



RURAL TOURISM ASSESSMENT

HOUGHTON LAKE AND PRUDENVILLE COMMUNITY DATA REPORT

Prepared By the MSU Extension RTA Team:
Andy Northrop, Will Cronin, and Garrett Ziegler

Michigan State University Extension Rural Tourism Assessment

Phase 1: Planning and Asset Identification Workshop

Phase 1 serves as the foundational stage of the Rural Tourism Assessment (RTA) process. During this initial phase, held in workshop format facilitated by Michigan State University Extension, stakeholders identify assets and key metrics central to their tourism economy. Identified assets are prioritized by stakeholders which serve to support subsequent Phases. Additional steps are taken to generate specific questions stakeholders would like answered from First Impressions Tourism (FIT) assessment(s) conducted during and central to Phase 2.

Phase 2: (Data Collection and Analysis)

Phase 2 centers on gathering data generated through surveys and site visits using MSU Extensions FIT program. FIT provides valuable insights into the tourism experience from both first-time visitors and community perspectives generated in Phase 1. The collected data is then thoroughly analyzed to identify strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities related to rural tourism development in participating communities. Presentations are then generated for the purpose of sharing with community stakeholders offered a community forum setting as part of Phase 3.

Phase 3: Results Dissemination and Community Engagement

Approximately six months after completing Phase 2, Phase 3 commences. Results obtained from Phases 1 and 2 are merged and shared with stakeholders participating in the Rural Tourism Assessment. This phase also provides an opportunity for residents and community members to engage in discussions and provide feedback on the first-time visitor perspective, findings, fostering collaboration and shared decision-making.

Phase 4: Implementation Strategy Development and Visioning (Optional)

Although optional, Phase 4 consists of facilitated discussions with stakeholders around next steps and implementation strategies for communities participating in the entire Rural Tourism Assessment process. These discussions heavily focus on insights gathered directly from FIT assessments conducted during Phase 2 and shared during Phase 3. Tourism development models are applied, where and when necessary, to help guide discussions. Tailored strategies are developed to enhance the tourism experience based on visitor feedback and community priorities.

Rural Tourism Assessment – Roscommon County Summary

The [Roscommon County Economic Development Corporation](#) and [Michigan State University Extension](#) (MSUE) established a partnership in early 2023 to strengthen rural tourism across the county and three communities by capitalizing on stakeholder knowledge, input, and first-time visitor perspectives to the area.

- Following MSUE’s Rural Tourism Assessment format, Roscommon County along with Prudenville/Houghton Lake, St. Helen, and Village of Roscommon participated in the multi-phase effort.
- Phase 1 was conducted April 2023.
- Phase 2 was conducted September – October 2023.
- Phase 3 was completed May 2024.
- At the time of drafting this summary, Phase 4 is being planned for Fall 2024.

As part of RTA, Phase 2 consists of a comprehensive FIT assessment in and with participating partners. In this effort, Roscommon County and the three identified communities received five first-time visitors at separate times between September and October 2023.

All five visitors spent three nights, four days visiting various stakeholder identified tourism assets from Phase 1, as well as a wide range of self-identified tourism assets while on site. A total of 15 nights were spent in the county: eight nights in hotels, four nights in motels, two nights camping, and one night in a bed & breakfast.

Visitor Profiles:

- 1 Female from Generation X visited with her spouse between Friday–Monday.
- 1 Male from Generation X visited alone between Tues–Friday.
- 3 Males from Millennial Generation visited alone between Thurs–Sunday.
- All visitors are married residents of either Upper or Lower Peninsula, MI, and are employees of Michigan State University Extension with various expertise.

Visitor Diverse Personal Interests:

- Artists, (Mountain) Bike Rider(s), Birder(s), Camper(s), Foodie, Hiker(s), Paddler(s), Nature and Outdoor Enthusiast(s), Trail Enthusiast(s), Water Lover, Trip Planners, and Avid/World Travelers.

Introduction to First Impression Tourism Assessments (FIT)

The First Impressions (FI) program was developed in 1991 by the University of Wisconsin Extension to help communities learn about their existing strengths and weaknesses as seen through the eyes of first-time visitors. The FI program has been used to help communities across the U.S. and Canada inform economic initiatives or further develop community goals and has been modified over the years by various Extension services based on different needs. Michigan State University (MSU) Extension adapted this program via a multi-state grant provided by the Northeast Regional Center for Rural Development in 2014. MSU Extension's First Impressions Tourism Assessments (FIT) is a unique version of FI for our state and, since inception in 2016,

What is FIT?

