Quality of Life and a Sense of Place in Southeast Minnesota

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Mary Ann Collins-Svoboda, Mississippi Valley Partners

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Executive Summary

Southeast Minnesota is, by all accounts, one of the most scenic areas of the state. The bluffs overlooking the Mississippi River, the steep valleys of rivers such as the Root and the Zumbro, and the picturesque farms and small towns, all combine to make this region one of the most attractive in the state, indeed, in the Upper Midwest.

The area’s beauty is also becoming a force for change. New houses are being built to take advantage of scenic views. Tourists increasingly flock to places like Lanesboro and the valley of the Mississippi. The area’s beauty has become a catalyst for changes in land use, for improved roads, and for a host of other changes in the landscape that are both obvious and subtle. In turn, the perceived changes in land use have given rise to ongoing debates about what directions land use planning should take in order to best maintain a sustainable rural quality of life in the region.

This report summarizes recent trends and developments in one area of economic development that is dependent on continued high quality of life—heritage tourism. Heritage tourism—defined most generally as attracting visitors to an area because of the natural and historic qualities of the place—would seem to be a good fit with the scenic qualities and rural lifestyles of Southeastern Minnesota. To a degree, this is true, and there are important programs already underway in this area. But it is important to note that in some cases tourism, whether termed “heritage” or not, can result in dramatic, unwanted changes in the place that visitors are coming to see.

This report is an overview, a road map if you will, of issues, concerns, and practices as they pertain to heritage tourism in Southeast Minnesota. The basic question the study addresses is:

Can sustainable heritage tourism be developed in such a way that economic development goals are reached without incurring unwanted changes in lifestyle and "sense of place?"

The report explores this question by developing two lines of inquiry. The first summarizes and surveys current trends and developments in heritage tourism in the Southeast Minnesota region. The second highlights some current practices, programs, and principles from outside the region. Analysis of the trends and case studies highlights successes already taking place as well as points to opportunities for still greater sustainable development.

The study found that concerns with growth management are present, but they are more latent and underlying than other issues immediately being addressed. Aside from growth management, and the accompanying concerns with authenticity and sense of place, the practice of heritage tourism is still in a growth mode now, where participants are looking for increased visibility, visitation, and how they can best make a sustainable living in this economic situation. Project informants report that their other primary concerns at this stage are in the area of education, as they work to spread the word that tourism has potential to be an important part of the region’s economic future.

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Introduction

In 1999, CURA's Bridging the River Project became involved in a conservation design study of the Apple Blossom Scenic Drive, in Winona and Houston Counties. Using a grant from the University's Design Institute to enter into a collaborative study with the Minnesota Land Trust, CURA staff and other university personnel developed a series of "scenarios" about what parts of the Drive might look like under several "build out possibilities." In its most simple, broadest form, conservation design is a process of designing new development by first identifying the special features of a particular area that ought to be protected, then designing new development so that those features are most minimally impacted. Conservation design is an emergent pattern of land use and resource protection across the country, and the Minnesota Land Trust is taking a leading role in its development in Minnesota.

The conservation design study involved discussions with representatives from the Winona County Planning Department, Dresbach Township Board, and the Planning Commission and City Council of the City of La Crescent. All of these local government officials were interested in the project, although they reserved judgment on how useful it might be for land use planning in their area until they could study a plan in detail. One result of the study, though, was the inclusion by the City of La Crescent of bluff protection provisions in its new land use ordinance. We understood clearly from these meetings, and from other presentations we made to planners, public officials and planning commissioners in the area, that land use and changes in land use were centrally important to them. In some ways, land use planning is about more than just what should happen to a particular parcel; land use planning decisions, and the processes by which changes are made, get to fundamental values of the sense of place, quality of life, regional identity, and relation between the public and local units of government.

Previous studies of the Apple Blossom Scenic Drive (Blufflands Design Manual and Apple Blossom Scenic Drive Management Plan) had identified a number of publicly-held goals and visions for the Drive. Among the most prominent of these with implications for conservation design were: preserve scenic views, preserve agricultural land use, maintain rural character (these goals are paraphrased from the studies).

The Design Institute study developed alternative scenarios involving identification of priority conservation areas and then location of new construction in areas that would minimize detrimental impact to those areas. We drew up scenarios at several densities:

- 1 Dwelling Unit (D.U.) per 40 acres (existing zoning);
- 1 D.U. per 5 acres ("Rural Residential" which is the county's default in areas not zoned 1:40);
- "urban density," of roughly 4 D.U. per acre (what might happen under a hypothetical annexation that consumed the entire Drive).

The scenarios illustrated possible designs for part of the Drive under "conventional" design, in which there is generally no provision up front for conservation, and under "conservation design." The project team also developed scenarios for particular stretches of the Drive that maximized
protection of certain features of the area while allowing for new development at the 1:40 and 1:5 ratios.

Concurrent with the Design Institute study, the Bridging Project received a grant from the Experiment in Rural Cooperation to examine the economic impacts of conservation design as a land use practice. This charge, we came to understand, was much more complex than we first expected, for a number of reasons:

First, recognized that the economics of land development are highly site- and time-specific. The market for land, whether for development or for agriculture, is dependent on a very large number of variables having to do with the housing market in the region, crop prices, etc. While it would be possible to map land prices from sales of land in a given area, it was uncertain what, exactly, that would show for the future.

Another potential approach to the problem would have been to do a “cost of development study” of the same parcel of land under two scenarios, both conventional design and conservation design. The project team was reluctant to pursue this approach for fear of giving the appearance that a particular parcel had been committed for development. The team also did not want to provide professional services that would have competed with the services of professional engineers or architects.

Finally, we heard, albeit informally and unsystematically, that the development pressure on the Drive appeared to have eased, but not before its major agricultural heritage had permanently changed. “All the good sites have houses already on them,” one informant told us, and another added the perspective that “There’s no more farming up there anyway.” We gathered material from the County Assessor’s Office regarding land values and home construction along the Drive, and regarding land ownership patterns, but again, the probabilities of developing a fruitful study appeared dim. More detailed information about this inquiry is found below in the section, “Background: Land Use and Change Along the Apple Blossom Scenic Drive.”

As we worked, we kept thinking that the real issue being posed had to do with the economic value of scenery. If it was true, as people were suggesting, that the market for land along the Drive was being driven by its scenic value rather than its agricultural value, what could we say about this connection that would have value for other people in Southeast Minnesota? How could we get a handle on the nexus between scenery, land use, and economics? And what connection might be found to agriculture, which remains the region’s most visible rural land use and an important part of the regional economy and identity?

As we realized that the heart of the Apple Blossom Scenic Drive discussions—both our work and the previous studies—was about the Drive’s role as a catalyst for change, we began to see some of the dimensions of what was at stake more clearly. What people had been talking about included change: in land use, changes in the terms of different public visions for the future of the place, and an emerging role for the Drive as a Scenic Byway in addition to a country road that served its residents. There are also three other scenic byways in the area, and tourism programs, so the whole issue of how to have tourism and maintain scenery and the land use that is such a big part of that seems to be a question of consequence.

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Tourism, particularly that branch of the industry known as heritage tourism, seemed to get us close to the heart of the matter. One component of heritage tourism is that it attracts visitors who want to see and experience the distinctive elements of a place, to gain an insight into the "sense of place" that makes a region unique. In the part of Southeast Minnesota represented by the Scenic Drive, those qualities had everything to do with the agricultural land use, the scenic views, and the general rural character. Furthermore, in the two previous studies we had worked with, tourism had proved to be a controversial subject. Respondents to public opinion surveys stated very clearly that they wanted appropriate economic development, and that they did not want tourist development that would interfere with the place and their quality of life.

