



2013

# Horicon and Mayville Assessment



Wisconsin Department of  
Tourism Strategic Mission

The Wisconsin Department of  
Tourism's mission is to  
market the state as the  
Midwest's premiere travel  
destination for fun. By  
executing industry-leading  
marketing programs,  
providing reliable travel  
information and establishing  
strategic partnerships, we will  
play a significant role in  
delivering exceptional  
customer service and  
generating greater economic  
impact and jobs for  
Wisconsin.

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The Mayville-Horicon Assessment was conducted as a joint project between the Wisconsin Department of Tourism, Bureau of Industry Relations and Services and the Mayville Chamber of Commerce. The project was coordinated by Linda Turk, Executive Director of the Mayville Chamber of Commerce, and the Department of Tourism's Regional Tourism Specialist, David Spiegelberg.

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## **Mayville and Horicon, Wisconsin: Tourism Overview**

As gateway communities to the Horicon Marsh Wildlife Area, Mayville and Horicon have a long tradition of welcoming visitors and tourists. In addition to providing typical visitor services for lodging, dining, and shopping, the communities offer boat tours, paddle sport rentals, quality campgrounds, and a long list of seasonal events related to nature-based tourism. The Rock River which flows through both communities provides abundant opportunities for outdoor recreation and serves as a scenic backdrop for historic homes, unique downtown buildings, historic Main Streets, and boutique hotels.

The Horicon Marsh is the largest freshwater cattail marsh in the United States and has been designated as a “Wetland of International Importance” and a “Globally Important Bird Area.” The importance of this national and international nature attraction should be emphasized at every opportunity. It is a point of difference that is the envy of most destinations and regions. The recent announcement of expanded interpretive services at the visitor center will exponentially increase the visitor experience and allow both Mayville and Horicon to build on a nature-based platform for future development.

While the leisure traveler is extremely important to both Mayville and Horicon, business travelers to John Deere, Gleason Reel, Seneca Foods, and Mayville Engineering to name a few, add economic impact to the region. Quality lodging, entertainment and dining options play an important part of servicing the business traveler. When jobs are created and companies recruit for the best and brightest talent, quality of life and sense of place become a critical component in effective hiring.

Mayville and Horicon’s proximity to the urban centers of Milwaukee, Chicago, Rockford, Madison and the Fox Cities make the Horicon Marsh and both communities an easy and accessible destination. The growth in nature-based travel, the health and wellness segment of the industry and the need for “urban escapes” will benefit Mayville and Horicon’s tourism offerings. Yet, not unlike other destinations, further promotion and development is needed.

Developing and promoting an appealing portfolio of assets allows Mayville and Horicon to take greater advantage of tourism as the basis of the region’s economic development strategy. With this in mind, the key to success is to first determine what is different and special about these communities. Then, with the assistance of business partners, a strong vision, and the development of a strategic marketing plan, the tools are in place to promote the unique offerings that result in increased visitors and the supporting assets they require.

### **What Success Looks Like Here**

To effectively plan the tourism development strategy, it is necessary to bring together the right people who can plan what activities, events or attractions will bring in visitors and spending. The outcomes will set the stage for product growth and the platform for marketing plan development. It is important to answer the following questions:

- Who are your customers and what do they say is important to them?
- Do you have those assets and experiences or do you need to develop them?
- Is there a coordinated effort between your tourism and economic development programs?
- Are your stakeholders on board and do they understand the power of tourism and the contributions it makes to local and state economies?

## **Destination Assessment Process**

Communities that believe they can compete for visitors should be commended for the vision to diversify their economies. In terms of job growth, the Travel and Tourism industry is one of the fastest growing industries in the new economy. And, these are jobs that can very rarely be exported outside the borders of the Badger State, much less the nation.

The Wisconsin Department of Tourism offers tourism partners a process designed to find the best path for maximizing strengths, appeal to visitors, and the tools to further develop the impact of visitor spending on the local economy and grow jobs.

The process begins by engaging a municipality or an independent not-for-profit agency such as a Destination Marketing Organization (DMO), Convention & Visitors Bureau (CVB), Chamber of Commerce, Economic Development Council, Sports Commission or Arts Council. These entities have the resources to launch the process and the administrative ability to keep it on track.

### **1) Lead Organization/Municipality to Assign Task Force**

The first step in the Destination Assessment Process is to assign a Task Force to take the lead in the deliberations that will ultimately establish a framework for enhanced Destination Marketing and Development.

The Task Force should include hospitality-specific individuals, but other stakeholders in the community are vital as well. The Task Force should be made up of hoteliers, restaurateurs, retailers and attractions...but also individuals from the Arts Community, Agriculture, Finance, Healthcare, Media and Education. While every community is different, the optimum size for such a group is 13-20. This can be scaled back for very small destinations.

### **2) Task Force Gathers Perception Research Data**

The Destination Assessment Task Force embarks on a fact-finding mission to thoroughly understand how the community perceives itself and what visitors think. This two-pronged approach affirms that there is a base from which an effective tourism strategy can be launched and that the community would be supportive of welcoming more visitors.

The Department staff guides the Task Force through available primary marketing research, existing economic impact research and how to perform perception research through intercept surveys and online vehicles.

