

2012

# Evansville, Wisconsin Assessment



Wisconsin Department of Tourism



# Executive Summary Report Destination Assessment

Evansville, Wisconsin

May 1, 2012

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. 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 Evansville Destination Assessment was conducted as a joint project between the Wisconsin Department of Tourism, Bureau of Industry Relations and Services, and the community of Evansville. The project was coordinated by the Department of Tourism's Regional Tourism Specialist, **David Spiegelberg**.

Advice, assistance and oversight were provided by the Evansville Community Task Force comprised of the following members:

- Sue Berg**, Tourism Committee Chairperson and Member;
- Dave VanDerHaegen**, Executive Director, Creekside Place;
- Sue Farnsworth**, Multiple Line Insurance Representative;
- Mary Rajek, Lori Allen, Nicole Hamby**, interim representatives from Chamber of Commerce;
- Greg Ardisson**, CEO and restaurateur, The Night Owl Food & Spirits;
- Kyle Allen**, Allen Realty, real estate and concrete work;
- Todd Culbertson**, Rock 'N Rollz sandwich shop;
- Ed Francois**, Francois Oil, local gas stations, auto dealerships, and developer;
- Sandy Larson**, Larson Acres Dairy Farm;
- Dr. Jeff Richards**, ProSpine Chiropractic;
- Paul Warren**, Dave's ACE Hardware manager;
- Sandy Decker**, Mayor of Evansville;
- Jim Brooks**, Chairperson of the Evansville Economic Development Committee.

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## **Evansville, Wisconsin: Tourism Overview**

**Steeped in a deep sense of community replete with small town charm, Evansville, Wisconsin, is the home to rich historic architecture, a profound Civil War history and artisans galore. Situated with easy access to Madison and Janesville, Evansville offers attributes pleasing to visitors and residents alike. However, dining and lodging choices are limited, so to compete for visitors and their spending, planned and thoughtful development of amenities is necessary to increase the drawing power of the community. The area is blessed with abundant natural and man-made resources. This is in part why Evansville has multiple properties on the historic register, why it is designated a Bird City and a Tree City, and certainly why agriculture is a pillar of the local economy.**

## **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.

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 have some individuals with hospitality-specific, 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.

### **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 all of 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 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.

## **Common Themes in Community and Stakeholder Interviews**

**Q: If you did not live in or near Evansville, what about this community would encourage you to visit?**

The attributes most mentioned by the respondents were art galleries; Leota Park and lake; history – specifically homes/houses, downtown, historical districts, and buildings; special events – specifically the 4th of July event; small town charm; and architecture, alluding to the diverse and historic style of homes and buildings downtown.

**Q part 1: From a visitor's perspective, what are Evansville's most attractive assets?** The assets highlighted by the respondents were parks, particularly Leonard Leota Park and Lake; community events, notably the 4th of July event; architecture and history, with frequent mentions of homes and downtown buildings; and the community's small town atmosphere and charm.

**Q part 2: Of those you listed, which one do you believe is the strongest asset?** History (again with numerous references to structures), parks and events were the three top assets mentioned.

**Q: What are community's greatest weaknesses in attracting visitors?** The top response focused on dining, with most citing either the lack of upscale fine dining or lack of enough choices. Limited shopping opportunities, especially in the downtown area were cited. Other weaknesses mentioned were lack of a variety of activities, the number of vacant buildings, and poor appearances.

**Q: What addition(s) to Evansville would make it more attractive to visitors?** The vast majority of respondents said that better/finer dining and a wider variety of restaurants, more variety in shopping and a wider variety of events and activities would make the community more attractive to visitors.

**Q: Do you support efforts to consider new ways to attract visitors?** The answer was almost unanimous for supporting ways to attract visitors.

## **Common Themes in Visitor Perceptions**

**Q: What prompted you to seek information about Evansville? / What prompted you to visit Evansville today?** Former residents, a link to friends and family, events, and proximity (living nearby) were mentioned.