This insight led us to the questions that motivated this study, that is,

Is there a model for "heritage tourism" that is place-sensitive enough to preserve the distinctive qualities of a place, while it also acts as a means of economic development?

In other words, are there programs, people, and practices in heritage tourism that are "getting it right"? What's available to people in Southeast Minnesota? What are the issues and central questions that are being faced by other regions trying to use sensitive, locally driven heritage tourism as a means of economic development? Are there models of tourism that are environmentally sound, and that at the same time develop a region's economic and social potential?

The following study explores heritage tourism and related programs such as scenic byways with particular attention to the following issues,

- potential as sustainable economic development, with the associated question of to whom the economic benefits go, local businesses or franchises;
- potential to avoid "over developing" an area, but instead balancing the need to retain an area's special qualities while developing tourism programs;
- the need for comprehensive, locally-driven planning that is both inclusive and responsive

The study is general, intended only to "map the territory" in a more systematic way than has previously been available. As a result, it did not develop solutions or answers to the issues it explored, but it did attempt to discover how various people and programs have posed the questions.

Finally, although the bulk of the study's focus is on people and programs in Southeast Minnesota, it does attend to practices elsewhere, particularly as those may be seen to have a bearing on future sustainable development in Southeast Minnesota.

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Background: Land Use and Change Along the Apple Blossom Scenic Drive

Both anecdotal information and trend data gathered by the Winona County assessor point to changes in land use along the Apple Blossom Scenic Drive. In summary form, over the past decade, many lots have been developed into expensive residential properties while active farming appears to be on the decline. Anecdotal evidence is fairly clear about these trends. Both Neil Broadwater from the Minnesota Extension Service and Art Thicke, a farmer who lives and works two miles from Dakota, see the changes as being driven in large part by the topography of this part of the county. The land is steep, which can make the farms smaller, harder to manage using conventional means, and require smaller equipment, according to Broadwater. Aside from apple orchards, which are another manifestation of farming in steep areas, much of the agricultural activity is raising beef or dairy cattle. Yet changes in the economy of both dairy and beef cattle have made it very difficult for small farmers to compete, and many of the farmers in this area are working part time while they also have a job in town. Many agricultural landowners in this area, according to the assessor’s office are renting their land to others.

Gaps in data did not allow a complete analysis, or for a systematic spatial picture to be developed, but some important information can be gleaned from the Winona County Assessor’s Office. In 1997, Pat Walters completed a survey of recent trends along County Highway 1, as the Apple Blossom Drive is designated for part of its length. Land transactions that involved both land and buildings had taken place at fairly regular intervals between 1980 and 1996, with a total of 8 transactions recorded. Generally, the acreages involved were small, 4-5 acres per sale except for one at 81 acres. The Estimated Market Value (EMV) in 1997 for the smaller tracts was between $37,450 and $58,250 per acre. During the same period, there were 16 transactions recorded that involved land only. One was for 80 acres, two others were for between 10 and 20 acres, and the others were 5 acres or smaller. Again, these were distributed fairly regularly between 1986 and 1996, except for 4 transactions that took place in 1992. The 1997 EMV for the smaller tracts was between $4,166 and $10,341 per acre.

The anecdotal understanding of land use change along the Drive is that “there’s a bunch of doctors from La Crosse up there.” While analysis does not show professions of owners of newly constructed buildings, it does indicate that these are not poor people. Analysis of selected property records for the same area and time period shows some clear trends, although, again, the data is not fully complete. Land values are certainly rising over the 1989-2000 period in this area, with a fairly typical 4.52 acre parcel increasing in value from $10,500 ($2323/acre) in 1989 to $53,500 ($11,836/acre) in 2000. Twelve parcels with building activity during this period were randomly selected; they showed a range of building values between $117,000 and $631,000, with an average of $189,950. Most of the buildings appear to have been built after 1995.

These trends, however, do not appear to offer much prognosis for the future, in and of themselves. Anecdotally, the feeling is very strong that the pace of development has slowed, that the sites with the best views have been built upon, and that much of the remaining land has been parceled in anticipation of a future development market should it occur. Furthermore, ideas and proposals about future development patterns, and their associated economic impacts, are so closely connected with notions of private property rights, that it was felt that further analysis and study along these lines would be potentially controversial. Instead, the nexus of concerns

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relating to land use, economic change, and scenery led to an examination of what has become known as heritage tourism.

**Statement of the Problem: What is Heritage Tourism?**

The professional and academic literature on tourism has in the past decade come to develop an approach termed heritage tourism. Heritage tourism—the marketing of an area’s natural or cultural heritage as an important part of its attraction—is subtly distinct from the issue of “authenticity” in tourism. The question of authenticity speaks to the concern that the visitor is getting an authentic, or real, or genuine experience rather than something that is packaged and presented for their benefit and that is disconnected from other elements of the life in that place. Visitors can get plenty of different kinds of authentic experiences without those being directly connected to the cultural or natural heritage of the place. Nor is there an automatic connection between the practice of heritage tourism and the concept of “sustainable” tourism. There are many different ways in which tourism may be “sustainable”—and most of the more-developed notions concern a sustainable tourist economy, but they are not necessarily implicated in heritage tourism. It would seem to be the case that good heritage tourism is implicitly sustainable, in the sense that a tourism plan that results in the loss of the very qualities of heritage that tourists come to see would soon result in no more tourists. But it’s important to recognize that tourism can be sustained, be locally-driven, and have many other admirable qualities, without being necessarily based on the region’s heritage.

Since the early 1990s, the National Trust for Historic Preservation has developed and maintained a strong heritage tourism program. The Trust is the nation’s largest nationwide historic preservation advocacy group; it should be no surprise, therefore, that its program of heritage tourism focuses on the preservation and use of historically significant buildings. The Trust’s manual for the field *Getting Started: How to Succeed in Heritage Tourism* defines heritage tourism this way:

> ...traveling to experience the places and activities that authentically represent the stories and people of the past. People across the country have discovered how well the preservation of historic, cultural, and natural resources combines with the development and marketing of tourism to sustain local economies and ways of life.

The Trust’s program makes one critical assumption: that a community or region has decided that it wants to increase the role of tourism in its local economy. Nearly all of the programs, principles, and process steps presuppose that a community wants to embrace tourism, and they focus instead on how to extend, enhance, and improve the preservation, interpretation, planning and marketing required. There is some discussion, in the planning section of the book, about who should be involved in developing a tourism plan that is embraced by the entire community, but that is decidedly a minor subject of this volume.

The Minnesota Office of Tourism (MOT) has more recently developed a program focus on cultural/heritage tourism. The MOT definition is very similar to that put forth by the Trust:
Travel to authentic historic and cultural places, attractions, and events to encounter people, traditions, history, and art.

The Minnesota program, adopted in the spring of 2001 as a supplement to the more traditional “hunting, fishing, camping in the north woods” focus of Minnesota tourist promotion, is at once narrower and more broad than the Trust’s model. The MOT embraces a variety of cultural experiences, whether folk festivals, concerts, or other arts events in a much more direct way than the Trust’s historic preservation-based model does. Likewise, the MOT material has very little to say about the importance of historic preservation in particular, or resource conservation/sense of place issues more generally. As befits its administrative home in the state Department of Trade and Economic Development, the MOT model is much more strongly geared toward economic issues such as “Minnesotan Product,” “Product Development Potential,” “Marketing” and “Visitor Services.” This is not to say that the MOT is not concerned with issues of authenticity and quality of place, but that those are not the program’s central points.