Once the data has been gathered, the Task Force reconvenes to analyze the findings and develop a case that increasing visitation to the community could significantly enhance the local economy and job growth.

### **3) Perform a Comprehensive Inventory of Destination Assets**

Probably the most important facet of a Destination Assessment is the compilation of a comprehensive inventory of assets. With a complete understanding of what the destination offers a visitor, the destination can maximize those

assets and plan for development of the missing pieces.

The goal is to identify every asset that a visitor to the community could find interesting enough to visit or utilize.

#### 4) Analyze all Research

Once the intelligence gathering has been completed by the Assessment Task Force, the analysis process begins and includes:

- Destination Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats

In addition, the Task Force performs an analysis of its competitors. From the list of competitors, the Task Force then assess whether their county wins, losses or draws in head-to-head competition. As every destination has several aspects of appeal to visitors, the Task Force breaks the comparisons into several experiences.

#### 5) Identification of Destination Vision

Once the community's compelling strengths have been identified and the research data analyzed, the Task Force identifies a Destination Vision to drive future initiatives. Short of developing a brand identity, this process establishes the goals toward which the destination will strive.

#### 6) Identification and Prioritization of Potential Destination-enhancing Development Projects

With a Destination Vision established, the Task Force can begin to identify and prioritize the types of initiatives that will propel the destination forward in its desire to expand its visitor economy.

## **Common Themes in Community Stakeholder Perceptions**

Most of the stakeholder input focused on outdoor recreation and the small town/main street attributes of the area. This is not surprising as these attributes are some of the most important overall image hot buttons for travelers as evidenced in primary Department of Tourism research. The challenge is to differentiate Mayville and Horicon's strengths from the competition. The first step is to find out what locals think. There were nearly 65 responses for a good representative sample. Following is a summary of that research:

### **Q: If you did not live here, what about the communities would encourage you to visit?**

The top 10 answers were:

- Horicon Marsh
- Downtown/Main Street
- The Audubon Inn
- Golf
- Audubon Days (Event)
- Outdoors
- Restaurants and Dining
- Special Events/Festivals
- The TAG Center (sports complex and pool)
- The Rock River

### **Q. From a visitor's perspective, what are the community's most attractive assets?**

The top ten answers were:

- Downtown/Main Street
- Horicon Marsh
- The Rock River
- Parks
- Outdoor/Nature
- People
- The TAG Center
- Events/Festivals
- The Audubon Inn
- City Pavilion

### **Q: What are the community's greatest weaknesses in being able to attract visitors?**

Overwhelmingly stakeholders felt that more downtown businesses and activities are needed in both communities. The poor appearance of some of the Main Street storefronts was noted by local residents. Residents stated that existing businesses need to be marketed and promoted better. There was also a desire to see more "non-outdoor" related businesses such as, coffee shops, boutiques, art/music venues, and other businesses that would attract and keep residents and visitors in the downtown area. The committee also recognized that more family-friendly and kids-based activities are needed, such as ice cream shops, coffee shops, movie theaters, etc.

The top ten answers were:

- The need for more downtown businesses
- Lack of downtown activities
- Poor appearances of some store fronts
- Lack of advertising the community's strengths and history
- The need for more "non-outdoor" related attractions
- Lack of coffee shops
- Limited dining options
- Lack of a grocery store (in Horicon)
- Lack of franchise lodging options
- Speeding ticket issues (Are civic leaders engaged?)

**Q: What additions would make your communities more attractive to visitors?**

Answers to this question mirrored those in the previous question with the need for more downtown businesses, the need for more boutiques/music/art, and more dining and attractions/activities in the downtowns.

Other respondents suggested:

- An increased number of events and festivals
- Better bike trails, bike lanes, and biking connectivity
- A developed and attractive River Walk
- The possibility of a John Deere factory tour

**Q: Knowing what you do about the economic impact of additional visitors to your community, do you support efforts to consider new ways to attract them?**

All respondents replied with an affirmative answer.

## Visitor Perception Research

### On Site/Data Based Surveys

→ A combination of 130 online and intercept surveys were completed. Respondents were from Beaver Dam, Mayville, Horicon, Fond du Lac, Greenfield, Eagle, Iron Ridge, Sullivan, Ripon, Hustiford, Darien, Wauwatosa, Crystal Lake (Illinois), Mt. Prospect (Illinois), and Chicago.

### Q: What about this community encouraged you to visit today?

- The Audubon Inn
- Family and Friends
- Horicon Marsh
- Hiking
- Bus tour
- Boat tour
- Past resident
- Cheese and Wine tour
- Driving by
- Camping

### Q: What are the communities' most attractive assets?

- Horicon Marsh
- Boat tours
- Friendly people
- Interesting old homes and buildings
- Main Street/small town charm
- The Audubon Inn
- Restaurants/Dining
- The Rock River
- Ledge Park (a prominent county campground and park)
- Music in the Park (Event)

### Q: What are the communities' greatest weaknesses in your eyes?

- Lack of a grocery store (in Horicon)
- Lack of attractions and downtown activities
- Lack of bike paths and ski trails
- No public access to the Rock River
- No canoe or kayak rental on the river
- Need for later business hours and businesses open daily
- Empty stores/businesses and its affect on the appearance of the downtown
- Lack of antique shops and other speciality shopping options
- Lack of evening entertainment (besides bars)