FIT is a comprehensive community assessment conducted by unannounced visitors in a host community. FIT involves developing leaders, assessing the host community, sharing results in forum open to all, and providing suggestions to advance community-driven tourism. Overall, FIT helps participating communities learn about their strengths and weaknesses through the eyes of first-time visitors. Since inception, FIT has empowered leaders and stakeholders to develop action plans to improve their communities based on new perspectives and suggestions from first-time visitors. These action plans are proven to be the catalysts needed to launch and expand small town tourism development across Michigan. For more information on FIT, please visit - https://www.canr.msu.edu/tourism_first_impressions/index

Additional FIT Resources

Please visit the FIT Resources Below to learn more about the program

FIT - [How it Works](#)

FIT - [Frequently Asked Questions](#)

FIT - [Building a Community Leadership Team for FIT](#)

A Summary of Community Actions

and Success from FIT - [Downloadable Report](#)



Summary of MSU Extension tourism development programs

The following programs are available statewide to guide decision making around tourism development and implementation.

Understanding Tourism for Michigan Communities (UTMC)

This interactive workshop highlights tourism industry statistics and exposes communities to trends and travelers' interests, as well as a number of niche tourism markets. UTMC is specifically designed to promote regional synergies, leadership, and tourism product development. <https://www.canr.msu.edu/tourism/programs/understanding-tourism-for-michigan-communities>

Planning for Tourism-Preventing Destination Decline

This workshop walks communities through a planning process and uses life-cycle models to explore where communities may be in establishing themselves as tourism destinations. Additional tools will be employed to determine their readiness, identify next steps for action and explore engagement strategies for coalition building within the community. <https://www.canr.msu.edu/tourism/programs/planning-for-tourism>

First Impressions Tourism (FIT) Assessments

FIT is a comprehensive community assessment conducted by unannounced visitors in a host community positioned to lead development based on the program results. FIT involves developing community leadership, assessing the host community, sharing the results in a community forum open to all, and providing suggestions to drive community action. Overall, FIT helps communities learn about their strengths and weaknesses through the eyes of first time visitors.

https://www.canr.msu.edu/tourism_first_impressions/index


Custom Tourism Programs

MSU Extension tourism educators are equipped to meet the diverse needs and interests of Michigan communities. Specialized programs are available to communities with a specific interest in agri-tourism, ecotourism and/or cultural/heritage tourism.


Learn more Learn more about MSU Extension tourism programs by visiting:

<https://www.canr.msu.edu/tourism/>

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First Impressions Tourism Assessment
Houghton Lake and Prudenville
June 2024



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MSU Extension
First Impressions: Assessing Your Community for Tourism

How It Works | History | Community Reports | Apply | Resources | Frequently Asked Questions

A comprehensive community assessment conducted by unannounced visitors in a host community Overall, FIT helps communities learn about their strengths and weaknesses through the eyes of first-time visitors.

[How It Works](#) [Apply](#)

Results from this assessment were shared with the Houghton Lake and Prudenville communities on May 8th, 2024. Their FIT assessment was one of four assessments part of the MSU Extension's Rural Tourism Assessment program for Roscommon County.



Community, Food, and Environment Institute

This report was compiled by:

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Helping people to improve their lives through an educational process that applies knowledge to critical issues, needs and opportunities.




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To file a program discrimination complaint, a complainant should complete a Form AD-3027, USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, which can be obtained online, at www.usda.gov/files/default/files/documents/usda-program-discrimination-complaint-form.pdf, from any USDA office, by calling (866) 632-8992, or by writing a letter addressed to USDA. The letter must contain the complainant's name, address, telephone number, and a written description of the alleged discriminatory action in sufficient detail to inform the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights (ASCR) about the nature and date of alleged civil rights violation. The completed AD-3027 form or letter must be submitted to USDA by:

mail:
U.S. Department of Agriculture
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; or

fax:
(833) 256-1665 or (202) 690-7442;

email:
program.intake@usda.gov.

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La información del programa puede estar disponible en otros idiomas además del inglés. Las personas con discapacidades que requieren medios de comunicación alternativos, para obtener información sobre el programa (por ejemplo, Braille, letra grande, grabación de audio y lenguaje de señas americano) deben comunicarse con la agencia estatal o local responsable que administra el programa o con el TARGET Center del USDA al (202) 726-2600 (voz y TTY) o comunicarse con el USDA a través del Servicio Federal de Transmisión de Información (800) 877-8339.

Para presentar una queja por discriminación en el programa, el reclamante debe completar un formulario AD-3027, Formulario de queja por discriminación del programa del USDA, que se puede obtener en línea en www.usda.gov/files/default/files/documents/usda-program-discrimination-complaint-form.pdf, en cualquier oficina del USDA, llamando al (866) 632-8992, o escribiendo una carta dirigida al USDA. La carta debe contener el nombre, la dirección y el número de teléfono del reclamante, y una descripción escrita de la siguiente acción discriminatoria con suficiente detalle para informar al Subsecretario de Derechos Civiles (ASCR), por sus siglas en inglés, sobre la naturaleza y la fecha de la presunta violación de los derechos civiles. La carta o el formulario AD-3027 completado debe enviarse al USDA por medio de:

correo postal:
U.S. Department of Agriculture
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; o

fax:
(833) 256-1665 o (202) 690-7442;

correo electrónico:
program.intake@usda.gov.

