

COMMUNITY TOURISM ASSESSMENT
FOR
LINDSTROM, MINNESOTA

MAY 14, 2008

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EXTENSION



I. Introduction

The Lindstrom Community Assessment Program was conducted by the University of Minnesota Tourism Center on February 25-26, 2008. The assessment is part of a broader community tourism development process the Center developed in 1991. The process has been used by a variety of tourism and economic professionals, community-based volunteers, and educators.

Recently, a modified version of the process has been implemented in Mountain Lake, New York Mills, and Fertile Minnesota. Typically, two Tourism Center faculty members conduct the assessment. To expand their outreach, the Tourism Center invited all of the University of Minnesota's Extension Educators in Community Economics to learn about this program through hands-on participation on the team. In addition, two faculty members from the University of Main Cooperative Extension Service participated. A list of assessment team participants is included in the first attachment.

The city of Lindstrom, through its Economic Development Authority, hosted the team and was the focus of the assessment.

The tourism assessment consists of three parts:

- Development and review of background materials relating to tourism development in Lindstrom
- A community forum conducted on February 25 and community site visit conducted by Extension Educator teams on February 26.
- A written report submitted to the Lindstrom Economic Development Authority by the assessment team.

During the site visit, the tourism assessment team toured the city and the area, visiting several sites and attractions, engaged local citizens in casual conversations about their community, and discussed their observations within the team.

II. Data used in the tourism assessment

A variety of sources were used to compile the tourism assessment. Secondary data sources include: Tourist Profile for Lindstrom (2008); The City Administrator's staff report (2007); EDA meeting minutes (2006); the city's comprehensive plan (2005); and Minnesota Design Team recommendations (1998).

Primary data sources include the results of the community forum meeting on the community's tourism strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats as well as the observations of community assessment team members. A panel of local citizens also provided community context and further explanation of some of the outside observations.

III. Tourism-related data for Lindstrom

Relatively little tourism-specific data has been collected for Lindstrom. For purposes of tourism data analysis, Chisago County is included in the 9 county Metropolitan area. For the period June, 2005-May, 2006, travelers spent \$58,253,218 in the county, which ranked the county 38th in total tourism expenditures. Tourism provided approximately 830 fulltime jobs and generated \$7 million in state revenues.

Who is visiting Lindstrom? While no specific profile of a visitor to Lindstrom exists, some comparisons to the average visitor to the Metro. Area during 2005-2007 can be drawn. For example: the majority were female (61%) with an average age of 44 and an estimated median income of \$74,500.

The average travel party size was 3 and travel parties stayed in the area about 3.4 nights. Twenty one percent indicated they completed day trips to some location in the Metro. area. Most (56%) indicated they were on vacation while 20% indicated their trip was for personal reasons and 18% were traveling for business. Many (19%) were visiting friends and relatives in the area.

Most visitors (60%) engaged in shopping activities while in the area while 21% participated in outdoor activities and 21% attended affair or festival of some type.

A more complete profile is included in Attachment 2.



IV. References to tourism development in other data sources

A number of previous documents and sources were made available for review following our community visit. Many of these cited tourism as an opportunity and several studies addressed themes similar to those that emerged in this assessment effort.

The Comprehensive Plan for Lindstrom (2005) includes tourism development as an economic development goal for the city (page 20). It suggests that the city work with organizations and agencies in the region to promote area-wide tourism while focusing on those tourism activities unique to Lindstrom. It also suggests that consideration should be given to directing further resources to the development of tourism, particularly as it relates to arts, heritage, and recreation.

Many of the community's strengths and weaknesses have been identified in past planning documents including the 1990 Comprehensive Plan, 1997 Lindstrom Ledger survey, 1998 Minnesota Design Team recommendations, 1998 Trunk Highway 8 Group Sessions, 2001 and 2005 Comprehensive Plan Policies, 2006 EDA Board Meeting, and 2007 City Administrator interviews related to community visioning. While each of these documents was developed to meet specific needs of specific stakeholder groups, it is apparent that many of the same community characteristics keep getting identified. The results of the community forum held on February 25, 2008, contain many similar items (Attachment 3). Two of the major characteristics include the importance of the lakes and the Swedish heritage of the community.

V. Inventory of attractions

A small group of community residents (7) completed an inventory of attractions worksheet prior to the Extension team visit. The data analysis indicates the lack of consensus on what constitutes a community attraction. If the standard of recognition is 5 people or more indicating that a particular attraction exists, the results are as follows:

Inventory of natural/scenic attractions (42 potential attractions / 27 received 1+ votes / 10 recognized by 5 or more people): beaches/fall foliage/fishing streams/lakes/hiking trails/orchards & vineyards/ parks/picnic areas/nature trails/scenic views

Inventory of cultural attractions (43 potential attractions / 23 received 1+ votes/ 4 recognized by 5 or more people): antique or craft shops/churches/historic buildings/memorials

Inventory of recreational activities (46 potential attractions /31 received 1+ votes/ 6 recognized by 5 or more people): boating/bowling/camping/golf/horseback riding/shopping

Inventory of special events (40 potential events / 30 received 1+ votes/ 6 recognized by 5 or more people): antique shows/holiday celebrations/parades/queen coronations/triathlons/winery tours

Inventory of other attractions (43 potential attractions /23 received 1+ votes/ 5 recognized by 5 or more people): arenas/bakeries/ball parks/ playgrounds/libraries

Becky Carlson, from the local newspaper, shared a draft publication she has developed using this inventory. She collected information on some of the existing sites, including hours of operation, fees, contact persons, etc. The community can build upon the inventory and use it as a guide for residents and visitors alike. The inventory can also be a starting point for evaluating each site's ability to attract visitors.



VI. The Community SWOT Analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats)

The complete results of the SWOT analysis are included in attachment 2. Approximately 30 city leaders from Lindstrom, (city council members, Economic Development Authority, Planning Commission) as well as business owners in Lindstrom and neighboring communities, participated in a community tourism SWOT exercise on February 25. The evening meeting was facilitated by Extension. Within small groups, individuals were encouraged to identify the respective strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats associated with present and future tourism development in Lindstrom. Priorities were established and implications discussed. Major strengths included water/lakes and Swedish heritage while major weaknesses included lack of hospitality facilities as well as a lack of community cohesiveness. The exercise went a step further to identify major tourism development opportunities such as being a Swedish tour destination and taking advantage of the community's proximity to the Twin Cities. On the other side of the coin, major threats included lack of community cooperation, traffic congestion, and the lure of Wisconsin attractions.