**Q: Have you visited Evansville before?** 75% had visited Evansville before.

**Q: Based on what you have learned, what do you see as Evansville's most attractive assets?** History, architecture, small town charm/atmosphere, and parks were the top items mentioned.

**Q: What do you see as Evansville's greatest weaknesses?** Lack of choices in dining, as well as lack of finer dining and upper scale pubs; lack of diverse shopping opportunities; closed/vacant shops, and lack of entertainment were listed as weaknesses.

**Q: What would you suggest to add to the community to make it more likely that you would visit (or visit more often)?** Increase the number and variety events and activities; offer more shopping opportunities, and add upscale and a wider variety in dining.

## Destination Asset Summary

The Tourism Committee used the following ranking system on each of the assets:

Local= Drawing local residents

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

Destination=Drawing overnight visitors

| Cultural & Heritage Attractions     | Description   | Local | Regional | Destination |
|-------------------------------------|---|-------|----------|-------------|
| Buildings of Architectural Interest | architecturally diverse residential districts, downtown buildings, 3 National Register districts  |       | x        | x           |
| Ethnic Celebrations / Festivals     | Oktoberfest   |       | x        |             |
| Ghost Towns / Haunted Buildings     | Haunted Weary Road; Evansville House (East Side) written as having a resident ghost; we never saw one (EF)  | x     |          |             |
| Historic Districts                  | 3 National Register residential historic districts, Leota Park, Main Street bricks  |       | x        | x           |
| Historical Tours                    | By request walking tour of historic district  |       | x        | x           |
| Landmarks                           | Main Street bricks, Lake Leota Girl's School, Lake Leota Park, Standpipe, Seminary, Baker Office Building, Eager Memorial, windmills on Main St.  |       | x        | x           |
| Memorials and Monuments             | Maple Hill Cemetery (Civil War veterans, etc.), Tank at park; have cemetery tours with visit from historical figures, tank & cannon at park, CCC Monument at School Forest, Library, 1st home of Rock County Fair (see notes below) |       | x        | x           |
| Museums                             | Baker Office Building History Museum, Eager Economy Store Museum  |       | x        | x           |
| Re-enactments                       | Civil War Home front Activities, May, annual through 2015   |       |          | x           |

| <b>Cultural and Heritage</b>               | <b>Description</b>                                    | <b>Local</b> | <b>Regional</b> | <b>Destination</b> |
|--|---|--------------|-----------------|--------------------|
| Religious Sites and Facilities             | Churches  |              |                 |                    |
| Ruins                                      |   |              |                 |                    |
| Walking Tours                              | Self-guided Historic districts                        |              | x               | x                  |
| Open houses or guided tours                |   |              | x               |                    |
| Waterfront Restorations                    | Lake Leota 2010                                       |              | x               |                    |
| First home of Rock County Fair             | Site marker by school district offices on Fair Street | x            |                 |                    |
| 4 <sup>th</sup> of July Celebration        | Downtown parade, events 3 day celebration             | x            |                 |                    |
| Class reunions, family reunions, fireworks |   |              | x               |                    |
| Chas Van Hise (UW Madison)                 | Attended Evansville Seminary; former UW President     | x            |                 |                    |
| Theodore Robinson hometown                 | Impressionist Painter studied with Monet              |              |                 | x                  |
| Home of Pop Hall Circus                    | Summer home to many circus families                   | x            |                 |                    |
| Home of Court Justice Burr Jones           | There is a street named of him                        | x            |                 |                    |
| Sesquicentennial in 2016                   |   |              | x               |                    |

