East Jordan's Downtown Development Authority secured funding to build a pedestrian bridge connecting the east and west sides of town, along with fishing platforms and a boardwalk pocket park. The City Parks Department launched a revamp of Sportsman's Park with a non-motorized boat and kayak launch incorporating American with Disabilities Act (ADA) upgrades after first-time visitors validated such improvements were essential for any harbor trying to attract a diverse user base.

In addition to these larger infrastructure projects, which were launched within a year of completing FIT, East Jordan later highlighted an increase in tourism marketing, strengthening of local arts, and promotion of previously under-marketed assets, such as the Jordan River, through wayfinding signage. Improvements to residential areas were also included in their action plan, which was developed following the FIT assessment. East Jordan's community leadership team emphasized the process and their results brought enthusiasm that enabled the CLT to go from a committee to a real team sharing monthly updates. For further inquiry as to what East Jordan is doing specifically in each of these areas please contact the East Jordan Chamber of Commerce.

City of East Jordan Welcome Banner.

City of East Jordan Downtown Marketing Banner.

Village of Cass City Gateway Sign.

VILLAGE OF CASS CITY, MICHIGAN

The Village of Cass City received five first-time visitors during early autumn 2018 and reviewed their results in open forum with their Community Leadership Team (CLT) and residents during spring 2019. Lead by the Village of Cass City, their CLT included members from the Chamber of Commerce, Downtown Development Authority, Cass City School Board, local health care professionals, and technology/retail entrepreneurs. As a direct result of engaging in the FIT program, the Village of Cass City applied first-time visitor perspective data to:

- Leverage service club perspectives identified in their FIT report to support new community developments
- Launch a youth-driven environmental committee designed to identify flora and fauna for nature-based tourism
- Expand their 9-hole disc golf course to 18 holes for the purpose of attracting national competitions and expanding local outdoor recreation opportunities
- Erect distance markers on walking trails to/from the Cass River to their downtown
- Install a kiosk downtown showcasing events and community information to residents and visitors
- Developed and funded, in partnership with Hills and Dales Hospital, a gateway and wayfinding signage to identify and strengthen visitor and resident knowledge of existing assets
- Raised nearly $18,000 from service clubs and local foundation to install updated free-standing playground equipment in their municipal park

GETTING STARTED

Communities struggle with where to begin when planning for tourism and rarely, if ever, consider capturing first-time visitor perspectives as a baseline starting point for building or sustaining a small-town tourism economy. By capturing this perspective, evaluated via multiple tourism-related metrics, and incorporating them into plans, communities can leverage innovative ideas they may not have considered before, forgotten about, or thought might not have potential to be anything except an idea.

The first impressions concept, whether through the FIT program or captured on a feedback form in a hotel lobby or local restaurant, supports community improvements and the innovation needed to grow and sustain tourism economies. However, the successes with FIT, such as with the City of East Jordan or Village of Cass City, would not have happened if it weren't for local governments and organizations that recognized a fresh set of eyes can help these synergies strengthen their community-driven tourism.

RESOURCES

First Impressions Tourism (FIT) Program: www.canr.msu.edu/tourism_first_impressions/

FIT Community Reports: www.canr.msu.edu/tourism_first_impressions/community-reports

East Jordan Area Chamber of Commerce: ejchamber.org/

Village of Cass City: www.casscity.org/

Village of Cass City Wayfinding Sign.

CHAPTER 7
CREATING A TOURISM ASSET INVENTORY

JIM MURATZKI,
LAND INFORMATION
ACCESS ASSOCIATION

Sometime around 2009, Denise Cline of the Northeast Michigan Council of Governments (NEMCOG) was trying to overcome a deadlock. The US-23 Heritage Route, a scenic 200-mile stretch of highway along the eastern coast of Michigan's Lower Peninsula, had been designated by the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) in 2004.

However, the driving force for that designation had come from a single individual without complete involvement of residents or officials in the six counties along the route. A 2003 Management Plan for the Heritage Route provided a set of goals as guidelines, but those goals were county-specific. Therefore, despite years of meetings, Cline was having trouble getting the Heritage Route's Management Council to see the entire Heritage Route as a unique, single destination. As far as the local stakeholders were concerned, their interests stopped at their own county border.

Cline had an idea: Make a list — or inventory — of all the places — or assets — tourists may want to visit along the route. With funding from MDOT, NEMCOG hired the Land Information Access Association (LIAA), a non-profit based in Traverse City, to build an online destination site for tourism asset inventory information.

NEMCOG and LIAA organized and trained teams in each county to add assets to the online inventory. As their work continued and the inventory grew, it became obvious to all involved that the tourist experience did not start or stop at any borders. And, it gave Cline a way to build a little friendly competition into the inventory process by encouraging teams to keep up with the information provided by their neighbors ("Surely you have as many places to visit as those guys do, don't you?").

During this process, Cline also developed a logo, identity, marketing plan and a set of similar-looking maps (geographically divided by county but branded by the character of each region) for the Heritage Route. With these as common tools, all participants began to see and embrace a regional identity. With the release of the asset inventory as a public website, all participants had a place to point potential visitors to, and a point of pride to express the newfound realization that theirs was a region of vast, diverse and unique tourist experiences that could compete with anywhere for the attention of visitors.

Every community and region is different but creating a complete view of what tourists are interested in - and what you can offer to them - via an asset inventory is a necessary step to understand, protect, manage and promote great places in an informed and sustainable manner.

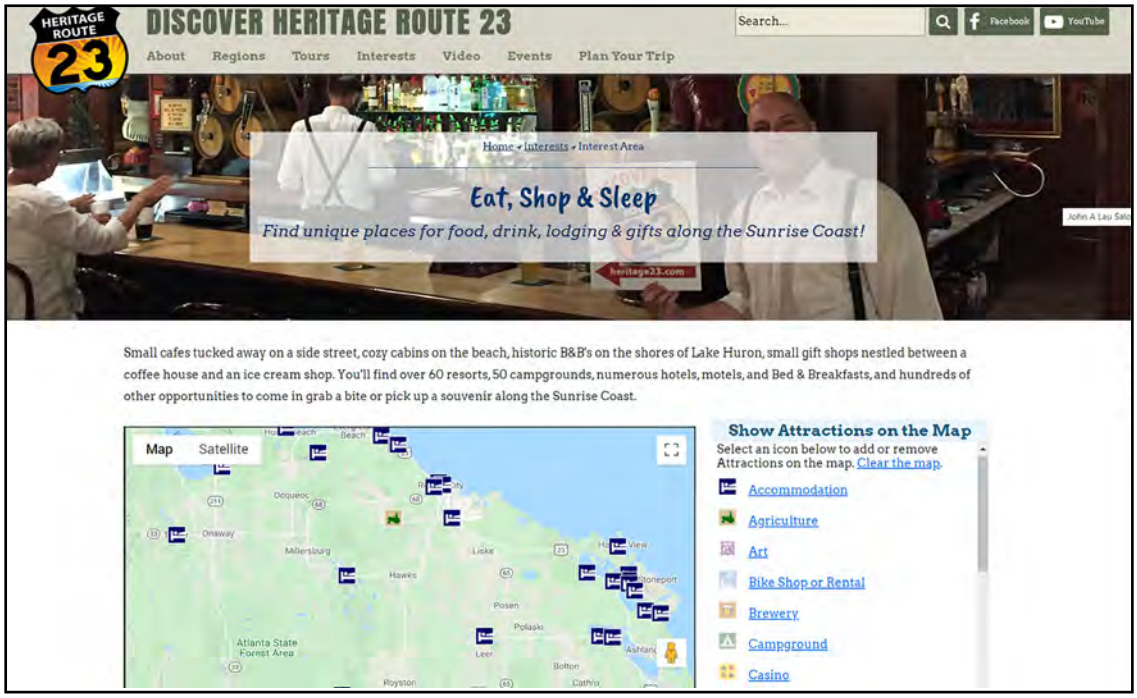
As you consider starting an inventory, is important to recognize that an asset inventory is never complete. Businesses come and go, while other destinations may change or have new features available. Therefore, consider the long-range viability of your project. A grant may provide enough funding to initially build the inventory, but you will also need ongoing funding and/or staffing to maintain the inventory.

The following sections discuss the data to consider for your tourism asset inventory and how it is built. The step-by-step process to creating a tourism asset inventory is described in Appendix C.

ASSET INVENTORY DATA

The exact definition of a tourism asset will vary from community to community and from project to project. However, there are some basic elements that all tourism assets will share:

Tourism assets are geographic. Tourism assets occupy some sort of physical space on the planet. They can be points, such as places with an address or a single latitude and longitude coordinate (a place you can stand). They can be linear, such as scenic roads, rivers or trails. They can be regions, such as parks or historic districts. Though you may want to consider them as you plan your asset inventory, tourism assets generally do not include individual people or media such as books or papers. This is because a tourism asset must be able to be visited.



As you plan your inventory, you must determine your capacity for storing information about your assets, and their geographic nature will be the most challenging information to store. Points are relatively easy to manage, so if you do not have the capacity to store linear or regional features (generally requiring a Geographic Information System - GIS - or other mapping tools), then consider storing only the access points to your linear or regional features. For example, store the boat launch that allows you to get on the river with a paddle craft, or store the trailhead that gives you a place to park and begin hiking on a trail. You may not need to store the geometry of the river or trail itself.

Tourism assets are publicly accessible. That is, anyone may visit them at some time. Yes, there may be an entrance fee or parking fee or limited hours. However, a tourist asset cannot be on private property that is unavailable to potential visitors.

Tourism assets have responsible parties. There is someone to contact and ask about the asset. For businesses, this is obvious and easy; for things like scenic views or historical markers, this may be more difficult to ascertain or assign. However, every asset should have someone a visitor can contact to ask questions - one goal of this entire process is to remove as much uncertainty from your visitors as possible.

Tourism assets have stories. A place is always more than the services it provides. Locals may like it because it has the best sunsets or it has hosted the most marriage proposals. Perhaps a historic event took place there, or it was the first of its kind in the region. Or, maybe it has a Thursday burger special or karaoke night. Plan on capturing these stories along with the more basic information about every asset.

As you begin to design your asset inventory, consider all of these aspects to ensure that the information is useful, complete and compelling.

DATA SOURCES

There are many organizations to contact when you start searching for data to bring into your asset inventory:

- Convention and Visitors Bureaus (CVBs)
- Chambers of Commerce
- Historical Societies
- Local, Regional and State Parks and Public Land Managers
- Conservation Organizations such as Conservancies and Lake Associations
- Outfitters and Guides

These groups usually maintain lists of places that they will hopefully share with you. You should consider these as checklists or good starter data sets. They are rarely comprehensive (for example, maybe only CVB members are listed, or perhaps only contact information is included), but they can provide a foundation of information to build upon.

However, the primary data source you should rely on for the asset inventory is simple: local residents. If you take anything away from this chapter, it is this. Tourists now want to experience a destination rather than just see or sit in it. This means they want to connect with the culture, the history and the landscape of a place in a more intimate and knowledgeable way, as a local would. You should no longer just provide lists of place names, services, phone numbers and websites. You should provide stories and examples of opportunities for immersion in the area and demonstrate how places are integrated into the fabric of the community. Only a local can know this information. Because writing and compiling this information is difficult and takes time, it is best practice to spread out the work and get many people to participate.

This recommendation comes with one note of caution: You must choose places that are prepared for visitors. Though you want to promote authentic experiences, it is not fair to either the place or the visitor to encourage people to go somewhere that is unready for their arrival. This can come in many forms: If people will arrive in cars, is there enough parking? If the place is environmentally sensitive, is there adequate visitor management to protect the asset? If visitors from other cultures (domestic or foreign) will come, is the asset prepared to welcome them and/or deal with different needs or behaviors?

ASSET INVENTORY PROCESS

The process of building an asset inventory is not necessarily a step-by-step linear process. Often, inventory projects start organically, either through a grassroots effort of a group trying to protect or promote places they feel passionate about, or by the sheer force of will of a single individual to realize a vision. Regardless, the following tasks must be considered. These process tasks are listed in ideal chronological order but may be done in any order, and may overlap one another due to project-specific circumstances.

1. Identify stakeholders and begin meeting
2. Designate a champion
3. Create a taxonomy and data dictionary
4. Define editorial standards and designate an editor
5. Create teams
6. Determine a data storage platform
7. Create an identity
8. Gamify the process
9. Create a product
10. Prepare assets for visitors
11. Develop a marketing and outreach plan

For a step-by-step description of the tourism asset inventory process, go to Appendix C.

RESOURCES

US 23 Heritage Route website: www.us23heritageroute.org

Mapping and Managing Natural and Cultural Assets – Sustainable Heritage Areas: Partnerships for Ecotourism (2017)- "http://shape.interreg-npa.eu/subsites/SHAPE/WPt2_Capitalising_on_assets/DT2.1.1_Report_on_mapping_and_managing_assets_and_assessing_climate_change_impacts.pdf" shape.interreg-npa.eu/subsites/SHAPE/WPt2_Capitalising_on_assets/DT2.1.1_Report_on_mapping_and_managing_assets_and_assessing_climate_change_impacts.pdf

Rural Tourism Asset Map: Henry, Rural Rock Island, Mercer (IL) Counties (2014) - http://www.placedynamics.com/assets/hrrim.pdf" www.placedynamics.com/assets/hrrim.pdf

Iron Belle Trail Manistee. Photo courtesy of MDNR.

CHAPTER 8
INVENTORYING NATURAL AND CULTURAL ASSETS

ZACHARY VEGA,
LAND INFORMATION
ACCESS ASSOCIATION

A major reason a person chooses to live and work in a particular community is often the quality of place that is shaped by its natural and cultural assets. These elements are often a major draw for visitors and a tourism economy, as well.

An inventory of a community's natural and cultural resources aggregates data and public input to help inform comprehensive land use and conservation planning. This chapter discusses how local and regional leaders can effectively inventory these assets as a first step in planning for tourism that is sustainable both now and for future generations.

THE IMPORTANCE OF CREATING NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCE INVENTORIES

One of Michigan's primary draws for attracting residents and tourists is its abundance of natural resources. The state's lakes, rivers, dunes, forests and miles of trails make it the perfect location for outdoor enthusiasts. Throughout the year, and especially during the summer months, these natural assets attract thousands of tourism visits from both in-state residents and out-of-state visitors. In fact, many of Michigan's communities are primarily defined by their outdoor recreation culture.

While these natural assets can help support the economic and social well-being of a place, too much of a good thing can spell trouble for a community that does not effectively plan for the stewardship of those resources. Planners and public officials often refer to the "tragedy of the commons" concept. This is where individuals, acting on their own accord and in disregard for the common good, overwhelm a shared resource and deplete it completely or to a degree of disrepair. At some point, the area cannot support the number of visitors it is experiencing. The purpose of inventorying and planning for these resources is to avoid a tragedy of the commons scenario, or using a tourism model, to avoid reaching the stagnation phase in Butler's Tourism Area Life Cycle Model (see Chapter 2).