Upon examining the results of the SWOT, community participants emphasized the need for a realistic analysis of who is currently visiting the community, the need for additional tourism product development, and the importance of maintaining and expanding the current visitor assets of the community.



VII. Visitation Team Observations and Suggestions

On Tuesday morning, February 26th, teams of Extension Educators completed driving and walking tours of the community and recorded their “first impressions” of the community. Because “first impressions” influence how long tourists stay in the community, this assessment provides Lindstrom with some outside perspectives.

The following reflects their observations and suggestions on what they observed:

History & Culture

Observations:

- There is a need for cultural interpretation. Does signage alone make clear the Swedish connection to a non-Swede?
- Access to Karl Oscar statue is difficult because of the snow
- Did not see any interpretation of Vilhelm Moberg other than the display at the library. Several team members wanted to know where the Vilhelm Moberg house was.
- What is the degree of authenticity of Swedish culture in Lindstrom?
 - While there are bilingual signs, is the Swedish culture just on the surface or is it a cultural identity for the whole town?
 - Dahla Horses (Non-Swedish visitors didn't understand why donkeys were displayed all over town. In some cultures the donkey represents something that is dumb.)
- While Lindstrom is promoted as “Little Sweden” there is not much within the community that carries out the theme
- What is the market: Swedes or Swedish-Americans? (how deep is the connection? Is the market primarily the elderly? If so, what is being done to attract youth visitors?)
- What about the German heritage?
- The yellow Swedish guide publication is overly wordy, hard to follow, and not attractive

Suggestions:

- Expand the “Swedish Circle” concept in marketing the community
 - Possibility of folk arts school (This has been successfully developed in Milan and Grand Marais)
 - Swedish themes in architectural styles
- Explore the possibility of Swedish language day camp classes for Twin City residents (The University of Minnesota, Gustavus Adolphus College, and Minnesota State University in Mankato offer Swedish language classes and would be resources for teaching them)
- Publish the Swedish tour bus tour schedule in the paper as a way of alerting local businesses to potential opportunities
- City officials and business owners need to agree upon the importance of Swedish authenticity and how that is defined. Using that definition, decide upon which parts should be enhanced? (downtown doesn't need to look like a theme park)
- Implement tour marketing ideas:
 - Develop a compact disc driving tour that independent visitors can purchase, along with detailed maps

- Develop a Circle Tour brochure
- Consider placing a billboard on I-35 to direct visitors to the community
- Consider hosting performances of Swedish musicians
- Establish connections to group tour network: where tour operators can hire “step-on guides”
- Tour groups need meal accommodations. Consider having local churches provide group tours with a meal and opportunity to connect with local residents. (This strategy has been successful in Walnut Grove when they host the Laura Ingles Wilder Pageant each summer. Walnut Grove has a population of only 701 yet they host and feed hundreds of visitors at six evening performances over 3 weekends)

Business

Observations:

- There is a hodgepodge of retail
- There are a variety of agricultural tourism assets in the immediate area (orchards, winery, farmers markets)
- The bakery & meat market have “old world appeal”
- The national historic site (antique shop) not appealing
- The balloon (Re Max Realty) sign over the chamber office is not appealing
- There was a lack of signage for chamber office
- The coffee house—outdoor seating and inviting place to stop
- The downtown, overall, is not visually appealing or coordinated
- Benches along downtown street are nice
- There is a sign in one business that is hostile to another business, raising questions in the assessment team member’s mind about trusting any business

Suggestions:

- Make Chamber of Commerce office the reception center and make building more “inviting”
 - Consider providing a patio area for visitors to enjoy the lake
 - Consider adding a gift shop to the Chamber office selling postcards of Lindstrom (there was a notable lack of postcards available)
- A bed & breakfast is a possibility in one of the older houses near down town
- Tourists turn to convenience stores for information about the community. Ensure brochures about attractions are placed in the stores and that staff are trained in customer service.

Community infrastructure

Observations:

- Several factors led the assessment team to conclude that the community does not want visitors to bring or launch their boats on the lake:
 - There are limited turn-arounds and parking for boat trailers and RV’s
 - Public bathroom facilities are absent and would be needed
 - There are a lot of unwelcoming signs next to lakes, ranging from “no public access” to “absolutely no public access”

- There is a general need for more financial investment in maintaining housing in the community. (Follow up discussion with community leaders identified septic system issues that need to be resolved before homeowners are willing to invest in maintaining their housing. This is important to maintain the quality of the lakes for boating and fishing for residents as well as visitors)
- After Highway 8 realignment is complete, the rear of many of the buildings will need renovation
- The entrance signs to the community are nice but small making them easy to miss
- Veterans Park is cluttered
- Bike trail stops at #25 and doesn't go into the park or Whispering Pines

Suggestions:

- Very unique and artistic water tower—keep it maintained
- Change the wording of the “dead end” signs to “no outlet”
- Develop signage for Trinity Lutheran to indicate its historical significance
- Repaint the fire hydrants along TH 8, Newell Ave., 1st street, Olinda Trail
- Apply for Community Development Block Grant to assist redesign of downtown streetscape and add parking areas near Chamber office
- Develop nicer, more visible entrance from the West
- Develop larger, more visible signage for county parks/trails
- Provide bike racks
- Carry Swedish theme throughout the corridor

Recreation

Observations:

- There are major public space issues
- There are few connected points for trails/recreation
- Beautiful park
- Good biking/walking trail
- No interpretation of Ki-Chi-Saga park (maps/trails)
- Signage at Lindstrom beach
- Signage for boat launches needed



Suggestions:

- One way of building the Swedish connection is focusing on heritage. Another option is connecting with the current Swedish lifestyle which includes a strong environmental focus and fitness opportunities. Several options include:
 - With a number of cross country skiers visiting William O'Brien State Park, the area is a draw for skiing. Assessment Team members indicated that the state park is often crowded on winter weekends. Ski trails could be developed to bring tourists to the community during the slow retail/tourism winter months
 - There is an increasing awareness of environmental protection. As Lindstrom works on road redesign on main street, it may be an opportunity for building owners to incorporate energy saving changes to their buildings from simple steps (using energy saving light bulbs, providing recycling bins) to more complex (eco-friendly building designs). These environmentally friendly steps could be featured and promoted to visitors and residents
- So. Center Lake access—good for canoe/boat outfitter as a potential new business
- Provide and manage parking and lake access points
- Connect trails/recreation and provide maps and directional signage

Government

Observations:

- There appeared to be zoning issues within the city
- There appear to be tax base and bonding issues

Suggestions:

- Opportunity for development packaging for further city improvements

Community attitude

Observations:

- There appears to be low local support for local businesses
- There remains the question: who really wants tourism in Lindstrom? For example, we heard comments about people not wanting additional boats on “their” lake.
- The “No split pair” signs indicate lack of community cohesiveness
- Not collaborating as communities or businesses
- There is a sense of tension between residents and visitors
- Will neighboring communities refer visitors to Lindstrom?

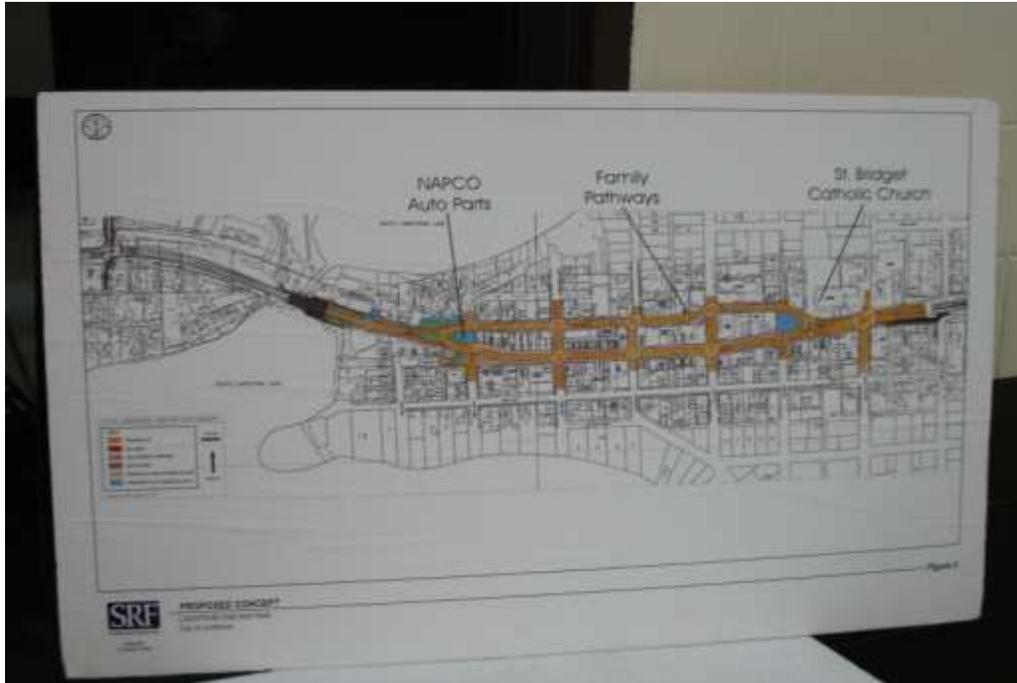
It is important to note that many of the observations made during the February 25-26 sessions corroborate the findings of earlier studies. Future discussion of tourism development in Lindstrom should take into consideration past research findings related to community attitude, community collaboration, and community vision.

The reality is Lindstrom currently hosts tourists—from the friends and family market to the Swedish visitors wanting to see Vilhelm Moberg-related sites to people passing through town on their way to St. Croix Falls or other locations. The question is whether the community is managing the visitor experience to the benefit of residents and business owners.

VIII. General Conclusions of the Resource Team

While the focus of the assessment was on tourism development, it became apparent there were broader community development issues that need to be addressed.

1. Community development before tourism development
 - The community needs to come together to develop a sense of investment in the community (attitude & action)
 - The community needs to decide what being “Little Sweden” really means in this diverse culture
 - A more diverse set of community voices needs to be invited into the discussion (youth, new residents, etc.)
 - Tourists rarely limit their visit to one community. Cooperative efforts with neighboring communities are necessary for tourism efforts to be successful. The immediate region offers great potential for regional Swedish tourism with Mora, Cambridge, and Scandia being immediate possible partners.



2. Community infrastructure needs are the community priority
 - Tourism development will necessarily take a secondary priority until Highway 8 realignment issue is resolved
 - The community needs to complete trail connections and other projects already started
 - The community should continue to examine planning and zoning issues related to open space, lake shore development and downtown redevelopment
 - The community should determine the need for additional community meeting space or remodeling existing space like the Community Center
 - The lakeshore septic system issue remains an important infrastructure issue clouding future tourism development
 - Successful tourism development may require collaboration with neighboring communities. The communities need to decide growth patterns.

3. The market for tourism development in Lindstrom needs to be better understood
 - What does the community mean by “tourism”?
 - Examine active sports and day trip markets
 - Examine available visitor data from the chamber and businesses

IX. A Potential Tourism Development Strategy For Lindstrom

The above conclusions suggest the development of a community tourism development strategy for Lindstrom faces a long and uncertain future. However, many of the observations, suggestions, and previously published data suggest there are more immediate steps the community can take. The Resource Team makes the following recommendations

1. Establish a leadership group to “champion” tourism development projects

Enhancing tourism has been identified over the past 10 years in a number of projects and reports. However, limited coordinated efforts have occurred. From our experience, at least two factors are important: lack of community agreement to pursue tourism as an economic development strategy and/or lack of one or more individuals to provide leadership to tourism development efforts. While the lack of funding can be identified as a barrier, it can often be overcome with commitment to a strategy and leadership to develop and implement it.

While we are recommending the community address some infrastructure issues first, it is very important to consider implications of tourism while developing plans so that long term compatibility is achieved. The community meeting on February 25th was a start at communicating across geographic boundaries on tourism development issues.