Finally, it should not be surprising that practitioners in the field have developed their own perhaps-intuitive definitions of heritage tourism. Kathy Hartl is Executive Director of Historic Bluff Country, a regional heritage tourism group in Southeastern Minnesota. To her, heritage tourism is the kind of enterprise where visitors go to historic sites and get a historic sense of the culture of the people. In Southeastern Minnesota, she would include the Amish tours because that is a part of the culture that is distinctive down there, even if the Amish families have only been in the area since the mid-70s. Heritage tourism is distinct from recreation-based tourism where people come to engage in activities like biking or canoeing, but they could be related. For example, hikers along the historic Grand Portage in northeast Minnesota might be thought of as engaging in both heritage tourism and in recreation-based tourism.

The present study will not explore all aspects of these multiple definitions of heritage tourism. Specifically, it will pay only slight attention to the economic aspects of this industry. Instead, it will focus on two related issues:

how can heritage tourism programs successfully preserve the very qualities that make a place distinctive, and attractive to tourists and residents alike?

what are some particular issues, concerns, or needs expressed by people involved with heritage tourism in Southeast Minnesota and how have others outside the region addressed those issues.

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The Practice of Heritage Tourism

Southeast Minnesota has, to one degree or another, had some involvement with heritage tourism for nearly two decades. Over that period, substantial progress has been achieved in a number of areas, but there is, of course, work yet to be done. This section of the report examines heritage tourism in Southeast Minnesota by concentrating on four particular areas:

- changing attitudes toward tourism and tourists
- development as a concern, vs. growth management or authenticity
- connection to agriculture
- concerns, needs, and next steps

After this descriptive summary, the report considers some programs in place both in this region and in nearby areas as well. Finally, the third part of this section considers some selected national programs that may be applicable to the Southeast Minnesota experience.

Issue-Based Perspectives on Heritage Tourism

Changing attitudes toward tourism and tourists

The most common impression given by the people interviewed for this study is that local attitudes toward tourism and tourists are changing. Toni Smith, the Minnesota Extension Service Extension Educator in Wabasha County and a leader in the field of tourism and economic development, notes that there was formerly apathy and indifference toward tourism, but people have begun to change their attitude as they begin to think about tourism as one avenue toward economic diversity. A big part of the change has been the recognition that local citizens make money from tourism, not just big businesses, franchises, or people from outside the region. A key event in developing this recognition, in her mind, has been the “85 Mile Garage Sale” put on by Mississippi Valley Partners every May, which has complemented the four-color 50 page travel guide distributed free of charge every year (distribution of 150,000).

Kathy Hartl, Executive Director of Historic Bluff Country, agrees, noting that the whole education process for local people has been to illustrate that the entire community benefits when individual businesses benefit. Dave Vogel spoke also to the value of education efforts when he described the efforts of his office to help local people think of “guests” coming to their towns rather than “outsiders.” Vogel, regional director of the Minnesota Office of Tourism, sees that change beginning to happen, although it hasn’t completely turned around. Hartl agrees, noting that local people sometimes grumble when they see a bus pulled up outside their favorite restaurant and know that there won’t be a seat inside. There are some pockets of resistance to the idea of a tourist-based economy, but lots of people “get it.” If a particular business is not connected to tourism, and sees no support from tourists, then they’ll be slower to pick up on this.

To some observers, the change in attitude is something of a necessity. Smith and Hartl both mentioned recent downturns in the agricultural economy as factors that encouraged communities
to look to tourism as one element in a local economy, and Smith also noted the closures of "Main Street" stores due to changes in regional shopping patterns. Vogel points out that a renewed spirit of cooperation can develop once a number of communities in a region decide to invest in tourism. Instead of competing with each other for a limited amount of tourist dollars, neighboring towns in the region have begun to pool their resources for marketing, which allows them both to reach more people and to illustrate that there's enough to do in the region to make a longer stay attractive.

A community's overall perspective on tourism is extremely important in terms of diversifying the people and businesses doing the work also. Smith notes that in Wabasha, the Chamber of Commerce locally has been promoting tourism as part of the economic future of the county, and that there's a realization that visitors can enable the town to support more restaurants, parks, that downtown can support a bookstore and a bakery that will be patronized by local people as well as visitors. Local historical societies realize that they depend on tourist visits for revenues to keep their museums open.

But the question of a community's attitude about tourism remains vital even when visitors ("guests" in Dave Vogel's terms) have come to a community. As Mary Ann Collins-Svoboda, president of Mississippi Valley Partners, put it, community members can't make it just an economic relationship with tourists. "You can get anything in lots of places, great food, etc. What we've got is service, friendliness, the perception of place to the visitor, what they think a small town used to be like." She continued,

You've gotta think beyond the immediate. If you have a bus with 50 little old ladies, and they each buy $2 worth of stuff and have to use your bathroom, that can be pretty frustrating. But each of them has daughters who are looking for places to bring their families, and if they had a good experience, then word will get around.

You have to make the place and the past interesting for yourself, because that's all we have. The place and the past is what we have. People love stories about this place and the past. Stories provide connections, which is what so many of us need, what our visitors come looking for, and what we have to offer them that they can't get anywhere else.

Toni Smith agrees, pointing out that the arguments about the value of tourism and the importance of maintaining a strong sense of place are well grounded, "We don't need to make the argument that historic buildings, architecture, scenery etc. are important and that they sell—the argument that's hard is how can they be packaged to make a sustainable living for local people."

"Development" as a concern vs. "Growth Management" or "Authenticity"

Despite the reported changes in perspectives on tourism, some myths simply die hard. "We don't want to be another..." with the name of a town or region overrun by tourists, is still commonly heard. Understanding precisely what someone may mean when they say they don't want to be another Branson Missouri, Brainerd, Wisconsin Dells, or even Lanesboro can be 8/1/2001
difficult. Sometimes it may mean simply that they don’t want things in their town to change, but other speakers may have a more specific sense of what it is that they fear about being overrun by tourists.

People interviewed for this report had differing perspectives on this issue, which included, implicitly, differing views of the criteria for “successful” tourism programs. As Dave Vogel put it, “The possibility of being overrun isn’t really a problem for the people we deal with. For the CVB (Convention and Visitors Bureau), having a lot of people is success, because they want to promote and attract new dollars to the community. Some towns may not want to be Lanesboro, but that’s successful in tourism development terms.” Others agree that tourism in the region hasn’t yet reached a point where overcrowding is a major problem. Hartl noted that, “There are probably times and places where people do feel saturated and overcrowded. Lanesboro on a nice summer day is one example. But there’s a wide variety of levels of tourist response among the 26 communities we work with and some really aren’t very crowded.”

Toni Smith notes that concern with retaining a valued sense of place—another way of describing the worries about crowding, is important to a group like Mississippi Valley Partners, which she was instrumental in founding in 1992. “The ethic of groups like MVP is to sustain what they have—they have to make money to make a living, but they also know that they want to make a win-win situation where the place they live in isn’t overrun. They want to retain what they like about being here, as opposed to becoming a place that is overrun with attractions that do not really portray the community heritage.”

For Smith, the concern with overcrowding may be a bit premature, since she prefers to focus still on the need for growth in tourism revenues rather than the need for management. “My questions still are pretty basic,” she said, “is it feasible for a family to make a living on sustainable tourism, whether heritage based or ecologically based? We need models for practices of rural heritage tourism that is successful commercially.”