Esta institución ofrece igualdad de oportunidades.

Rural Tourism Assessment

- **Phase 1 Q2-2023**
 - Tourism Asset ID Workshop / April 12, 2023
- **Phase 2 Q3-Q4 2023**
 - FIT Assessment
 - Roscommon County,
 - Prudenville/Houghton, St. Helen, and Village of Roscommon
 - Aggregating results and reports
- **Phase 3 – Q1-Q2 2024**
 - Roscommon County Forum – Held on May 1st
 - Zoom-based Community Forums May 8th, 15th and 22nd



Phase 1: Roscommon County & Community Tourism Asset Identification Workshop



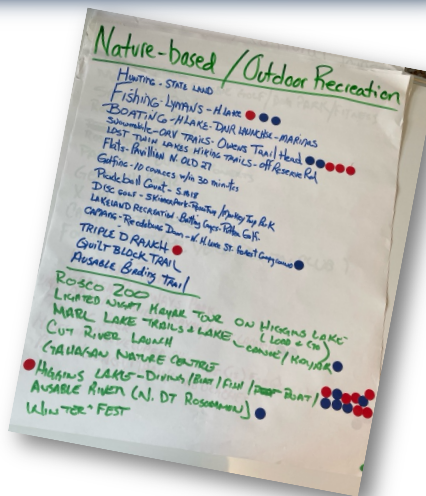
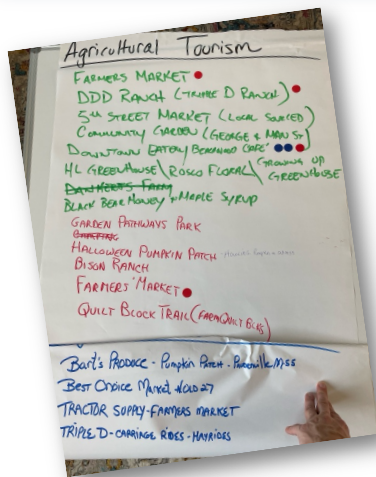
Phase 1: Tourism Asset Identification Workshop

Phase 1 Objectives:

- Bring stakeholders across county/communities into a collective asset identification process
- To provide leaders/stakeholders the opportunity to pre-select and prioritize their tourism assets
- To collect additional stakeholder input for the purpose of generating county visioning questions for First Impressions Tourism (FIT) assessment




RTA Phase 1 – Prioritizing Tourism Assets



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RTA Phase 1 – Collective Visioning Exercise

What is something you would like to know about your County from a (first-time) visitor perspective?

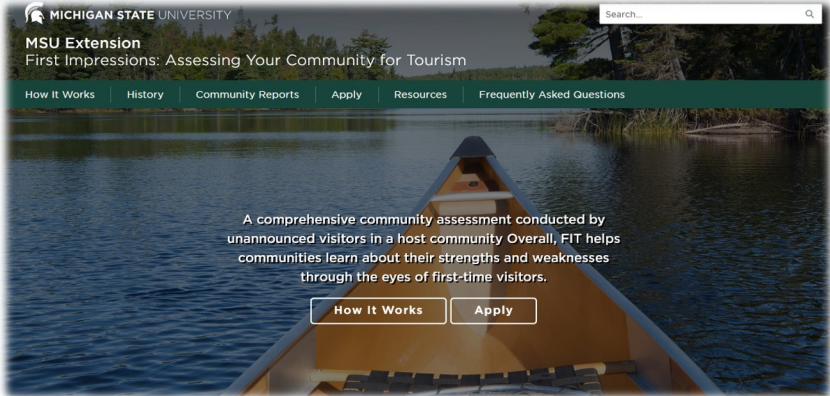


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Phase 2:

- First Impressions Tourism (FIT) Assessments
- Q2-Q3 Late Summer/early Fall




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PURPOSE

FIT is a comprehensive community assessment conducted by unannounced visitors in a host community positioned to lead development based on the program results. FIT involves developing community leadership, assessing the host community, sharing the results in a community forum open to all, and providing suggestions to drive community action. Overall, FIT helps communities learn about their strengths and weaknesses through the eyes of first-time visitors.



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FIT communities will:

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



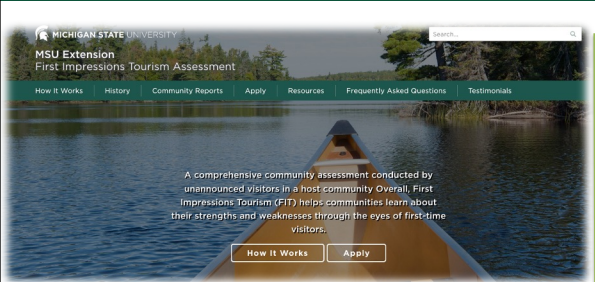
The results of FIT can:

- Spawn **local leadership**.
- Strengthen **community vitality**.
- Form the basis for **future development**.

