



Richland Center Destination Assessment Executive Summary Report



Summer 2018

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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Richland Center, Wisconsin

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Richland Center, Wisconsin: Overview

The City of Richland Center, Wisconsin is located on Hwy 14 between Madison and La Crosse. The City is the proud home of industrial, retail, agricultural, and medical enterprises. The industrial parks are home to major businesses specializing in metal machining, food products, transportation, and packaging. Downtown Richland Center, the Historic District (National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) 1987) offers unique shopping and business opportunities. Richland Center offers families a safe and scenic environment to raise children, with lovely neighborhoods, parks and lakes and community events including music and festivals in the summer.

The A.D. German Warehouse, said to have been designed in 1915 by Frank Lloyd Wright, is in Richland Center where Wright was born in 1867. This building is one of Wright's architectural gems listed on the National Register of Historic Places in Wisconsin. It is the only warehouse designed by Wright and was built during his "organic" or "natural" period (1911-1924) which also included the famous Imperial Hotel in Tokyo and Midway Gardens in Chicago.

Richland Center is the County Seat of Richland County which was established in 1842. The county now has an estimated population of 18,052.

Richland Center is surrounded by 267 miles of Class 1 and Class 2 trout streams that twist and bend through the Wisconsin countryside. These cold-water streams produce such good fish that the Department of Natural Resources uses the trout from these waters to stock streams across the state.

Local Volunteers and Organizations have been busy improving the trails around the Pine River Recreational Trail and cleaning up the Pine River making it an outdoor recreational experience. There are several ports along the Pine River to canoe or kayak. The Rockbridge stretch of river is a wooded area with many rock outcroppings, deep pools, and Grade A Trout Fishing. The Richland Center stretch is a slower stretch of river where you can see the town from a whole different angle. This is a stretch for tubing, and a great spot for learning to kayak. This water route is approximately an hour and a half trip straight through or there are stops along the way to stop and rest. Barrier free accessible ports are also located at various locations along the route.

Richland County Economic Impact Data 2017

Ranked #65 / 72 Counties

| Direct Visitor Spending | | | Total Business Sales | | | Employment | | |
|---------------------------|--------|--------|------------------------------|--------|--------|------------|------|--------|
| Millions | | % | Millions | | % | Total | | % |
| 2016 | 2017 | Change | 2016 | 2017 | Change | 2016 | 2017 | Change |
| \$19.6 | \$19.9 | 1.33% | \$33.2 | \$33.9 | 2.05% | 317 | 312 | -1.43% |
| Total Labor Income | | | State and Local Taxes | | | | | |
| Millions | | % | Millions | | % | | | |
| 2016 | 2017 | Change | 2016 | 2017 | Change | | | |
| \$6.6 | \$6.6 | -.53% | \$2.3 | \$2.3 | .18% | | | |

Richland Center History

Richland Center was founded in 1851 by Ira Sherwin Hazeltine, a native of Andover, Vermont. Hazeltine was drawn to the site because of its abundant water power, fertile prairies, and its proximity to the geographical center of Richland County. Hazeltine offered to donate land to the county if Richland Center was voted the county seat. In 1852 the Wisconsin Legislature formally declared Richland Center as the seat of justice for Richland County. The present Richland County courthouse was built at Richland Center in 1889.

In 1876, a narrow-gauge railroad branch opened to connect Richland Center with the Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul Railroad at Lone Rock, Wisconsin, providing an outlet for the town's commerce. The line was originally constructed with maple rails, but it was rebuilt as a standard gauge iron railway in 1880. On October 8, 1882, the town's railway depot was destroyed when an early morning fire ignited two kegs of gunpowder stored inside, causing an explosion that tore the roof from the building and scorched several nearby rail cars. Another passenger depot built in 1909 still stands in Richland Center, and it today serves as a visitor center for the community.

Richland Center became an important location for the women's suffrage movement in Wisconsin after Laura Briggs James, Julia Bowen, and other residents founded the Richland Center Woman's Club in early 1882. The club quickly became the largest suffrage group in the state and was influential in organizing the movement throughout Wisconsin. Susan B. Anthony visited Richland Center in 1886. Later, Laura James' daughter Ada James became influential in the movement, helping to create the Political Equality League in 1909 and advocating for women's rights, pacifism, birth control, and prohibition.