There may be a group of people interested in pursuing this strategy. Liz Templin has been meeting with a retail development team from the Chamber who has expressed interest in exploring tourism. Ann-Christine Moonen and Ewa Rydaker, who guide Swedish tourists to Lindstrom, have expressed willingness to meet with a team working on this effort. In addition, the County EDA has reportedly identified tourism development as an area of interest.

Tourism research indicates that visitors who have access to information about attractions and events in an area stay longer, resulting in more spending. The Swedish communities near Lindstrom (Scandia, Mora, and Cambridge) are a resource. Neighboring Chisago County communities might also be interested. Extension could provide assistance in helping to initiate conversations with these possible partners.

This group could visit and study locations that have been successful in marketing their Swedish heritage. One such community is Lindsborg, Kansas. This small, rural community with a population less than Lindstrom’s hosts a number of Swedish events during the year. They host a large festival every two years called “Svensk Hyllningsfest”. See their website at: www.lindsborg.org/

The group can also make connections with key entities in Sweden that provide information on Moberg. One of those entities is Utvandarnas Hus (<http://www.utvandarnashus.se/eng/>)

2. Develop the Swedish connection in a systematic way

The Swedish heritage connection is well established, generally accepted by the community, and represents an identifiable marketing brand for the community. It is part of the past and present of the community. The community vision statement for Lindstrom also emphasizes Swedish heritage as part of the community's future.

While there are many individual projects, activities, and attractions that reflect Swedish heritage, there is an impression that overall coordination and visitor welcome services is lacking. Mark Karnowski, former Lindstrom City Manager, has identified 14 specific connections to Swedish heritage that currently exist. He also identifies 6 ideas for enhancing the relationship. They include repainting the fire hydrants, making the Chamber office a reception center, developing a gift shop feature to the chamber office, developing the "Swedish Circle" of communities, and incorporating Swedish streetscape elements.

The "first impressions" visitation effort plus previous reports identify a variety of specific steps that could be taken to strengthen the efforts to truly make Lindstrom "Little Sweden". Listed below are suggestions to consider, along with potential resources to help implement the suggestions:

Physical improvements

- Protect Swedish headstones in local cemeteries and provide interpretation
 - *Service clubs, church groups and/or youth groups might do this as a service project*
 - *Interpretation might be done by the county historical society*
- Develop Swedish-related building facades and signs
 - *The city might consider providing low interest loans to building owners for façade improvements*
 - *The College of Design at the University of Minnesota may have faculty and students willing to visit the community to suggest design elements*
- Develop flower boxes and planter boxes for public spaces—It has been pointed out by the tour guides that European visitors value these enhancements
 - *Garden clubs might be interested*
 - *The University of Minnesota's Master Gardener program could provide assistance on flower types, costs, etc.*
- The Minnesota Design Team has suggested that, with the traffic flow being split, the Karl Oskar statue be moved to a location between the two streets and have it face eastbound traffic as a "welcome" to visitors. Is this feasible and desired by the community?
- Complete the Immigrant Trail
- Enhance recreational amenities for residents and visitors by providing rental options for bikes and boats
 - *This could be a new business or an additional service by an existing business*
- Return the fire hydrants to the colors of the Swedish flag—it adds to the unique character of the community
- Explore options to preserve the 60 acre parcel on the lake for public use through a park, etc.

Visitor information

- Develop and make available community and trail maps
 - *Perhaps the City or County Park Commission could work on this project*
- Provide maps of Swedish heritage sites with interpretation
 - *Area Swedish Clubs might be a resource to assist on this project*
 - *Perhaps the County Historical Society could work on this project*
- Provide video tape or DVD of community that could be distributed to group tour planners
 - *This could be a student project for history, English, or journalism classes at the high school*
- Develop market profile of visiting Swedes and Swedish-Americans
 - *The Tourism Center can conduct visitor profile research. See examples at their website: www.tourism.umn.edu/products*
- Establish working relationships with American Swedish Institute and other related organizations to provide tourism information about Lindstrom to visitors
- Obtain copies of Moberg's series of Emigrant novels as well as DVD's of the movie "The Emigrants" to sell locally
 - *While the movies are reportedly currently out of distribution, explore the possibility of partnering with groups (Swedish Institute, personal connections with Swedes with financial resources like members of ABBA, Ingrid Bergman -- who reportedly stayed in Lindstrom one summer, etc.) to obtain the rights*
- Improve web site to reflect Swedish-related attractions (in Swedish, if possible)
- Provide Lindstrom souvenirs
 - *Postcards are an inexpensive way to both market the community as well as meet a common demand from visitors. Postcards of the water tower and historic Swedish home are common requests from group tour visitors. The post cards could be sold or given away. Consider making the post cards bilingual (English/Swedish) to build upon the Swedish connection*
 - *The water tower would make an attractive souvenir for Swedish travelers if it was small enough to pack into a suitcase*
- Develop communication and networking among all communities with major Swedish heritage
- Develop customer service training for staff at attractions and existing businesses
 - *The "At Your Service: Working with Multicultural Customers" training is available through the University of Minnesota Tourism Center. Extension could equip people from the local area to conduct this training on an on-going basis*
- Make sure tourist information from other attractions of interest to Swedish visitors is available
 - *Consider cooperative marketing of the community festival with neighboring communities. This could be an opportunity to bring visitors to town to visit Swedish sites/offer shuttle buses to Lindstrom sites*
- Establish a coordinated local contact point for Swedish visitors
- Develop a "top 10 list of Swedish visitor interests" and submit to Explore Minnesota Tourism for inclusion on the EMT website
- Work with Explore Minnesota Tourism and other entities to establish Swedish visitor presence at the Mall of America. The input we received indicated Swedish

visitors were unable to obtain information about Swedish sites at the Mall. Since this is a popular tourist attraction for Swedish visitors, it is an important marketing opportunity.

- *Ensure staff working at the Minnesota Store know about sites of interest to Swedes—perhaps through a written guide*
- *Research the cost of having brochures distributed at the Mall and explore methods of sharing the cost via collaboration with other communities*

Social relationships

Tourism research indicates that visitors want authentic experiences. Visiting with local residents is one element of this experience.