First Impressions: Assessing your community for tourism (FIT), Michigan State University Extension
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MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY | Extension **Things to know...**



- Every community gets visitors
- We don't rank or compare communities
- Balance of positives & negatives
- Information from new perspectives
- Not meant to shame
- Repeated data emphasize importance

First Impressions: Assessing your community for tourism (FIT), Michigan State University Extension
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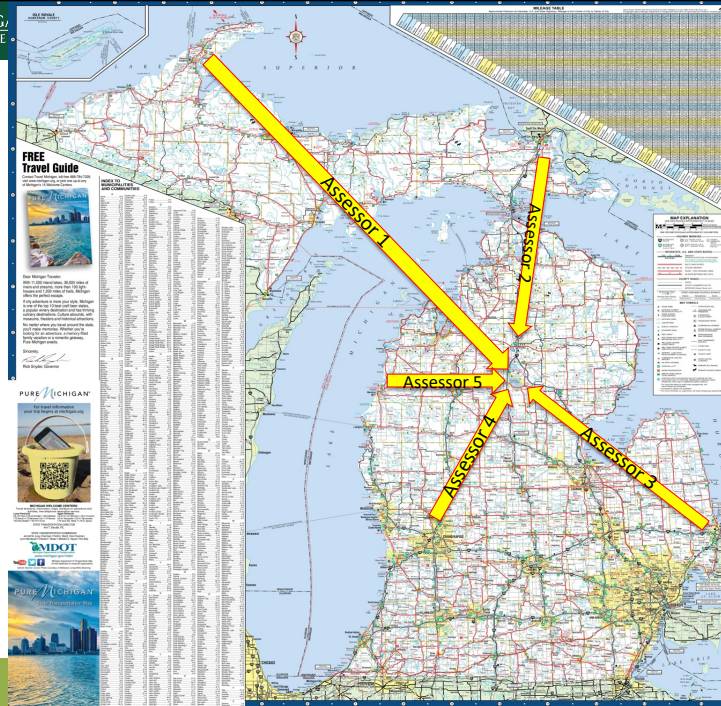


First Impressions Tourism!
Who visited our community?
When did they visit?



• **5 Visitor Profiles:**

- 1 Female
- 4 Male
- Generations:
 - 3 Millennials
 - 2 Gen X
- Visited alone - 4
- Visited with spouse – 1
- All long-term residents of MI
 - Life
 - 10+ years



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- **Assessors also identified as-**
 - Non-parents, Parents
 - Artists, Bike riders, Birder, Campers,
 - Foodies, Local Food Fan,
 - Hikers, Paddlers
 - Nature & Outdoor Enthusiasts,
 - All Trails Enthusiasts
 - Water Lovers
- Map readers, Trip planners, Avid travelers
- Planners, Arts Executive, Tourism Faculty, Community Development Faculty



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The Visit (aka Assessments)

- Pre-research 2-4+ Hours
- 3 nights / 4 days in September
 - 1 Tues - Friday
 - 3 Thurs - Sunday
 - 1 Friday - Monday

Accommodation – 15 nights

- 8 nights - Hotels
- 4 nights - Motels
- 2 nights - Camping
- 1 night - B&B

RTA Roscommon | FALL 2023 | MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY EXTENSION




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FIT - Results 3 Sections

- Pre-Visit
 - Web Presence & Marketing / Initial Impressions
- The Visit
 - Our Experiences / First Impressions & Data Sets
- Post-Visit
 - Reflections
 - **Strengths**, **Challenges**, and **Opportunities**

LAPEER FIT REPORT | SUMER 2023 | MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY EXTENSION



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Most helpful website and why?



We're just a short drive away...

DETROIT	190 MILES
GRAND RAPIDS	130 MILES
TOLEDO	230 MILES
FORT WAYNE	250 MILES
LANSING	125 MILES
SAGINAW	105 MILES
CHICAGO	310 MILES
MACKINAC BRIDGE	100 MILES
TRAVERSE CITY	60 MILES

Fresh air and fresh water – purely Michigan – purely refreshing.
Come for the experience that will last a lifetime.
You will love all there is to see and do in the heart of Northern Michigan.

WELCOME TO THE HOUGHTON LAKE AREA



Tip-Up Town USA

This fun-filled family event is the largest Winter Festival in Michigan.



Calendar of Events

Find out what exciting events are happening in the Houghton Lake Area



Outdoor Recreation

The Houghton Lake area offers a wide variety of outdoor activities in all four seasons.



Things To Do

The Houghton Lake area has a wonderful range of attractions and things to do. From events, culture...



Roscommon County Info

Find information, link, guidebooks, services and more for Roscommon County.



Cam

Campfires Nature's s' more rea



www.visithoughtonlake.com



Houghton Lake CVB Website

What made it helpful?

- Included the most comprehensive list of things to do in the community
- A nice organized layout of things to do in the area and places to stay. Familiar to other CVB / Chamber layouts
- Short videos provided decent information on the area
- Comprehensive list of hotels
- Good overview of the area

What could be improved?