Frank Lloyd Wright was born at Richland Center in 1867. The A. D. German Warehouse, completed in 1921, is the only building designed by Wright in the city and is an early example of his Mayan Revival style.

The Richland Center City Hall and Auditorium was built in 1911-1912. This was the first auditorium in Wisconsin created by combining a theatre and municipal offices and operated by a municipality. There are twelve dressing rooms and seats for nearly 1,000 people. It was described as the finest show house between Chicago and Minneapolis. The building was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1980.

Known today as University of Wisconsin-Richland, the present campus opened in 1967 as the Richland Branch Campus of the Wisconsin State University-Platteville. With the 1972 merger of the University of Wisconsin and State University Systems, the campus became part of the University of Wisconsin Center System and was known as UW Center-Richland, until 1983 when the institution became known as the University of Wisconsin Centers. In 1997, the name of the institution was changed to the University of Wisconsin Colleges and the campus name to UW-Richland.



What Does Success Look 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 appeal to visitors and increase expenditures. The outcome of such a process sets the stage for product growth and establishes 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 development necessary to increase 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 Corporation, 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 have some individuals with hospitality-specific backgrounds, but other stakeholders in the community are vital as well. The Task Force should be made up of hoteliers, restaurateurs, retailers and attractions; and, individuals from the arts community, agriculture, finance, healthcare, manufacturing, 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) Lead Organization Gathers Perception Research Data

The lead organization 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 lead organization 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 convenes 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 entire 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 community 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.



Bike Trails in Richland Center

Visitor, Resident and Stakeholder Surveys

Richland Center Destination Assessment Survey Summary

Common Themes in Resident and Stakeholder Perceptions

The challenge is to differentiate Richland Center's strengths from the competition. The first step is to find out what locals think. There were 40 responses recorded. Further sampling and support from the local community is needed and should be revisited.

- ***90% of Residents and Stakeholders commented on the outdoor beauty and natural assets of the area as a top strength.***
- ***100% of Residents and Stakeholders surveyed support finding ways to grow tourism in Richland Center as a means to positive economic impact and workforce growth***

Common Themes in Visitor Perceptions

Visitors were approached at events, attractions, and businesses in Richland Center during a 9-month period, from October 2017 to June 2018. Survey results were also compared to the responses of a previous survey conducted in 2014 and proved to be very similar. Approximately 65 surveys were completed in 2017-2018, with 132 completed in 2014. The visitor perceptions set the stage for community development and regionalism.

- ***50% of Visitors surveyed were staying in town overnight on their way to another destination***
- ***25% of Visitors were in the area for events (tractor pulls, music events, Frank Lloyd Wright tour, Wright of Spring)***
- ***Many commented they did know about things to do in Richland Center***
- ***Of those who did mention activities, the most mentioned tourism asset was the Pine River (fishing, kayaking, canoeing)***



Fishing in Richland County

Resident and Stakeholder Survey Responses

The following is representative of the answers that were captured during the survey process:

1) If you did not live here, what about this community would encourage you to visit?

- The landscape, the hills, the trees
- Natural beauty, rolling hills
- We have amazing natural beauty with rolling hills and rock formations. Trout fishing, Pine River, and our parks are awesome.
- Outdoor activities – bike, canoe, fly fishing, UW concerts, outdoor music and events, parks and trails
- Beautiful hills and parks
- River, hills, fishing

2) From a visitor's perspective, what are this community's most attractive assets?

- Small town atmosphere, rural vistas
- Nature
- Beautiful hills and valleys
- Natural outdoor beauty, rivers, bluffs
- Bike trails, hiking and biking trails, Pine River, kayaking, camping, beautiful scenery
- Natural beauty, rolling hills

3) What are this community's greatest weaknesses in being able to attract visitors?