Cultural resources perform a similar role as natural resources in that their presence contributes to a community's unique sense of place. However the process of inventorying cultural assets differs because they are features of the built environment rather than the natural environment. Similar to natural attractions, cultural attractions can become overwhelmed, both physically and socially, by visitors if they are not properly managed.

While a Natural Resources Inventory and a Cultural Resource Inventory can be independent documents, for the purposes of this chapter they will be considered together. The data collection, public engagement and planning processes for natural and cultural resources are largely the same. The only significant differences between the two are that they frequently require different implementation strategies.

WHAT GOES INTO AN INVENTORY?

A Natural Resources Inventory (NRI) describes significant, naturally occurring features within a finite project area (e.g., municipality, watershed, or region). A Cultural Resource Inventory (CRI) may include historic, scenic and recreational resources, which are often included in an NRI, as well, though they may also act as standalone documents. The scope of the inventory is determined by the community or entity using the information in its decision-making processes. Examples of the type of features includes are provided in Figure 8-9.

FIGURE 8-9: FEATURES TO INCLUDE IN AN INVENTORY

NATURAL RESOURCES INVENTORY

- Base map
- Soil types
- Topographic features (steep slopes, county drains)
- Watershed boundaries
- Streams and waterbodies
- Floodplains
- Wetlands
- Critical habitats
- Land cover (forest, grassland, wetland, barren, developed, etc.)
- Rare plant and animal species
- Invasive species
- Conservation and public lands
- Quality farmland
- Land use
- Viewsheds

CULTURAL RESOURCES INVENTORY

- National Register of Historic Places or State Historic Preservation Office sites
- Sites identified through a community or visitor survey
- Building surveys for historic neighborhoods or districts
- Community arts and cultural resources, such as:
  - Galleries and/or exhibition spaces
  - Museums
  - Performance spaces and community theaters
  - Artist and dance studios
  - Universities, colleges and other educational institutions
  - Libraries

In its simplest form, an NRI is a collection of gathered data accompanied by a narrative description of existing natural resources with community-informed benchmarks for these resources' sustained use. The NRI is a living document: as new information comes in (e.g. the introduction of an invasive species to the area or a proposed trail alignment), the community must work to include this information in the inventory and periodically review the extent to which these new data change the locality's benchmarks for successful management.

Too often, communities don't have an accurate picture of where their natural and cultural resources are located, which resources are economically, socially and environmentally significant to the community, and how these resources can be effectively managed. The NRI provides a framework towards a clearer understanding and an opportunity for consensus building around the community's resources.

Ideally, an NRI should include three elements:

DATA

The data for a NRI or a CRI can be as focused or as wide-ranging as the community sees fit. For a community planning for tourism, a municipality may seek to map and collect data on all steep slopes or dunes in its jurisdiction. And while this datum is certainly important in planning for a sustainable built environment, it probably isn't as important as understanding how to measure a popular lake's carrying capacity for powerboats.

The main focus of the NRI component is to ask questions; research the answers through a descriptive analysis of historic, existing and projected future conditions; and develop new questions from data that previously did not exist. The data collected should answer the question, "What is happening here?"

STATE WATER TRAIL DESIGNATIONS

Water trails infographic courtesy of LIAA.

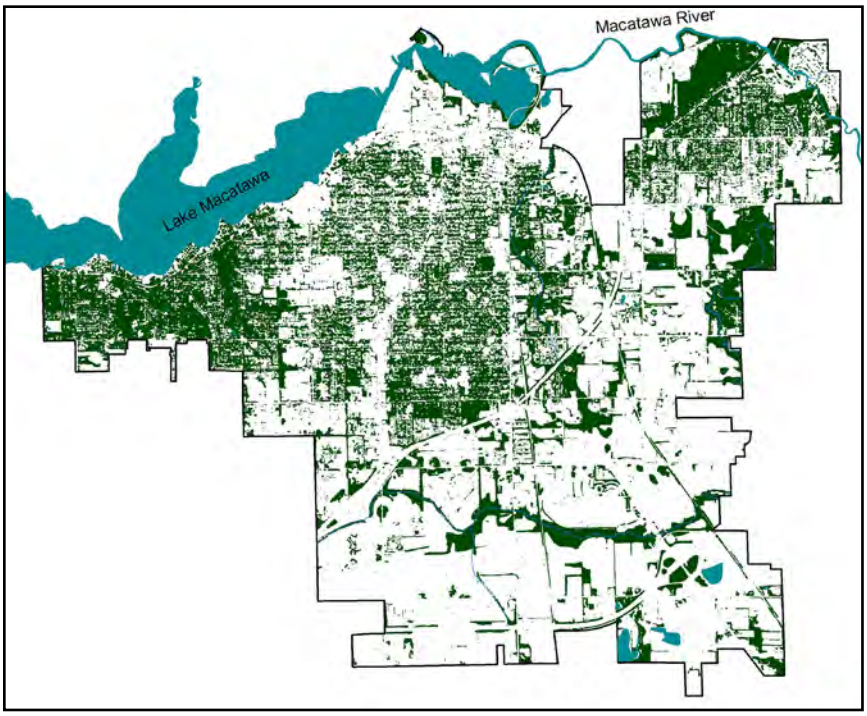
An example of this may be a village that has just come into ownership of a 40-acre parcel of partially forested land. Local leaders may have different ideas for how the land should be best utilized: parkland, hiking trails, new housing, etc. Before any consensus building exercises can take place, everyone must know what is happening on the parcel. Are the soil type and elevation changes conducive to building? Are there plant or animal species that are unique, endangered or ecologically critical present? Are there groups already spending time on the land who have an interest in a particular use?

A similar example can be drawn for a cultural resource, such as a downtown that a city wants to register as historically significant. The data collected would center on the age, materials used and design style of the buildings. What time period does the area most represent? If a historic district were established, what design features would be regulated? To what degree does the community identify with the cultural identity the area supports? The NRI and CRI can help answer these questions by providing the context in which decisions and benchmarks can be made.

MAPS AND INFOGRAPHICS

Data alone cannot inform an inventory so that it is useful to the community. Maps, infographics and other visual information are essential components in the NRI. Mapping helps to illustrate how natural and cultural resources are spatially related to infrastructure and people, allowing the community to decide how these relationships can be improved for long-term use.

Tree Canopy Map courtesy of LIAA.



For example, while it is helpful to know that a site has n percent tree canopy, this information is still too vague. We also need to know what areas of the site are tree-covered and which are not. If you are planning a park, you want to place a parking lot in a place that would require little to no tree removal. Maybe the project team wants to construct trails with a mix of wooded and open spaces. If the entire community is the project area, it is possible that all of the tree canopy is confined to one corner of the jurisdiction, highlighting a need to preserve this area against development.

Maps also reveal how various community features are geographically oriented to natural and cultural resources. An example of this may be a popular trail route that tourists travel to the community to use. An inventory of adjacent properties may present an opportunity to link the trail route to the downtown retail area. In this way, the trail is now a more effective economic contributor, in addition to the environmental and social contributions it was already serving.

DATA NARRATIVE

The data narrative provides the context for the NRI, describes the methods used and connects the information collected to the community's overall story. Consider that a compilation of data is unlikely to be used by a community unless local officials and the public have clear understanding of the following:

- Why was the NRI was created?
- What are the boundaries of the inventory area?
- What data was collected and why?
- Who participated in the planning process?

What is the community going to do with this information?

A clear concise narrative serves two main purposes. First, plans may take years to implement. There may be turnover for local officials and staff. Without a clear narrative, the community is likely to forget the sentiments and conditions that led to the inventory's development in the first place. The narrative should be clear enough that a new municipal official could step in, and understand the issues and opportunities described for the project area.

Community planning session. Photo courtesy of LIAA.

Second, the narrative can help establish public support for any actions that may affect a resource. The public is more likely to support initiatives that it had a voice in developing. The NRI's narrative can provide concise reasoning for master plan recommendations, which can also bolster support for projects years after its drafting. Frequently, decision makers must turn to community and data-supported evidence to defend their positions. A well-narrated and supported inventory can help establish strong reasoning for difficult decisions.

CREATING BENCHMARKS FOR IMPROVEMENT

An NRI is most useful when it is used as a foundation for the planning process. The information and data collected on its own may be helpful for decision makers, but forming benchmarks with interested stakeholders is the only way to effectively generate a vision for the community or project site. For example, a project team may find that a local lake has lost a quarter of its quality over the past decade. The water's lower quality is, at least anecdotally, correlated with its growth as a popular boating destination during summer holidays. The community, now equipped with this information, can set benchmarks to protect the resource. The community may set goals to test the water more regularly; to reach and maintain a healthy pH or turbidity value; or establish an enforceable boating capacity for the lake. The inventory should therefore not only describe the existing conditions on the site, but also the measurable steps the community will take to sustain or improve these conditions.

Honolulu House Museum. Photo courtesy of MDNR.

WHERE THE INVENTORY SHOULD LIVE

The information collected for a natural or cultural resources inventory is best suited for a municipality's master plan or a similar municipal document, such as a parks and recreation plan or a capital improvements plan. However, in some cases the inventory may act as a standalone document. This is especially true when the inventory applies to a specific site or is seeking to answer a specific question.

A community may cite a need to provide more connections to its various natural resources in its master plan. An NRI may be developed for this precise goal by generating maps and collecting data from the public and statistical sources on factors such as existing trails, viewsheds, public easements and the amount of protected land need to accommodate summer tourism. In this way, the inventory can inform overall community decision making or project-specific planning decisions.

The steps to creating a natural resource and cultural resource inventory is provided in Appendix D.

CONCLUSION

Natural and Cultural Resources Inventories serve an important role in planning for resource protection and stewardship. Local leaders can include the inventory's development in its master planning process, as the information collected is often essential to include in municipal master plans anyways. The data, maps and narrative that make up a typical inventory can help to update the community on the area's existing conditions so that informed plans can be developed. A community's master plan guides local decisions for an array of topic areas. Municipalities that take the time to thoroughly inventory their resources, engage the public on their findings and develop plans supported by stakeholders have a better chance of maintaining their tourism assets in a sustainable manner.

Inventorying of community assets. Photo courtesy of LIAA.

Photo by Deb Nystrom.

CHAPTER 9
ENGAGING THE COMMUNITY IN TOURISM PLANNING

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NORTHERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY

Tourism adds economic value to communities by enhancing business opportunities, increasing residential population, and supporting the local tax base. However, like any industry, tourism is not all positive for the people who live in destination communities. Residents may develop frustrations over congestion and parking issues, no longer being able to go to their favorite restaurant or beach, and developing feelings of inequitable access to economic gains. Because of this, engaging a community around sustainable tourism is important.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IN TOURISM

Community participation is central to the sustainable tourism concept, with proponents arguing that participation in planning is necessary to ensure the benefits reach all residents in tourism areas (Simmons, 1994).

In Michigan, efforts to engage community members about sustainable tourism have had a positive impact on communities inundated by tourism. In Alger County, located in the central Upper Peninsula, community engagement associated with sustainable tourism practices has tempered negative perceptions of the tourism industry among community members.

In 2015, Michigan State University's Regional Economic Innovation initiative and the Michigan Humanities Council funded projects in the area, including a community engagement program. These projects resulted in the development of the Sustainable Ecotourism Organization (SEO). While two faculty members from Northern Michigan University started the SEO, the organization now operates independently, led by community members.

Prior to engaging the Alger County community and starting the SEO, the project team developed an operational definition. "Ecotourism" was the terminology used to create the model. The Triple Bottom-Line sustainability model was used to define ecotourism, which incorporates the natural environment, local economy, and culture as variables. The Costa Rican Ecotourism Rating Scale model provided direct talking points when engaging community members, including employing local people, local resources, local food sources, recycling, and the use of alternative energy sources.

KNOWING THE TOPIC

At the beginning, the SEO project team discovered that some community members were resistant to terms like ecotourism or sustainable tourism. Conversations about sustainability are often limited to our relationships with the natural environment and the ability to sustain our earth in its natural state. Although environmental sustainability is important, sustainable tourism includes economic and cultural sustainability (Tsaur, 2006).

As the definition of sustainable tourism combines visitors, conservation and local participation, it has the potential to generate cultural, social and economic benefits in a community. These local benefits are critical for long-term sustainability. Ecotourism has the potential to contribute to the economic wellbeing of a locality or a region and diversify local economies by providing alternative employment and entrepreneurial opportunities (Che, 2006). Entrepreneurial development using ecotourism often replaces traditional economies that for a variety of reasons are no longer productive.

A case study from Pennsylvania's Allegany National Forest found that for sustainable tourism ventures to be considered successful, local communities must have some measure of control and share equity in the benefits (Schevyns, 1999). Key components leading to the success in this example of sustainable tourism were the organization of local stakeholders, efforts to develop businesses, preservation of natural resources and conducting business in the interest of the local culture.

NMU President Ericson and John Madigan, Munising business owner.

KNOWING THE STAKEHOLDERS

Alger County saw significant growth in tourism beginning in the summer of 2014. The city of Munising's infrastructure was challenged: traffic congestion was overwhelming in the city and at Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore. Angry conversations began. Three groups were arguing with each other: business owners were the primary blame for congestion; city government was targeted for not meeting infrastructure needs; and residents were viewed as resistant.

The project team met with the three stakeholder groups separately to introduce them to five variables that make up the model for ecotourism. Business owners were first, followed by local government officials, and then meetings with residents, including tribal representation. It was important to meet while the tourism season was active. Challenges were addressed as they occurred. Meetings had specific agendas, talking points, and presentations. The project team met with each group regularly for one year before bringing them together.

Visitors crowd Marquette Streets to watch the UP 200.

BUSINESSES

Local businesses were defined as those that were directly involved with tourism in the Munising area, as well as service industries related to them (attractions and hospitality). At that time, there were fewer tourism vendors, primarily focused on boating activities such as large boat tours and kayak tours for the Pictured Rocks area. Initially, this group of stakeholders was defensive. They had been the target for much of the dissent related to tourism in the area.

The SEO project team approached them by noting the practices that they were already doing that were sustainable in relation to the five subscale items. For example, kayaking businesses were not using fossil fuels for the primary aspect of their business. Another business, the ship tours, used a boat that operated on biodiesel. This opened the door to discuss more sustainable practices.

Working in groups to discuss sense of place.

Restaurants in the area became involved by expressing challenges for securing locally grown foods. Nearby Chatham is home to many small farms, but the food grown on these farms is transported outside of the county to be sold. However, the restaurants advised that processing large amounts of local foods was more expensive and time consuming than purchasing preprocessed foods.

Understanding and conveying to these groups a "return on investment" for using sustainable practices was important. For example, providing a business with data that shows the use of solar energy will save them money in the long term helped business owners understand that sustainable tourism practices are not a net loss. Introducing the concept of a "social return on investment" was key: in the current tourism economy, visitors are more interested in supporting companies that use sustainable practices.