- Website would benefit from an interactive map showing different listed assets
- The area is so large that organizing things by location would be helpful. Even having a map that layout the major communities and attractions / lakes would be helpful.
- Positioning the app to be central on the website so it is noticeable at first



Most helpful website assessment:

Question	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
The information was well presented.	0	0	3	2
Web pages were visually appealing.	0	1	1	3
I noticed typographical errors.	2	3	0	0
It was easy to find information on the website	0	0	4	1
The information was useful.	0	0	4	1
More information is needed on this site.	0	2	1	2



First 5-minute impressions:

As I drove into the destination, I wasn't sure where the community started and ended. It felt very much like I was still on a busy main road, flanked by a lot of things to see and do, but it didn't seem like a very inviting place. I noticed the lake in places, but it also felt like the lake was divided from the main business are of the community. It didn't seem like a good place to get out and walk around and only accessible by car.

I found it to be congested, overwhelming with tight-narrow roads and not walkable and bikeable like I had hoped it to be. Even though there was construction limiting my mobility even by car, I was immediately uneasy driving alone on account of not being able to drive, look around, understand the area, etc.



First 5 minute impressions continued:

It's hard to have a first impression because the area is so spread out. It's a long commercial strip with rentals and very little lake access for someone who doesn't have a cabin that they're going to. Also traffic on 55 is so fast it's hard to feel like this is a place to stop. You don't encounter anything that feels like a real community node maybe aside from the 18 and 55 intersection.

Why is everything so spread out? This is clearly a vacation town that was popular back in the day. There is a sad amount of blight, but also some interesting and appealing things along the way. My main impression is shaped by the south end of the lake and Prudenville.



Top 4 reasons visitors come to s

Outdoor recreation	4
Specific activity this community has to offer – Boating, Golf, Cottage	3
Visit friends and family	3
Relax	2
Engage in sports activities	2
Other Reason	2
In transit to somewhere else	2
Shop	1
Experience a unique culture	0
Get entertained/for entertainment	0
Engage in business/professional activities	0
Visit historical sites	0
Engage in religious activities	0
Get away from people	0
Be in nature	0
Agritourism opportunities	0



Community Attributes

Hospitality and friendliness
Customer service
Variety of accommodations
Safety and Security
Cleanliness
Variety of things to do
Other
Variety of restaurants
Variety of shopping options
Directional signage



Community Attributes

Many restaurants in the area but they were all very similar and catered to a more basic taste in food without any international or more healthy options. Most of the shopping establishments seemed to be selling similar touristy type knick-knacks and t-shirts. Area of the community seemed to be very car-centric and not a place I would want to get out and walk around.

Generally poor signage, I noticed a nice lakeside park (across from the Backdoor Saloon) had not signage from the road. Shopping is elusive as there are no distinct shopping centers that are interesting. I was referred by one gift shop to another gift shop about 2 miles away. Without that referral, I would have never stopped.



Community Attributes

Restaurants are all bar food or family restaurants very little variety beyond that this doesn't feel like a community it's an expansive strip of commercial establishments that don't really have anything tying them together other than a four lane highway





I just found the quality of restaurants to be average with nothing all that good or different. I also thought this area has so much signage that there very well could have been directional signage in many places, but the overwhelming and in your face signage restricted my ability to find proper navigational signage



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Community Infrastructure

Cell phone service
Parking
Benches/Seating options
Waste receptacles
Public restrooms
Sidewalks/Walk-ways
Wifi
Water fountains
Recycling receptacles
Pedestrian travel infrastructure
Bicycle travel infrastructure

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Community Infrastructure

As I've already mentioned there was very limited non-car mobility infrastructure. Not a place that I would want to walk around or ride my bike through without better/safer side walks and bike paths.



There are some parks here and there but it's easy to miss them. Sidewalks do exist but they're in pretty bad shape and clearly not used much. I didn't encounter any benches or street furniture outside of parks I did find a few restrooms associated with parks but other than that it's pretty spare.



Community Infrastructure

Overall this is a highly dispersed community lacking any coherent downtown area, but with a large plethora of shopping and outdoor recreation assets. Overall pedestrian and bicycle traveling in the southern section of the lake is really not something I would recommend. The 4-5 lane road M-55 is busy at most times, lacks sidewalks in many places, and often has sidewalks so close to road without a buffer it would not be very safe for a family or the elderly to walk. With the lack of public lands along the lake shore it would be hard to envision lakeshore access for walking. Also most of the businesses are not directly on the lake shore but further back so it might not even make sense. I think it's an important thing for the community to recognize they are so dispersed, but to find ways to highlight the gems within the area.