- Enhance the local network of local Swedish-speaking citizens who are willing to interact with Swedish visitors
- *As these residents age, driving may become more restricted. Consider establishing ride options for these valuable volunteers to travel to meeting locations*
- *Establish expectations that group tour operators reimburse local residents for their out-of-pocket expenses when hosting groups*
- Research possibilities for involving Scandinavian language students or teachers from area colleges and universities
- *Visit with faculty from the University of Minnesota, Gustavus Adolphus, and Minnesota State University about possible student projects*
- *Identify Swedish language instructors within Community Education programs in the area to explore their interest in participating*
- Invite testimonials/commentary from Swedish public personalities who have visited. For example, there may be a unique opportunity to obtain testimonials from international celebrities Bjorn and Benny from ABBA. The release of the movie “Momma Mia” this summer provides an exceptionally timely opportunity to obtain and market their testimonials.
- Incorporate Karl Oscar Days and other festivals into broader tourism marketing campaign
- *Evaluate information available to visitors on the internet about this event*
- *There is no mention of the historic Swedish house in this festival. Consider adding a shuttle bus to take festival participants to the site during the festival*
- Develop oral histories of local Swedish residents
- *There is a University of Minnesota internship program called the Community Assistance Program (www.cura.umn.edu/cap.php) that could possibly fund a student to collect the interviews over several months*
- *Visit with local history teachers to explore student projects (as a team or individuals) videotaping interviews with local Swedish residents about their history in Lindstrom and their connections to Sweden. Provide these interviews to the County Historical Society.*
- *Visit with local youth group leaders to explore member’s interests in working on this project. A couple of examples might include: a prospective Eagle Scout project for a Boy Scout member or a 4-Her enrolled in the “citizenship” project might do this as their County Fair exhibit*

Group tours

Group travel represents an important share of the visitor market. Individuals who choose this form of travel indicate they enjoy the opportunity to get to know others with similar interests, travel within the safety of a group, and with the convenience of knowing that many of the “hassles” of arranging the travel itinerary have been taken care of.

- Establish formal connections to in-bound group tour network. Contact Mary Ann Steen at Explore Minnesota Tourism for assistance. (maryann.steen@state.mn.us or 651-215-1213)
 - Establish one point of contact from Lindstrom for group tours. This point of contact can then let the community know (historical society, retailers, restaurants, etc.) who is visiting, when they will arrive, and how many are in the group. This can help businesses profit from the visitors as well as providing an optimal experience for the visitors
 - Provide a staging area near downtown for motor coaches that includes turnaround space, parking, and safe loading/unloading.
 - Provide public toilet facilities or negotiate with a business for use of their facilities when a group tour is in town
 - Work with the Chamber to create information packets for group leaders and/or visitors.
 - *Include a map and information about the community.*
 - *Other communities have created lapel pins for their community. Some visitors collect these pins. They could be sold to visitors or be used as give away pieces by community groups to key guests*
 - Work with local restaurants on group meal opportunities.
 - *Because group tours may not be visiting during regular restaurants, establish the amount of lead time necessary for restaurants to prepare meals for a group. Again, this is a profit opportunity for local businesses*
 - *Ensure existing businesses receive feedback about poor service situations so they can improve*
 - *To accommodate elderly Swedes who visit the community and do not speak English, encourage restaurants to provide accurate Swedish translation of their menu. Accurate translation reduces frustration at point of sale for both the staff and the visitor. The restaurant or Chamber could work with current Swedish tour group operators to review existing translations for accuracy*
 - *Group tour meals could be an excellent fundraising opportunity for community service clubs, using the community center, or churches*
 - Work with the Chisago Inn management to identify and develop opportunities for groups to stay in town.
3. Develop capacity for additional lodging – food – hospitality
- Better understand the VFR (visit family/friends) market in Lindstrom
 - Engage and support existing hospitality businesses
 - Formalize working relationships with Hazelden to better understand and respond to their needs for local products and services
 - Conferences and reunions held on-site

- Family members of clients involved but not housed on-site
 - 40% of clients are non-Minnesota residents (many international)
 - Potential development of history visitor center on campus
 - Need for additional office, lodging, conference space
 - Support local businesses that are part of the “support network” for community visitors
 - Enroll front line employees and organizational volunteers in customer service training to reinforce a welcoming attitude
 - The red brick building on Main Street can be rented but there is no information about it available. This could be a good venue for small groups.
4. Develop day trip market
- Develop itineraries that include themed stops (culture/heritage/local foods & wine/history, site locations for movies like Grumpy Old Men, etc.)
 - Establish working relationships with other Minnesota cities with Swedish culture/heritage and develop planned itineraries to market to group tour markets (bank clubs/community education groups/elder hostel groups, etc)
 - Work with area chambers of commerce, convention and visitors bureaus, bank clubs, and community education departments to establish day trips
5. Develop methods for attracting re-aligned Highway 8 travelers to stop and shop
- Explore surveying existing customers, including residents, about existing retail. The survey can include satisfaction with merchandise, hours, parking
 - *There is a resident retail survey available on the following website:*
<http://www.uwex.edu/ces/cced/downtowns/index.cfm>
 - *Extension could work with you to develop and implement a resident survey*
 - Refurbish and renew downtown business facades to encourage a “stop and shop” atmosphere
 - Encourage businesses to market their uniqueness. For example, the bakery has an extensive organic section which is not well marketed
 - With the work on Highway 8, the city should consider applying for a Community Development Block Grant that might re-design the downtown streetscape and add parking areas near the Chamber office. While Community Development Block Grants are tough to get, some indicate that cities who have state or federally imposed highway projects that disrupt the current status are ranked much higher on the funding list.
6. Build community awareness about tourism
- Consider hosting an event to orient residents and employees to the attractions that already exists. For example, have all residents had a chance to see the historic Swedish house? Do residents know about attractions to take visiting friends and family to the area? This event could be marketed this summer as a “Vacation at Home” option (due to gas prices)
 - Include regular columns in the local paper about tourism and its value to the community

- Examine opportunities to capture more sales from families coming to youth sporting events (meals, shopping options, other activities to entertain families before and after the sporting events)
- Explore hosting Swedish youth Bandy sports teams. (Bandy is like hockey and groups come to the US to play. The High School has already briefly hosted one Swedish team)
- Provide a public viewing of the movie, “The Emigrants”

In conclusion, Lindstrom HAS a significant tourism sector. It has many community assets that appeal to a variety of visitors, especially those of Swedish heritage. The development of the immigrant story could be viewed by many as a common immigrant experience that could unite the community and tell a powerful story of hope, determination, and successful community integration and development.