**Q: What addition to the communities would make it more likely that you'll return?**

- More shopping and retail (antiques, grocery, boutiques, etc.)
- More advertising and marketing of attractions and activities
- More businesses on Main Street
- More bike/ski trails
- Guided hikes/walks
- Additional restaurants/dining
- Variety of evening entertainment
- John Deere factory tours

## Destination Asset Summary

Local = Attracting local residents

Day Trip = Attracting people from short distances from around the area

Overnight Destination = Attracting overnight visitors

Nature-Based Attractions	Local	Day Trip	Overnight
<b>ATV Trails</b>			
<i>Wild Goose Trail</i>			X
<b>Bird Watching</b>			
<i>Horicon Marsh</i>			X
<i>Dodge County Parks</i>		X	
<b>Caves, Gorges, Grottos</b>			
<i>Ledge Park</i>			X
<b>Fall Foliage</b>			
<i>Hwy 67 Scenic Drive</i>		X	
<i>Horicon Marsh</i>		X	
<b>Environmental Programming</b>			
<i>Horicon Marsh</i>		X	
<i>Federal</i>		X	
<i>Marsh Haven</i>		X	
<b>Geological Formations</b>			
<i>Ledge Park</i>		X	
<b>Mountains, Cliffs, Hills</b>			
<i>Ledge Park</i>		X	
<b>Nature Trails</b>			
<i>Ziegler Park</i>	X		
<i>Horicon Marsh</i>		X	

<i>Wild Goose Trails</i>		x	
<i>Tour de Marsh - hike, bike, auto</i>		x	
<b>Natural Lookout Points</b>			
<i>Palmatory Lookout</i>	x		
<b>Protected Wetlands</b>			
<i>Horicon Marsh</i>			x
<b>Rivers, Streams and Waterways</b>			
<i>Horicon Marsh</i>			x
<i>Rock River</i>	x		
<i>Rock River Dams</i>	x		
<b>Wildlife Sanctuaries</b>			
<i>Horicon Marsh</i>			x
<b>Wilderness Areas</b>			
<i>Horicon Marsh</i>			x
<b>Wine Trails</b>			
<i>The Audubon Inn and Retail</i>		x	

<b>Recreation</b>	<b>Local</b>	<b>Day Trip</b>	<b>Overnight</b>
<b>Ball Parks / Tournaments</b>			
<i>Mayville hosts tournaments</i>		x	
<b>Bicycling</b>			
<i>Wild Goose Trail</i>		x	
<i>State and local roads</i>	x		
<i>Tour de Marsh Bike Event</i>		x	

<b>Bird Watching</b>			
<i>Horicon Marsh</i>			X
<b>Boat Rides</b>			
<i>Horicon Marsh Boat Tours</i>		X	
<b>Camping</b>			
<i>County Park System</i>			X
<i>Playful Goose</i>			X
<b>Canoeing</b>			
<i>Horicon Marsh Boat Tours</i>		X	
<i>Canoe and Kayak on the Rock</i>		X	
<i>Canoe Regatta</i>			X
<i>Paddle Horicon Marsh Event</i>		X	
<b>Geo-Caching</b>			
<i>Horicon Marsh</i>		X	
<b>Golf</b>			
<i>Mayville Golf Club</i>	X		
<i>Rock River Hills Golf Course and Restaurant</i>	X		
<b>Green Houses</b>			
<i>Village Flower Show</i>		X	
<i>Bennets Nursery</i>	X		
<i>Fox Den</i>	X		
<i>Ace Hardware</i>	X		
<i>Steinke Greenhouse</i>	X		
<b>Health Resorts / Spas</b>			
<i>Impressions Day Spa</i>	X		

<i>Reudebusch Building</i>	X		
<b>Hiking / Walking</b>			
<i>Horicon Marsh</i>		X	
<i>Wild Goose Trail</i>		X	
<i>Ziegler Park</i>	X		
<i>County Park System</i>		X	
<b>Hunting</b>			
<i>Horicon Marsh</i>	X		
<i>Private Land Owners</i>	X		
<i>Mayville &amp; Horicon Gun Club</i>	X		
<i>Goose Haven</i>	X		
<b>Marathons /Triathlons</b>			
<i>Horicon Huk Disc Golf &amp; Walking</i>	X		
<b>Picnicing</b>			
<i>Parks</i>	X		
<b>Regattas and Boat Races</b>			
<i>Canoe Races</i>			X
<i>Duck Races</i>			X
<b>Running</b>			
<i>5K</i>	X		
<b>Snow Skiing - Cross-Country</b>			
<i>Wild Goose Trail</i>		X	
<b>Snow Skiing - Snowboard</b>			
<i>Horicon Marsh - free snowshoes</i>		X	
<b>Snowmobiling</b>			

<i>Local trails</i>			X
<b>Swimming</b>			
<i>Horicon Aquatic Center</i>	X		
<i>TAG Center</i>	X		
<b>Tennis</b>			
<i>Courts in Horicon and Mayville</i>	X		