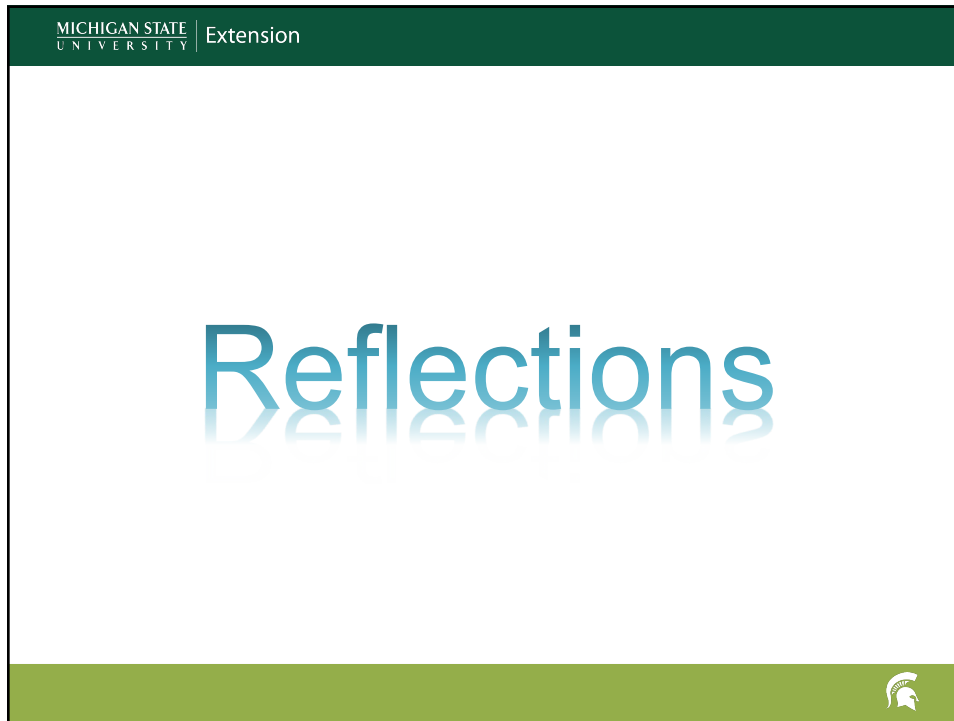
Lakefront is primarily privately owned--limited public access to prime swimming sites. There is very little connectivity, biking was not an option so close to the road. There was no sense of "where to go" other than private beaches (such as hotel). I found Trestle Park and Sullivan Park and enjoyed those waterfront destinations, in addition to my hotel.



Downtown Business Area

Parking charges are reasonable	14
Parking is secure	12
Customers are greeted warmly when they walk through the door	11
There are areas of green space	9
Parking is centrally located	8
Flags/banners are displayed on the exterior of businesses	7
There is a gateway point to enter/leave town (piece of art, mural, sign, etc.)	7
This is a welcoming place	6
The grounds have been landscaped with flowers, trees, shrubs, and bushes	5
The downtown business area is handicapped accessible	5
There is a mix of ages	5
Walking sidewalks are well maintained	4
The main downtown business area is a major tourist draw for the area	4
Hanging baskets are displayed on the exterior of businesses	3
The main downtown business area feels distinct or special	3
Vehicle traffic is managed to encourage pedestrian movement, via foot or bike	2
There is pedestrian traffic (foot and bike)	2
There are walker/biker friendly signs	1
Bike lanes exist on roadways	1
There is a mix of ethnic groups	1





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Assets Visited – Prudenville/Houghton Lake

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lake House Meat and Deli and the takeout only Side Shack• Bookworm• Beachfront Hotel• Detroit Rustic• Joe’s Coney Island• Knitty Gritty Treasures• M55 Pour House• RV Camping World• Lost Twin Lakes Hiking Trail• Kiss Me Coffee• Walmart• Lakeview Waterfront Park• Beachfront hotel• Morning Glory• Spicer’s Boat City• Frog Tiki Bar	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Home Depot• Sully’s on the Lake BBQ• Lakeside Resort• Houghton Lake Flats (Birding trail)• HL Fitness Center• Bart’s Fruit Market• Trestle Park• Pawn Shop• Limberlost• Chamber Farmers Market• Sullivan Beach Park• Houghton Lake Provisioning Center• Navajo Trading Post• Skinner Park / Roscommon Township Disc Golf• TJ Loopies Sips and Sweets• Backus Township Park• Lakeside Bar and Grille
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Assets Visited – Prudenville/Houghton Lake

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lake House Meat and Deli and the takeout only Side Shack • Bookworm • Beachfront Hotel • Detroit Rustic • Joe’s Coney Island • Knitty Gritty Treasures • M55 Pour House • RV Camping World • Lost Twin Lakes Hiking Trail • Kiss Me Coffee • Walmart • Lakeview Waterfront Park • Beachfront hotel • Morning Glory • Spicer’s Boat City • Frog Tiki Bar 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Home Depot • Sully’s on the Lake BBQ • Lakeside Resort • Houghton Lake Flats (Birding trail) • HL Fitness Center • Bart’s Fruit Market • Trestle Park • Pawn Shop • Limberlost • Chamber Farmers Market • Sullivan Beach Park • Houghton Lake Provisioning Center • Navajo Trading Post • Skinner Park / Roscommon Township Disc Golf • TJ Loopies Sips and Sweets • Backus Township Park • Lakeside Bar and Grille
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Assets highlighted orange were identified by community stakeholders as "points of interest" before FIT assessments began.