- Places to stay, things to do, lack of promotion of what we do have
- Restaurants, retail, not enough social events
- Not enough downtown retail and restaurants
- It is difficult to know where to find and access outdoor areas and activities. Once people get here there are not enough amenities to keep them here
- Lack of shopping, too many service businesses downtown, prior storefront locations being used as storage.
- No evening entertainment, lack of shopping
- Curb appeal downtown

4) What addition to the community would make it more attractive to visitors?

- Better customer service and attitude toward visitors from locals
- Having residents make visitors feel welcome
- Better restaurants
- Better signage of where things are, including trails.
- Need better website to promote the town
- Businesses open weekends and nights
- Better variety of stores, a supper club, more performing arts events and venues
- Remove 2-hour parking limit
- Fill Main/Court Street buildings with shops
- Expand Frank Lloyd Wright opportunity

5) 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 to town...and why or why not?

- Yes, we need to grow both our workforce and visitor spending
- Yes, we need to grow our town now or we will become a lost town with no hope
- Yes, I've lived here 50 years, love the town, we need new residents and visitors
- Yes, not only could it increase revenue and support local businesses and entrepreneurs, but it will also draw people and business to relocate here
- Yes, when people come here to visit everyone benefits – motels, restaurants, gas stations, campgrounds. We need to give financial incentives to new stores, but not duplicate what we have.
- Yes

6) If you answered “no,” what is your biggest concern regarding additional visitors?

- No responses



Kayaking on the Pine River

Visitor Survey Responses

The following is representative of the answers that were captured during the survey process:

1) What about this community encouraged you to visit today?

- Just spending the night on my way to La Crosse
- Here for the tractor pulls, staying at hotel
- I work here, live in Madison
- Fishing on the river, staying at campground in Muscoda
- Here for tour of Frank Lloyd Wright building, staying in Mineral Point
- Meeting at University of Wisconsin, staying at hotel in town
- Kayaking on the Pine River today, going to tractor pulls tonight
- Truck and tractor pulls
- Music fest
- Staying at Ramada, on our way to Spring Green (APT)
- Trout fishing near here
- Visiting family in the area

2) Have you visited this community before?

- 45 Yes 69%
- 20 No 31%

3) From your perspective, what are this community's most attractive assets?

- River and fishing
- Nice parks, beautiful scenery
- We come to town to shop, Walmart, grocery stores
- Good food
- Truck and tractor pulls, motorcycle races
- Historic buildings, Frank Lloyd Wright building is now open for tours
- Drive in movie theater, came up from Shullsburg to see it
- Candlewood Cabins
- Music fest
- Seems like a nice town, noticed historic buildings downtown
- People seem friendly, hotel is nice
- Great kayaking, we loved the river
- Beautiful area of Wisconsin

4) What are this community's greatest weaknesses in your eyes?

- Nothing was open downtown
- Town seems kind of rundown?
- Businesses were not very friendly towards us
- Attitude towards people in town for tractor pulls, commented we are just “[slur]”
- Hotel is old and rundown
- Downtown looks unkept, weeds growing everywhere, lawns not mowed
- A lot of empty store fronts
- Nothing, seems like a nice old town
- Only fast food restaurants, no supper clubs/upscale dining
- Only place to shop is Walmart, but they did have what we needed for camping this weekend

5) What addition to this community would make it more likely that you'll return?

- More places to eat and shop
- We come here every year for the tractor pulls (when they don't get canceled for rain), and for the fair. We usually stay all weekend at a local hotel.
- More things to do, more events
- We come here for Walmart and McDonalds
- Better hotels, ours is rundown and they are not very friendly to motorcyclists
- We come several times a year to visit family, usually stay in town
- Not sure what there is to do here



Churning Dirt Nationals, Richland Center

Photo: Badger State Tractor Pullers

Destination Asset Summary

Local = Drawing residents only

Regional = Day trips; visitors coming short distances from around the area

Destination = May prompt an overnight

Residents and stakeholders participated in a process to inventory assets in Richland Center, and the Richland County area.