| <b>Nature- Based Attractions</b>  | <b>Description</b>   | <b>Local</b> | <b>Regional</b> | <b>Destination</b> |
|---|--|--------------|-----------------|--------------------|
| Bird Watching   | Lake Leota Park, Wind Prairie                                |              |                 |                    |
| Day Trips to see birds like Snowy Owl, Bald Eagles nesting on Allen Creek | Bird City. Hot Spot  |              | x               | x                  |
| Fall Foliage  | Residential large old trees, Route 68 (riley Road)           |              | X               | x                  |
| Environmental Programming (Super Scientific Circus)                       | Energy Fair Event (April)                                    |              | x               |                    |
| Geological Formations   | NPS visit on Ice Age Trail Possible route                    |              |                 | x                  |
| Lakes   | Leota Lake   |              |                 |                    |
| Restocking  | Connected to the Allen Creek                                 |              | x               |                    |
| Nature Trails   | Evansville Wildlife Area Grove Community School Forest Trail | x            |                 |                    |
| Prairie and Grasslands  | Wind Prairie Restoration Park                                | x            |                 |                    |
| Protected Wetlands  | DNR land on Hwy 123  |              | x               |                    |
| Rivers, Streams and Waterways   | Allen Creek, Spring Creek                                    |              | x               |                    |

|                                    |   |   |  |   |
|------------------------------------|---|---|--|---|
| Wildlife Sanctuaries and Preserves | Evansville Bird City designation DNR land on Hwy 123            |   |  | x |
| Wilderness Areas                   | Evansville Wildlife Area  | x |  |   |
| Woodlands                          | Evansville Tree City designation, Grove Community School Forest | x |  |   |

| Recreation                | Description   | Local | Regional | Destination |
|---------------------------|---|-------|----------|-------------|
| Ball Parks/Tournaments    | Lake Leota Park Blue J's                              | x     |          |             |
| Bicycling                 | Bike Trails throughout the city                       |       | X        | x           |
| Bird Watching             | Leota park, Wind Prairie                              |       | X        | x           |
| Driving Tours             | Rustic Roads #68, residential and country barn quilts |       | x        | x           |
| Fishing-Fly               | Allen Creek   |       | x        |             |
| Fishing-Ice               | Lake Leota  | x     |          |             |
| Fishing Derbies           | Catch and Release Lake Leota                          | x     |          |             |
| Geo-caching               | Evansville  |       | x        |             |
| Golf                      | Evansville Golf Course Public 18 holes                |       | x        |             |
| Hiking/Walking            | Lake Leota Park                                       | x     |          |             |
| Hunting                   | Evansville Wildlife Area DNR Land on Hwy 123          | x     |          |             |
| Picnicking                | Lake Leota Park                                       | x     |          |             |
| Regatta and Boat Races    | Recycle Regatta on Lake Leota                         | x     | x        |             |
| Running                   | Gibbs Lake Gallop, Lake Leota Fun Run, Duathlon       |       | x        |             |
| Snow Skiing-Cross Country | Golf Course   |       | x        |             |
| Sledding                  | Evansville Country Club Golf Course                   |       | x        |             |
| Swimming                  | Lake Leota Park, outdoor pool                         | x     |          |             |
| Tennis                    | Lake Leota Park, Outdoor tennis courts                | x     |          |             |

| Special Events                | Local Description  | Local | Regional | Destination |
|-------------------------------|--|-------|----------|-------------|
| Agricultural Fairs            | Breakfast on the Farm (June 2012)                            |       | x        |             |
| Antique Auto Show             | Brown School Car Show, July 4 <sup>th</sup> Classic Car Show |       | x        |             |
| Antique and Collectibles Show | Farm Toy Show (March)  |       | x        |             |
| Arts, Crafts and Hobby Fairs  | Holiday Craft Fair (December)                                | x     |          |             |