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What will you remember most six months from now?

- Just the amount of things that are along the main road and how it feels like a place that you can only drive through and not walk around. The lack of a distinctive town with any character.
- How hard it was to access the lake.
- The driving to get from one place to another, lack of downtown. Really friendly people... especially after they've played 18-holes of golf and are a little tipsy.
- How it was spread out and run down in many places, but also had some wonderful assets that I liked enough to come back especially given how convenient it is off the expressways.
- Overwhelming main road with far too much along it to be comfortable walking or riding my bike. It really needs a significant facelift.



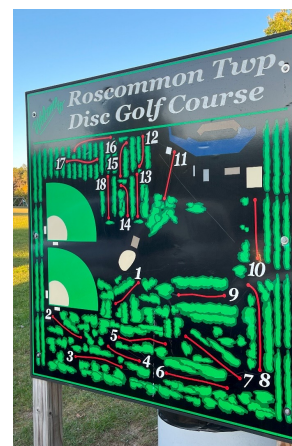
Feeling of being welcomed – 100% said Yes!

- *Overall felt welcome at most businesses but felt a little out of place as a solo traveler.*
- *In general folks were all friendly and welcoming*
- *Everyone was just so nice, greeted in every business, friendly customers and staff everywhere I went. It was the people for sure that made me feel welcome.*
- *Surprisingly, I felt this place/location is open to visitors.*



Are there specialty shops, attractions, and/or assets that would bring you back to visit? If yes, which one(s):

- *I think the Frog Tiki Bar would be a cool place to visit again*
- *I could see myself renting a cabin here someday perhaps, but I don't feel compelled to come back.*
- *Morning Glory and Backdoor Saloon with park across the street.*
- *Springbrook Inn would be a great place for a get away with my wife. Staying there for comfort and food and relaxing, with nice day outings to outdoor rec nearby. Also, I loved the disc golf course and might stop by just for that.*
- *Houghton Lake*







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Strengths

- Houghton Lake – a great natural resource for recreation and the main draw for the community
- Customer Service – excellent customer service at businesses within the community
- Existing lakeside parks



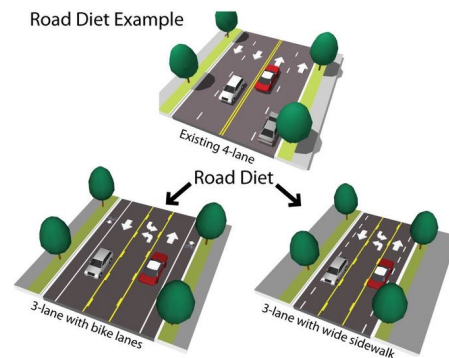
Weaknesses

- The M55 Corridor
 - Walkability
 - Traffic patterns
 - Bike Path/Sidewalk maintenance
- Public access to the lake



Opportunities

- The M55 Corridor – working with other stakeholders to envision a different structure and traffic patterns
- Enhancement of public access and public spaces



What additional activities/facilities/services would you suggest to be offered in this community?

- I think they could do something to increase the ability to walk and travel by bike along M-55. There could also be a more public lake access site within the community. Somewhere that provides better beach access and a space for community events and gathering would provide additional connections to the communities best asset, the lake.
- As I said for a place called Houghton Lake, lake access is terrible. I think going forward it is imperative that the local government and nonprofit sector do anything possible to expand lake access for new audiences. Unless you have a rental in the community you have a very hard time getting on the lake and enjoying it and that's very unfortunate particularly because many of Houghton lakes competing communities don't have that problem. Would also like to see more for families thinking of a children's museum for example just a thought.
- More wayfinding signage for parks along the main road. I was able to find them easier through Google maps than through signage.



What additional activities/facilities/services would you suggest to be offered in this community?

- 1) Offering more ways to navigate the dispersed area, be it maps, websites, or signs. It's so dispersed and road is busy so it's hard to get a sense of where to go. 2) Fix up existing sidewalks and add a bit of beautification (flowers, signs, fences, etc). Blight is bad here, needs some help
- I feel like it should be made obviously clear where to fish, access the lake (not on private land), and how anyone can enjoy the lake that isn't staying on it. It seemed really hard to find that kind of info as I was bound to the car most of the time.