| TOURISM ATTRACTIONS | | | | |
|--|---------------------------------------|--------------|-----------------|--------------------|
| Cultural & Heritage Attractions | Description | Local | Regional | Destination |
| Archaeological Sites | Rockbridge, Effigy | | X | |
| Buildings of Architectural Interest | A.D. German Warehouse / Downtown tour | | | X |
| | Auditorium, Train Depot | | | X |
| Early Settlements | Native American | | X | |
| Events / Education based | UW-Richland | | X | |
| Historic Districts | Downtown buildings, Auditorium | | X | |
| Historical Tours | Nature and History, Rockbridge | | X | |
| Interpretive Centers | A.D. Warehouse | | | X |
| Landmarks | Pier Park – Natural Bridge | | X | |
| Lumber & Mining Camps | Modern Sawmill at Rockbridge | | X | |
| Memorials and Monuments | Veterans, Flag Park | | X | |
| Museums | Akey School Museum | | X | |
| Native American Historic Sites | Frank's Hill | | X | |
| Walking Tours | Nature and History Hike, Rockbridge | | X | |

| Nature-Based Attractions | Description | Local | Regional | Destination |
|---------------------------------|---|--------------|-----------------|--------------------|
| Bird Watching | Ash Creek Community Forest | | X | |
| Caves, Gorges, Grottos | Eagle Cave, Rock Bridge | | | |
| | Popp's Cave (Currently closed 2018) | | | |
| Fall Foliage | Several scenic drives and hikes in area | | | X |
| Forests (State / National) | Lower WI Riverway, Forests | | | X |
| Geological Formations | Natural Bridge, Natural Gateway, Steamboat Rock | | X | |
| | Pier Park, Elephant Trunk Rock | | X | |
| Lakes | Garner Lake, Cruson Slough, Lee Lake | | X | |
| Nature Trails | Walking trails, Ash Creek Community Forest | | X | |
| Protected Wetlands | Willow Creek | X | | |
| Rivers, Streams and Waterways | Pine River | | | X |
| Sand Dunes | Lower WI Riverway, near Gotham and Lone Rock | | X | |
| Wilderness Areas | Lower WI Riverway, Ash Creek Community Forest | | X | |
| Woodlands | Lower WI Riverway, Ash Creek Community Forest | | X | |

| Recreation | Description | Local | Regional | Destination |
|--------------------------|---|-------|----------|-------------|
| Amusement or Theme Park | Aquatic Center | X | | |
| Ball Parks / Tournaments | Jaxson's Brew Crew Park | | X | |
| | Cazenovia Ball Park | | X | |
| Bicycling | Pine River Trail, Ash Creek Community Forest, | | X | |
| | City Mountain Bike Trails | | X | |
| Bird Watching | Ash Creek Community Forest | | X | |
| Camping | Eagle Cave, Viola County Park, Alana Springs, | | | X |
| | Fireside, Camp Woodbrooke, Pier Park | | | X |
| Canoeing / Kayaking | Kickapoo River, Pine River | | | X |
| Fishing - Fly | Viola, Camp Creek | | | X |
| Fishing - Ice | Lee Lake, Cruson Slough | | X | |
| Geo-Caching | Several sites in area | | X | |
| Golf | Disc Golf | X | | |
| Health Resorts / Spas | Massage Therapy | X | | |
| Hiking / Walking | Ash Creek Community Forest, Pine River Trail | | X | |
| Horseback Riding | Ash Creek Community Forest | | X | |
| Hunting | Deer, Turkey, etc. | | X | |
| Picnicing | Pier Park, Viola Park | X | | |
| Roller Blading / Skating | Roller Rink | X | | |
| Running | Pine River Trail | X | | |
| Snowmobiling | Richland County Trails | | | X |
| Spelunking | Popp's Cave (Closed in 2018) | | | X |
| Swimming | Aquatic Center | | X | |