Attachment 1

Tourism Assessment Team

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Lori Rothstein
- Maine Cooperative Extension Service
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Attachment 2

Tourist Profile for Lindstrom, Minnesota
By
Liz Templin
Regional Extension Educator, Community Economics
University of Minnesota Extension
February 24, 2008

Introduction

The purpose of this report is to provide tourism information relevant to the Lindstrom – Chisago City region. Lindstrom is a small community with a 2006 estimated population of 3,966 (Source: DEED's Community Profile for Lindstrom) while Chisago City has a 2006 estimated population of 4,307 (Source: DEED's Community Profile for Chisago City). The neighboring cities are located in Chisago County.

Visitor Profile – Swedish Travelers

The immediate tourist influences on the communities include the historic connection to Sweden through writer Vilhelm Moberg. Limited data are available about the visitor profile of tourists from Sweden to Minnesota. A presentation by RMI, an inbound European tourism company, quoted Global Insights as stating international visitors were expected to reach 52.3 million tourists in 2007. While 41% of tourists go to the 10 major states (NY, FL, CA, HA, NV, IL, MA), 59% go to non-traditional destinations. They also quote the US Bureau of Economic Analysis, 2002, with data indicating “European tourists spend an average of \$1,982 per trip to the U.S. and stay for 14 days.”

RMI promotes tourism by Europeans for several reasons. “Europeans take, on average, 5-6 weeks of vacation time plus up to 16 annual paid public holidays.” Swedes work an average of 38.2 weeks per year, with a minimum required vacation (by law) of 5 weeks per year (Mishel, 2007) (see Table 1)

RMI stated “Europeans are more likely to visit during ‘shoulder’ or off-peak seasons than domestic travelers. European tourists are willing to visit ‘off-the-beaten path’ rural attractions and destinations...International guests enhance the experience for domestic visitors and create additional perceived value.” Other reasons to pursuit European tourists include having it as a “hedge against volatile domestic and Canadian market swings.”

Visitor Profile – North American travelers

Metro domestic tourists' average age in the mid-40's, with the youngest average age in the winter (39.4) and the oldest in the fall (47.6). In the fall, the number of male and female visitors is about equal, while males dominate winter visitors and females dominate spring and summer visitors. (Davidson – Peterson, 2006b, 2008a, 2008b)

Vacation or short pleasure trips bring visitors to the Metro area in the summer (61%), fall (52%), winter (75%) but business or work is the most frequent purpose for travel in the spring (36%). It is not surprising, then, that 35% of spring visitors are traveling alone, leading to the smallest average travel party of all seasons at 2.4 persons. Winter has the highest travel party size at 3.3 persons, and also the highest percent of travelers with children under age 18 (43%). (Davidson – Peterson, 2006b, 2008a, 2008b)

Metro Minnesota visitors are predominately from the United States, with 94% or more of the travelers. Minnesotans are the predominant visitors in the winter (44%), and the lowest in the summer (24%). The state with the second most visitors to the Metro area in all seasons is Wisconsin, ranging from 5-11% of visitors per season. Non-border states provide 41% of visitors in the spring, 44% of summer visitors, 29% of fall and 24% of winter visitors. (Davidson – Peterson, 2006b, 2008a, 2008b)

Winter visitors have the most previous experience in Minnesota, averaging 7.2 trips, with summer drawing the most new visitors to Minnesota (35%). (Davidson – Peterson, 2006b, 2008a, 2008b)

Visitors are predominately white (87-95%). Black visitors comprise 4% of the tourists in both the summer and fall, Hispanics are 4% of summer visitors, and Asians are 4% of spring visitors. All other ethnic groups are smaller than 4% of the travelers. (Davidson – Peterson, 2006b, 2008a, 2008b)

Summer visitors have the longest average visit at 4.2 nights with winter the shortest, at 2.5 nights. Paid accommodations account for half (winter) to three-fourths (spring) of lodging. Unpaid accommodations at the home of family or friends are the highest in winter, at 23%. Persons making day trips account for 31% of winter visitors (at the high end), and 14% of summer visitors (at the low end). (Davidson – Peterson, 2006b, 2008a, 2008b)

The data suggests the highest income visitors are in the spring (\$81,400 for 2006 travelers), with the lowest in the fall (\$62,500 for the average of 2005 / 2007 travelers). (Davidson – Peterson, 2006b, 2008a, 2008b)

The five most popular springtime activities are, in rank order, dining out, amateur sporting events, general or mall shopping, Mall of America, and visiting friends or relatives. The most popular activity in all seasons is dining out with about two-thirds of visitors in all seasons. Amateur sporting events were the second most popular activity in winter (43%) and spring (33%). Shopping at the Mall of America ranked second in the summer (44%), third in the fall (32%), and fourth in the spring (24%). Visiting family and friends was the second most popular activity in the fall (36%), third in the summer 28%), and fifth in the spring (22%). Other activities in the top five in various seasons include sightseeing or driving for pleasure, taking in city sites, nightlife or evening entertainment, amusement parks or carnivals, visiting museums other than art museums, general shopping, and attending fairs or festivals. (Davidson – Peterson, 2006b, 2008a, 2008b)

Two-thirds of metro visitors plan their trips on the internet, with friends, relatives or coworkers providing travel planning information to half of the summer visitors and a third of the fall visitors. (Davidson – Peterson, 2008a and 2008b) (See Table 4)

“Consumers don’t typically think in regional terms as they start looking for travel information. Rather, they are often looking for information about a particular city, or for destinations that feature a specific activity. However, it became clear that regional tools were of value, especially for familiar visitors as they got deeper into the information gathering process and wanted to find other things to see and do while ‘in the area’... Participants stressed the importance of maps in helping provide a sense of what each region encompasses.” (SMARI 2007 or 2008)