GOVERNMENT

Mayors, city commissioners, city managers, township representatives, and downtown development officials all became involved with discussions about tourism. Local government officials were generally supportive of enhancement of tourism. Communities where tourism was already prevalent were challenged by infrastructure needs and negative perceptions of the tourism industry from community members, while communities with less tourism were interested in developing the industry.

RESIDENTS

The local residents were the most challenging and productive stakeholder group engaged. The project team met with residents in Marquette, Munising, Grand Maris, and Chatham. Each community expressed different challenges and perceptions of the tourism industry. Initially, complaints dominated the meetings, but through continued conversations, they were replaced with constructive actions.

Challenges expressed by residents centered on their sense of place—or rather a loss of that sense of place. They noted that communities no longer appear the way they had been only a few years earlier. Local scenic attractions had become crowded. Trash along trails and roads was more apparent, and there was disdain directed toward businesses making money from community resources. Many of the residents became involved with this planning process because they were looking for business opportunities.

MOVING THROUGH THE PROCESS

After the first year, all stakeholder groups came together for a conference at a local restaurant and hotel that uses sustainable tourism practices. In the morning, examples of sustainable tourism practices were modeled, then stakeholder groups discussed what they had learned over the past year. They were served a lunch of locally grown foods. In the afternoon, MSU Extension facilitated a Sense of Place workshop where the groups worked together on a shared vision for what sustainable tourism could look like.

Five sub-committees were formed to address challenges and find solutions. For example, responding to the problem of trash accumulating on roads and trails, one subcommittee enlisted The Center for Outdoor Ethics, a national organization, who provided their weeklong "Leave No Trace" training on how to engage visitors in practices to decrease human impacts in natural areas. Another subcommittee began sponsoring their own workshops on alternative energy, and they worked with community government and private contractors to gain curbside recycling in their community.

PARTING WORDS

Engaging community members about sustainable tourism has tangible benefits. By providing education, connecting with stakeholders, and creating a productive environment, the SEO initiative found that groups began to speak to each other, rather than at or about each other.

Education on sustainable tourism research and practice provided community members with a way to discover their particular role in a tourism economy. Having guided, organized discussions led to productive discovery of conditions. Facilitated connection of stakeholder groups developed a common vision for how people would like their community to look. Finally, tasked groups provided a way to define challenges, but also provided community members with a sense of control over the challenges and a way to search for solutions.

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South Higgins Lake State Park.
Photo courtesy of MDNR.

CHAPTER 10
"ZONING" PUBLIC LAND TO BALANCE RECREATION AND RESOURCE PROTECTION

MAIA TUREK, MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

MATT SMAR, MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT, GREAT LAKES AND ENERGY

Public parks are often a community's most valuable tourism asset. Promoting local parks encourages tourists and other visitors to enjoy the area's outdoor recreation and leisure opportunities, explore the community, and support the local economy. Parks can benefit the community in other important ways, such as by playing a role in stormwater management and protecting natural and cultural resources that anchor the community's sense of place.

In many areas of Michigan, state parks are the primary tourist attractions and host millions of visitors each year. State parks are also home to spectacular landscapes, historic structures and sites, sensitive habitats, and rare plants and wildlife. Lands that support such a wide variety of features need thoughtful management to sustain their diverse uses and benefits.

Because some visitor activities have the potential to harm resources, balancing recreation use with resource protection requires particular care. The Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) has developed a land use planning approach to match the sensitivity of State park lands and resources with acceptable levels of recreation and other visitor impacts.

Communities typically manage land use by preparing, adopting, and implementing master plans. The focus of such efforts is long-term sustainability of the community, environment and economy. In a similarly comprehensive approach, the MDNR guides development, use, and protection of its park lands according to a **general management plan (GMP)** prepared specifically for each park.

An early and critical step in the park planning process, the basis of the GMP is to analyze the lands and resources within a park boundary and divide it into **management zones.** These zones are defined by resource characteristics, aligned with management guidelines, appropriate levels of development, and visitor interactions with the resources. They are comparable to land use or zoning districts defined in a community's master plan. Once complete, a general management plan is used to develop site plans for each zone, focusing on the infrastructure most appropriate for that zone.

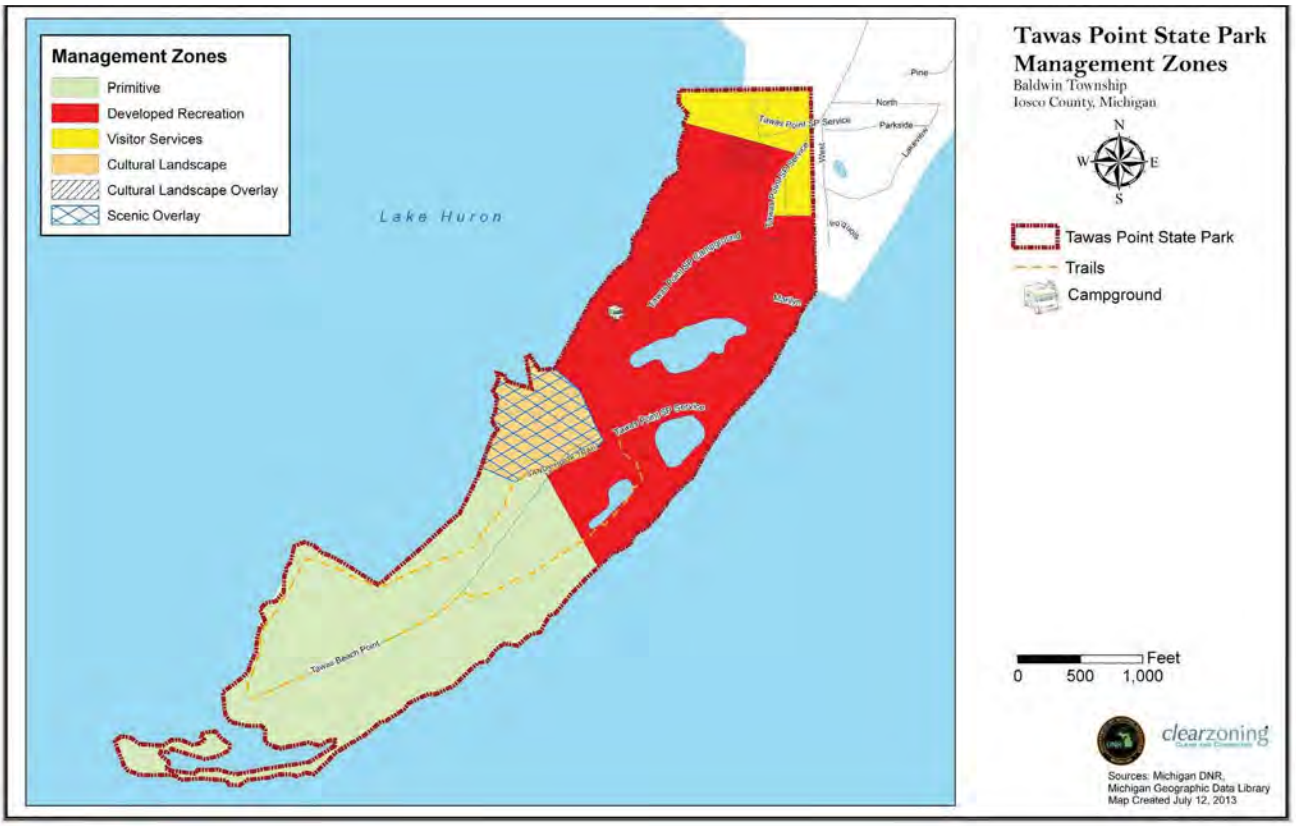
The MDNR uses nine standard management zones to address levels of recreational access and development, including park administration and operation uses. These standard zones cover the wide range of landscapes, recreational demands, and other uses supported by state parks, from those encompassing thousands of roadless acres in the Upper Peninsula to urban parks within major cities. Generally, the more sensitive the lands and resources within a zone, the fewer activities and types of development allowed.

For example, many state parks are home to threatened and endangered plants and animals that are strictly protected under State and Federal law. To safeguard these species, the MDNR may designate the areas where they are found as "Ecologically Sensitive Zone" where development and visitor use are highly restricted. In this zone, recreation is not allowed and visitor use is limited to ecological research and monitoring. Development is not allowed except where needed for resource protection.

Another example that prioritizes resource protection is the "Cultural Landscape Zone." Management within this zone focuses on maintaining historic structures and sites while accommodating moderate visitor access, education, and interpretation. Development must be compatible with the cultural landscape.

In contrast, the 'Developed Recreation Zone' is at the other end of the visitor impact spectrum. This zone is managed for active recreation with a high density of visitors in a developed setting designed for high levels of visitor use. Facilities should support universal access. Natural resources in this zone are actively managed and modified to support visitor activities.

Tawas State Park Management Zones (2013).



The MDNR's approach to zoning land in state parks is worth exploring at the community level, where popular local parks contain sensitive habitats and other resources. This approach provides thoughtful management to sustain the diverse uses and benefits of such resources while achieving balance between recreation use and resource protection.

A thorough knowledge of the locations and types of sensitive resources within the park is key to developing local management zones. It is particularly important to identify resources that are regulated or protected under State and Federal law. Local park managers can supplement their knowledge of park resources, if needed, by working with local environmental groups, resource management agencies, historical societies, and consultants. It is important to note that identifying and designating management zones in a park should not take place at the end of the planning process, but rather the beginning (see Chapter 8 for information on the role of natural and cultural resource inventories in the master planning process).

Finally, the most important aspect of being a public land manager is the balance of use with conservation to keep these places relevant today, but here for tomorrow. It is for this reason, that the most important part of planning for use is public education and input - from a diverse audience of visitors, stakeholder groups, and the general public to improve the draft and gain support of the community.

HOW THE DNR CAN HELP

The Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is committed to the conservation, protection, management, use and enjoyment of the state's natural and cultural resources for current and future generations.

There are several ways the DNR can partner with communities to plan for tourism that supports the quality of life for residents, businesses and visitors.

FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

Each year, the DNR offers approximately $80 million in available grant funding to local units of government, state agencies and nonprofit partners to help make communities healthier, safer and more vibrant. Some examples include:

WILDLIFE AND AQUATIC HABITAT

Grants are available to assist with Michigan's wildlife and aquatic habitat management and improvement, including recreational access and dam removal. There are also grants to support community forests, from tree planting to assisting in the purchase fire-fighting equipment.

PARKS AND RECREATION PLANNING

Community Park, Recreation, Open Space and Greenways plans, commonly referred to as a "5-Year Recreation Plan," create an inventory of existing facilities and resources, identify community recreation and open space needs and set a plan of action for a 5-year period. To be eligible to apply for Land and Water Conservation Fund, Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund, and Waterways grants, a community must have an approved 5-Year Plan on file with the DNR.

It is strongly recommended that the recreation plan be developed as part of the community master plan. The coordination of recreation planning with comprehensive planning allows a better understanding of current park and recreation needs by allowing them to be better understood within the current and future demographic and physical context of the community.

ACCESSIBILITY

In addition to formal grants, local state parks and trails are working to improve accessibility at state-managed recreational facilities and have matched funds raised by communities to complete projects such as accessible trails, playgrounds, as well as water access for swimmers and paddlers at state-managed facilities.

PLACEMAKING INITIATIVES

As public land managers, parks and recreation providers, curators of history, and educators, the DNR offers many experiences for residents and visitors that help define what is special to a place. There are many ways to collaborate to tell the story of a community and encourage visitation to your corner of Michigan's pleasant peninsulas.

According to the U.S. Travel Association, 85% of travelers do so to see their child excited by the experience. What in your community is exciting for kids? Michigan state parks are often seeking new reasons to attract visitors, from aqua parks to geodesic domes for overnight lodging, and appreciate the opportunity to collaborate to help fulfill a community vision for a sense of place. Explore the recreational opportunities already available and consider how trail connections, new amenities, or updates can help improve the prosperity of your community.

EXPERTISE

From wildlife to wildfire management, invasive species control and forest stewardship, the DNR has subject matter experts that can provide science-based guidance and best practices for oversight of natural, historic, and cultural assets. As people who are passionate about their programs, these public servants are interested in doing exactly that.

SUPPORT FOR COMMUNITIES

These are just some examples of resources available to communities, and more continue to be developed as needs arise. If you have a need or questions about any aspect of natural, cultural and recreational stewardship, management or development for your community, contact your DNR Customer Service Center to be directed to the best person or program to serve your needs.

RESOURCES

DNR Customer Service Center Contacts: www.michigan.gov/dnr/0,4570,7-350-79137_79765_81257---,00.html

DNR Grants: www.michigan.gov/dnr/0,4570,7-350-79134_81684---,00.html

MDNR Management Zones: www.michigan.gov/documents/dnr/PRDManagementZones_598731_7.pdf

P.J. Hoffmaster State Park. Photo courtesy of MDNR.

Domaci Gallery, Rogers City.
Photo by Deb Nystrom

CHAPTER 11
LINKING TOURISM AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT: A REGIONAL PERSPECTIVE

DENISE CLINE, AICP,
NORTHEAST
MICHIGAN COUNCIL
OF GOVERNMENTS

One of the important subjects that communities include in a master plan is economic development. This includes broad strategies to increase economic development and achievable goals, objectives, and action items to implement a community's economic development vision.

However, goals relating to tourism as an economic development tool often are missing from master plans. Typically, local communities tend to think of economic development in terms of manufacturing or commercial facilities and how best to create an environment to attract these establishments or allow for them to succeed. Local units of government don't think they have a role in tourism development as it might be considered "outside" of the usual services that government provides. Traditionally, the vision of local government involvement in tourism is limited to parks and recreation (park maintenance, facility upgrades, provision of programs, etc.).

Given the importance of tourism to the Michigan economy and the predominant role tourism plays in many local communities, it is beneficial for local governments to consider tourism as an important industry sector and to incorporate a set of goals, objectives, and action steps geared toward a tourism vision and the tourism industry.

Often a local government relies on its tourism-focused agencies, such as the Convention and Visitors Bureau or the Chamber of Commerce, to do all of the work for tourism planning. On occasion, a component unit of a local government, such as a recreation commission, downtown development authority, or a harbor commission may become involved in some aspects of tourism planning. However, such activities are seldom a priority for local government administration, a local planning commission, or planning department. This leads to a disconnect between the local government and tourism agencies, when, in fact, they should be working hand in hand.

Including tourism in the economic development goals within a community master plan (the blueprint for how the local government operates and will develop), allows the community to implement action items and to place a priority level for tourism alongside manufacturing, retail, and service industries. It also facilitates grant funding opportunities for tourism that

might not be considered were it not listed as a priority item in that plan. Including tourism within the master plan will also raise the awareness of listed tourism goals among elected and appointed officials charged with implementing the master plan (e.g., the city manager, city council, township supervisor, village president, county board of commissioners, etc.).

Developing goals, objectives, and action items for tourism should be incorporated into a community's standard master planning process. As public input on the strengths and weaknesses in a community is gathered, it is important to invite not only residents but members of the tourism community to provide input and ideas, whether that is a Chamber of Commerce, Convention and Visitors Bureau, or local business owners that rely on tourism to survive.