Hartl reports that in the towns served by Historic Bluff Country, some people are making a living from tourists, but that the economic impacts are still pretty mixed. Gas stations and grocery stores, food and lodging, seem to be doing better than some others. For her, though, the issue has to do with two criteria for success from tourism. “Success is measured by both bottom line dollars and a general feeling that people have about their visit. The dollars and the overall satisfaction build on each other. People are drawn to the area because this appears to be a slower pace, they can relax and do a number of smaller low-key activities that are different and interesting. They can connect with the history and people, with the sense of place.”

A big part of commonly-held resistance to tourism development is a fear, not just of being overrun by visitors at a particular point in time—the overcrowded feeling—but fear of how tourism development may change a community in more enduring ways. Hartl offered this reflection:

One thing that heightens the sense of difference between visitors and locals is the sense that real estate prices have gone way up in places like Lanesboro. This is complicated, but it seems that there’s a pretty high
turnover of businesses, perhaps because people think this is going to be
great, pay too much, and don’t really have a plan for what to do during the
off season. We don’t track the economics of this specifically enough
month to month or business to business to really get a handle on the
economic impact.

In addition to concern for escalating property values, some resistance to tourism comes from a
fear that a community’s infrastructure may become overwhelmed. Vogel spoke to this concern
when he said, “Most of the changes seem to have been gradual, without overwhelming the
infrastructure. Owatonna had rapid change with the Cabelas, but I haven’t heard about any
difficulties. There’s not as much impact as there is say in Brainerd in the summer. Even though
we’re not at that level yet, we should keep that in mind when planning.”

Local community planning was also important to MVP’s Collins-Svoboda. “If folks in a town
want to stick their head in the sand and have a closed door mentality, they’re setting themselves
up for perhaps even bigger problems. If there’s no zoning or planning for slow growth, someone
could come in and take advantage of that situation and put SuperAmericas on every corner,
really speed up your growth and there’s nothing you can do about it. We should plan for
managed growth.” She notes that in Wisconsin, where she lives, counties and towns have
blufftop ordinances that restrict how close to the bluff edge you can build. Stockholm’s business
district is very strictly zoned, in an attempt to maintain a distinctive look to the downtown.
Some places don’t have those restrictions, so they end up looking more uniform, like Anyplace.

Vogel is emphatic, though, that planning has to be local, not imposed from somewhere else,
“The local area and community need to make the decisions. Others like the Design Team can
show what might happen if various options are explored, and the local people can then decide
what’s right for them. We can talk about ‘What would it take to do X, and do you want to do
that.'”

Connection to agriculture

Although “agricultural tourism” has gained fairly widespread awareness outside the region, and
there have been some studies and program development within Southeast Minnesota, those
interviewed for this study didn’t have a great deal to say about it. Smith pointed out the studies
completed and nearing completion through the University of Minnesota’s Tourism Center.
“Kent Gustafson from Tourism Center and Karl Foord, the Extension Educator from Dakota
County are working on a detailed marketing plan that will show what visitors would want from
an ag tourism experience, how far they would travel, and other questions.” Country Heritage
Adventures is a group marketing tourist visits to farms and related properties in this region.

Concerns, needs, and next steps

Not surprisingly, opinions differed to some degree on what were the biggest needs and most
immediate issues facing heritage tourism in Southeastern Minnesota. Main points are
summarized below.

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Toni Smith: “Another issue is capacity. Some cities have a full Convention and Visitors Bureau with staff, some have a Chamber, which does a lot of different things. Plainview just decided on its own to emphasize heritage tourism with its relation to Jon Hassler (boyhood home), writing, theaters, now they’ve gotten involved with a bike trail project, routes, and a race.”

Kathy Hartl: “The first challenge or need that comes to mind is to learn more about local places. There are lots of significant places around here where the knowledge is either hidden or lost, where the people who know about them are maybe older or maybe moving away. It’s also time-consuming to develop ways to publicize this information once you’ve developed it. We’ve not done much with the heritage of the people who were here before the whites came, either.

“Another issue that needs attention is how to develop places so that people know about them and they can stay open. For example, Schech’s Mill, in Houston County, is interesting, and historically significant, but the owner is getting older and he has this tremendous storehouse of knowledge about how all the machinery works. The owners have applied for some funding to develop, restore, and make the mill accessible, but it’s hard to get public funding for a private property. Private funding is a real challenge also.

“We also need access to technical information, such as how to make a historic building handicapped-accessible.”

Mary Ann Collins-Svoboda: “The big thing that we need to do is record our talks with the elderly about the past that they’ve seen. It’s very important to preserve the stories and the buildings, because you’d better have something to show people.”

Programmatic Perspectives on Heritage Tourism
There are a number of programs taking place in and around Southeastern Minnesota that focus on particular dimensions of heritage tourism. Most, but not all, focus on the economic aspects of the industry. Major programs and activities are summarized below.

Minnesota Office of Tourism Cultural/Heritage Tourism Program

In spring 2001, the Minnesota Office of Tourism (MOT) unveiled a new initiative to promote cultural/heritage tourism in Minnesota. Its report notes that tourism to cultural and heritage attractions is one of the top growth areas in the industry, and that Minnesota has a great deal to offer visitors seeking cultural experiences. The program has a set of 11 goals, most of which address marketing, promotion, and issues having to do with the economic structure of the industry. Noteworthy, though, are two of the goals:

- Ensure that visitor use is managed to sustain the products and resources;
- Provide high quality visitor experiences that are authentic and preserve the uniqueness of communities and also improve the quality of life for residents
These two points speak directly to the concerns of this study in several ways, most notably the recognition that residents’ quality of life is an important planning concern when developing a tourism program.

The MOT plan is strategic at this point, identifying a number of potential approaches to developing a program that will enhance the economic viability of the state’s arts, culture, and heritage attractions. It is important to realize, though, that even if details are sketchy the listed state agencies and the proposed pathways for collaboration suggest very real possibilities for enhanced partnerships in this area.

There are more tangible programs from the MOT as well. The MOT Partnership Program has grant funds that can go to nonprofit tourism promotion organizations such as the Convention and Visitors Bureau (CVB) or the Chamber of Commerce. It’s a 50-50 grant for advertising and marketing only. There are special guidelines for cultural/heritage tourism. In addition, the Department of Trade and Economic Development (DTED) may have programs for developing an attraction, such as a low interest tourism loan program. Finally, MOT has another grant program that helps with the planning process. According to Dave Vogel, “We illustrate possibilities but do not tell anyone what to do. We can facilitate planning sessions, which can be a 1-5 year process of community/area inventory. For example, we ask people to look at the area as if they’re new—what would be interesting to a visitor?”

**Historic Bluff Country**

Historic Bluff Country is a Convention and Visitors Bureau incorporated in 1985 and serving 26 communities in the area between Interstate 90 and the Iowa line (north to south) and State Highway 56 and the Mississippi River (west to east). Its mission is to establish Southeast Minnesota as an attractive vacation destination, which will strengthen the economic base of the region. It highlights the area’s scenic beauty, outdoor recreation, historic sites, scenic byways, and other distinctive elements of the place. A mostly-volunteer organization with a staff of two, its primary activities are promotional, including a brochure that is widely distributed, a web site, a booth at the Minnesota State Fair, and a number of other activities. Its dues-paying members are primarily small businesses.

**Mississippi Valley Partners**

Mississippi Valley Partners (MVP) was begun with the assistance of the Minnesota Extension Service in 1992 “to promote tourism with continuing sensitivity to environmental and historical preservation.” MVP is an all volunteer group, with over 125 members from 13 communities surrounding Lake Pepin on the Mississippi River.

The goals of the organization are:

- Create an atmosphere of open communication concerning tourism issues in the 13 MVP communities.
- Develop the concept of looking at the 13 communities as one destination place with numerous small community experiences.