<b>Special Events</b>	<b>Local</b>	<b>Day Trip</b>	<b>Overnight</b>
<b>Agricultural Fairs</b>			
<i>Dairy Breakfast</i>	X		
<b>Antique Auto Show</b>			
<i>Mayville Car Show - Wednesdays</i>	X		
<i>Horicon Car Show - Wednesdays</i>	X		
<i>Antique &amp; Collectibles Show</i>			X
<i>Dodge County Antique Power Club</i>			X
<b>Arts, Crafts &amp; Hoppy Fairs</b>			
<i>Horicon - Sept</i>	X		
<i>Mayville - October</i>	X		
<b>Auto / Motorcycle Racing</b>			
<i>Dodge County Fairgrounds</i>		X	
<b>Culinary Fairs and Events</b>			
<i>Taste of Horicon - June 15th</i>	X		
<b>Dance &amp; Opera Productions</b>			
<i>Audubon Murder Mystery Dinners</i>	X		
<i>Marais Players - Mayville</i>	X		

<i>Children's Theater - July</i>	x		
<b>Environmental Festivals</b>			
<i>Horicon Marsh Bird Festival</i>			x
<i>Arch. Days - Marsh</i>		x	
<b>Farm Tours</b>			
<i>Dairy Breakfast</i>	x		
<b>Farmers' Market</b>			
<i>Horicon and Mayville Markets</i>	x		
<b>Flea Markets</b>			
<i>Citywide Garage Sales – multi-communities</i>	x		
<b>Harvest Celebrations</b>			
<i>Waldvogels Farm</i>		x	
<b>Hay Rides</b>			
<i>Waldvogels Farm</i>		x	
<i>Eberel's Farm</i>	x		
<b>Holiday Celebrations &amp; Festivals</b>			
<i>Heritage Festival - Mayville</i>	x		
<i>Audubon Days</i>			x
<i>Satterlee Clark - Christmas Open House</i>	x		
<b>Home Tours</b>			
<i>Walking Tours</i>		x	
<i>Satterlee Clark - Christmas Open House</i>	x		
<i>Soloman Juneau House - Theresa</i>	x		
<b>Local Theatre</b>			
<i>Audubon Murder Mystery Dinners</i>	x		

<i>Marais Players - Mayville</i>	x		
<i>Children's Theater - July</i>	x		
<b>Livestock Exhibitions</b>			
<i>County Fair</i>		x	
<b>Music Festivals and Concerts</b>			
<i>Mayville and Horicon - Music in the Park</i>	x		
<i>Lions Club Polka Dancing</i>		x	
<i>County Dances - Mayville Park Pavilion</i>	x		
<b>Parades</b>			
<i>Memorial Day</i>	x		
<i>July 4th</i>	x		
<i>Heritage Festival - Mayville</i>	x		
<i>Audubon Days</i>			x
<b>Sports Events</b>			
<i>Baseball - Softball</i>		x	
<i>Idea - Historic Baseball</i>			
<i>American Legion State Tourn.</i>		x	
<b>Tractor Pulls</b>			
<i>Theresa Tractor Pull</i>		x	
<i>Dodge County Fair</i>		x	
<b>Other Attractions</b>	<b>Local</b>	<b>Day Trip</b>	<b>Overnight</b>
<b>Antiquing</b>			
<i>Corner Tattoo and Treasure</i>	x		
<i>Bethasda Thrift Store - largest in the county</i>		x	
<i>Artisan Colonies</i>	x		

<i>Horse Paintings</i>	x		
<b>Bed &amp; Breakfasts</b>			
<i>Honeybee Inn - Horicon</i>			x
<i>Rivers Bend Inn - Mayville</i>			x
<b>Convention / Conference Facility</b>			
<i>The Audubon Inn Meeting Room</i>	x		
<i>Horicon Marsh Education Center</i>	x		
<i>Mayville Pavilion</i>	x		
<i>Mayville Golf Course</i>	x		
<i>Rock River Hills Golf Club</i>	x		
<i>American Legion - Mayville &amp; Horicon</i>	x		
<b>Culinary Offerings / Local Foods &amp; Wines</b>			
<i>The Audubon Inn</i>			x
<i>Marsibilio's Trattoria</i>		x	
<i>Hwy 33 - Wine &amp; Beer Tasting</i>	x		
<i>Confections for Any Occasion by Joel</i>		x	
<i>Old Fashion Foods - Cheese factory</i>		x	
<i>Widmer's Cheese Factory</i>		x	
<i>Ice Cream Station - Horicon</i>	x		
<i>Bugsy's Best - Cheese, Sausage, Wine, Ice Cream</i>	x		
<i>Dining - Pubs &amp; Taverns</i>	x		
<i>The Pub - Known for bullhead</i>		x	
<i>Rock River Tap - Horicon</i>	x		
<i>Ginger's Hideaway</i>	x		
<i>Marsh Inn</i>	x		