Sometimes implementing tourism related goals may require a local government to perform additional tasks to facilitate the stated goal. Street improvements, utility extensions, rezoning property, or providing additional public safety services to a tourism project may be necessary. Infrastructure changes need to be incorporated as part of a local community's annual capital planning process. Changes in service provision need dedicated and detailed planning to implement correctly. All of this needs the support of local administration, so including tourism goals within the master plan is one way to achieve this. Successful implementation of tourism goals can also lead to increases in local property values, which could lead to increased revenue to a local unit of government which, in turn, can lead to better services being provided to citizens and visitors.

REGIONAL INVOLVEMENT

Some local units of government have discovered the benefit of engaging regional agencies in the development of plans for their community. Regional agencies, such as a regional council, bring a different and broader perspective to the planning process. Regional councils in Michigan (there are 14) are multi-service entities with state and locally-defined boundaries that deliver a variety of federal, state, and local programs while also functioning as a planning organization, technical assistance provider and "visionary" to their member local governments. As such, they are accountable to local units of government and effective partners for state and federal agencies. These regional agencies are called Councils of Governments, Regional Planning Commissions or Councils, Regional Planning and Development Commissions, or Metropolitan Planning Organizations.

Within the master planning process, smaller local units of government in rural areas often don't have the budget to engage in a thorough analysis of the effects of tourism within their community and to determine specific action steps they should take. It is beneficial to the community to think of themselves as part of a regional tourism destination rather than in competition with other local units of government. Engaging with their regional council will bring that regional perspective to the project.

Tourism visioning at the regional level can yield many benefits that might not be achieved at a local level. Regional agencies are well suited to facilitate communication among tourism "stakeholders" within the defined region. Regional agencies can also foster collaboration among local units of government and even individual businesses or tourism-focused agencies by providing a comprehensive regional perspective of what tourism activities are being implemented area-wide.

Small entities, whether a local unit of government, tourism-related agency, or individual business, typically lack the capacity (time, staffing, finances) to implement and sustain an aggressive tourism marketing campaign at the local or regional level, much less statewide or nationally. Regional agencies can help fill this gap by helping promote tourism activities with one broad, regional voice, foster collaboration and cross-promotion among local entities implementing similar tourism related goals, securing grants for implementing tourism goals at a regional, multi-community level, or providing staff and technical assistance to help plan and implement specific objectives.

CASE STUDY: US 23 HERITAGE ROUTE CORRIDOR MANAGEMENT PLAN

The US 23 Heritage Route, a 200-mile route along the Lake Huron shoreline and part of the Pure Michigan Byways program, is the platform from which a regional, cooperative tourism promotional program was launched. The route ties together 45 jurisdictions in six counties with the Northeast Michigan Council of Governments (NEMCOG - a regional planning agency) managing the program. Local units of government as well as state, federal, and local groups participate in the Heritage Route. NEMCOG brings a regional and overall encompassing perspective to the program and has been able to facilitate cooperation among communities when it comes to promotion of the six counties as one regional tourism destination (see Chapter 7 for a description of the US 23 Heritage Route tourism asset inventory project).

US 23 Heritage Route Discovery Day participants at Thunder Bay Theatre, Alpena.

US 23 Heritage Route Discovery Day participants at Harborside Cycle & Sport, Alpena.

As part of the Pure Michigan Byways, the route is required to have a Corridor Management Plan that contains detailed goals, objectives, and action strategies. These strategies were written by the US 23 Heritage Route Management Council, with the assistance of NEMCOG. The Management Council oversees the direction of the entire program and is comprised of representatives from local units of government, state and federal agencies, tourism agencies, and other local interest groups.

Each strategy in the plan was developed with the region as a whole in mind. The focus areas of the plan include such categories as attractions; community development; highway safety and multi-modal transportation; forests, open space, and scenic views; and the environment. All of the strategies were developed with one overarching mission in mind:

> *"The US 23 Heritage Route is a key element in the overall recreational experience offered along the Lake Huron coastline from Standish to Mackinaw City. A wide variety of well-managed recreational, historical and cultural opportunities are available for enthusiasts to enjoy while surrounded by clean air, clear water, lush vegetation and wildlife habitat. Travelers will experience preserved scenic views of the waters, forests and open spaces found along the US 23 Heritage Route. The US 23 Heritage Route will be safe and inviting for all modes of transportation. Visitors will find a wide variety of services and attractions along the US 23 Heritage Route, especially in the many beautiful and thriving towns and cities along the Route. Having US 23 designated as a Pure Michigan Byway assists in improving the quality of life for residents, visitors, and tourists alike as well as strengthening local economic development efforts. The public will be informed about the attributes of the Heritage Route through a coordinated marketing and educational campaign."*

The program functions well within this mission because the communities have recognized that they are more powerful as a whole than they are alone. The communities have learned to play off each other's strengths and cross-promote in order to entice visitors to travel the coastline for a longer period of time. The program has provided them the opportunity to communicate the same overarching message and to speak in the same voice. It also has allowed communities to collectively identify what makes the area unique as a whole and individually and to develop strategies to preserve and promote those qualities.

Planning within the regional perspective also encourages communities to support each other and provides a networking system to share ideas. They all end up having a stake in each other succeeding within the tourism industry and in the preservation of resources that provide the basis for visitor attraction. Through years of hard work and diligence, the US 23 stakeholders have recognized the importance of the regional perspective and continue to move toward implementing the strategies on a regional and a local level.

A regional program such as US 23 Heritage Route provides a unique opportunity for the transition of these strategies and the regional perspective into community master planning. Because these strategies exist on the regional level, engaging regional agencies such as NEMCOG in the master planning process naturally brings these ideas down to the local level. Individual communities along the US 23 Heritage Route have incorporated the strategies into their local master plans that coordinate with and complement the strategies that the regional program has developed.

In addition, a regional perspective to developing master plans means that groups are engaged into the master planning process that might not have been involved previously (such as CVBs, stakeholder groups such as bicyclists or bird watchers, or any other group that has been involved in the regional program). Considering regional goals within a local plan is also useful in identifying gaps that exist in that particular community which need to be filled in order to accomplish the regional goal (e.g., Do we have the correct signage in place? Are there regional identity graphics and messaging we can be using?). In addition, looking at how other communities fulfill each goal is a useful tool.

Even though local communities might have already been involved in a regional program such as the US 23 Heritage Route, incorporating coordinated regional goals into the master plan legitimizes the relationship between local and regional entities and also allows communities to officially implement action strategies systematically to promote collaboration with other units of government and agencies.

In Michigan, many regional agencies offer master planning as part of their provision of services to their members, so engaging them early reduces cost for a local community that doesn't have the financial or staff resources to update a master plan on their own. A master plan which encompasses tourism as an industry sector and which focuses on regional collaboration leads to better decisions and the development and implementation of strategies for how to effectively allocate resources to best allow the community to become an established and vital member of the tourism community.

RESOURCES

Northeast Michigan Council of Governments website: www.discovernortheastmichigan.org

US 23 Heritage Route website: www.us23heritageroute.org/

Michigan Association of Regions website: www.miregions.com/

Lowell Riverwalk. Photo courtesy of MDNR.

CHAPTER 12
INFRASTRUCTURE PLANNING FOR TOURISM

JANET KOCH,
WEXFORD COUNTY

The phrase "tourism infrastructure" rings oddly on most ears. Tourism is people and travel and fun things to see and do and eat and cool places to stay, and maybe a plane ride or two, right? If you want to expand the definition, tourism is probably also marketing and signage and destination promotion.

Infrastructure, on the other hand, is public works. Roads, but mostly water mains and sanitary sewers and wastewater treatment facilities and stormwater drainage. Underground stuff that municipalities build for their residents at great expense and lasts for years and years.

Tourism is tourism and infrastructure is infrastructure. Then what, exactly, is tourism infrastructure?

DEFINING TOURISM INFRASTRUCTURE

All those expensive underground works are indeed part of the infrastructure that supports tourism. But the tourism infrastructure also includes other types of facilities; accommodation, food and beverage, and communication.

Accommodation facilities are the obvious hotels and motels, but also includes campgrounds, apartments, bed and breakfasts lodgings, and the now common short-term rentals such as VRBO and Airbnb. The **food and beverage facilities** serving tourists are, naturally, the restaurants, cafes, and bars. However, with the rising popularity of short-term rentals, tourists are also increasingly likely to be shopping at local supermarkets, grocery stores, and package liquor stores. The most critical **communication facility** for tourists is a high-speed internet connection.

But those elements only represent the physical components of tourism infrastructure. There are additional elements that are less tangible: cultural, service, and government.

Cultural elements can draw hundreds, thousands, and even hundreds of thousands of tourists to a destination. Festivals, concerts, art shows, car shows, food competitions, hockey competitions, dance competitions, the list of events is limited only by our imaginations. Cultural elements can also include the local art and music scenes.

An often-overlooked component of tourism is the **service elements** a community offers to its transient population. Medical needs can become critical overnight for tourists. Is there a robust ambulance service? How far is the closest hospital or urgent care clinic? In addition to medical facilities, there are other service considerations for tourists, such as car repairs, insurance, and banking needs.

Another component of tourism that is rarely considered is the **governmental element**. Tourists may not recognize a smoothly running government, but they will notice when a municipality is poorly run. How will they know? From the pothole-filled roads. By the litter blowing along the gutters. The faded and torn banners lining Main Street, the ripped flag at city hall, the sidewalks in disrepair. All of these can contribute to a feeling of uneasiness for tourists, and a sense that the city isn't safe.

DEFINING THE DREAM

Enhancing the lives of a community's residents, both socially and economically, should always be the ultimate goal for a community. That said, improving the tourism infrastructure in your community will very likely improve the lives of residents.

Start with an inventory of tourism assets and see how they line up with the infrastructure needs just mentioned. A comprehensive tourism asset inventory could identify gaps and overlaps in your tourism infrastructure. By cataloging everything in your community that tourists might be interested in seeing or doing, you will also find gaps and areas that might need some bolstering. Chapter 7 explains how to create a tourism asset inventory.

Once you've identified what's missing, consider what might be done to fill the gaps. Perhaps what tourists are really looking for is free Wi-Fi throughout the downtown. Maybe there is a need for additional hotel rooms combined with conference space. Or perhaps the capacity of your wastewater treatment plan is limiting your community growth. And then there's that [fill-in-the-blank] project people have been wanting for years, the project that would be the jewel in your community's crown, but just hasn't happened yet.

TART Trail, Traverse City, Michigan. Photo by Gary Howe.

Some tourism infrastructure projects are strictly private enterprises; a new restaurant, a new ski run at an existing ski resort. Though private-only projects are part of what makes a community a tourist destination, and while they need to be guided by thoughtful master plan land use recommendations and zoning, they don't need the level of collaborative planning required by public projects.

While some public projects are small, some are big, and some are so big they need to be phased as multi-year projects. But every public project needs cooperation and collaboration. And cooperation and collaborations start with planning.

PLANNING FOR PLANNING

Before anyone gets too excited about that new piece of tourism infrastructure that will transform the community, some homework needs to be done. Even though "everyone" says what this town really needs is a new [fill-in-the-blank], the reality may be different.

The bigger the project, the more homework needs to be done. Ask around and hire a consultant to do a market study. Talk to your regional planning organization and pick their brains about communities of a similar size and how they've tackled their tourism infrastructure gaps. Above all, **make sure the project fits your community.** This cannot be emphasized enough. The best-intentioned project, no matter how well funded, will not succeed if the community itself cannot support it, or worse case, doesn't truly want it.

A first step in making sure the project fits is to review your community's master plan and recreation plan, which contain a wealth of information about your community's history, priorities, and goals. Ideally, the project has already been included in your community's 6-year capital improvements plan (CIP) as a way to implement the recommendations in the master plan.

An important consideration in the pre-planning stage includes the size of the project. Do some preliminary investigations into physical size, location, cost, etc. On the plus side, almost any project you can dream up has been done somewhere else. And here's the thing about public projects—the people who were involved with their creation need very little encouragement to talk about them. Pick up the phone, send an email, and get the information straight from the source. Odds are good that once you find the right person to talk to, you'll have a hard time getting them off the phone.

Determining the project's scope will help you determine the stakeholders who should be involved. The planning commission, the public works director, the owner of the property (or properties) where the project is located, organizations and individuals who will benefit from the project, organizations and individuals who might oppose the project. But to bring any given project to fruition, each of these stakeholders must be at the table, and the sooner they get invited, the better.

Infrastructure projects are, by nature, collaborative. They require cooperation from multiple stakeholders from start to finish and pushing through all that requires energy and dedication. The more people involved, the more organizations who support the project, the higher the likelihood of the project seeing the light of day.

The most important thing to learn from pre-planning efforts is whether the project is even possible. Sometimes there are limitations beyond anyone's control. There could be a utility easement on a key piece of property that makes construction impossible. Construction estimates could be twice what were anticipated. Or the project could meet with a stonewall or resistance at some necessary level. If that happens, then move on to the next project that will improve your community's tourism infrastructure.

On the other hand, if all systems look good, and everyone loves it, that's fantastic! Hand out a full round of backpats and celebrate! Then go home and get some rest, because the next heavy lift is a big one.

Leelanau State Park Steps. Photo courtesy of the MDNR.

PLANNING FOR SPECIFICS

Once broad support for a project has been established, and there are no major roadblocks in sight, it's mostly about the money. The combination of the recession from 2008-2012, the Headlee amendment, Proposal A, and the municipal revenues lost because of revenue sharing cuts means that our cities, townships, villages, and counties are more cash-strapped than ever. Few governmental units in Michigan are likely to meet a new request for capital funding with any level of enthusiasm, no matter how wonderful the project might be.

To move any project forward that requires governmental approval, those in favor of it should do the homework of finding options for funding. If this is a recreational project to be constructed on public property, there are many grant possibilities through Michigan's Department of Natural Resources (MDNR). These require grant matches, and the paperwork can be a burden, but the grant award could be significant (see Chapter 10 for information on MDNR grants).

Additional funding possibilities include other state and federal grant programs, loans, private investment, a capital fundraising campaign, and crowd funding. The nature of the project will help you explore the best way to go about raising the necessary funds.

AND EVEN MORE PLANNING

An often-overlooked aspect of infrastructure projects are the life cycle costs. It's easy to get caught up in the excitement of creating a positive addition to your community and forget the unfortunate fact that nothing lasts forever.

Yes, new project may last thirty years, but what happens in year thirty-one? Will there be money available for any necessary maintenance and reconstruction? And what about the annual operating costs, because there will surely be some. Proposing any additional costs to a municipality, no matter how small the costs might seem, is unlikely to meet with a warm welcome.

This is where the CIP comes in. Working with your stakeholders, take the cost estimates and revenue projections you gathered and find a place in your 6-year schedule to house it. Since the CIP must be updated annually, you can adjust the timing, scope or cost. The budget gurus will use this schedule to set aside funds or look for other sources of funding, once it's been prioritized in the plan.