|                                  |  |   |   |   |
|----------------------------------|--|---|---|---|
|                                  | Farm Toy Show (March)  |   |   |   |
| Auto Motorcycle Racing           | Capital Speedway   |   | x |   |
| Business Exhibitions             | Inside Out Day (August)<br>Chamber Business Expo (October)                                     |   | x |   |
| Centennials/Bi-Centennials       | Civil War Annual Event (May)<br>Sesquicentennial (2016)  |   |   | x |
| Culinary Fairs and Events        | Chili Cook-off (March)<br>Chocolate Extravaganza (February)<br>Oktoberfest and Beer school     |   |   | X |
| Environmental Festivals          | Energy Fair (April)  |   | x |   |
| Farm Tours                       | Larson Acres   |   | x |   |
| Farmer's Market                  | Evansville Farmer's Market   | x |   |   |
| Flower Shows                     | Evansville Garden Tour   | x |   |   |
| Gun Show                         | Geneo's  |   | x |   |
| Harvest Celebrations             | Harvest Windmill Festival<br>Oktoberfest<br>Beer School  | x |   |   |
| Hay Rides/Carriage Rides         | Olde Fashioned Christmas<br>Carriage rides<br>Historic Trolley Tours                           |   | x |   |
| Holiday Celebrations & Festivals | Memorial Day, 4 <sup>th</sup> of July,<br>Oktoberfest,<br>Olde Fashioned Christmas<br>Windmill | x |   |   |
| Home Tours                       |  |   |   | x |
| Local Theatre                    | Evansville Community Theater<br>High School Productions  |   | x |   |
| Music Festivals and Concerts     | Summer Outdoor<br>4 <sup>th</sup> of July live music<br>Civil War Ball                         | x |   |   |
| Parades                          | Memorial and 4 <sup>th</sup> of July   | x |   |   |
| Religious/Spiritual Observances  | Ecumenical Christmas Concert   | x |   |   |
| Sports Events                    | Evansville Blue Js<br>Softball Tournaments<br>Kick Ball  | x |   |   |
| Tractor Pulls                    | Evansville Tractor Pull<br>4 <sup>th</sup> of July   | x |   |   |
| Lambing Season                   | Ag-tourism   |   | x |   |

### Top Assets

Statewide or National:

**Civil War Activities** – annual event through May 2015

**Theodore Robinson** (studied with Monet) – Evansville is his hometown

**Ice Age Trail** – possible route

**Matthias James / Allen Creek Gallery**

**Agrecol** – seed farm that could be part of industrial tours for motorcoach

Regional:

**Historic Architecture**

**National Register** – three historic districts

**Historic Walking Tours** – currently by request only or self guided

**Historic Landmarks** – Main Street, Lake Leota Girls School, Lake Leota Park, Standpipe, Eager Memorial

**Memorials and Monuments** – Maple Hill Cemetery (tours), CCC Monuments

**Museums** – Baker Office Building, Eager Economy Building

**Historic Churches**

**Birding Opportunities** – Bird City designation, eagles on Allen Creek, Snowy Owls.

**Biking** –Bike trail through city

**Rustic Roads** – Riley Road, barn quilt tour, fall color drives

**Art Windmills**

**Barn Quilts**

Note: Many of the assets outlined above provide residents a local experience. That is not to say residents of Evansville should not recommend participation in these assets for friends or family who are visiting. It is also important to note that local residents become the community's best ambassadors by participating in local opportunities and then catalyzing change and growth because they recognize an opportunity. It is a good strategy for the leaders in Evansville to organize an Ambassador Program so residents become Evansville's concierge.