Economic Impact

Shopping was the largest traveler expenditure for Metro travelers in all seasons, totaling \$1.5 billion. Food and recreation were almost tied for second place, with each garnering \$1.4 billion. Lodging (\$0.9 billion) and transportation (\$0.6 billion) rounded out total expenditures. Liquor was the top recreation expenditure in each season (\$115 million) (Table 5) (Davidson-Peterson, 2006b)

Chisago County was ranked #38 of all Minnesota counties in Traveler Expenditures, with \$58,253,218 from June 2005 –May 2006). This was 0.49% of the state’s \$11.7 billion tourist expenditures during the same time period. Hennepin County ranked number one, contributing 26% of the tourist expenditures. (Davidson-Peterson, 2008a)

The summer months of June, July, and August provide 41% of the tourist expenditures for Chisago County. The second highest season for tourism is the fall (September – November), with 24%. Spring (March, April, and May) provides 21% and winter only 13% of the tourism dollar expenditures (Davidson-Peterson, 2008a)

Direct impact of tourism provided an estimated 830 full time equivalent jobs in Chisago County from June 2005 to May 2006. These jobs provided \$16.5 million in resident income. State tax revenue was estimated at \$4.1 million with \$1.3 million in local revenue. (Davidson-Peterson, 2008a)

When adding in the indirect impact of tourism, the total is 1,278 full time equivalent jobs, \$33.8 in resident income, \$7 million in state revenues, and \$2.2 million in local revenues. (Davidson-Peterson, 2008a)

Table 2. Profile of Travelers in Metro Minnesota by Season

Note: Metro includes Anoka, Carver, Chisago, Dakota, Hennepin, Ramsey, Scott, Washington, and Wright Counties
Davidson – Peterson (2006b), (2008a), (2008b)

	Summer 2005/2007 (June – August)	Fall 2005/2007 (Sept - Nov)	Winter Dec 2005-Feb 2006	Spring March – May 2006
Age				
18 to 24	9%	9%	15%	1%
25 to 29	9	8	10	4
30 to 39	22	13	23	24
40 to 49	24	20	29	29
50 to 59	23	24	14	28
60 to 64	5	7	4	3
65 and older	5	16	2	8
No Answer	4	2	2	4
Average Age	43.0	47.6	39.4	46.9
Income				
Less than \$25,000	7%	10%	7%	1%
\$25,000 to \$34,999	6	6	5	6
\$35,000 to \$49,999	12	15	9	7
\$50,000 to \$74,999	20	23	21	26
\$75,000 to \$99,999	17	12	15	15
\$100,000 to \$124,999	12	8	12	18
\$125,000 to \$149,999	5	3	5	6
\$150,000 or more	10	7	15	7
No Answer	11	14	11	13
Estimated Median Income	\$74,200	\$62,500	\$79,900	\$81,400
Gender				
Male	46%	49%	55%	45%
Female	52	47	43	54
No Answer	2	3	1	1
Racial / Ethnic Background				
American Indian	1%	1%	2%	1%
Asian	2	2	*	4
Black	4	4	1	*
Hispanic	4	2	1	2
White	87	90	95	89
Other	2	*	*	1
No Answer	2	2	1	4
Residence				
United States	94%	96%	99%	94%
Minnesota	24	40	44	39
Wisconsin	8	11	10	5
Iowa	3	3	4	2
North Dakota	2	1	1	3
Illinois	6	2	4	1
South Dakota	3	2	1	*
Texas	3			3
Michigan	3			
California	3		2	2
Texas			1	
Other State	29	27	17	35
State not specified	10	9	16	9
Canada	3	2	1	*
Another Country	3	1	1	1
No Answer	1	1		

Table 3. Travel Party and Trip Profile

Note: Metro includes Anoka, Carver, Chisago, Dakota, Hennepin, Ramsey, Scott, Washington and Wright Counties
Davidson – Peterson (2006b), (2008a), (2008b)

	Summer 2005/2007 (June – August) Metro	Fall 2005/2007 (Sept - Nov) Metro	Winter Dec 2005-Feb 2006 Metro	Spring March – May 2006 Metro
Trip Purpose (multi-response):				
Vacation or short pleasure trip	61%	52%	75%	35%
Personal (i.e. wedding, funeral, medical)	16	26	15	21
Business or work	13	14	7	36
Convention or conference	14	14	4	15
No answer			*	*
Travel Party Size				
1 person	22%	22%	10%	35%
2 people	31	35	26	24
3 to 4 people	29	32	38	29
5 or more people	18	11	26	11
Average Travel Party Size	2.8	2.6	3.3	2.4
Total Trip Length of Stay				
Day tripper	14%	21%	31%	18%
1 night	11	18	28	10
2 nights	19	22	21	16
3 to 6 nights	43	31	15	51
7 or more nights	13	8	4	5
Average Nights (Excluding Day trippers)	4.2	3.4	2.5	3.5
Children in Travel Party				
One or more children under 18 years old	37%	22%	43%	36%
No children	63	78	57	64
Ages of Children in Travel Party				
<i>Younger than 6 years old</i>				
None	87%	92%	87%	94%
One or more	13	8	13	6
<i>6 to 11 years old</i>				
None	83	91	80%	79%
One or more	17	9	20	21
<i>12 to 17 years old</i>				
None	79	87	77%	79%
One or more	21	13	23	21
Minnesota Trips in Last 5 years				
None	35%	17%	13%	27%
<i>One or more trips</i>		82		
1 trip	12	9	6	4
2 to 4 trips	23	23	23	16
5 to 10 trips	11	20	16	16
More than 10 trips	18	30	41	36
No Answer	1	1	1	*
Estimated Median Trips	2.3	5.1	7.2	5.7
Lodging				
<i>Paid Accommodations</i>	65%	59%	45%	73%
Hotel / Motel / Historic Inn	61	56	45	73
In an RV at a campground	1	*		*
Resort	1	*	*	*
In a tent at a campground	1	*	*	*
Vacation home / condo / cabin / houseboat you rented	*	1	*	*
Bed & Breakfast	*	1	*	*