| Special Events | Description | Local | Regional | Destination |
|----------------------------------|---|-------|----------|-------------|
| Agricultural Fairs | County Fair | | X | |
| | Viola Horse and Colt Show | | | X |
| Antique Auto Show | Roses for Ronni, Hub City Car & Van Show | | X | |
| | Car Show during Wright of Spring event | | X | |
| Arts, Crafts & Hoppy Fairs | Craft Fairs in November | | X | |
| Auto / Motorcycle Racing | Churnin' Dirt event | | | X |
| Dance & Opera Productions | RC Dance and Gymnastics Recital | X | | |
| Farm Tours | June Dairy Month Breakfast | | X | |
| Historic | Wright of Spring event / FLW tour | | | X |
| Holiday Celebrations & Festivals | Rotary Lights, Christmas Light Show | | X | |
| Home Tours | Wright of Spring event | | | X |
| Local Theatre | Performing Arts Center, Community Players | | X | |
| Music Festivals and Concerts | RC Thunderfest | | | X |
| Parades | Memorial Day, June Dairy Days | | X | |
| | Canyon of Lights | | X | |
| Rodeos | State High School Rodeos | | | X |
| Sports Events | Schools | | X | |
| Symphony / Orchestral | Community / Schools | X | | |
| Tractor Pulls | County Fair, Hybrid Redneck events | | | X |
| | Churnin' Dirt event | | | X |

| Other Attractions | Description | Local | Regional | Destination |
|--|--|-------|----------|-------------|
| Antiquing | Several locations in area | | X | |
| | Thrift Stores | X | | |
| Coffee House | In town | X | | |
| Convention / Conference Facility | Meeting space at Ramada | | X | |
| Drive-in Theater | Starlite 14 Drive-in | | X | |
| Hotel - Full Service | Several in town | | | X |
| Hotel & Lodging - Bed & Breakfasts | Several in town | | | X |
| Hotel & Lodging - Full Service | Local Hotels | | | X |
| Hotel & Lodging - Cottages | | | | |
| Hotel & Lodging - Cabins | Candlewood Cabins | | | X |
| Hotel & Lodging - Camping | Several in area | | | X |
| Railroad Depots / Rides | Historic Depot and caboose in town | | X | |
| Retreats and Learning Centers | | | | |
| Roadside Produce Stands | Amish locations | | | |
| Scenic Highways | Scenic 60 | | | X |
| | 80, 14, 56, 58, 171, many county hwy's | | | X |
| Scenic Views / Observation Towers / | Several lookouts in area | | X | |
| Unusual Buildings | A.D. German Warehouse | | | X |
| Universities & Colleges | UW Richland County | | X | |
| U-Pick Farms / Orchards | Sunset, Oakwood, Huebsch Hill Farms | | X | |
| Wineries / Breweries and Tasting Rooms | Weggy, Cheese Cellar | | | X |
| Working Farms | Many in the area, not open for regular tours | X | | |
| Only | Drive-in theater | | X | |
| Oddest | A.D. German Warehouse | | | X |



Round Barn in Richland County

Richland Center's Top Tourism Assets

Ranked by the participants/stakeholders:

1. **Frank Lloyd Wright Heritage-Birthplace / Trail** (including A.D. German Warehouse)
2. **Lodging / Camping**
3. **Pine River**
4. **Trails** (canoeing, kayaking, hiking, biking, ATV, snowmobile, equestrian)
5. **Historic Downtown – Retail, tours, auditorium**
6. **Events**
7. **Ag Tourism** (including wineries, farmers markets, Amish areas)
8. **Highways, Corridors, Airport**



AD German Warehouse, designed by Frank Lloyd Wright, Downtown Richland Center

Competitive Overview: Win, Lose, Draw

This is an exercise to analyze how Richland Center fares against the competition reflecting on the assets as being better, the same or inferior.

Richland Center competitive market: Spring Green

| <i>Richland Center</i> | <i>Win</i> | <i>Lose</i> | <i>Draw</i> |
|---|------------|-------------|-------------|
| 1. Frank Lloyd Wright Heritage-Birthplace | | X | |
| 2. Lodging / Camping | | | X |
| 3. Pine River | | | X |
| 4. Trails | X | | |
| 5. Historic Downtown | | | X |
| 6. Events | X | | |
| 7. Ag Tourism | X | | |
| 8. Highways, Corridors, Airport | | | X |