SWOT Analysis

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <p><u>Strengths</u></p> <p><b>Civil War</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Broad based geography</li> <li>• Visibility – multi-day event</li> <li>• Historical and Educational</li> <li>• Unique offering – Military Ball</li> <li>• 2200 Middle School Students (draw in their parents and family)</li> </ul> <p><b>History</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• National Historic Districts – 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> in the state</li> <li>• 300 structures on the Historic Register</li> <li>• Walkable history</li> <li>• Variety of architecture located in a compact walking/touring area</li> <li>• Self-guided tours</li> <li>• The Grove Society</li> <li>• Historic windmills</li> <li>• Local History Experts</li> <li>• Local History rooms/displays</li> <li>• Brick Main Street</li> <li>• Historic Downtown</li> </ul> <p><b>Art Assets</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Theodore Robinson Society</li> <li>• Creekside Place – Venue</li> <li>• Library</li> <li>• Plein Aire Event</li> <li>• 14 South Artist (70-80 Artists)</li> <li>• Real Café at Daun (Coffee and Art)</li> <li>• Integrated Art</li> <li>• Local Artists</li> <li>• Matthias James /Allen Creek Art Gallery</li> </ul> <p><b>Nature</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lake Leota Park (Lake, Fishing, History, CCC, Pool, Picnic)</li> <li>• Magnolia Bluff (County Park, Ice Age Trail, Horse trails, fall color tour)</li> <li>• Gibbs Lake Park (boating, fishing, horse trails)</li> <li>• Allen Creek (trout stream)</li> <li>• Bird City and Tree City designation</li> <li>• Rustic Roads</li> <li>• Fall Color Tours</li> </ul> | <p><u>Opportunities</u></p> <p><b>Civil War Event</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Better Marketing</li> <li>• Market to school groups</li> <li>• Incentives</li> </ul> <p><b>History</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cross promotional opportunities with Rock Co. museums and historic sites</li> <li>• Packages and Marketing</li> <li>• Design Walking Tour App</li> <li>• Grant opportunities</li> <li>• Fall color tour combined with walking tours</li> <li>• Bundle history with other activities</li> </ul> <p><b>Arts</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cross promotional series with other communities</li> <li>• Weekend tours – create packages</li> <li>• Art shows at Creekside Place</li> <li>• Collaboration with other art organizations/Wisconsin Arts Board</li> <li>• Find a champion for the cause</li> <li>• Phantom art galleries</li> </ul> <p><b>Nature</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ice Age Trail</li> <li>• Connectivity of trails – Fitchburg, Janesville</li> <li>• Bikes/Biking/Bike marketing</li> <li>• Fitness/Walking contests</li> <li>• Walking trail along Creekside</li> <li>• Bird City – more marketing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Audubon Society and film</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><b>Ag Tourism</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Buy Local produce</li> <li>• Wisconsin Farmers Markets Association</li> <li>• Agrecol – Tour options</li> <li>• Cross promotional agri tourism opportunities with Larson’s</li> </ul> |
|--|---|

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <p><b>Ag Tourism</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Larson Family Farm (Dairy Breakfast, tours, 5 generation, farm technology, sustainable)</li> <li>• Agrecol (seed company with name recognition)</li> <li>• Barn Quilts</li> <li>• Farmers Market</li> </ul> <p><b>Creekside Place</b><br/><b>4<sup>th</sup> of July Events</b></p>   |   |
| <p><u>Weaknesses</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Restaurants – Lack of fine dining, lack of brew pub</li> <li>• Shopping - Need boutiques and unique shops</li> <li>• Lodging – lack of lodging near downtown</li> <li>• No Bed and Breakfast establishment</li> <li>• Business hours – not open long enough</li> <li>• Lack of cooperative marketing</li> <li>• No place for an RV to camp or park</li> <li>• No campgrounds</li> <li>• Not enough trail connectivity</li> <li>• Lack of customer service</li> <li>• No outdoor rentals at Lake Leota</li> <li>• Locals don't shop downtown</li> </ul> | <p><u>Threats</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NIMBY (not in my back yard)</li> <li>• Loss of funding/marketing</li> <li>• Energy – rising gas prices</li> <li>• Loss of people and volunteer resources</li> <li>• Continued increase in empty storefronts</li> <li>• Lack of coordination for tourism</li> <li>• Negative press – corporate vs. family farm</li> </ul> |

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

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

**Edgerton**

| <b>EVANSVILLE</b>                              | <b>WIN</b> | <b>LOSE</b> | <b>DRAW</b> |
|--|------------|-------------|-------------|
| Civil War Event                                | X          |             |             |
| Arts - Theodore Robinson                       | X          |             |             |
| Arts - John Wilde                              | X          |             |             |
| Arts - Matthias James / Allen Creek Gallery    | X          |             |             |
| Ice Age Trail                                  |            |             | X           |
| Birding, biking, nature tourism                |            |             | X           |
| Ag Tourism - Agrecol                           | X          |             |             |
| Ag Tourism - Larson Acres                      | X          |             |             |
| History-buildings, architecture, walking tours | X          |             |             |