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• Promote tourism in the area with an on-going commitment to environmental, historical and cultural appreciation.
• Increase business sales and "bottom-line" profits in Mississippi Valley Partner businesses.
• Develop a shoulder season; create an increased demand for the winter season; and market both to the general public.

The MVP web site focuses on the history of each of the participating towns, area wildlife, especially the bald eagles that winter on Lake Pepin, and particular special attractions. Two cooperative events in particular make MVP’s program distinctive. The first weekend in May every year sees the recurrence of the “85 Mile Long Garage Sale,” where people from throughout the region have simultaneous sales. The shopping opportunity attracts visitors from far and wide, and many area churches take advantage of the increased traffic by providing lunches.

Currently, MVP has a published brochure/area guide for distribution, a site on the World Wide Web, and is beginning a community garden program. It has completed a substantial business retention and expansion program. It remains fully committed to the bi-state nature of its work.

Although MVP is strongly grounded in its cultural heritage and sense of place, according to Mary Ann Collins-Svoboda, they are not primarily a historical society, “We don’t make suggestions on preservation, but leave that to the historical societies. We communicate all the time with museums, folklore societies, and all of the others to convey that the river is shared by all and the responsibility of all. The river brings us all together. People come here wanting to see the attractions, the heritage, the festivals, regardless of what state it’s in.”

Country Heritage Adventures
Country Heritage Adventures is a collaborative effort among a group of farmers in southeastern Minnesota to market their farms as destination attractions. Located in Wabasha, Goodhue, and Olmsted Counties, primarily, the 15 CHA members offer a wide variety of distinctive farm-based attractions, including opportunities for visitors to interact with livestock as well as exotic animals, tours, and orchard produce. Some members have branched out as well, offering antique vehicle and carriages for display, hot air balloon rides, antiques, and wood carvings for sale.

Audubon
The National Eagle Center, in Wabasha, began as a cooperative venture between the National Audubon Society, the City of Wabasha, and the local non-profit EagleWatch. The National Eagle Center will attract visitors to view eagles in their winter nesting grounds along Lake Pepin.

Iron Range

Northeast Minnesota’s Iron Range is another area of the state that has begun to work with heritage tourism on a regional basis. A 1997 study “Preservation Management and Marketing Plan” developed by Hess, Roise, and Co. forms the basis for subsequent activities. Currently there are 45 interpretive markers at designated heritage sites throughout the region, with plans in the works to develop thematic brochures and a library of historic preservation materials. The
program is being developed by the Northern Lights Tourism Alliance (NLTA), which is an advisory board to the regional Iron Range Resources and Rehabilitation Board (IRRRB) on heritage tourism matters, and which has dedicated a staff person to the effort.

**Minnesota Scenic Byway Program**

There are currently four state-designated Scenic Byways in southeastern Minnesota—the Great River Road, the Apple Blossom Scenic Drive, the Shooting Star Scenic Byway, and the Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway. See Appendix B for more detailed information on these byways. The following description is taken from the Minnesota Scenic Byways web site.

The Minnesota Scenic Byway Program was launched by a 1992 memorandum of understanding between the Minnesota Department of Transportation, the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, the Minnesota Office of Tourism and the Minnesota Historical Society. The Minnesota Scenic Byway Program is designed to establish partnerships with communities, organizations and government agencies to match resources with grassroots marketing and economic development efforts. The program exists to:

1. Identify highway routes of exceptional interest
2. Promote travel and recreation on those routes
3. Enhance and provide stewardship for the features that distinguish those routes.

The Minnesota Scenic Byway Commission began soliciting byway nominations in the spring of 1994 and has now designated 20 byways totaling 2204 miles. The route solicitation period is now complete as the Scenic Byway Program moves into a new phase of marketing and byway development. We have successfully competed for $6.3 million in National Scenic Byways Discretionary Grant funds since 1992. These dollars have served as an impetus for action for local byway groups, state agencies and local governments that have received money.

The Minnesota Office of Tourism is managing five marketing projects that include byway marketing in 2000 and 2001, Scenic Byway displays in Minnesota rest areas in 2000, regional sport show information delivery in 2000 and 2001. They also conducted a state Scenic Byway Workshop in 1999. A new web page devoted to Minnesota Scenic Byways was added to the Explore Minnesota website in March, 2000. (www.exploreminnesota.com) These marketing activities form a foundation for individual byway marketing initiatives.

Byway success is most noticeable where byway groups have been able to integrate byway goals and values with other initiatives and programs in the byway corridor. Capital improvement programs by local, state and federal agencies are supported by byway coordination and planning. For example, the recently completed corridor partnership plan for the Minnesota River Valley Scenic Byway supported the successful programming of roadway improvements to a segment of the byway using Natural Preservation Route standards. The Edge of the Wilderness byway group

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completed a multi-year capital improvement plan that incorporates byway projects and highway projects to identify possible joint projects and funding sources.

A National Scenic Byways Program is funded through FY 2003 by TEA-21. About $25 million is made available nationally on an annual basis through a discretionary grants program administered by the FHWA National Scenic Byway Program. Allocated funds are available for eight eligible activities connected with state and nationally designated scenic byways. (www.byways.org). Applications for scenic byway funds are solicited annually by the National Scenic Byways Program of the Federal Highway Administration in January of the year preceding the fiscal year for which the funds will be available. Applications are due in early spring. Minnesota has captured between $600,000 and $700,000 in each year of the program.

TEA-21 funding is available for specific activities on scenic Byways. This is discretionary funding that is made available on a national level, unlike Transportation Enhancements which are funded through the ATPs and Met Council. Minnesota byways typically receive about $550,000 in federal funding (80% federal, 20% local). Guidance for the funding is available at http://byways.org/grants/docs/Guidance.pdf The Minnesota deadline for proposals is February 28 for projects during the following fiscal year that starts on October 1. We will make a state announcement in November or December.

A Corridor Management Plan for the Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway is currently under development, as is an Interpretive Plan for the Great River Road. The Great River Road Development Study integrates consideration of development, marketing, interpretation and preservation along this route.

National Perspectives on Heritage Tourism

Heritage tourism has, over the past decade, emerged across the country as a substantial area of professional practice and development. Led by the National Trust for Historic Preservation, many organizations, consulting practices, and academic institutions have developed resources relating to the development of successful heritage tourism programs. Three of the most prominent and most directly applicable to the focus of this study will be described in this section of the report.

The National Trust's heritage preservation program is codified in the booklet Getting Started: How to Succeed in Heritage Tourism. The booklet defines the program's basic framework and philosophy, which is summarized in the formula

TOURISM + PRESERVATION = SUSTAINABLE ECONOMY

Getting Started opens by defining the benefits of preservation and the benefits of tourism, and establishes a connection, albeit brief, with the practice of "eco-tourism," in which tourism to exotic natural habitats is part of the economic framework of preserving those places.
The heart of *Getting Started*, though, is its discussion of the five basic principles and four essential steps to the National Trust’s model of how to develop a strong heritage tourism program.

The five basic principles are:

*Focus on authenticity and quality:* Develop the stories and highlight the resources that are distinctive to your particular place, rather than themes and images that are more generic.

*Preserve and protect resources:* The buildings and natural areas that exemplify the distinctive sense of place must be preserved for the program to have real meaning and sustainability. No one particularly is moved by a sign that says “This is the site where a great building used to be.”

*Make sites come alive:* This principle primarily concerns interpretation, the development of stories that establish the connections between place, community, and visitor.