Richland Center competitive market: Boscobel

| <i>Richland Center</i> | <i>Win</i> | <i>Lose</i> | <i>Draw</i> |
|---|------------|-------------|-------------|
| 1. Frank Lloyd Wright Heritage-Birthplace | X | | |
| 2. Lodging / Camping | | | X |
| 3. Pine River | | | X |
| 4. Trails | | | X |
| 5. Historic Downtown | X | | |
| 6. Events | X | | |
| 7. Ag Tourism | X | | |
| 8. Highways, Corridors, Airport | X | | |

Richland Center competitive market: Soldiers Grove

| <i>Richland Center</i> | <i>Win</i> | <i>Lose</i> | <i>Draw</i> |
|---|------------|-------------|-------------|
| 1. Frank Lloyd Wright Heritage-Birthplace | X | | |
| 2. Lodging / Camping | X | | |
| 3. Pine River | | | X |
| 4. Trails | | | X |
| 5. Historic Downtown | X | | |
| 6. Events | | | X |
| 7. Ag Tourism | X | | |
| 8. Highways, Corridors, Airport | X | | |

Strengths, Weaknesses Opportunities, Threats (SWOT)

| | |
|--|---|
| <p><u>Strengths</u></p> <p>Frank Lloyd Wright Heritage-Birthplace / Trail A.D. German Warehouse) Lodging / Camping Pine River Trails Canoeing Kayaking Hiking Biking ATV / snowmobile Equestrian Historic Downtown – Retail and tours Events Ag Tourism Wineries Farmers markets Amish Highways, Corridors Airport Symons Recreation Center Phoenix Center</p> | <p><u>Weaknesses</u></p> <p>Lack of ethnic diversity Location – not a recognized travel destination No strong marketing focus for tourism Slow to adapt to technology Shortage / quality of lodging Limited workforce / low unemployment Small groups / limited staff for promo efforts Age demographic Attitudes about tourism / misunderstanding Distance to media DMAs (Dubuque/Madison/Rockford)</p> |
| <p><u>Opportunities</u></p> <p>Corridors – infrastructure Tourism department Hotels in town, camping in county Customer service improvements AgTourism Technology Need for images / video Workforce Education / College / UW Richland County Sustain natural resources Historical locations still exist / tours Room to grow Funding / sales opportunities Marketing plan Distance/proximity to advertising markets (Galena, Dubuque, Rockford, Madison)</p> | <p><u>Threats</u></p> <p>Perception that there is nothing to do here Apathy towards growing visitor base Lack of funding Competition Dairy economy Sustaining public area Low unemployment Changing travel expectations Old habits, not quick to change Lack of broadband Regulations on businesses</p> |

TOURISM OPPORTUNITIES SUMMARY

| RANK: TOPIC- ITEM | RATING: EASY, MEDIUM, DIFFICULT | TIMELINE FOR COMPLETION: | COMMENTS/CONCERNS: | OWNERSHIP: |
|---|--|--|---|---|
| 1. Great Customer Service and Hospitality | EASY - MEDIUM | START ASAP; 6 Months; Updates regularly | Presentations / Consultations with Andrew Nussbaum | All of Richland Center, with Wisconsin Department of Tourism assistance |
| 2. Marketing and media plan | MEDIUM | START ASAP; Summer 2018 Update as needed | Plan all marketing using a monthly/quarterly calendar New billboards now up | Richland Center Tourism /Businesses |
| 3. Social Media Plan | EASY | START ASAP; 6 Month updates | Coordinate with local businesses and events | Richland Center Tourism /Businesses |
| 4. Promotional Materials | MEDIUM | START ASAP; One year and updated yearly | Suggest refreshing materials to reflect assessment results | Richland Center Tourism /Businesses |
| 5. Community PR | EASY - MEDIUM | START ASAP; Spring 2018; regular updates and ongoing | Regular messaging to residents and stakeholders about the importance of tourism as it relates to economic development efforts | Richland Center Tourism /Businesses |
| 6. Events | MEDIUM | START ASAP; 6 MONTHS | Explore ideas for new events that align with MP's vision and drive downtown traffic and nights/weekends | Richland Center Tourism / Businesses / Civic groups |
| 7. AgTourism Development | MEDIUM | START ASAP; 6 MONTHS | Farmers Markets, Culinary and Artisan opportunities | OPEN Opportunity |
| 8. History Tour | MEDIUM | START ASAP; 6 MONTHS | Night tours, weekends | Richland Center Tourism / Businesses / Civic groups |
| 9. Camping / Lodging | CHALLENGING | START ASAP; 6 MONTHS | Create itineraries that encourage destination travel (overnight travel) | Chamber/City |
| 10. Regional Collaboration | MEDIUM | START ASAP; 6 MONTHS | Find ways to partner with marketing efforts in surrounding schools and communities, including Platteville and Spring Green | Richland Center Tourism /Businesses / with Wisconsin Department of Tourism assistance |