**Stoughton**

| <b>EVANSVILLE</b>                              | <b>WIN</b> | <b>LOSE</b> | <b>DRAW</b> |
|--|------------|-------------|-------------|
| Civil War Event                                | X          |             |             |
| Arts - Theodore Robinson                       | X          |             |             |
| Arts - John Wilde                              | X          |             |             |
| Arts - Matthias James / Allen Creek Gallery    |            | X           |             |
| Ice Age Trail                                  | X          |             |             |
| Birding, biking, nature tourism                |            |             | X           |
| Ag Tourism - Agrecol                           | X          |             |             |
| Ag Tourism - Larson Acres                      | X          |             |             |
| History-buildings, architecture, walking tours | X          |             |             |

**New Glarus**

| <b>EVANSVILLE</b>                              | <b>WIN</b> | <b>LOSE</b> | <b>DRAW</b> |
|--|------------|-------------|-------------|
| Civil War Event                                | X          |             |             |
| Arts - Theodore Robinson                       | X          |             |             |
| Arts - John Wilde                              | X          |             |             |
| Arts - Matthias James Allen / Creek Gallery    | X          |             |             |
| Ice Age Trail                                  |            | X           |             |
| Birding, biking, nature tourism                |            | X           |             |
| Ag Tourism - Agrecol                           | X          |             |             |
| Ag Tourism - Larson Acres                      | X          |             |             |
| History-buildings, architecture, walking tours |            |             | X           |

**Evansville Development Opportunities**

The tourism committee ranked their tourism opportunities in the following order:

1. Civil War event expansion or revitalization
2. Historical and architectural assets organized and communicated
3. Arts assets organized and communicated

| Opportunity Item                                | Ranking | Easy-Difficult | Timeline  |
|---|---------|----------------|-----------|
| Civil War – Market to School Groups             | 1       | Easy           | 1 year    |
| Civil War & Other Events – Coordinate marketing | 2       | Medium         | 1 year    |
| Civil War Incentives (dollars to draw groups)   | 3       | Difficult      | 3-5 years |
| Civil War – Resources from Tourism              | 4       | Easy           | 1 year    |
| History – Fall Color Tour                       | 5       | Medium         | 1-3 years |
| History – Walking Tour Ap                       | 6       | Difficult      | 1-3 years |
| History – Grants – Get list from Tourism        | 7       | Medium         | 1-3 years |
| History – Cross Promote with Rock County        | 8       | Difficult      | 3-5 years |
| History – Package and Marketing                 | 9       | Medium         | 1 year    |
| History – Bundle with other activities          | 10      | Medium         | 1 year    |
| Arts – Weekend tours                            | 11      | Difficult      | 3-5 years |
| Arts – Create Champions in the Community        | 12      | Difficult      | 1-2 years |
| Arts – Cross Promotion                          | 13      | Difficult      | 1-2 years |
| Arts – Collaborate with Arts Board              | 14      | Difficult      | 1-2 years |
| Arts – Phantom Galleries                        | 15      | Medium         | 1 year    |
| Arts – Host events at Creekside Place           | 16      | Easy           | 1 year    |

## Vision Summary

### Destination Vision

Evansville is best known for its historic buildings with rich, diverse architecture, its small town charm, and, more recently, its signature Civil War living history event. However, the recognition of these assets could reach further and ultimately motivate travelers into considering Evansville as their choice getaway. Given the rich historical assets, the vision of Evansville will be to:

- Have well defined and communicated points of interest regarding history and architecture.
- Catalyze the local retail committee (which recently developed “History in Motion” as a tagline) to continue revitalizing downtown while inspiring residents and visitors to develop a sense of place.
- Engage both residents and business owners to promote events and assets of the area.
- Become a year-around destination by designing events for the shoulder seasons.

- Educate the business community and residents on the importance of tourism in economic development.
- Develop more dining experiences and possibly lodging.
- Continue to investigate the potential for nature based tourism (Ice Age Trail) and agri-tourism opportunities (Larson Acres and Agrecol).