Being part of a team that creates a new and significant piece of tourism infrastructure, a new attraction for your community, will be very frustrating at times. It will also be very rewarding. Good luck.

RESOURCES

Redevelopment Ready Communities Capital Improvements Plan Guide: www.miplace.org/496784/globalassets/documents/rrc/rrc-guide-cip.pdf

Michigan Infrastructure Council: www.michigan.gov/mic/

Photo by Deb Nystrom.

CHAPTER 13
TOURISM PLANNING AND COMMUNITY RESILIENCY

MATT SMAR, MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT, GREAT LAKES AND ENERGYY

Like other activities that happen in the public realm, tourism is part of the fabric of community life. Many local governments in Michigan recognize the importance of addressing tourism through the community planning process, and some try to do so. Ideally, the role of the master plan in this regard would be to nurture the benefits tourism brings to local businesses and street life while mitigating its impacts on neighborhoods, infrastructure, natural resources, and other community cornerstones. The vision and goals in the master plan would guide this balancing exercise. In this way, well-managed tourism has the potential to support the local government's efforts to promote public health, safety, and welfare

The purpose of planning is to prepare the community for the future. This includes making the community resilient to foreseeable disruptions to routine operations and the lives of its residents. Such disruptions are all too well known in Michigan, and severe weather events and trends, public health emergencies, and economic upheavals are familiar examples. Tourism is also vulnerable to these disruptions and the master plan can include policies and other measures for helping the community's investments in tourism weather difficult times. And there is a bright flipside to this coin; for a community looking to increase its resiliency, creatively addressing tourism in the planning process can help make other dimensions of the community less vulnerable to certain hazards.

SHORELINE HAZARDS, WATERFRONT LAND USE, AND TOURISM

The shores of Michigan's Great Lakes and rivers are dynamic environments and subject to dramatic physical changes. These changes often occur abruptly after long periods of relative stability. During these stable periods, which may last decades, shoreline lands take on the appearance of permanent dry land. To a person shopping for real estate, the waterfront lands may look like a scenic site for a vacation property or place to retire. To the local Treasurer, they may inspire pleasant thoughts of lush property tax revenues. To someone knowledgeable about the natural processes of coastlines and floodplains, the appearance of the lands is temporary. One day, the waterfront lands will be transformed by catastrophic flooding and erosion.

Home impacted by Lake Michigan water levels and erosion. Photo courtesy of EGLE

Beaches and dunes on Michigan's Great Lakes coast are a timely example. These coastal lands are shaped by water levels of the Great Lakes. When lake levels are low, the beaches and dunes increase in size and area. Dune grass spreads and stabilizes the sand, adding to the appearance of permanent dry land. When lake levels rise again, waves travel farther up the beach. During strong storms, wind-driven waves wash over the beach and reach the dunes. With successive storms the waves erode the beach, dunes, and bluffs and destroy houses and other structures built on the sand.

The rise and fall of Great Lakes water levels follows an irregular cycle. In recent decades high water years occurred in the late 1980s, late 1990s, and more recently, beginning in 2019. While the cycle is generally unpredictable, it is recorded fact. At the time this Guide goes to press in summer, 2020, shoreline erosion powered by high water levels continues to destroy homes and roads on the Great Lakes. No local government official in a coastal community needs to be surprised when high Great Lakes levels threaten waterfront properties and infrastructure.

What does this have to do with tourism? In Michigan, local governments have sole authority to manage waterfront land use through planning and zoning. The same beaches, dunes, and views of the Great Lakes sought by people in the market for private waterfront property are prized by community residents who don't live on the water, and visitors from other parts of Michigan and the country.

As the hazards of using Great Lakes shorelines for residential land use become better known, a local government that dedicates and manages these lands for public recreation and tourism has the potential to score big wins for the community in terms of boosting the local outdoor recreation and tourism economy, increasing resiliency to coastal hazards, and enhancing quality of life for area residents. By the same token, floodplain lands along rivers

may also be managed for recreation. While chronic flood hazards make these lands poor choices for residential and commercial development, they are well-suited to parks and trail networks.

Obviously, the periodic flooding and erosion that threaten homes built too close to the water also threaten to damage or destroy recreational infrastructure. For a community managing waterfront parks and trails, leaving the lands in an undeveloped or lightly developed condition allows the natural coastal and floodplain processes to unfold harmlessly, and may be an economical and prudent management option.

EXTREME HEAT EVENTS, GREEN SPACE, AND TOURISM

Heat is the deadliest type of weather in the United States, and has killed more people than hurricanes, tornadoes, floods, and lightning combined. Extreme heat by itself is stressful and may lead to heat stroke, but its interaction with certain types of air pollutants such as ground-level ozone adds to the danger for people with asthma and other lung conditions. In Michigan, the average annual air temperature has increased since the 1980s, and the number of days per year that exceed 90^{0}F is also rising.

As summers become hotter, protecting public health and comfort from extreme heat may become more of a challenge in urban areas with extensive parking lots, buildings, and other impervious surfaces. Asphalt, concrete, and other common paving and building materials absorb the energy in sunlight and release it back into the air as heat. This may continue for hours after sunset. In this way, an uncomfortably warm evening may follow an unbearably hot day in the city. Compared to neighboring areas with more forest and green space, air temperatures in urban areas are typically warmer. This phenomenon is known as the "urban heat island effect" because cities tend to be enveloped in an "island" of warm air surrounded by a more rural region of cooler air temperatures.

Increasing green space and trees are among the proven antidotes for countering the urban heat island effect. A leafy urban tree canopy intercepts the sun's rays before they reach street level, which reduces the heat released by pavements and other impervious surfaces. Trees, other vegetation, and soil also release water vapor and cool the air. Increasing the urban tree canopy in parks and along streets has other potential benefits, such as reducing stormwater runoff volumes and raising property values. But the aesthetic qualities of properly maintained urban trees and their role in moderating air temperatures are key to a community planning to promote itself to visitors as a walkable destination with a distinctive sense of place. On a hot summer day, a shady, tree-lined street in a retail or entertainment district has undeniable appeal.

However, planting street trees and increasing green space in urban areas can benefit residents throughout the community if approached strategically. Many communities have residential areas where shady streets and parks are particularly scarce, and where residents are vulnerable to extreme heat events. In these communities, safeguarding the health and comfort of community residents drives the effort to add street trees and urban green space; the benefits to the local tourism and outdoor leisure economy is a secondary goal.

Grand Haven
Beach Erosion.

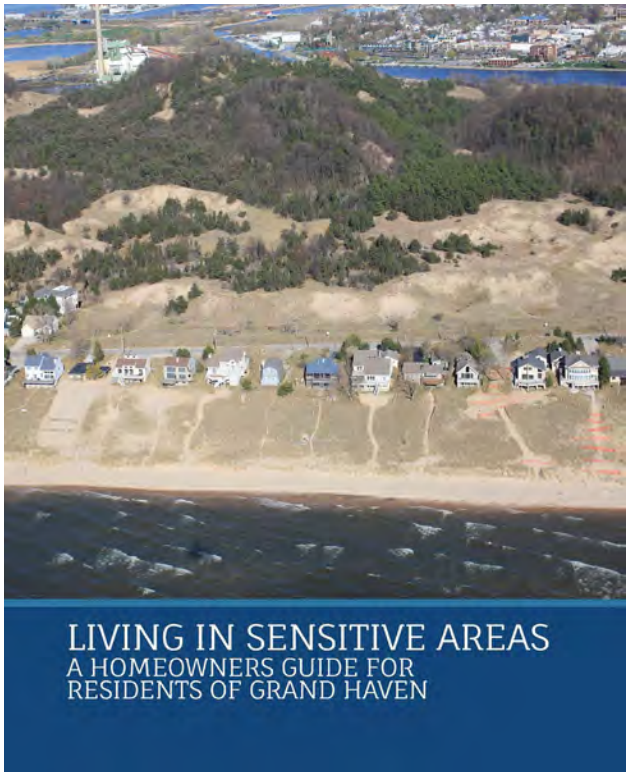
EMERGENCIES, TRANSPORTATION AND PUBLIC FACILITIES, AND TOURISM

Communities striving for recognition as outdoor recreation and tourism destinations need to have the facilities and infrastructure to support it. For example, a range of transportation options allows visitors to circulate through the community and surrounding areas in a variety of ways. A continuous network of well-maintained sidewalks is a basic requirement for a walkable community. Pedestrian and bike trails can link neighborhoods, commercial districts, parks, and other areas of the community and connect to regional trail systems. Public transportation is also an attractive option for many visitors and helps reduce traffic congestion and parking challenges. State parks and privately run hotels, resorts, and campgrounds help meet lodging needs, and some communities also run public campgrounds. Wayfinding infrastructure is vital for outsiders trying to navigate the community, and providing street signs, information kiosks, and other forms of accessible information is a great service to visitors, including information on social media.

A community that offers a variety of transportation and accommodation options for visitors has an advantage in the competition for tourism dollars. In terms of community resiliency, it may also have an advantage in helping its residents get through weather-related disasters and other community emergencies. During a crisis, people who cannot return to their homes need safe lodging, and facilities where they can attend to basic hygiene. This is a need that local private and public lodging providers can help meet. Recreation centers, community

centers, and other public facilities with restrooms and showers may also be adapted for emergency shelter, and air-conditioned public facilities can serve as community cooling centers during extreme heat events. Finally, the community's system for sharing information with residents and visitors takes on additional importance during emergencies.

Transportation options are important during emergencies. Sidewalks and trail networks may provide a route around roads that are blocked or otherwise impassable. In subdivisions or neighborhoods with a single point of connection to the road network, such alternative exit routes may save the lives of those fleeing a natural disaster. After any immediate danger has subsided, people displaced by an emergency may not have access to their personal vehicles. In these situations, access to public transportation can help people living in temporary shelters continue going to work or school. However, not all emergencies are life-threatening or community wide. Some may impact a family or just one person, due to the loss of a job, for example. In these circumstances, public transportation or use of the local sidewalk and trail system may help those affected make necessary trips while they weather the financial difficulty.



RESILIENT COMMUNITIES

Neither tourism nor community resiliency happen in a vacuum. Tourists, visitors, and community residents appreciate the same services and amenities and share the same needs, including the need for safety from hazards. It can be argued that nothing that happens in a community occurs in a vacuum, and public measures implemented to address a narrowly focused issue may reverberate through other aspects of community life, intentionally or otherwise. For example, a campaign to reduce urban runoff volumes by planting street trees may also enhance the community's sense of place and build resilience to extreme heat events. This means that many best practices communities implement for a variety of reasons also hold potential benefits for community resiliency and tourism. By keeping this in mind and thinking creatively, community planners can add depth and new dimensions to land use goals and objectives and plan a more resilient and vibrant community for residents community for residents and visitors alike.

RESOURCES

Resilient Michigan: www.resilientmichigan.org/

Planning for Community Resilience in Michigan: A Comprehensive Handbook: www.resilientmichigan.org/handbook.asp

Survive and Thrive: Lessons from Michigan Coastal Communities Planning for Resiliency: www.planningmi.org/community-resiliency

EGLE Coastal Management Program: www.michigan.gov/egle/0,9429,7-135-3313_3677_3696---,00.html

Milliken State Park. Photo courtesy of MDNR.

APPENDIX A
ACRONYMS AND GLOSSARY

ACRONYMS

CIP – Capital Improvements Plan

CVB – Convention and Visitor(s) Bureau

CoC – Chamber of Commerce

DMO – Destination Marketing (or Management) Organization

EGLE – Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes and Energy

MAP – Michigan Association of Planning

MEDC – Michigan Economic Development Corporation

MDNR – Michigan Department of Natural Resources

MDOT – Michigan Department of Transportation

MSUE – Michigan State University Extension

ROI – Return on Investment

RRC – Redevelopment Ready Communities

VFR – Visiting Friends and Relatives

VRBO – Vacation Rental by Owner

GLOSSARY

Attraction – The places, people, events, and things that make up the objects of the tourist gaze and attract tourists to destinations. Common examples include natural and cultural sites, historical places, monuments, zoos and game reserves, aquaria, museums and art galleries, gardens, architectural structures, themeparks, sports facilities, festivals and events, wildlife, and people (Encyclopedia of Tourism, 2015)

Destination – A particular place which a tourist plans to visit. Typically, natural and human attractions play a major role in making that choice. Includes a range of scales from an individual resort to a city, to a country, or to even a continent. (Encyclopedia of Tourism, 2015)

Destination Management Organization – Organization responsible for the implementation of strategic tourism policies, product development and coordinated management of all the elements that make up a destination. (Global Sustainable Tourism Council)

Ecotourism – A form of sustainable tourism which relies on nature-based attractions; employs best practice environmental management; contributes to conservation; involves local communities; offers effective interpretation; and generally, though not exclusively, favors smaller scale operation. (Encyclopedia of Tourism, 2015)

Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria – Global baseline standards for sustainability in travel and tourism. The GSTC Criteria are used for education and awareness-raising, policy-making and as a basis for certification. The Criteria are the minimum, not the maximum, which businesses, governments, and destinations should achieve to approach social, environmental, cultural, and economic sustainability. (Global Sustainable Tourism Council)

Responsible Tourism – tourism that

- minimises negative economic, environmental, and social impacts;
- generates greater economic benefits for local people and enhances the well-being of host communities, improves working conditions and access to the industry;
- involves local people in decisions that affect their lives and life chances;
- makes positive contributions to the conservation of natural and cultural heritage, to the maintenance of the world's diversity;
- provides more enjoyable experiences for tourists through more meaningful connections with local people, and a greater understanding of local cultural, social and environmental issues;
- provides access for physically challenged people; and is culturally sensitive, engenders respect between tourists and hosts, and builds local pride and confidence. (Cape. Town Declaration on Responsible Tourism)

Sustainable Tourism – Tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social/cultural and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities. (United Nations World Tourism Organization)

APPENDIX B
SUSTAINABLE TOURISM SURVEY RESULTS

PREPARED BY PROF. SARAH NICHOLLS, NOVEMBER 2019

LOCAL GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS AND PLANNERS

The project team emailed a total of 691 local government officials and professional planners in Michigan Great Lakes coastal communities and asked them to complete a five-question online survey; 75 addresses bounced as undeliverable, leaving a total of 616 contacts. After several reminder emails, the survey was closed in November 2019 with 129 complete responses, for a response rate of 20.9%. The responses for each question are summarized below.

WHEN ASKED TO DESCRIBE THE PRIMARY PURPOSE OR FUNCTION OF THE OFFICIAL'S ORGANIZATION ... (N = 129)

The type/level/coverage of organizations reported was as follows (not all responses specified a type or scale thus total < 100%) {or could do this based on stated entity, above}:

- Local government – 65 (50.4%)
- County government – 20 (15.5%)
- Regional entity – 4 (3.1%)
- State – 1 (0.8%)
- Tribal – 1 (0.8%)
- Private entity or individual – 7 (5.4%)
- Education – 2 (1.6%)
- Media – 1 (0.8%)

Twenty-two responses (17.1%) mentioned residents; 4 (3.1%) referred to visitors and 3 others (2.3%) to tourism.