Destination Vision Summary

What is a destination? A destination is essentially the ending point for any trip. There are as many different types of destinations as there are communities for people to visit. 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.

This is what the residents and stakeholders envision for Richland Center in the future:

Richland Center, 2020-2027:

- We are a community that uses the Pine River as a focal point for premier silent sports destination.
- We are a community that realizes the potential of the Frank Lloyd Wright brand, and the A.D. German Warehouse is being renovated and is regularly open to the public as an attraction. Signage and sidewalk stripes for the architectural walking tours are readily available and have a unified design.
- We are a community with diverse retail opportunities downtown, and specialty dining.
- Our visitor center/depot is open daily, and our Chamber of Commerce is now strong and fully staffed.
- We have a strong farmers market open every week.
- Richland Center has a strong and well-funded marketing plan.
- We are known for our many outdoor activities and several new events in town, including rooftop events at the A.D. German Warehouse.
- We have expanded our bike trails and routes, both in town and out of town.

Richland Center, April 2028-2048:

- Our downtown area is full of stores and caters to visitors from across the country. Our shopping and dining is a preferred southwest Wisconsin destination. Our ample supply of quality lodging options has boosted our overnight potential, and room tax dollars fund an effective marketing plan.
- Population has increased 50% since 2020, with younger people discovering that Richland Center is a great town to live and work in.
- New trails and walking paths have been constructed and are regularly utilized by visitors and residents alike, including a pedestrian overpass to Court Street.
- Richland Center is now recognized worldwide as the Birthplace of Frank Lloyd Wright and attracts enthusiasts from international markets. Frank Lloyd Wright impersonators now regularly give tours to give personal feel to the experience. A downtown hotel welcomes visitors.
- Industry tours are also available at many locations, including dairies, cheese factories, sawmill.
- Historic and ethnic festivals attract over 1,000,000 visitors annually.

Destination Vision and Marketing Recommendations

Develop a Diversified and Scheduled Marketing Plan

- Every tourism marketing effort should begin with a solid plan, one that includes not only a budget, but a defined plan utilizing a monthly or seasonal calendar. The marketing plan is your road map and details the attractions and events in your area. At the end of each tourism season, you can use your marketing plan to set goals and make changes for next year. For example, if revenue at one attraction did not meet expectations, perhaps it needs product development, some upgrades to make it more appealing to visitors, or better advertising.
- Take advantage of earned media opportunities. Recently, Frank Lloyd Wright locations (including the A.D. German Warehouse) and Candlewood Cabins has been receiving national and international mention by media outlets and travel writers.

Explore Ways to Bring Frank Lloyd Wright to Life

- Along with having a physical brand presence through the A.D. German Warehouse and the newly formed Frank Lloyd Wright Trail, Richland Center is fortunate to be the birthplace of Wright.
- Explore marketing and public relations opportunities to bring his persona back to life. Physical presence of impersonators at historic locations and events would create a personal experience for visitors to “meet the legend”. When actual actors/impersonators are not available, create a digital presence via social media and digital displays. Let Frank Lloyd Wright tell his own story.
- Do not be afraid to tell the controversial side of his history, people enjoy reality and truthfulness.

Develop a “First Impressions” program and a thriving Richland Center

- Highlight the human side of your destination and build trust with the people exposed to it.
- First impressions include many elements such as your commitment to customer service. Most businesses believe 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 sessions that meet your needs.
- A strong component of Richland Center’s development vision should focus on improving Richland Center’s approach to welcoming visitors, those customers “we haven’t met yet”. Businesses have a strong following with local and regional customers and the perception of small town atmosphere was very positive at the local level. However, visitors to Richland Center when surveyed, did present concerns about lack of service and hours of operation, and did not readily share that customer service was a strong selling point of the business community.