<i>Danny Boys</i>	X		
<b>Dining - Café and Coffee</b>			
<i>Celtic Café</i>	X		
<i>The Trailer</i>	X		
<i>Back Street Café</i>	X		
<b>Dining - Family Restaurants</b>			
<i>Mother's Day</i>	X		
<i>Sherwoods</i>	X		
<i>Back Street</i>	X		
<i>Iron Ridge Inn</i>		X	
<b>Dining - Ethnic</b>			
<i>Celtic</i>	X		
<i>Don Ramones</i>	X		
<i>New China</i>	X		
<i>Marsibilio's Trattoria</i>		X	
<i>Chens</i>	X		
<i>Mother's Day - Greek</i>	X		
<b>Dining - Organic or Local Foods</b>			
<i>Marsibilio's Trattoria</i>		X	
<i>The Audubon Inn</i>		X	
<b>Dining - Fine Dining</b>			
<i>Beaumont Restaurant - The Audubon Inn</i>		X	
<b>Dining - Other</b>			
<i>Subway</i>	X		
<i>McDonalds</i>	X		

<i>Dominos</i>	x		
<b>Hotel - Full Service</b>			
<i>The Audubon Inn</i>			x
<i>Iron Ridge Inn</i>			
<b>Hotel - Historic</b>			
<i>The Audubon Inn</i>			x
<b>Industrial Plant Tours</b>			
<i>John Deere</i>		x	
<i>Widmer's Cheese</i>		x	
<b>Hotel &amp; Lodging</b>			
<i>Mayville Inn</i>			x
<i>Royal Oaks Motel</i>		x	
<b>Movie / TV Locations</b>			
<i>Tom Cruise &amp; Paul Newman – The Audubon Inn</i>			x
<i>Monster House - Rob Schrab</i>	x		
<b>Murals / Outdoor Art</b>			
<i>Subway</i>	x		
<i>Horicon City Sign - Bronze Heron</i>	x		
<i>Pete Husting Baseball Player Statue</i>	x		
<b>Railroad Depots/Rides</b>			
<i>Kekoskee Depot</i>	x		
<b>Retreats &amp; Learning Centers</b>			
<i>Horicon Marsh</i>		x	
<b>Scenic Highways</b>			
<i>Hwy 67 Scenic Drive</i>		x	

<b>Shopping &amp; Retail Experiences</b>			
<i>Carriage Haus Shops</i>	x		
<i>Blue Heron Landing</i>		x	
<i>Knitty Gritty</i>		x	
<i>Loose Ends Yarn Shop</i>		x	
<i>Confections for Any Occasions by Joel</i>		x	
<i>Flyway Gift Shop</i>		x	
<i>Natural Way</i>		x	
<i>Old Time Food</i>	x		
<i>Comforts for Home - Horicon</i>	x		
<b>U-Pick Farms/Orchards</b>			
<i>Zastrow's Strawberries</i>		x	
<i>Propst Tree Farm - Christmas Tree Farms</i>		x	
<b>Wedding Chapels</b>			
<i>Spring Brook</i>			x
<i>Honey Bee Inn</i>			x
<i>The Audubon Inn</i>			x
<i>Mayville Golf Club</i>	x		
<b>Biggest/Smallest</b>			
<i>Horicon Marsh - Diversity and Largest</i>			x
<i>The Audubon Inn - Most Beautiful Bar in WI</i>			x
<i>Honey Bee Inn - Most Romantic Inn in US</i>			x

**Mayville and Horicon's Top 5 Assets - Ranked in Importance by the Task Force:**

1. The Horicon Marsh Wildlife Area
2. Events and Festival (Bird Festival, Audubon Days, Autumn Art)
3. Boutique Lodging (The Audubon Inn, Honey Bee Inn, Rivers Bend Bed & Breakfast)
4. Horicon Marsh Boat Tours
5. Ledge Park (a prominent county park and campground)

**Strengths, Weaknesses Opportunities, Threats**

<p><u>Strengths</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tourism potential for the Downtown/Main Street</li> <li>• Business from Horicon Marsh</li> <li>• Small Town Charm</li> <li>• Proximity to large urban markets</li> <li>• Outdoor/Natural Activities</li> <li>• Some select dining options*</li> <li>• Golf Courses</li> </ul> <p><i>*Existing dining was identified as a strength, but the committee wants to see more development.</i></p>	<p><u>Weaknesses</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of shopping/retail/coffee shop</li> <li>• Lack of downtown activities – music, theaters, nightlife, and outdoor swimming pool</li> <li>• Business Hours (closed Sunday and Monday)</li> <li>• Lack of family activities</li> <li>• Some empty storefronts/appearances</li> <li>• Lack of outdoor dining</li> <li>• Lack of a grocery store in Horicon</li> <li>• Lack of marketing/advertising</li> <li>• Lack of volunteers/champions</li> </ul>
<p><u>Opportunities</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expansion of shopping and retail (boutiques, wine/specialty foods/coffee, gifts, craft beer)</li> <li>• Bike, canoe, kayak rentals</li> <li>• High end antique shops</li> <li>• More biking, hiking, ski trails</li> <li>• Development of a riverfront</li> <li>• Grow existing events</li> <li>• Promotion and sale of local foods</li> <li>• Outdoor dining</li> <li>• Strategic marketing plan to grow visitor awareness</li> <li>• Cross promotion/business cooperation</li> <li>• Education/Resource – Economic Development Grants</li> </ul>	<p><u>Threats</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Temporary closure of Hwy 28</li> <li>• Temporary closure of the bridge in Horicon</li> <li>• Lack of funding for strategic marketing</li> <li>• Lack of local volunteers/champions for events</li> <li>• Lack of community/resident involvement in tourism</li> <li>• Resistance/apathy by local elected officials for tourism growth</li> <li>• Fear and resistance to change</li> </ul>

**Competitive Overview: Win, Lose, Draw**

This is an exercise to analyze how Mayville/Horicon fares against the competition (as defined by the Task Force) by reflecting on the assets as being better, the same or inferior.