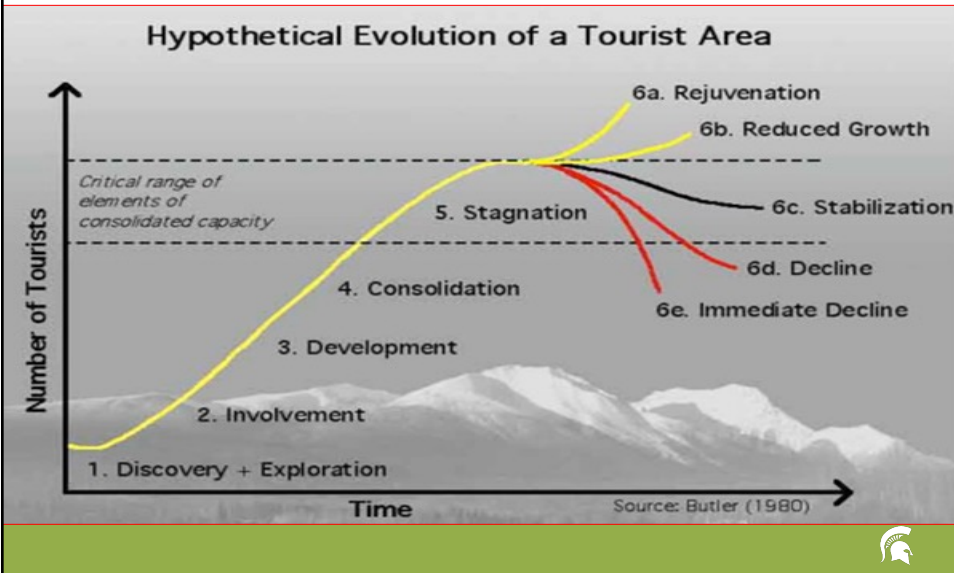


If you could change one or two reasonable things about this particular community what would it be?

- I think they could really benefit from a few more diverse food options. Something that provides a space for food trucks or a community gathering place. Anything they could do to slow down traffic on M-55 and create more pedestrian and bike traffic is welcome.
- Slow traffic on 55 where possible, expand public lake access, upgrade and maintain pedestrian infrastructure.
- Within zoning, reduce "required parking" and setbacks between businesses. Integrate mixed uses (residential) into the commercial strip. Need to mix uses and density to break up the miles of commercial strip and parking lots. Excessive amounts of land in unused or under utilized parking lots.
- 1) Create a more visually appealing community. Create a Blight Squad dedicated to cleaning up run down or abandoned areas and helping to beautify public assets 2) Add more sidewalks like everywhere and slow down traffic possibly (divided highway?)
- Slow traffic on the road, increase safety for walkers and cross-walks, and clean up the face of the community.



Bridge Community Vision with Tourism Life Cycle Model



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- Communities are using FIT to -
 - Build capacity
 - Strengthen their image, assets, and tourism/recreation opportunities
 - Update master and/or recreation plans
 - Spawn new ideas and leadership
 - Increase grant applications to -
 - DNR, Community Foundations, USDA Rural Development
 - Organize for state agency programs, such as
 - Redevelopment Ready Certification (RRC)
 - Main Street Programs



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First Impressions: Assessing your community for tourism (FIT), Michigan State University Extension
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First Impressions: Assessing Your Community for Tourism

How It Works | History | Community Reports | Apply | Resources | Frequently Asked Questions

A comprehensive community assessment conducted by unannounced visitors in a host community Overall, FIT helps communities learn about their strengths and weaknesses through the eyes of first-time visitors.

How It Works | Apply

www.canr.msu.edu/tourism/programs/

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District 2



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Next Steps for FIT Communities

- Consult the FIT Community Next Steps manual provided to your Community Leadership Team (CLT).
- Learn from other FIT communities as to what is achievable by reviewing “FIT Successes Report–April 2021 Edition” – <https://www.canr.msu.edu/resources/fit-successes-report-april-2021-edition>
- Consider exploring the raw data further and identifying parts of the results to act.
- Facilitate discussions with private sector assets visited during the assessment and share asset reviews with each stakeholder and/or department.
- Schedule a public discussion meeting between the CLT, local leaders, and active citizens of all ages, abilities, and backgrounds.
- Review your community’s result and discuss strategies to work together.
- Search out low-hanging tourism-related projects from list of results, picking one or two items that can be accomplished immediately and ensure their completion.
- Schedule a follow-up discussion with MSU Extension Government and Community Vitality/Tourism educators to facilitate your next steps if you need assistance. ○ Contact MSU Extension Statewide Tourism Educator, Andy Northrop – northro5@msu.edu

Available Funding and Grants

- MI Economic Development Corporation – Public Spaces Community Places – <https://www.miplace.org/programs/public-spaces-community-places/>
- Match on Main – <https://www.miplace.org/small-business/match-on-main/>
- United States Department of Agriculture–Rural Development Grants <https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/all-programs>
- Michigan Arts and Humanities, Michigan Council for Arts and Cultural Affairs (MCACA)
- Arts Midwest (Touring Gig Fund), National Endowment for the Arts
- Community Foundations and/or individual Foundation funds (example: Dow in Midland)
- Business/Corporate sponsorships (example: MI Sugar Trails – <http://www.sblc-mi.org/michigan-sugartrails.html>)
- Crowd Funding, Individual donations / sponsorships (Lions Club, Rotary Club, etc.)