Create “Themed Itineraries” to Utilize the Existing Strong Traffic Patterns and Tourism Assets of Richland Center.

- Richland Center is well situated on Highway 14 and Highway 80, two corridors with heavy traffic.
- The itinerary concept can be used to include tourism assets not located in Richland Center to highlight those that are.

- Merge branding signage, maps and information (printed guides, itineraries, web content and mobile applications into a cohesive program to move people around the region and capitalize on the theme of the destination. By offering numerous points of interest and places for people to purchase services and amenities, the opportunity to convert daytrip visitors into overnight guests greatly increases.
- Themed itineraries for agtourism can package wineries, cheeses and dairy, farmers markets, pumpkin patches, apple orchards, popcorn retail, etc. into one route. Lodging options can then be offered to compliment the trip given the strong inventory of specialty and niche lodging available.

Leverage Popularity of Effective Local Events to Promote Richland Center Attractions

- Local events, including very strong music events, are regionally renowned. The participation of local attractions should be paramount. This will promote Richland Center as a destination for many different interests.
- Consider the role of attractions during events, and possibly have satellite events taking place at specific locations during large events at no extra charge, such as offer tours of the museums and have art related programs/activities available.
- Continue to explore ways to integrate nature-based attractions and retail opportunities in the area.

Social – Visual – Digital

- Show off what makes you unique on social media, every destination has something special that nobody else does. Ask yourself “Can my online audience see what we do?”. While it is evident that Richland Center Tourism regularly shares tourism related information via social media, engagement from businesses should be equally active.
- Social media produces high engagement, especially for travel brands. In your tourism marketing strategy, it is recommended to invest more in the mechanics of gaining more followers.
- Grow social platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram via engagement with followers. Respond with relevant feedback and active native content.
- Social media has made a huge impact on the tourism industry. Consumers engage with social networking sites to research trips, make informed decisions about their travels and share their personal experiences of a particular hotel, restaurant or airline.
- Create awesome destination videos. The online world is moving toward short form videos. Videos convey a huge amount of information in very little time, so it’s a great way to showcase who you are and what you do. Show people your destination and help them out at the same time. Create helpful videos that showcase things to do in your area, helpful tips about getting around, fun facts, and locals-only secrets. Share these videos on your website and social media.

Implement a “Shoulder Season” Content Strategy

- Regardless of when people choose to travel, they are dreaming of their next vacation all year round. Leading up to the slow season, publish native content and blog posts that are centered around experiences they can enjoy in your region during the off-season.
- Start with brainstorming a list of experiences that people will enjoy, addressing any fears (too cold, too wet, too hot, too humid, etc), and reiterating the experience benefits.
- Get out and about in Richland Center and take some photos and videos of those experiences, during the low season (so people can see real-time what it’s like at that time of year).
- Optimise your social posts that relate to the content, to ensure it gets maximum visibility in search engine results when people are typing in relevant search queries into Google.
- Encourage all businesses and attractions to share your posts with their social and email communities, and make sure you re-share it during your peak and shoulder season to drive demand before you hit the shoulder season.

Re-engage Your Locals & Offer Special Deals for Loyal Customers

- There is merit in offering your locals and loyal customers a special deal if they visit and stay with you during the shoulder season or slower dayparts. Consider a mid-week accommodation special or throw in a unique/tailored experience for any bookings throughout the shoulder period. Promote your local/loyal customer deals via a targeted marketing campaign and ensure you track the return on investment of the campaign to measure effectiveness and growth.
- VFR (visiting friends and relatives) travel involves visitors whereby the purpose of the trip or the type of accommodation involves visiting friends and/or relatives. Your local community is the source for all of your VFR customers and there are opportunities in offering a promotion to this segment via a geographically targeted social media, or even via a segmented email marketing campaign. Remember to include details about the local economic importance of the “shop local” segment.

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