Eleven responses (8.5%) mentioned the provision of essential/health and safety-related services; 13 (10.1%) mentioned the economy; 10 (12.9%) natural resources or the environment; and, 4 (3.1%) quality of life.

No response included the word sustainability. One included more than one of the key elements of a traditional definition of sustainability (focus on economy, environment, and society, and on current and future generations) without using the term per se. Prepared by Prof. Sarah Nicholls, November 2019 Page 4

WHEN ASKED THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE OFFICIAL'S ORGANIZATION *CURRENTLY ENGAGES* IN TOURISM ACTIVITIES... (N = 129)

The three most commonly engaged in activities (based on mean):

1. Place making (creating a better place for residents and visitors)
2. Contributing to economic development
3. Contributing to the protection of sensitive natural areas

Tourism planning ranked 9th out of 11 activities.

Identifying/implementing sustainability initiatives ranked joint 4th out of 11 activities.

TABLE A: THE EXTENT TO WHICH OFFICIAL'S ORGANIZATION CURRENTLY ENGAGES IN TOURISM ACTIVITIES (N=129)

	NOT AT ALL	A LITTLE	SOME-WHAT	TO A GREAT EXTENT	MEAN (OUT OF 4)	UNSURE
Tourism marketing	53 (41.1)	37 (28.7)	25 (19.4)	13 (10.1)	2.0	1 (0.8)
Enhancing visitors' experiences	18 (14.0)	28 (21.7)	36 (27.9)	44 (34.1)	2.8	3 (2.3)
Attracting conventions and other events	69 (53.5)	35 (27.1)	18 (14.0)	6 (4.7)	1.7	1 (0.8)
Anticipating/managing crises	19 (14.7)	24 (18.6)	37 (28.7)	46 (35.7)	2.9	3 (2.3)
Tourism planning	37 (28.7)	42 (32.6)	37 (28.7)	10 (7.8)	2.2	3 (2.3)
Identifying/implementing sustainability initiatives	6 (4.7)	28 (21.7)	46 (35.7)	42 (32.6)	3.0	7 (5.4)
Coordinating/building partnerships with tourism stakeholders	22 (17.1)	33 (25.6)	39 (30.2)	34 (26.4)	2.7	1 (0.8)
Place making (creating a better place for residents and visitors)	4 (3.1)	13 (13.2)	32 (38.0)	77 (59.7)	3.4	3 (2.3)
Contributing to economic development	6 (4.7)	13 (10.1)	44 (34.1)	64 (49.6)	3.3	2 (1.6)
Contributing to the protection of sensitive natural areas	7 (5.4)	20 (15.5)	32 (24.8)	67 (51.9)	3.3	3 (2.3)
Contributing to the preservation of cultural heritage	12 (9.3)	25 (19.4)	41 (31.8)	45 (34.9)	3.0	6 (4.7)

TABLE B: EXTENT TO WHICH OFFICIAL'S ORGANIZATION *SHOULD ENGAGE* IN TOURISM ACTIVITIES (N = 129)

	NOT AT ALL	A LITTLE	SOME-WHAT	TO A GREAT EXTENT	MEAN (OUT OF 4)	UNSURE
Tourism marketing	40 (31.0)	30 (23.3)	36 (27.9)	21 (16.3)	2.3	2 (1.6)
Enhancing visitors' experiences	7 (5.4)	23 (17.8)	53 (41.10	44 (34.1)	3.1	2 (1.6)
Attracting conventions and other events	42 (32.6)	34 (26.4)	27 (20.9)	24 (18.6)	2.3	2 (1.6)
Anticipating/managing crises	12 (9.3)	12 (9.3)	32 (24.8)	72 (55.8)	3.3	1 (0.8)
Tourism planning	21 (16.3)	42 (32.6)	38 (29.5)	27 (20.9)	2.6	1 (0.8)
Identifying/implementing sustainability initiatives	1 (0.8)	13 (10.1)	24 (18.6)	88 (68.2)	3.6	3 (2.3)
Coordinating/building partnerships with tourism stakeholders	12 (9.3)	27 (20.9)	35 (27.1)	55 (42.6)	3.0	0
Place making (creating a better place for residents and visitors)	2 (1.6)	5 (3.9)	18 (14.0)	104 (80.6)	3.7	0
Contributing to economic development	2 (1.6)	6 (4.7)	27 (20.9)	91 (70.5)	3.6	3 (2.3)
Contributing to the protection of sensitive natural areas	2 (1.6)	8 (6.2)	18 (14.0)	101 (78.3)	3.7	0
Contributing to the preservation of cultural heritage	1 (0.8)	14 (10.9)	34 (26.4)	78 (60.5)	3.5	2 (1.6)

TABLE C: EXTENT TO WHICH OFFICIAL'S ORGANIZATION *CURRENTLY ENGAGES/SHOULD ENGAGE* IN ACTIVITIES (N = 129)

	MEAN: CURRENTLY	MEAN: SHOULD
Tourism marketing	2.0	2.3
Enhancing visitors' experiences	2.8	3.1
Attracting conventions and other events	1.7	2.3
Anticipating/managing crises	2.9	3.3
Tourism planning	2.2	2.6
Identifying/implementing sustainability initiatives	3.0	3.6
Coordinating/building partnerships with tourism stakeholders	2.7	3.0
Place making (creating a better place for residents and visitors)	3.4	3.7
Contributing to economic development	3.3	3.6
Contributing to the protection of sensitive natural areas	3.3	3.7
Contributing to the preservation of cultural heritage	3.0	3.5

** all pairs of means are different to one another with a statistical significance of 0.05 or better

TABLE D: IMPORTANCE OF TOURISM TO ECONOMY IN OFFICIAL'S COUNTY (N = 129)

	N	%
Not at all	1	0.8
A little	0	0.0
Somewhat	23	18.0
Extremely	104	81.3

TABLE E: SIZE OF TOURISM INDUSTRY IN OFFICIAL'S COUNTY (N = 128)

	N	%
Too small/we need more visitors	39	30.5
About right	75	58.6
Too large/we receive too many visitors	14	10.9

TABLE F: EXISTENCE OF A TOURISM DEVELOPMENT PLAN FOR OFFICIAL'S COMMUNITY (N = 129)

	N	%
Yes, there is a tourism-specific plan for the community	11	8.5
No, but tourism is included within the overall master plan for the community	48	37.2
No, no plan for tourism exists	31	24.0
Unsure	39	30.2

OFFICIALS: WHAT DOES THE TERM 'SUSTAINABLE TOURISM' MEAN TO YOU? (N = 121)

- Attracting new/return visitors – 22 (18.2%)
- Doesn't harm resources/the environment – 15 (12.4%)
- Year round (rather than seasonal) tourism – 14 (11.6%)
- Balance – 8 (6.6%)
- Considers residents and visitors equally – 5 (4.1%)
- Economic benefits without harm to the environment – 5 (4.1%)
- Today and into the future/long term approach – 5 (4.1%)
- Don't know (this term) – 5 (4.1%)
- Benefits/protects locals/quality of life and economy and environment and tourists – 4 (3.3%)
- Doesn't harm the environment or quality of life – 4 (3.3%)
- Visitor satisfaction/recommendations – 4 (3.3%)
- Economic growth – 3 (2.5%)
- Responsible/respectful – 3 (2.5%)
- Considers economy, environment and society, also visitors, industry and hosts – 2 (1.7%)
- Economic benefits without harm to culture – 2 (1.7%)
- Managing short term rentals – 2 (1.7%)
- Providing transit options – 2 (1.7%)
- Providing an authentic experience – 1 (0.8%)
- Economic benefits without harm to the environment or society or economy – 1 (0.8%)
- Consistent visitation (year to year) – 1 (0.8%)
- No negative impacts (type unspecified) – 1 (0.8%)
- Nothing – 1 (0.8%)
- Puts residents first – 1 (0.8%)
- Responding to trends/change – 1 (0.8%)

The most common response focused solely on the sustainability of visitation (maintaining/growing visitor numbers); another 12% focused more specifically on the reduction of seasonality in the industry, whilst 3% referenced the need to maintain/improve visitor satisfaction and likelihood to recommend.

Twenty-eight percent of responses identified the importance of maintaining/protecting (or not damaging) assets/resources; however, only seven (6%) included reference to the need to protect all three of the environment and society and economy, of which only two also mentioned the need to simultaneously consider visitors and industry and hosts.

Nineteen responses (16%) mentioned residents/citizens; 7% used the word balance or balancing; nineteen (16%) referenced future conditions or the long term/run.

OFFICIALS: WHO/WHICH AGENCY(IES) DO YOU THINK HOLD(S) PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY FOR PLANNING FOR SUSTAINABLE TOURISM IN YOUR COMMUNITY? (N = 121, THOUGH MULTIPLE RESPONSES WERE ALLOWED AND SO TOTAL % EXCEEDS 100)

- CVB/tourism office – 51 (42.1%)
- Chamber of Commerce – 49 (40.5%)
- Local government – 41 (33.9%)
- Private businesses (or related associations) – 16 (13.2%)
- County government – 15 (12.4%)
- Planning commission – 10 (8.3%)
- Downtown development entity – 10 (8.3%)
- Economic development organisations – 8 (6.6%)
- Federal government agencies (Forest Service, National Parks) – 7 (5.8%)
- State government agencies (DNR, DEQ) – 5 (4.1%)
- Local/county parks and recreation agency/commission – 4 (3.3%)
- Residents/citizens – 4 (3.3%)
- Non-profits – 4 (3.3%)
- Regional entities – 3 (2.5%)
- Environmental groups – 3 (2.5%)
- No-one – 3 (2.5%)
- Government (unspecified) – 2 (1.7%)
- Visitors – 1 (0.8%)
- I don't know – 7 (5.8%)

TABLE G: EXTENT TO WHICH OFFICIAL THINKS EACH HOLDS RESPONSIBILITY FOR PLANNING FOR SUSTAINABLE TOURISM (N = 121)

	NOT AT ALL	A LITTLE	SOME-WHAT	TO A GREAT EXTENT	MEAN (OUT OF 4)	UNSURE
Local government	5 (4.1)	17 (14.0)	47 (38.8)	52 (43.0)	3.2	0
County government	8 (6.6)	25 (20.7)	52 (43.0)	36 (29.8)	3.0	0
State government	5 (4.1)	29 (24.0)	54 (44.6)	33 (27.3)	3.0	0
The Convention and Visitors Bureau	10 (8.3)	8 (6.6)	26 (21.5)	77 (63.6)	3.4	0
The Chamber of Commerce	2 (1.7)	9 (7.4)	43 (35.5)	67 (55.4)	3.5	0

CONVENTION AND VISITOR BUREAUS AND CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE

The project team emailed a total of 41 Michigan Convention and Visitor Bureaus (CVBs) and Chambers of Commerce (COCs) with a stated tourism function and asked them to complete a five-question online survey. After several reminder emails, the survey was closed in November 2019 with 26 complete responses, for a response rate of 63.4%. The responses for each question are summarized below.

CVBS/COCS: WHEN ASKED TO DESCRIBE THE PRIMARY PURPOSE OR FUNCTION OF THEIR ORGANIZATION ... (N = 26)

- Destination promotion – 13 (50%) (with specific mention of leisure visitors – 3, meetings/events – 2, groups – 1, overnight visitors – 1)
- Destination marketing – 12 (46.1%)
- Enhance the local economy – 7 (26.9%)
- Benefit members – 5 (19.2%)
- Benefit the community – 5 (19.2%)
- Destination development – 2 (7.7%)
- Sell the destination – 2 (7.7%)
- Destination management – 1 (3.8%)
- Increased hotel occupancy – 1 (3.8%)
- Create collaborations – 1 (3.8%)
- Support tourism – 1 (3.8%)
- Attract/retain businesses – 1 (3.8%)

No responses mentioned planning or sustainability.

TABLE H: WHEN ASKED THE EXTENT TO WHICH THEIR CVB/COC *CURRENTLY ENGAGES* IN TOURISM ACTIVITIES... (N = 26 OR 16*)

	NOT AT ALL	A LITTLE	SOME-WHAT	TO A GREAT EXTENT	MEAN (OUT OF 4)	UNSURE
Tourism marketing	0	2 (7.7)	0	24 (92.3)	3.9	0
Product development*	0	2 (7.7)	0	24 (92.3)	3.9	0
Improving service quality*	0	2 (12.5)	9 (56.3)	5 (31.3)	3.2	0
Enhancing visitors' experiences	0	0	7 (26.9)	19 (73.1)	3.7	0
Attracting conventions and other events	2 (7.7)	6 (23.1)	6 (23.1)	12 (46.2)	3.1	0
Anticipating/managing crises	2 (7.7)	7 (26.9)	8 (30.8)	8 (30.8)	2.9	1 (3.8)
Conducting market research*	1 (6.3)	0	6 (37.5)	9 (56.3)	3.4	0
Tourism planning	0	2 (7.7)	5 (19.2)	19 (73.1)	3.7	0
Identifying/implementing sustainability initiatives	2 (7.7)	4 (15.4(	11 (42.3)	9 (34.6)	3.0	0
Coordinating/building partnerships with tourism stakeholders	0	0	6 (23.1)	20 (76.9)	3.8	0
Place making (creating a better place for residents and visitors)	0	2 (7.7)	9 (34.6)	14 (53.8)	3.5	1 (3.8)
Contributing to economic development	0	3 (11.5)	5 (19.2)	17 (65.4)	3.6	1 (3.8)
Contributing to the protection of sensitive natural areas	1 (3.8)	10 (38.5)	5 (19.2)	9 (34.6)	2.9	1 (3.8)
Contributing to the preservation of cultural heritage	2 (7.7)	5 (19.2)	9 (34.6)	8 (30.8)	3.0	2 (7.7)

TABLE I: EXTENT TO WHICH *CVB/COC SHOULD ENGAGE* IN ACTIVITIES (N = 26 OR 16*)

	NOT AT ALL	A LITTLE	SOME-WHAT	TO A GREAT EXTENT	MEAN (OUT OF 4)	UNSURE
Tourism marketing	0	1 (3.8)	1 (3.8)	24 (92.3)	3.9	0
Product development*	1 (6.3)	1 (6.3)	5 (31.3)	9 (56.3)	3.4	0
Improving service quality*	0	0	4 (25.0)	12 (75.0)	3.8	0
Enhancing visitors' experiences	0	1 (3.8)	3 (11.5)	22 (84.6)	3.8	0
Attracting conventions and other events	0	3 (11.5)	7 (26.9)	16 (61.5)	3.5	0
Anticipating/managing crises	1 (3.8)	5 (19.2)	9 (34.6)	11 (42.3)	3.2	0
Conducting market research*	0	1 (6.3)	1 (6.3)	14 (87.5)	3.8	0
Tourism planning	0	1 (3.8)	3 (11.5)	21 (80.8)	3.8	1 (3.8)
Identifying/implementing sustainability initiatives	1 (3.8)	3 (11.5)	12 (46.2)	10 (38.5)	3.2	0
Coordinating/building partnerships with tourism stakeholders	0	0	2 (7.7)	24 (92.3)	3.9	0
Place making (creating a better place for residents and visitors)	0	2 (7.7)	6 (23.1)	18 (69.2)	3.6	0
Contributing to economic development	0	0	8 (30.8)	17 (65.4)	3.7	1 (3.8)
Contributing to the protection of sensitive natural areas	0	4 (15.4)	10 (38.5)	12 (46.2)	3.3	0
Contributing to the preservation of cultural heritage	0	4 (15.4)	6 (23.1)	15 (57.7)	3.4	1 (3.8)

TABLE J: EXTENT TO WHICH CVB/COC *CURRENTLY ENGAGES/SHOULD ENGAGE* IN ACTIVITIES (N = 26 OR 16*)

No perceived need to increase engagement in tourism planning (already perceived to be high) or identification/ implementation of sustainability initiatives (currently perceived as something that is done 'somewhat' on what average). However, need to increase engagement in both contributing to the protection of sensitive natural areas and contributing to the preservation of cultural heritage is statistically significant.