Mayville/Horicon competitive market:

**Waupun**

<b>Mayville/Horicon</b>	<b>Win</b>	<b>Lose</b>	<b>Draw</b>
Horicon Marsh	x		
Events		x	
Audubon Inn/Honey Bee Inn	x		
Horicon Marsh Boat Tours	x		
Ledge Park – Camping			x

Mayville/Horicon competitive market:

**Warrens**

<b>Mayville/Horicon</b>	<b>Win</b>	<b>Lose</b>	<b>Draw</b>
Horicon Marsh	x		
Events		x	
Audubon Inn/Honey Bee Inn	x		
Horicon Marsh Boat Tours	x		
Ledge Park – Camping		x	

Mayville/Horicon competitive market:

**Cedarburg**

<b>Mayville/Horicon</b>	<b>Win</b>	<b>Lose</b>	<b>Draw</b>
Horicon Marsh	x		
Events		x	
Audubon Inn/Honey Bee Inn		x	
Horicon Marsh Boat Tours	x		
Ledge Park – Camping	x		

Mayville/Horicon competitive market:

**Delafield**

<b>Mayville/Horicon</b>	<b>Win</b>	<b>Lose</b>	<b>Draw</b>
Horicon Marsh	x		
Events	x		
Audubon Inn/Honey Bee Inn			x
Horicon Marsh Boat Tours	x		
Ledge Park – Camping	x		

Mayville/Horicon competitive market:

**Watertown**

<b><i>Mayville/Horicon</i></b>	<b><i>Win</i></b>	<b><i>Lose</i></b>	<b><i>Draw</i></b>
Horicon Marsh	x		
Events			x
Audubon Inn/Honey Bee Inn	x		
Horicon Marsh Boat Tours	x		
Ledge Park – Camping			x

Mayville/Horicon competitive market:

**Beaver Dam**

<b><i>Mayville/Horicon</i></b>	<b><i>Win</i></b>	<b><i>Lose</i></b>	<b><i>Draw</i></b>
Horicon Marsh	x		
Events	x		
Audubon Inn/Honey Bee Inn	x		
Horicon Marsh Boat Tours	x		
Ledge Park – Camping	x		

## TOURISM OPPORTUNITIES SUMMARY

RANK: TOPIC	RATING: EASY, MEDIUM, DIFFICULT	TIMELINE FOR COMPLETION:	COMMENTS/CONCERNS:	OWNERSHIP:
1. Store fronts and retail space	Difficult	Start ASAP with a goal of full occupancy in 5-10 years.	Ongoing effort. Funding and bricks & mortar grants are key. Continue to provide resources to landlords and engage them in regular conversation about investing in their real estate.	Main Street Chambers of Commerce Discover Dodge Tourism Economic Development
2. Packages/ Co Op/ Cross Promotions	Medium	1 year	Start immediately. All tourism players should identify one or two projects to start with.	Chamber of Commerce Discover Dodge Tourism
3. Marketing plan	Medium	1 Year	Start immediately with development of a strategic marketing plan. Tactics will follow.	Chamber of Commerce Discover Dodge Tourism
4. Education and resources for community development	Easy	1 Year	Revisit all of the Dept of Tourism's resources. Identify resources from Main Street, Econ Dev, UW Extension, etc.	Main Street Chambers of Commerce Discover Dodge Tourism
5. Outdoor dining	Medium	1 Year	This item is a current agenda item and is currently being reviewed by the city. Remain engaged with city officials.	Local business owners City government
6. Bike and paddle sport rentals	Difficult	3 Years	Look at successful operations in other communities. Look for entrepreneurs. Small Business Association resources and start up business grants.	Chamber of Commerce Discover Dodge Tourism Local residents Local entrepreneurs
7. Event growth	Difficult	3 Years	Lack of volunteers and champions is a problem. Engage community in discussion about importance of tourism events. JEM grants to grow events.	Chamber of Commerce Civic Groups Local Residents
8. Develop a river front walkway	Difficult	5+ Years	A feasibility plan will have to be developed. Funding, construction, maintenance, etc. will have to be discussed. Look at other successful communities as benchmarks.	City governments Local residents

## Destination Vision Summary

What is a destination? A destination is essentially the ending point for any trip. There are as many different kinds of destinations as there are people to visit them. The important point is that you know who you are and what kind of destination assets you have that will appeal to your visitors and potential visitors.

When asked “what does a perfect tourism destination look like?”, the committee responded with the following items:

- Increased number of informed visitors and customers (strategic marketing plan).
- Full storefronts and thriving businesses on Main Street and in the downtown.
- Attractive facades on buildings and curb appeal in the downtown.
- A variety of family-friendly evening activities and entertainment.
- Businesses that excel in providing excellent customer service with all stakeholders acting as tourism ambassadors for the area.