<i>Unpaid Accommodations</i>	21%	20%	23%	10%
Home of family or friends	19	20	23	9
Vacation home / condo / cabin / houseboat of family or friend	1	*	*	1
At your vacation home / condo / cabin / houseboat	*	*	*	*
At a campground with no fee	*	*	*	*
<i>Day tripper</i>	14%	21%	31%	18%
Activities				
General (checked one or more below)	82%	76%	80%	74%
Dining out	71	60	65	72
Sightseeing or driving for pleasure	23	13	12	9
Taking in city cites	28	16	29	13
Driving on designated scenic byways	9	8	5	7
Casino gaming	6	9	8	2
Nightlife or evening entertainment	20	20	28	11
Viewing fall colors	1	12	*	*
Visiting (checked one or more below)	59%	56%	36%	38%
Friends or relatives	28	36	18	22
State or national parks	6	13	3	5
Historic sites	9	15	2	6
Amusement parks or carnivals	23	19	4	7
Other museums	7	20	13	2
Art museums	11	16	4	5
Indoor water parks	5	11	2	5
Indian areas	2	10	1	1
Outdoor water parks	2	9	*	*
Other attractions	6	13	1	*
Participated In (checked one or more below)	33%	23%	23%	19%
Fishing	5	3	*	3
Hiking	6	7	1	1
Pool swimming	15	6	9	13
Lake or river swimming	6	2	*	1
Wildlife viewing or bird watching	4	1	*	1
Motor boating / water skiing	3	1	*	1
Biking	4	2	1	*
Golfing	5	1	*	2
Canoeing	2	1	*	1
Jet skiing	1	*	*	*
Off-road ATV driving	1	*	*	1
Hunting	1	1	1	1
Snowmobiling		*	1	1
Cross-country skiing		*	*	*
Downhill skiing / snowboarding		*	9	1
Ice Fishing			3	1
Other activity	7	10	1	1
No Answer			1	7
Shopping (checked one or more below)	67%	56%	51%	65%
For gifts or souvenirs	22	26	23	15
General or mall shopping	22	26	18	32
At the Mall of America	44	32	21	24
Arts, crafts, or antiques	5	12	1	10
Outlet shopping	11	18	9	14
Attending (checked one or more below)	48%	58%	67%	51%
Fairs or festivals	25	26	17	16
Professional sporting events	10	5	7	4
Popular music concerts or shows	6	12	6	1

Amateur sporting events	6	3	43	33
Theater performances	4	6	8	3
Classical music concerts	1	3	2	1
Other events	7	14	2	*

Table 4: Travel Planning Sources

Note: Metro includes Anoka, Carver, Chisago, Dakota, Hennepin, Ramsey, Scott, Washington and Wright Counties
Davidson – Peterson (2008a), (2008b)

	Summer 2005/2007 (June – August) State	Summer 2005/2007 (June – August) Metro	Fall 2005/2007 (Sept – Nov) State	Fall 2005/2007 (Sept - Nov) Metro
Friends / relatives / co-workers	51%	49%	55%	39%
Internet	46	62	41	66
Brochure / travel guide	10	6	9	5
Newspaper / magazine	5	3	4	5
Local tourism bureau	3	1	2	*
TV / radio	3	2	3	4
Visitor / welcome center	3	2	2	*
Airline / travel agency	2	5	1	1
State Travel Office	1	*	1	1
Other	14	8	16	6

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Attachment 3

Community SWOT Exercise

* = multiple mentions

STRENGTHS	OPPORTUNITIES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water/lakes* • Swedish heritage* • Local celebrations* • Community spirit • Nice land available • Highway corridor* • Schools • Hazelden • Small town feel* • Hiking/biking Trails/parks* • Willing city council/EDA/Planning Commission • Community identity • Natural setting • Community location • Visible information center • Winery • Gardens • Golf course • Near freeway system • Helpful government programs • Gateway to St. Croix park system • Miles of lakeshore • Buffalo ranch 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trail opportunities* • New businesses with highway development* • Proximity to Twin Cities metro.* • Recreation • Room to grow/land availability • Artistic destination • Event revenues • Market area as Chisago Lakes • EDA's talking to one another • Bus tours • Business incubator center • Green focus • Youth • Wider side walks and more parking* (after highway redevelopment) • New bridge to connect lakes • Swedish tour destination* • More resorts • Day trip possibilities • New athletic facility • Triathlon • Development of mid-to-above hotel • Development of a mid-to-above level dining experience* • Educate convenience store employees • Fire hydrants painted in Swedish colors
WEAKNESSES	THREATS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of commercial/industrial tax base & retail* • Lack of restaurant options & hotels* • Lake water quality* • Lack of cohesiveness and cooperation* • Lack of visitor information—hard to market • Poor signage* 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of multi-government cooperation* • Visual impact • Lake pollution* • How to pay for improvements • Little action • Opportunities in nearby areas • Wisconsin attractions* • Resistance to change*

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Struggling businesses ● Urban growth (“drive through”) ● Lack of walkways ● Risk-averse community ● Lack of compelling attraction ● Limited open land ● High business tax rates ● Relatively unknown to Twin Cities ● Funding for business marketing ● Bedroom community ● Event/convention center ● Little diversity ● County participation ● Failure to support local businesses ● Hard to find out what’s happening in the community ● Uncontrolled development ● Western approach to Lindstrom poor ● To many service oriented business on main street and not enough retail ● Loss of some tourist-serving businesses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Lose our uniqueness ● Energy/gas prices* ● Traffic congestion on weekends* ● Highway 8 construction* ● Transition from small to large business ● Lack of “shop local” attitude ● Xcel Energy (visual impact of power poles)* ● Power line ● Youth less active outdoors ● Lack ability to fund projects ● “Naysayers” ● Land costs ● Big box retail* ● Become a fast moving thoroughfare ● Growth of surrounding communities
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Implications of SWOT exercise (large group discussion)

- Map of Swedish tourist stops needed
- Need profile of who is visiting Lindstrom now
- Reconnect the lakes with bridges
- Importance of the golf course
- Need more product development (lodging/attractions)
- Recognition of diversity (German heritage)
- Importance of Wild River State Park
- Expand existing assets (WineHaven)
- Should have facilities for weddings/reunions
- Importance of friends and relatives as tourism market
- Need for a visitor guide or list of local resources