*Find the fit—between your community and tourism:* This is an essential, and often overlooked, part of the program. Local priorities and capabilities vary, and a bad fit between a proposed program and the community’s priorities and capabilities will probably lead to failure. Questions communities must ask themselves include whether or not they want tourism, if there are times and places where tourism is not appropriate, what level of tourist visitation they have the physical and administrative infrastructure to handle.

*Collaborate:* A successful heritage tourism program demands resources that no single organization has. Business people must collaborate with preservationists, the private sector must work with various levels of government. In many cases, regional collaboration—even among towns who have formerly seen themselves as competitors—will help enhance the program to everyone’s benefit.

It is important to keep in mind that the National Trust is a preservation organization, so the emphasis in these principles is naturally on preserving and maintaining the important physical places that give a community or region its distinctive sense of place. Still, there is an essential awareness that heritage tourism can only succeed if it is part of a community’s vision of itself, and if it has a solid economic basis. The Trust has further defined four basic steps in an integrated process of developing heritage tourism programs.

*Assess the potential:* Each community or region should have a clear idea of its assets and capacity in five areas: attractions, visitor services, organizational capabilities, protection, and marketing. Each of these is essential to a successful program; a community can have world-class attractions, but if there are no visitor services or no organizational capability to manage a program, then a tourism program will not succeed. Likewise, if a community emphasizes visitor services and marketing at the expense of protection, then the very attractions that visitors come to see will be degraded.
Plan and organize: A successful program doesn’t “just happen.” A community’s human and financial resources must be organized in a complementary way—“everybody on the same page,” so to speak—for a program to become a true asset for a community.

Prepare, protect, and manage: The point here is that a successful program will plan for long-term success, and enhancement for both residents and visitors. It is important that early steps designed to develop business and attract visitors not compromise long-term goals and assets.

Market for success: Marketing, the process of attracting new visitors to your community, is an essential part of the process, but it is only a part, not the whole process. Marketing should be multi-year, and many-tiered, using a variety of communication tools. But it must also be integrated into the community’s overall framework so that false promises and expectations aren’t created.

Getting Started does not prescribe how these steps should be taken, or even that these are precisely the right steps, in the right order, for every community. But they are a framework for consideration so that a community or region won’t overlook a very basic element when putting a program together. Nor does the booklet tell communities that they should want heritage tourism. All of its advice about how to develop a tourism program is presupposed on an assumption that a community has decided that it does, but the program does offer important recognition that communities have the ability to control what their approach is and to what degree they embrace heritage tourism. For example, the process step of assessing a community’s capacity should identify whether a community wants and/or can handle tour busses. If not, that information must be clearly conveyed to the marketing planners, so that motorcoach operators are not approached and sent where they may not be wanted.

Over the past two years, the National Trust has developed a program called “A Dozen Distinctive Destinations” that recognizes 12 communities in the country that have “gotten it right” regarding heritage tourism. All 12 communities, selected this year from a pool of 70, “…are managing growth responsibly and maintaining strong, vibrant downtowns. They are committed to preserving their historic landmarks, maintaining their unique character, and sustaining an economic base of small, locally owned businesses.”

The Federal Highway Administration has since 1996 conducted a National Scenic Byway Program (NSB) that emphasizes the roles that scenic highways can play in tourism and economic development for an area. Although this is not a heritage tourism program per se, there are very close thematic connections. The NSB program evaluates roads according to six “intrinsic qualities” that make a road corridor distinctive. Four of these—natural resources, historic, archaeological, and cultural resources (understood in this context as museums, arts organizations, etc.—closely parallel important elements of heritage tourism programs. The description of the Minnesota Scenic Byway program included earlier in this report contains web site information for more specifics on the NSB. Nominations of a road to the NSB are handled through the state Department of Transportation. Of the four state scenic byways in Southeast Minnesota, one, the Great River Road, is a National Scenic Byway.
The professional and academic literature on tourism has devoted a considerable amount of attention to issues being addressed in this report. For reasons of brevity, and to keep the report’s focus on programs directly applicable to Southeast Minnesota, it will only examine one of these theoretical frameworks in any detail. The issues under discussion here find their way into the professional and academic literature under various headings, “authenticity,” “sustainable tourism,” “quality of life,” or “community-based tourism.” All of these headings, however, address to one degree or another the questions of how communities can best define for themselves what they want from a heritage tourism program, and how they can implement those visions in a way that provides the most benefit, and the least harm, to the community.

Bosselman, Peterson, and McCarthy (Managing Tourism Growth: Issues and Applications. Island Press, 1999) have developed a theoretical framework that is useful for thinking about how successful community-based tourism programs work. They have studied hundreds of cases where efforts have been made to manage tourism growth so as to maximize benefits to the community while minimizing harm caused by tourism development. They argue that tourism resources, that is, the things that make up the tourism experience in a given place, can be thought of as “common pool” resources. Common pool resources are those resources that are owned by no single body or institution, yet which affect everyone in the vicinity. A scenic view, for instance may be thought of as a common pool resource: while the land that makes up the scene is owned individually, the view itself is the “property” of all. The presence of the view benefits many, and its loss would hurt many, even though the specific land areas are privately held. Their framework is particularly useful in its recognition that the “commons” who are involved with the resource includes both local residents and tourists.

Bosselman et al define four goals of a successful common resource management system: equity, sustainability, efficiency, and resilience.

Equity is that quality which allows the program to be perceived as fair by the greatest number of potential participants.

A sustainable program is one that protects the resource for future generations.

An efficient system produces the maximum amount of economic benefit for the effort expended.

A resilient system is one that demonstrates its responsiveness to changing conditions.

Achieving these goals requires concerted effort, which is commonly marked by one or more of the following six components:

Define the boundaries clearly: participants must all know where the resources in question are; what’s included and what’s excluded from consideration.

Identify permitted users of the resource: Over-use of common resources is to a great extent a function of too many users (although other issues such as timing or seasonality may be factors as
well), so clear delineation of who may do what, and when, with respect to the resource is extremely important.

**Encourage repetitive users:** people will be more likely to enter into long-term agreements and modify their behavior toward the resource and other users if they feel that they are all in it for the long haul.

**Let the users participate in making the rules:** the more localized the decision-making, the better.

**Localize the rules as much as possible:** ditto. A community is more likely to engage in self-policing activity if they developed the rules of the tourism management strategy, rather than had them imposed by the state or federal government.

**Monitor and mediate rule violations:** If nothing happens to those who violate the rules, then why have them?

As was the case with the National Trust framework defined in *Getting Started*, these concepts should be seen as guidepoints for consideration in how to develop a program that better meets a community's needs. They are not a prescriptive formula, but a set of ideas that will help leaders develop their own criteria for a successful effort.
Analysis of Results

A couple of points can be developed from the program descriptions offered above.

1. There’s more going on than existing capacity in Southeast Minnesota can take advantage of. Mississippi Valley Partners has no paid staff and Historic Bluff Country has a staff of only two people, which severely limits the ability of either organization to take advantage of the existing programs available to develop heritage tourism further in this region. Programs which might be of benefit include the state Scenic Byway program (and its national parallel), programs and collaborative opportunities developed by the Minnesota Office of Tourism, the programs of the University of Minnesota Tourism Center (as well as other units of the University that might provide assistance in gathering oral history stories, for example), and the National Trust for Historic Preservation’s program.

2. People in this region have a good handle on the issues and concerns that face them more or less immediately (educating the community on the value of heritage tourism, developing economic capacity) and over a longer term (planning to protect as well as market). To a degree, the debate about the need for growth management in heritage tourism vs. the continued need for growth development is a matter of community education. As broader segments of the community come to realize the benefits of heritage tourism programs, and that those programs don’t necessarily require the loss of their quality of life and sense of place, growth management and development will come into balance. By the same token, as community support for heritage tourism grows, it will be easier to engage in the broad-based planning for resource protection that is necessary to make heritage tourism truly sustainable.