The committee was asked about short-term and long-term goals. A vision for 1 year, 3 years, and 5+ years:

**October 2014:** Outdoor dining will be a new draw for visitors, business people, and local residents in both Mayville and Horicon in 2014. Ideally, the addition of outdoor dining as a business opportunity will increase the number of restaurants and dining establishments to include coffee shops and specialty foods. Outdoor dining may also increase the number of evening activities available in the downtowns and on Main Street. *(Note: The outdoor dining ordinance is currently being reviewed by the city. There is a strong possibility that it will pass).*

A strategic marketing plan will be created. The outcome may be a comprehensive printed tourism publication, website, and other marketing tools that will highlight both Mayville’s and Horicon’s numerous activities that complement a visit to the Horicon Marsh. By following a marketing plan, both communities will take advantage of programs, tools, and initiatives that create and improve tourism awareness. Customer service, knowledge of the communities tourism assets, partnerships, cross promotions, and co op advertising may all be incorporated into a plan for advancing and improving the tourism product.

Great signage will highlight the Horicon Marsh and the historic downtowns. The result will direct people where to go, stay, and play in both towns and the surrounding area.

**October 2017:** Local businesses, properties, and public areas are renovated and remodeled through a citywide beautification plan. All amenities will exceed customer expectations. Discussions and planning will begin for the development of a river walk in both communities.

At least 50% of downtown storefronts and business space will be occupied with a variety of

businesses (including additional dining, coffee shops, boutiques, music/art venues, and evening entertainment options). The downtowns will also become more family-friendly with businesses that appeal to all age groups.

Both communities will grow existing events and develop new events for the downtowns and surrounding area. Many of these events will be tied to the nature-based tourism that takes place at the Horicon Marsh. Events will be based on customer research (motivations for travel) and staged regularly during all four seasons.

The new multi-million dollar interpretative displays at the Horicon Marsh International Education Center will increase visitation to the Marsh, thus providing both Mayville and Horicon with the opportunity to draw more customers into their downtowns.

New businesses in the downtown will offer both bike rental and paddle sport rentals to the outdoor enthusiast who visit the Horicon Marsh. Bike trail and water trail maps and resources will be created and available to promote the area's existing trails system.

**October 2019 and Looking Ahead:** With almost 100% storefront occupancy and the downtown beautification plan completed, both communities will have thriving downtown business environments. The River Walks will increase visitor and resident activity in each town. The River Walk will be part of a larger expanded water trail and bike trail system. The new opportunities at the Horicon Marsh Education Center, new downtown businesses, a variety of activities, and small town charm will all be promoted through stakeholder cooperation and a comprehensive marketing plan.

## **Destination Vision Recommendations**

### **Recommendation #1: Think regionally and embrace your tourism lure.**

The Mayville Chamber of Commerce, Horicon Chamber of Commerce, and Discover Dodge Tourism should partner to create a unified message for promoting the area. Think "Horicon Marsh Country" rather than the individual communities. This assessment project clearly identified the importance of the Horicon Marsh Wildlife Area to the area's tourism economy. The surveys show that most of your visitors are coming to the area to experience the Horicon Marsh. The Horicon Marsh is the draw, but visitors will naturally be drawn to Mayville and Horicon for secondary activities (dining, shopping, lodging, and other activities). The Horicon Marsh Education Center will further develop their interpretive displays in the coming years, and visitation is expected to increase significantly. Prepare your communities for this increase in visitation and opportunity. Push a regional unified message out to key markets once a strategic marketing plan is developed.

**Recommendation #2: Create a strategic marketing plan before investing time and money on specific tactics.**

While the committee wants to see a comprehensive printed guide produced, a strategic marketing plan will identify all communication channels for promotion and advertising. A marketing plan will further define, refine, and build on the findings of this assessment project. More robust information about market research, target markets, product development, promotional tools, budgets, and tracking will come out of a formal marketing plan.

**Recommendation #3: Develop a “First Impressions” program for your downtowns and Main Streets.**

- Remove any debris and unwanted eye sores from downtown/Main Street.
- Keep downtown buildings painted and tidy.
- Consider investing in landscaping and flower planters as an added buffer between vehicle and pedestrian activity.
- Ask residents and business people what businesses they would like to see in the vacant storefronts. Consider tools and programs for gathering input.
- Consider “Phantom Galleries” for artwork in vacant storefront windows . Possibly focus on art work that promotes your lure (birds, nature, wildlife, etc. Think about subjects related to the Horicon Marsh).
- Invest in welcome and directional signage.
- Consider official membership in the Wisconsin Main Street program or Connect Community Program.

A strong component of Mayville and Horicon’s development vision should focus on improving their downtowns, the business climate, and the number and variety of business and retail opportunities. The heartbeat of small towns is found in its people and in the vitality of its downtown. Create a “gathering place.” Keep in mind, if the locals don’t want to hang out downtown, likely neither will visitors. People like intimate settings. Adding outdoor dining options is a perfect first-step in creating a “gathering place.”