	MEAN: CURRENTLY	MEAN: SHOULD
Tourism marketing	3.9	3.9
Product development*	2.9**	3.4**
Improving service quality*	3.2**	3.8**
Enhancing visitors' experiences	3.7	3.8
Attracting conventions and other events	3.1**	3.5**
Anticipating/managing crises	2.9	3.2
Conducting market research*	3.4**	3.8**
Tourism planning	3.7	3.8
Identifying/implementing sustainability initiatives	3.0	3.2
Coordinating/building partnerships with tourism stakeholders	3.8**	3.9**
Place making (creating a better place for residents and visitors)	3.5	3.6
Contributing to economic development	3.6	3.7
Contributing to the protection of sensitive natural areas	2.9**	3.3**
Contributing to the preservation of cultural heritage	3.0**	3.4**

** all pairs of means are different to one another with a statistical significance of 0.05 or better

TABLE K: IMPORTANCE OF TOURISM TO ECONOMY IN CVB/COC'S COUNTY (N = 23)

	N	%
Not at all	0	0
A little	0	0
Somewhat	1	4.3
Extremely	23	95.7

TABLE L: SIZE OF TOURISM INDUSTRY IN CVB/COC'S COUNTY (N = 22)

	N	%
Too small/we need more visitors	7	31.8
About right	15	68.2
Too large/we receive too many visitors	0	0

Note: two of the four respondents who did not answer this question left comments to say that their communities receive too many visitors in high season but too few in low season.

TABLE M: EXISTENCE OF A TOURISM DEVELOPMENT PLAN FOR CVB/COC'S COMMUNITY (N = 26)

	N	%
Yes, there is a tourism-specific plan for the community	6	23.1
No, but tourism is included within the overall master plan for the community	13	50.0
No, no plan for tourism exists	5	19.2
Unsure	2	7.7

A tourism-specific development plan {that covers more than marketing} was suggested to exist for: Detroit, Great Lakes Bay, Ludington, Marquette, Silver Lake Sand Dunes and SW MI Tourist Council. Searches and requests for these plans did not, however, identify any such plans.

CVB/COC: WHAT DOES THE TERM 'SUSTAINABLE TOURISM' MEAN TO YOU? (N = 24)

- Preserving/protecting natural resources/environment – 7 (29.2%)
- Attracting new/return visitors – 3 (12.5%)
- Preserving/protecting assets/resources (type unspecified) – 3 (12.5%)
- Today and into the future/long term approach – 3 (12.5%)
- Balance – 2 (8.3%)
- Managing tourism growth – 2 (8.3%)
- Preserving/protecting cultural resources/heritage – 2 (8.3%)
- Visitors behaving responsibly/being stewards – 2 (8.3%)
- Changing in response to visitor demand – 1 (4.2%)
- Considers economy and environment – 1 (4.2%)
- Considers economy, environment and culture/society – 1 (4.2%)
- Considers tourists, businesses and host communities – 1 (4.2%)
- Developing in a way that increases attractiveness for visitors and residents – 1 (4.2%)
- Enhancing the experience for locals, summer residents and visitors – 1 (4.2%)
- Environment in which demand does not regularly exceed supply – (4.2%)
- Development that is conscious of the desires and needs of stakeholders – 1 (4.2%)
- Maintenance of the value proposition – 1 (4.2%)
- Providing options to visitors – 1 (4.2%)
- Residents, businesses and visitors living in a symbiotic relationship with one another – 1 (4.2%)
- Tourists and the tourism industry enhancing the community's environment, culture and economy – 1 (4.2%)
- Visitor contribution to the community – 1 (4.2%)
- Supporting existing and new businesses – 1 (4.2%)

The most common response focused on the importance of preserving/protecting natural resources/environment (29%). Sustainability of visitation (maintaining/growing visitor numbers) was one of the three second most commonly identified responses, with the need to preserve/protect assets/resources (type unspecified) and the importance of taking a long term approach (13% each).

Only two responses referenced the need to consider all three of the environment and society and economy. One other mentioned the need to simultaneously consider visitors and industry and hosts. Five responses (21%) mentioned residents or hosts; two (8%) used the word balance.

CVB/COC: WHO/WHICH AGENCY(IES) DO YOU THINK HOLD(S) PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY FOR PLANNING FOR SUSTAINABLE TOURISM IN YOUR COMMUNITY? (N = 24, THOUGH MULTIPLE RESPONSES WERE ALLOWED AND SO TOTAL % EXCEEDS 100)

- Local government – 13 (54.2%)
- CVB/DMO/tourism office – 12 (50.0%)
- Chamber of Commerce – 8 (33.3%)
- County government – 5 (20.8%)
- Economic development organisations – 5 (20.8%)
- Downtown development entity – 4 (16.7%)
- Local/county parks agency/commission – 2 (8.3%)
- Private businesses – 2 (8.3%)
- All agencies involved in community/economic development – 1 (4.2%)
- Charities – 1 (4.2%)
- Conference attendees – 1 (4.2%)
- Conservancies – 1 (4.2%)
- Environmental organizations – 1 (4.2%)
- Individuals – 1 (4.2%)
- Local college – 1 (4.2%)
- Residents/citizens – 1 (4.2%)
- State government – 1 (4.2%)
- The community – 1 (4.2%)
- Tourism organizations – 1 (4.2%)
- Watershed council – 1 (4.2%)
- Everyone – 1 (4.2%)

TABLE N: EXTENT TO WHICH CVB/COC THINKS EACH HOLDS RESPONSIBILITY FOR PLANNING FOR SUSTAINABLE TOURISM (N = 24)

	NOT AT ALL	A LITTLE	SOME-WHAT	TO A GREAT EXTENT	MEAN (OUT OF 4)	UNSURE
Local government	0	4 (16.7)	4 (16.7)	16 (66.7)	3.5	0
County government	2 (8.3)	6 (25.0)	5 (20.8)	11 (45.8)	3.0	0
State government	3 (12.5)	4 (16.7)	9 (37.5)	8 (33.3)	2.9	0
The Convention and Visitors Bureau	1 (4.2)	2 (8.3)	3 (12.5)	18 (75.0)	3.6	0
The Chamber of Commerce	0	9 (37.5)	5 (20.8)	10 (41.7)	3.0	0

TABLE O: EXTENT TO WHICH CVB/COC THNKS EACH HOLDS RESPONSIBILITY FOR PLANNING FOR SUSTAINABLE TOURISM BY RESPONDENT TYPE (N = 24)

	RESPONSIBLE ENTITY	
Respondent Type	**The Convention and Visitors Bureau**	**The Chamber of Commerce**
The Convention and Visitors Bureau (n = 17)	3.8	2.7
The Chamber of Commerce (n = 9)	3.3	3.8

APPENDIX C
TOURISM ASSET INVENTORY PROCESS

IDENTIFY STAKEHOLDERS AND BEGIN MEETING

Building an asset inventory is an iterative process. You start with a core group of people, then as the work progresses, you will discover other groups or individuals who have helpful expertise and invite them into the process. So, do not expect to have everyone at the table from the beginning, but it is helpful to try to bring as many on board from the beginning as possible.

The obvious starting point are those organizations already tasked with supporting tourism: convention and visitors bureaus and chambers of commerce. There is often talk that an asset inventory process should lie solely with these organizations, or that this process is redundant with their work. However, they understandably have the interests of their membership as their primary mission, and an asset inventory must be more holistic. So, while a CVB or Chamber can provide leadership or the bulk of the effort, a wider net should be cast for participants. Consider inviting the following to your planning meetings:

- Heritage organizations such as historical societies or regional museums can provide direct expertise through members or curators, or contacts within the community about specific areas of interest.
- Regional activity groups such as biking, hiking, paddling, skiing, running, or other sports clubs.
- Representatives from regional Indian tribes.
- College, university or primary school teachers.
- Local, state or federal government officials, representatives or staff. Especially focus on local governments in the region and agencies responsible for public land in the region.
- Conservation and hunting or fishing organizations.
- Land conservancies.
- The agriculture community, including growers and representatives of any consortia they participate in, such as the Michigan Agritourism Association.

Plan a meeting with representatives from as many of these groups as possible. Have someone present the basic outlines of the proposed asset inventory project. At this stage, it is important that everyone understands that they all can contribute to the project. If there are many participants, it may be best to solicit or accept volunteers to form an executive committee. This subset of the group could set future meeting schedules and agendas and organize an effort to designate a project champion.

DESIGNATE A CHAMPION

All successful asset inventories have had a single person to encourage, focus and train project participants. A single point of contact during the process provides many efficiencies, including the clear distribution of information (the champion can gather issues, questions or news and send them out to all participants, rather than participants getting partial or erroneous information), the focus of project knowledge (the champion can learn a procedure and then teach it or provide it consistently to project participants), and reminding project participants about the project and their responsibilities to it between meetings.

Ideally, the champion would be someone who could devote a good percentage of their time to the project. This means that they either need to be employed by an organization that has a tourism asset inventory as one of their goals, or that funding can be secured to hire someone from a third-party organization.

- The champion's responsibilities could include:
- Compile and send project news to participants.
- Document and share updates to the taxonomy and editorial standards (see below).
- Onboard and train new participants.
- Track and review participant's contributions to the asset inventory.
- Answer questions and clarify standards as participants add information to the asset inventory.
- Check in with participants to ensure their engagement.
- Plan project meetings.

CREATE A TAXONOMY AND DATA DICTIONARY

This step basically asks, "What information are we going to collect and how will it be categorized?" This is a critical step because it can severely impact the scope of an asset inventory project.

Usually, the most important question to ask first is whether service businesses will be included in the inventory or not. Basic services such as restaurants, accommodations, and stores are an important part of a tourist's stay in a region. However, there may be other places to secure this information, such as the CVB website, internet search engines, or any number of travel or rating services such as Yelp or TripAdvisor. To determine whether services should be included in your inventory, answer the following questions:

- Are a significant percentage of service businesses in our region not covered elsewhere?
- Does that third-party coverage not overlap significantly with our project goals (for example, if a local's perspective or storytelling is important to your project but the third-party coverage does not capture that)?
- Are there organizations willing to keep service business information up to date in the asset inventory? Service businesses change very frequently, so if they are included, you must consider how those changes will be reflected in the asset inventory in the future.

If you answered yes to most of these questions, then you may want to consider including services in your inventory. If not, then you can leave them out initially and reevaluate later.

A taxonomy is a categorization scheme for your assets. Most tourism asset inventories will have multiple taxonomies working at the same time. Design your inventory data storage so that each asset can be included in multiple taxonomies (see Determine a Data Storage Platform below).

To determine taxonomies for your project, start by choosing a few sample assets you intend to include and try to group like things with like. You will find that there are multiple ways to sort them: geographically, functionally, topically. As you see patterns emerge, record them. Then, try the same exercise with a different set of assets. Do the patterns you saw earlier fit this set of assets as well? It will take some iteration and revising to begin to get to a taxonomy that works for your project.

Another consideration while developing taxonomies is the audience for your inventory. If there is an agency or project that you are building the inventory for, perhaps that agency or project already has a categorization scheme that meets their needs. If you are building an inventory for use on a public website, then you need to consider the needs of the potential users of that website as you develop the taxonomy. For example, a website intended only for kiteboard enthusiasts will likely need to organize its information differently than a website intended for a general travel audience.

Taxonomies will evolve as you add additional assets to your inventory, because you will find assets that do not fit into your predetermined scheme or you may need to widen or narrow the definition of a category as more examples of each category become available.

Here are some sample taxonomies:

- If your inventory is destined for a general-use website, you may want a categorization scheme that helps users go directly to their general area of interest. These could be very broad categories. This scheme may include categories like Active and Outdoor, Agriculture and Food, Arts and Culture, Heritage and History, and Shopping and Accommodations.
- When someone uses an inventory, they often want to sort the list by the function of the assets. This category answers the basic question, "What is that?" This scheme may include categories like Restaurant, Beach, Park, Museum, Scenic View and Historic Site.
- Since we are considering the visitor experience as we develop our inventory, you may want to include an activity category. This answers the basic question, "What can you do here?" This may include categories like Swimming, Hiking, Fine Dining, Fast Food Dining, Sunset Viewing, Guided Tours, Bird Watching, Kayak Rentals, etc.
- Again, depending on who will be using your inventory, you may want to consider a geographic taxonomy. This answers the basic question, "Where is it?" Though basic address information should always be included where available, please remember that typical political divisions, such as county or township, have little meaning to your average visitor and are not visible on the ground. Developing alternative geographies based on physical characteristics or possible experiences gives you a way to market portions of your inventory to different groups. Evocative names placed in regions on a map like Forested Highlands, River Country, Battle Ridge, Sparkling Coast or Village Route create an inviting picture in the visitor's mind while giving you a quick way to refer visitors toward their places of interest.

A data dictionary is simply a listing of the possible information you will gather for each asset. What data you gather will depend on the eventual audience of your inventory as well. Because these data often land in a database or spreadsheet through a form, each item is sometimes called a field. Basic fields may include:

- Place Name
- Description
- Categories
- Organization or person that provided this information

The description is critical and the most open ended. There will be more about this later in this chapter, but defining how this is written and ensuring it is done in a standard manner from the beginning (for example, should it be first person or third person, conversational or formal, proscribed or loose format) will shorten the time it takes to get the inventory to its audience. One framework you could use for the description could be the standard 4 Ws: What is this place, Who is it for, Why should they go here, and Where can they find it.

Of course, location and contact information are important to capture, including:

- Address
- City
- State
- Zip
- Latitude, Longitude (for mapping purposes)
- Phone
- Website
- Email
- Social Media

Also include accessibility information:

- Hours of Operation
- Wheelchair Accessibility
- Parking Availability
- Parking Fee
- Seasonal Availability
- Entrance Fee
- Pet Acceptance
- Age Restrictions

Media are also critical: photos, videos, documents (such as maps, menus or brochures), audio or podcasts are all possibilities.