3. Should the day come where there is greater capacity, and/or greater maturation in the programs, other folks in other places who are wrestling with the same problems and have devised solutions and frameworks that may be helpful might be contacted. In some regards, Southeast Minnesota heritage tourism is at a relatively early stage of development. Although the principal local organizations have been in existence for 16 and 9 years, they haven’t yet grown to the point where they can support staff. As this growth happens, community leaders will be able to take better advantage of programs such as that offered by the National Trust, and the perspectives on planning that have been developed by Bosselman et al, and that might be made available to local community leaders through research and planning assistance from consultants or the University of Minnesota’s Tourism Center.
Issues and Insights

Throughout the course of this study, several points were made abundantly clear, through listening to local leaders and examination of the professional and programmatic literature. These insights might be kept in mind by people committed to ongoing development and refinement of heritage tourism in this region.

1. It’s not the case that there either will or will not be tourists, because tourists have already discovered the region and there are diverse programs aimed at attracting more. The pertinent questions will include: how will this change be managed and by whom? Who will benefit (franchises or local people as one set of alternatives) and who will suffer (perhaps through over development and rising real estate prices, for example).

2. Plan early and carefully—keep planning and revising even as the program is under way—be inclusive, especially of people who may disagree, but who have a stake. There doesn’t appear to be any such thing as too much planning. Heritage tourism involves widely disparate groups of community stakeholders, and the goals of those groups may well shift as a program matures. Finally, well-placed naysayers can do a lot to torpedo a good program if they aren’t brought into the process early and their views aren’t considered carefully.

3. Listen carefully. “This is what you have to do if you want buses” doesn’t mean “This is what you have to do, period” nor does it mean you have to want buses. This is just one example of how signals can get crossed and messages confused without a careful planning process. Assumptions may differ quite a bit among differing perspectives, and for some, the statement “We want tourism” means “We’ll do anything necessary to get as many tourists as we can, regardless of cost.” In another example, “We don’t want to be another Brainerd” could refer to traffic jams caused by too many people, or a plethora of tacky developments.

4. Some of the heritage tourism-based businesses such as restaurants market fresh breads, food with fresh produce etc. These folks are probably tied to the farmers in the region, but continued connections should be explored.

5. The future work, in terms of further studies, analysis, or research, needs to develop usable products done in conjunction with local citizens. Future studies might look at:
   - is heritage tourism feasible for those towns that have been at it a while?
   - the various “heritage based” needs identified by those interviewed for this study (oral histories, etc.)
   - is it possible to do this as a sustainable business?
   - what would it take/what does it take to succeed, if sustaining local small business is the goal?

Given the wealth of heritage tourism practices throughout the country, and the many communities and organizations who are facing the same issues and challenges that face Southeast Minnesota, it should be possible to devise a questionnaire and study for best practices and other important factors so that local leaders can learn from the experience of others.

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Appendix A

Players and programs for heritage tourism in Southeastern MN

This section identifies resources that are readily available for anyone getting into heritage tourism in SE Minnesota, including local non-profits and state agencies. The roles of many of these groups are detailed in the body of the report.

University of Minnesota Extension Service
Toni Smith
Extension Educator, Community Vitality
611 Broadway Avenue, Suite 40
Wabasha, MN 55981-1613
651-565-2662
651-565-2664 (fax)
tonis@umn.edu
www.extension.umn.edu

Minnesota Office of Tourism
Dave Vogel
Regional Manager, Southern Regional Office
115 East Hickory St., #403
P.O. Box 286
Mankato, MN 56002-0286
507-389-2683
1-888-975-6766
507-389-2685 (fax)
dave.vogel@state.mn.us
www.exploreminnesota.com
www.dted.state.mn.us

Tourism Center, University of Minnesota
The Tourism Center conducts tourism research and provides education and outreach programs for the tourism industry, community groups and students. The Tourism Center is part of the University of Minnesota Extension Service. It operates in partnership with various academic units, government agencies and industry associations. The Tourism Center is located on the Saint Paul Campus of the University of Minnesota. In the summer of 2001, the Tourism Center published Community Tourism Development, a manual for community-based tourism planning.

Tourism Center
University of Minnesota Extension Service
116 Classroom Office Bldg.
1994 Buford Avenue
Saint Paul, MN 55108-6040
Telephone: 612-624-4947
Fax: 612-624-4264
8/1/2001
Email: tourism@extension.umn.edu

**MnDOT Scenic Byway Program**
Mark Anderson  
Office of Environmental Services  
Minnesota Department of Transportation  
395 John Ireland Boulevard  
Saint Paul, MN 55155  
(651) 284-3748  

**Great River Road**
The Minnesota Department of Transportation recently completed a comprehensive development study of the Great River Road in Minnesota. It is downloadable by accessing the following website.
http://www.dot.state.mn.us/environment/publications/great_river_road/river.html

Carol Zoff-Pelton is MnDOT’s Project Manager for the study:

E-Mail Address: carol.zoff-pelton@dot.state.mn.us  
Phone Number: (651) 284-3795  
Office Address:  
395 John Ireland Boulevard  
Mail Stop 620  
Saint Paul, MN 55155

**Historic Bluff Country**
P.O. Box 609  
Harmony, MN 55939  
1-800-428-2030  
hbc@means.net

**Mississippi Valley Partners**  
PO Box 334  
Pepin, WI 54759  
1-888-999-2619  
info@mississippi-river.org  
http://www.mississippi-river.org/index.html
Appendix B
Minnesota Office of Tourism Web Site Summaries for Southeast Minnesota Scenic Byways

**Great River Road - Southern MN**

The southern portion of this long and diverse byway runs between the Twin Cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul, home to a theater, art and music scene envied by larger cities across the country. The shopping scene is extraordinary as well, crowned by Bloomington's extraordinary Mall of America. To the southeast of the Twin Cities, Highway 61 hugs the river through some of the most stunning scenery in the state, where massive wooded bluffs overlook the wide, winding waters of the Mississippi. This portion of the river is also home to several state parks, and some of the best birdwatching in the state.

For more info: [http://www.mississippi-river.com](http://www.mississippi-river.com)  (Mississippi River Parkway Commission)

Southern section: Twin Cities-Hastings-Red Wing-Wabasha-Winona-LaCrescent
Northern section: Lake Itasca (Headwaters)-Bemidji-Grand Rapids-Aitkin-Brainerd-Little Falls-St. Cloud
Total length: 562 miles

View listings along the Great River Road - Southern MN for:

**Things to Do**

LARK Toys and Carousel and Meadowlark Shops, Kellogg (507) 767-3387
Bunnell House Museum, Winona (507) 454-2723
Julius C Wilkie Steamboat Center, Winona (507) 454-1254
Valencia Performing Arts Academy, Winona (507) 453-5501
Red Wing Arts Association, Red Wing (651) 388-7569
Great River Bluffs State Park, Great River Bluffs State Park, Winona (507) 643-6849
Arrowhead Bluffs Museum, Wabasha (651) 565-3829
Frontenac State Park, Frontenac State Park, Frontenac (651) 345-3401
Wabasha County Museum, Lake City (651) 345-3987
National Eagle Center, Wabasha (651) 565-4989
Polish Cultural Institute, Winona (507) 454-3431
John Latsch State Park, Winona (507) 932-3007
Goodhue County Historical Society, Red Wing (651) 388-6024
St Mary's U of M Performance Center, Winona (507) 457-1715
Sheldon Theatre, Red Wing (800) 899-5759