Focus on the 10-10-10 “rule of critical mass”<sup>1</sup>. According to Roger Brooks, in just three lineal blocks, you must have a minimum of ten places that serve food. Examples include a soda fountain, bistro, café, bakery, coffee shop or restaurant to name a few. The second ten are destination retail specialty shops and might include art galleries, wine shops, book or antique stores. And finally, ten places open after 6:00 p.m. Modify this rule to meet your needs with 3-3-3 Mayville/Horicon Rule. Start small, meet your goals and expand from there.

**Recommendation #4: Signage.**

Identify ways to improve signage from the Horicon Marsh to and from the communities of Mayville and Horicon. Work with city, county, state, and federal agencies to maximize any and all opportunities for attractive and useful signage. The Department of Tourism has comprehensive information available about various signage programs.

**Recommendation #5: Create a “Tourism Ambassador” program for businesses and residents.**

First impressions include aesthetically pleasing additions and improvements to your downtowns

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<sup>1</sup> Destination Development Inc. Amazing Facts About Downtowns, June 2, 2011

and Main Streets. Consider your human capital, such as your commitment to customer service and knowledgeable residents. Most people think they provide exceptional customer service, but truth be told, this is not always the case. Work with your Regional Tourism Specialist to craft customer service training that meets your needs.

The visitor survey suggests that most of your guests are coming from outside the area. Are you making sure residents and local business people know everything there is to do in the community so their guests can experience it all? Essentially, local residents should become your best sales people.

- Educate residents on the depth of tourism and what it means to your community.
- Host “Knowing Mayville/Horicon/The Marsh” workshops that highlights all tourism assets in the area. Videos, websites, visitor guides, maps, and other resources are all valuable tools for learning about tourism offerings in the area.
- Use your inventory of tourism assets to create “top 10 lists,” activity based itineraries, and resource books for the front-line staff.

**Recommendation #6: Grow existing events and create new events.**

The Horicon Marsh area has a number of existing successful events – Horicon Marsh Bird Festival, Audubon Days, and Autumn Art on the Marsh. Consider using the Department of Tourism’s JEM Grant Program to grow and expand the marketing of these events. Consider pairing these events with “micro-events” in the downtowns – i.e., wine-tasting at the Audubon Inn and Honeybee Inn; cheese tasting at Old Fashion Cheese or Widmer’s Cheese; music at various dining establishments; or sidewalk sales at downtown retail establishments. Use the Department of Tourism’s “Cross Activity Sets” research and “Travel Motivator” research to create new events. Consider how the JEM grant program can assist.

**Recommendation #7: Develop packages and itineraries and cross promote your key tourism assets.**

The Horicon Marsh Wildlife Area is your primary lure. Consider combining this lure with other key tourism assets. As an example, create a package that includes a Horicon Marsh “experience” (Horicon Marsh Boat Tours), lodging option (Audubon Inn, Honeybee Inn, River Bend Inn), and a dining experience (Marsibilio’s Trattoria). Promote this package through the Department of Tourism’s Co Op Advertising Program or similar programs. Develop additional packages to include special events, recreational activities (biking, camping, paddling, skiing, golfing, etc.) and different seasons. Itineraries take the guess work and home work away from the visitor. Consider creating itineraries for different interests (culinary, silent sport, art, shopping, children, etc.).

**Recommendation #8: Don’t ignore the growth in health and wellness in the travel and tourism industry.**

Mayville and Horicon should pay special attention to the consumer’s “need” for vacation time, urban escapes, and options for healthy and stress-free destinations. The “escape to nature” experience that can be found at the Horicon Marsh Wildlife Area can be a valuable asset to both communities. The wildlife, walking trails, paddle sport activities, local food, and rest-and-relaxation assets that exist in the area can offer visitors the opportunity to rejuvenate and disconnect from their busy lives. Mayville and Horicon’s proximity to urban markets offer the opportunity for tourism development, not only as a nature destination, but also a “natural escape.”

**Recommendation #9: Develop a River Walk and expand the existing trail systems.**

Work with the city governments, economic development corporations, and Main Street programs to identify funding and resources for the construction of River Walks in both communities. Grant dollars may be available for planning and construction through federal, state, and non-profit organizations. Consider looking at success stories from communities with established River Walks (San Antonio, Texas; Wisconsin Dells; etc.).

Engage the DNR State Trails Coordinator in conversation about funding for additional hiking, biking, and water trails. Speak with the Wisconsin Bike Federation about a comprehensive bike plan for the county. Continue to work with the Rock River Trail Initiative about cataloging and marketing the area's trail network. The Department of Tourism has information and studies about the economic impact of trails and the growth in the silent sports market.

**Recommendation #10: Examine what secondary niche markets may be appropriate for development.**

Given the strong primary lure and essentially the cornerstone of the region's brand (Horicon Marsh), research what appropriate secondary markets would complement the nature-based travel niche. Given the contents of this assessment, the destination weddings market may be a good starting point. This would be contained in your marketing plan, but asset development may be necessary (florist, catering, photographers).

Other Destination Development Resources:

1. Wisconsin Department of Tourism qualitative and quantities research
2. University of Wisconsin Extension toolkit for Community Development
3. 2014 Governor's Conference on Tourism where Roger Brooks will be a featured speaker