DEFINE EDITORIAL STANDARDS AND DESIGNATE AN EDITOR

Though we encourage you to include as many people as possible when developing your asset inventory, the consumers of the inventory must hear it speak with one voice. Copywriting that sounds different from asset to asset, or completeness of content that varies from asset to asset, can cause frustration to end users of the inventory.

Therefore, you should write a brief standards document and distribute it to all your potential contributors. It could include:

1. Guidance on what types of assets should be included in the inventory (see Taxonomies above).
2. Recommendations on the amount and type of information to be included for each asset.
3. A basic style guide for writing descriptions (see this example from The Guardian).
4. Recommendations on how to locate assets on a map (if necessary).
5. Examples of complete entries for assets.

While it is fantastic when all participants can just accept these standards and use them, the process will need some oversight. Therefore, designating an editor to review completed assets and correct any deviation from the standards will improve the integrity of your inventory. If your standards are simple and time is available, then perhaps the champion can fill this role. This would also allow clarifications or guidance to be communicated to the entire editor community. If possible, someone who is used to applying writing standards and is versed in copywriting would be the best choice for this role.

CREATE TEAMS

A thorough process like an asset inventory is not easily done alone. When brainstorming ideas for what should be included, either when developing the taxonomy or deciding which individual assets to include, a group of people that can share ideas will make the inventory more complete and deeper in content. Also, the maxim "many hands make light work" is very true when writing, collecting photographs, or researching contact information for assets.

Therefore, creating teams tasked with developing parts of your asset inventory is encouraged. Your project will determine how best to organize them. Typical ways include geographically (making a team responsible for the assets in an area like a county, township or region) and topically (making a team responsible for the assets in a single category like accommodations, nature experiences or history).

DETERMINE A DATA STORAGE PLATFORM

A data storage platform is simply a place to put the information while you are gathering and compiling it. There are many options here, requiring more or less technology expertise. A major consideration here is what your final product will be; a website will need different inputs than a printed guide or a simple report of statistics. Here are a few possibilities:

Paper: Create a form on paper, print a bunch of copies and hand them out to your teams. They fill them out, one asset per form, and hand them back in. Your editor(s) can then review them and ask questions or request clarifications from the teams. Pros: A quick way to start if you are unsure of your final product; understandable to non-technical team members. Cons: Data entry takes additional time if you eventually need this content in a digital format (for a website, for example); and it is difficult to add a new category or field from your data dictionary to a paper form.

Spreadsheet: Ubiquitous, easy to set up and easy to understand, spreadsheets are an easy way to start managing an asset inventory data set. Currently, setting up an online cloud-based spreadsheet is just as easy as setting up a desktop spreadsheet. Just open a new sheet, add a column heading for each item in your data dictionary, and start adding assets as rows. (Note that if you allow one asset to participate in multiple items from a single category, create a separate column for each category item. For example, if you have an activity category, there may be a park that has swimming, volleyball and picnicking, so you will need a column for each possible activity selection.) Specific spreadsheet platforms for this would include Google Sheets (with the ability to add a form as a front-end provided by Google Forms) and Microsoft Excel (which works both on the desktop or online with or without its form front-end Microsoft Forms). Pros: Easy to start and set up; many people have experience with spreadsheets; and multiple team members can work concurrently in an online spreadsheet. Cons: Difficulty writing longer text and text with links or other references; hard or impossible to store geographic data and media (such as photos and documents).

Geographic Information System (GIS): Because geography is an important part of an asset inventory, storing it from the beginning in a GIS offers many benefits. Esri's ArcGIS is the standard software for this sort of effort. Through their ArcGIS Online product, you may even allow multiple team members to add or modify information in your inventory. Pros: Geography and content are together from the beginning; holes or biases in the data are more easily spotted. Cons: Requires GIS expertise and sometimes expensive licensing of software; will take extra effort to allow multiple users to add or modify data in the system.

Database: Unlike spreadsheets, the strength of most database systems is that they allow you to create multiple tables and then relate those tables to one another. By using a relational database, you can remove some redundancy in your data entry and get a lot more flexibility when asking questions of your data (called queries, written in Structured Query Language or SQL). Typical smaller-scale relational database platforms include Microsoft Access and FileMaker (now an Apple subsidiary). Alternatively, there are non-relational database platforms, generally called NoSQL databases, that require more upfront data design, but then can use a wider variety of input data. These are usually used for very large non-predictable

datasets. You generally will need expert help to design a database that will work for your needs, especially when designing data entry forms and queries. Pros: Useful for multi-product projects such as those that have both a planning and outreach component; data can be easily transferred into any other format. Cons: Challenging to set up; sometimes difficult to store geographic data and media (such as photos and documents).

Dedicated Platform: Some developers or service providers can create proprietary solutions specifically for asset inventories. These solutions can be custom-built or start from an already-created asset mapping application. Generally, they will have online data-entry interfaces and can easily have public-facing interfaces for people to interact with the gathered information when it is ready. Some pre-built options include LIAA's Community Center Asset Mapping extensions and OuterSpatial. Some website development organizations with a development staff can create such an application. Pros: Solutions can be tuned to your project needs; a proscribed process can take some guesswork out of a project; mapping and media management can be built-in from the beginning. Cons: Expensive.

Others: There are other platforms to consider that do not fit into the categories above. Google My Maps is a place to create simple maps that include points, lines, regions and descriptions and photos for free (at the time of this writing). If you want to get a quick idea of the geographic scope of your asset inventory, My Maps is a good place to start. You can export a My Map to GIS and from there into any other format when you're ready. Google Earth Pro gives anyone the tools to save and manage geographic data for free (also at the time of this writing). You can draw points, lines and regions in the software and export them for use in GIS or other formats.

CREATE AN IDENTITY

People can rally around a set of colors or graphic designs as can be seen in any university football stadium on a fall Saturday afternoon. The same is true for an asset inventory project. By giving your project an identity (a logo, a color scheme, a font set, and general guidelines for how they should be used), you provide a way for participants and the community to visualize the project. This, in turn, gives those participants a sense of belonging to something larger than themselves. With that sense comes an imperative to complete tasks and to let others know about the project.

We recommend hiring a professional graphic designer with proven experience in identity design. Do not have a "logo contest" or hire an inexperienced person, as the results will be much less likely to stand the test of time or the multitude of ways the identity can be used. The deliverables from a professional relationship should include, at a minimum:

- A logo in a variety of configurations (e.g., horizontal, vertical, full color, mono color, etc.) and a variety of formats (raster files such as JPEG and PNG, and vector files such as Adobe Illustrator .ai and Encapsulated Postscript .eps).
- A color scheme and recommended fonts.
- A style guide to show how the logo and other identity elements should be properly used.

Armed with this information, you will be flexible should you want to build a website, create signage, develop advertising or other outreach (e.g. swag), and communicate effectively via email or social media.

GAMIFY THE PROCESS

This is more a matter of style, but gamification can be effective and is worth a brief discussion here. Gamification refers to the application of characteristics of games to a typically non-game process. These characteristics include rules, a scoring mechanism, and competition. In an asset inventory project, use of gamification can add another layer of incentive to the already motivated participants, if those participants are willing to play along. You must be careful about using gamification, as to some it may feel random, or move the motivation outside of the goals of the project, or encourage participants to add unnecessary things simply to meet game goals. In addition, if the game is the sole motivator, those who cannot hope to win may simply drop out. However, if managed carefully, gamification can fun competition that can help to make a project more interesting to participants.

Examples of gamification may include some sort of prize for the team that completes their data entry first, maintaining a public count of how many assets each team has added to add a competitive angle, or celebrating a team member of the month or week as the project progresses. Consider these sorts of activities if your community sounds receptive.

CREATE A PRODUCT

Once your asset inventory has reached some sort of stability, it is time to consider or build the product. Here are some options:

Website: The most flexible option, a website can present your inventory with as much context as you are willing to add, including detailed instructions and use expectations for visiting sensitive assets. Consider adding clear ways that users can contact knowledgeable parties, allowing for multiple ways to find assets (remember the taxonomy?), and adding features to show up-to-date information such as a news feed or event calendar. Remember that a website is never (or at least shouldn't be) complete, so as you work toward this product, consider who and how will keep the website current after it is launched. In addition, advertising can be integrated into a website several different ways, offering you an extra way to gain some income from the website, either through sponsorships or direct advertising. Building a website can be daunting, and commonly available website builder services are not up to the task of displaying an asset inventory, so of course seek professional help.

Map/Brochure: Despite the integration of digital tools into our daily lives, there is still a demand for paper maps and brochures. Travelers enjoy the inventory overview a map and brochure can give them. Usually details are found elsewhere, like on a website or in a guidebook. You will need the services of a professional graphic designer to complete a map or brochure project using the data gathered by your asset inventory. Make sure it uses the identity you had developed in order to build brand recognition with your visitors.

Guidebook: A guidebook can provide details to travelers where internet access is lacking or for projects where a website is not possible. In addition, a guidebook can be a tangible home for advertising, giving you an alternative income stream should you wish to go through the extra effort of selling and managing ads. Typically, guidebooks are printed annually, since tourism assets change frequently, so plan accordingly. Again, the services of a professional graphic designer with demonstrable print experience is an absolute necessity for a guidebook project.

Data: Perhaps your only goal is to compile the data for someone else. Any of the data storage platforms discussed above would be more than adequate to distribute your asset inventory.

PREPARE ASSETS FOR VISITORS

If your product will include informing the general public about your tourism assets, then you must work with those assets to ensure they are ready for visitors. This may include things like training asset staff to be hospitable, ensuring that adequate signage is provided to guide visitors to their destination, ensuring that an asset has posted consistent hours of operation, providing well-marked parking areas, and adding traffic control measures to keep visitors from trampling sensitive areas. Keeping the focus on sustainable tourism may mean limiting and controlling visitors, but it will mean the asset will be protected and available for years to come.

DEVELOP A MARKETING AND OUTREACH PLAN

With your product planned and approaching release, you must determine the best ways to let people know about it. Here are some suggested options to get you started:

Press Release: Organic news coverage is the best way to get the word out initially. Make sure to contact news outlets in both the area you are inventorying and where you feel like your visitors will come from. Make sure to check on the news organization's websites before you contact them to ensure you follow their guidelines for how they would like to be contacted and the information they need.

Event: Host an event to celebrate or launch your product.

Advertising: Advertising can be expensive, but a few well-placed ads can really help you get interest building for your product. Avoid social media ads, but advertising on related websites or in print can be considered.

Social Media: Outreach on social media is a lifestyle, so be prepared to be in it for the long haul. Post on a consistent schedule, share interesting things that others would want to share (you will have to be consistently creative), and be prepared for both positive and negative feedback.

Reciprocal Links: If your product is a website, then the best way to improve your search engine placement is to have links to your website. If you feature links out of your website, then a good place to start is to ask those places to link back to your site (i.e., reciprocate). Also, do a search for the region or topics covered on your website and ask some of the main sites that come up if they could link to your site.

APPENDIX D
STEPS TO CREATING A NATURAL/CULTURAL RESOURCE INVENTORY

To explore the process communities can follow to create natural and cultural resource inventories, consider an example community called Lakeville. Lakeville is a historically rural coastal town. The town was primarily made up of single-family detached housing and a small downtown until the 1980s, when the area's beaches, hiking trails and late 19th century architecture began attracting a large summer tourism crowd. Residents and local leaders are now worried that the influx in daily visitors throughout the summer months will have a detrimental impact on the beaches' water quality and hiking. In addition, there is pressure to build hotels, restaurants and summer homes to accommodate the tourism industry. The local planner has been tasked with completing a Natural and Cultural Resources Inventory as a starting point to plan for the changes it is experiencing.

STEP 1: DETERMINE THE SCOPE OF THE PROJECT

Before creating a project framework for an inventory, ask the following questions:

- What are the site boundaries?
- What timeframe will the inventory analyze?
- What organizations, individuals and public entities are stakeholders for the site?
- How will the inventory be used?

Consider what information the community will need about the existing conditions in Lakeville to provide a basis for plans that can address these concerns. For example, the inventory should include water quality data and an estimate of how many people are visiting each beach daily. Information about trail use, erosion and invasive species would also be helpful. In other words, the inventory should be designed in a way that collects information needed to solve key issues.

STEP 2: DEFINE THE STUDY AREA

The project scope will help to determine the project's study area. For example, if the inventory is meant only to help inform decisions about Lakeville's water quality, the study area may be the watershed(s) that connect to the community. However, if the project is primarily concerned with managing the carrying capacity of local trails and forests, the study area would be the Lakeville municipal boundaries.

STEP 3: FORM A PROJECT WORK GROUP

The inventory and its implications for local decision making require that this document should not be created in isolation, by one group or entity. A variety of stakeholders should be included to provide unique perspectives and areas of expertise. It is important to remember that the carrying capacity of a natural resource and the motivation to promote a particular local aesthetic are subjective concepts. For this reason, inventories are most effectively developed when they are part of a planning process that includes a range of stakeholder interests.

After introducing the project to the public through an initial planning meeting, establish a smaller work group of 7-10 highly engaged stakeholders to direct the project, ideally with technical, GIS, public engagement and data abilities. The group may need to seek external partnerships in order to complete the work described in the project scope.

Using the Lakeville example, the project leader would reach out to a variety of entities with interests in cultural and natural resources to solicit their input or to participate in the work group. For the natural resource inventory, these might include conservation groups, park managers, watershed council staff, and tourism business owners. For cultural resources, this could include museum directors, local artists, historic district commissioners and chamber of commerce members.

STEP 4: DRAFT A SCHEDULE AND IDENTIFY FINAL PRODUCTS

In collaboration with the work group, develop a schedule that addresses project deliverables and recommends what to include. Determine what the group will inventory, how this information will be presented, an estimated timeline for completing the work and who will be responsible for each inventory component.

In Lakeville, the project work group decides that the inventory will need to include water quality testing at the area's beaches; and maps of pertinent information for the management of the area's forests (slope, soil types, critical habitats, etc.). While the inventory is certain to be more extensive, these components begin to answer the question of how to manage Lakeville's assets through a period of growth and increased tourism activity.

STEP 5: REVIEW EXISTING PLANS AND STUDIES

Rather than starting from scratch, the inventory should build upon and update information that the community has already collected. The project team should gather and review existing municipal documents such as the master plan, the parks and recreation plan, the capital improvements plan, the watershed management plan and environmental impact statements, to name a few. In other words, determine what has already been done before deciding where to go next.

STEP 6: PRESENT FINDINGS TO THE PUBLIC

Once the work group and its partners have finished inventorying the project area's assets, it is then time to gather public input on how to share this information. In Lakeville, the project leader makes the inventory publicly available to view 2-3 weeks before a larger public event takes place. At the meeting, the work group presents its findings, summarizing the data and making it both visually appealing and easy to understand. The work group can then use these talking points as a jumping off point for a facilitated discussion around the described topic areas.

Photo courtesy of MDNR.

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