Welcome to Minnesota's entertainment showcase! Red Wing's gloriously restored turn-of-the-century Sheldon Theatre showcases the best in arts and entertainment from Minnesota's heartland.
Festivals & Events

Here is a random sampling of matching items:

Apple Festival, La Crescent (507) 895-2800  9/13/01 through 9/16/01
Fall Festival of Arts, Red Wing (651) 385-5934  10/13/01 through 10/14/01
Treasure Island Resort & Casino, Pontiac Oakland Club International Car Show, Red Wing (952) 435-5748  7/18/01 through 7/21/01
American Queen Steamboat Docking, Red Wing (651) 385-5934  6/20/01, 7/4/01, 8/11/01, 9/27/01, 10/11/01, 10/25/01, 11/8/01
Goodview Days, Goodview (507) 454-3769  8/18/01 through 8/19/01
Christmas Lighting Ceremony, Red Wing (651) 385-5934  11/23/01
Fourth of July, Wabasha (651) 565-4158  7/4/01
Wild Wings Gallery Fall Festival, Lake City (651) 345-5355  9/15/01 through 9/16/01
Wabasha Oktoberfest Walk, Wabasha (651) 565-0329  10/13/01
Delta Queen Steamboat, Winona (507) 452-2272  9/30/01
Muddy River Rock-n-Roll MNSCS #5, Red Wing (651) 388-5358  7/1/01
Cherry Bomb Mountain Bike Race, Winona (507) 452-4228  7/15/01
National Eagle Center, Eagle Watch Season Opener, Wabasha (651) 565-4989  11/3/01 through 11/4/01
Delta Queen Steamboat Docking, Red Wing (651) 385-5934  9/28/01
Winona County Historical Society, Voices From the Past, Winona (507) 454-2723  10/13/01 through 10/14/01

The Arts

Winona State University, Winona (507) 457-0500
  The Good Doctor,  10/11/01 through 10/14/01
  International Rodrigo Festival,  11/11/01 through 11/18/01
  Disability Awareness,  10/17/01

Sheldon Theatre, Red Wing (800) 899-5759
  BeauSoleil Avec Michael Doucet, Red Wing  10/6/01
  Patty Larkin,  10/13/01
  Joe Juliano Band featuring Andy Baily,  9/7/01
  Ethnic Dance Theatre,  10/20/01
  Lon Chaney's Phantom of the Opera,  10/31/01

Concert in the Park, Red Wing (651) 388-7569  7/4/01 through 7/25/01
St Mary's U of M Performance Center, Winona, (507) 457-1715
  Five by Design's 'Radio Days',  11/2/01
  Rumblications,  10/11/01
  Inflatable Theatre,  10/17/01
  Ensemble Anonymus,  10/19/01
Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway
http://www2.exploreminnesota.com/index.asp?section=SCENICBYWAYS&id=2

The western third of the route showcases Minnesota's rich and rolling farmland. The eastern two-thirds of the route winds toward the Great River Road along the scenic Root River, a beautiful trout stream and canoe route, through spectacular hardwood-covered limestone bluffs. The Root River Trail offers 35 miles of fine biking and hiking along the river. This valley was untouched by the glacier and has weathered gradually over time to create a magnificent pastoral setting dotted with small towns, quaint and historic lodging places, a recreational bike and hiking trail.

For more info: http://www.bluffcountry.com (Historic Bluff Country)


View listings along the Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway for:

Things to Do

Historic Forestville, Preston (507) 765-2785
Visit an 1890s rural town and chat with costumed guides portraying actual residents.
Browse through the Meighen store and see the latest merchandise.

Lanesboro Historical Museum, Lanesboro (507) 467-2177
Eagle Bluff Environmental Learning Center, Lanesboro (507) 467-2437
Commonweal Theatre Company, Lanesboro (507) 467-2525
Spring Valley Methodist Church Museum, Spring Valley (507) 346-7659
1877 Peterson Station Museum, Peterson (507) 895-2551
Houston Nature Center, Houston (507) 896-HOOT
Forestville / Mystery Cave State Park, Forestville / Mystery Cave State Park, Preston (507) 352-5111

Preston Area Tourism, Preston (507) 765-2100
Peaceful, small town atmosphere, friendly, beautiful bluffs, winding river, quaint shops, wonderful dining and year around recreational activities make Preston the perfect getaway!

Lanesboro Visitor Center, Lanesboro (800) 944-2670
Visit beautiful, historic Lanesboro in southeastern Minnesota on the Root River Bike Trail! Enjoy biking, canoeing, fishing, hiking, shopping, antiquing, art galleries and live theatre!

Washburn-Zittleman House Museum, Spring Valley (507) 346-7659
Cornucopia Art Center, Lanesboro (507) 467-2446

Festivals & Events

Fall Fest, Preston (888) 845-2100 9/29/01
Hoedown Days, Houston (507) 896-3010 7/27/01 through 7/29/01
8/1/2001 28
Historic Forestville, Evening of Leisure, Preston (507) 765-2785 7/28/01, 9/1/01
Historic Forestville, 1899 Harvest Day, 9/29/01
Historic Forestville, Independence Day, 7/4/01
Wilder Fest, Spring Valley (507) 346-7476 8/17/01 through 8/19/01
Bluegrass Music Festival, Houston (507) 864-8109 5/18/01 through 5/20/01, 8/16/01 through 8/19/01
Downtown Christmas Open House, Lanesboro (800) 944-2670 11/17/01 through 11/18/01
City of Hokah 150th Celebration, Hokah (507) 894-4990 8/24/01 through 8/26/01
Root River Antique Engine & Tractor Show, Spring Valley (507) 754-5509 7/20/01 through 7/22/01

The Arts

Commonweal Theatre Company, - Live Radio, Lanesboro (800) 657-7025
  Over the Back Fence 5/20/01 through 9/2/01
  A Christmas Carol, 11/16/01 through 12/23/01
  Quilters, 5/18/01 through 9/9/01
  Twelfth Night, 7/20/01 through 10/28/01
  Art, 4/13/01 through 7/14/01
  A Moon for the Misbegotten, 9/14/01 through 11/11/01
**Apple Blossom Scenic Drive**
http://www2.exploreminnesota.com/index.asp?section=SCENICBYWAYS&id=10

Named for the many hillside apple orchards it winds through, the Apple Blossom Scenic Drive is a short but lovely drive in the bluffs of the Mississippi River Valley. Great River Bluffs State Park has camping and about 10 miles of trails through hardwood forests and hillside goat prairies, with several beautiful blufftop overlooks. Birdwatching is great along the Mississippi, and the old river holds just about every variety of game fish, too.

For more info: http://www.bluffcountry.com (Historic Bluff Country)

Dresbach-Dakota-Nodine-LaCrescent, 19 miles.

**Festivals & Events**

Applefest, La Crescent (507) 643-5139 9/13/01 through 9/16/01
Shooting Star Scenic Byway

This scenic byway includes four historic towns with examples of "prairie school" architecture, a state park, a designated wildflower area, and one of Minnesota's last remaining segments of native prairie and oak savanna. The narrow "strip prairie" is home to plant species such as big bluestem and Indian grass, prairie coneflower, blue flag iris, blazing star and showy goldenrod. Lake Louise State Park boasts the area's only lake, with camping, hiking trails, swimming and fishing.

LeRoy-Adams-Taopi-Rose Creek; 28 miles; Highway 56.

For more info: http://www.bluffcountry.com (Historic Bluff Country)

View listings along the Shooting Star Scenic Byway for:

Things to Do

Lake Louise State Park, Lake Louise State Park, Le Roy (507) 324-5249