***If you were to craft an ideal destination, what would it be? (Comments from Tourism Committee member's worksheets).***

- Fine dining, nice drive or walk, maybe a bike ride or walk on a trail. Shopping – a few places to choose from. Maybe stay the night or not.
- To be able to plan an all day or weekend. Activity/event and extras – plus lots of things to do.
- Authentic. Completely restored park facility. Variety of shops and dining places.
- Evansville has a constant one-day appeal for shoppers, families (park), and general history buff with regular weekend appeal that creates “package” itineraries plus a food lure (dining or beer, cheese, or other specialty item with pretzels ..... ) – plus a nice little art gallery/museum – free things to see and do.
- Downtown showcases our tourism assets. Multiple art venues – art co op. Phantom art galleries (we have resources). History displays. Highlight park features – flower beds – freshened paint.
- Mixed destinations to appeal to many groups – trails and outdoor activities and destination shops and dining.
- Entertaining, overnight, reputable, support events (branch out from main – schools and other groups, profitable).
- History in Motion – larger downtown/city. Events/offerings centered on our assets (history and arts). Center event, with complete activities – food, etc. Each summer month – focus on a product.
- Civil War – promoted world wide – grows into a one week event. History events staged 5 times a year with tours, contests, and websites.
- Camping, biking, fishing, swimming.

***What would a perfect tourism community look like to you?***

- Shops. Restaurants. An event or two happening or going on year round.
- Has something to offer all ages.
- It would project its history. Would be a walkable community with adequate signage to way find. Would have historic bed and breakfasts. Would have signage, markers and monuments.
- Nice combination of short walks, shops, and restaurants, with a good art gallery/museum, several free outdoor activities, plaques with history erected around town, consistent “look” within the community, a few activities like riding/boating/showcase rentals.
- Vibrant downtown on weekends. Customer service and friendly atmosphere, staffed visitor center, business successful in capturing tourism dollars.
- Travelers aid, shops-variety, restaurants, well-described points of interest and history.
- Unified, clean, overnight, welcoming, shops, restaurants and food, lodging.
- Living history activities, great shops and restaurants, indoor and outdoor w/ art and ambiance. Residents and owners engaged in promotion of events and assets of area.

- Residents are engaged in promoting events, assets of area, city becoming hub of different activities.
- Main Street shops – day and evening hours. Nice dining. Winery.

***Where do you want to be in 1 year from now as a tourism destination?***

- Events held monthly and weekend packages. Cooperative marketing with shops/restaurants for those weekends.
- To have a strong tourism opportunities year round.
- Be established with the Civil War re-enactment. Community. Develop awareness in Janesville and Madison.
- Attracting more visitors to specific events, plus more visitors in general through collaboration with other communities and organizations, by focusing on 3-5 packages/itineraries.
- Volunteer based organized to deliver. Obtaining tourism resources, i.e. – grants and other incentives. Improved and targeted and cooperative and planned marketing.
- More filled storefronts with Sunday hours. Progress toward trail connectivity. City and Business information readily available throughout business district.
- Building foundation. Planning. Focusing and working toward common goals.
- Want to be working within a consortium regionally and locally. Want to be well-coordinated with specific event dates and awareness and planning at all levels. Want to tap school tourism dollars. Perhaps honing each product – History – Art – Nature.
- Have champions in place for each area of interest.
- Create place to camp. Nice dining. Winery.

***Where do you want to be 3 years from now as a tourism destination?***

- Booming! Not just the 4<sup>th</sup> of July. I would only dream of this town having all of our storefronts filled with retail shops and an event happening every other weekend. A lot of walking traffic.
- Awareness throughout south central Wisconsin.
- Utilizing regional partnerships. Local businesses thriving because they are getting more traffic and spending.
- A full downtown full of walkers evenings and weekends. Tour buses including Evansville as a day stop in regional travel. Trail along Allen Creek. Addition of one winter festival.
- Known regionally. Organized, Achieving goals.
- Expand opportunities of year round events.
- Have developed trails. Have app created for history.

***Where do you want to be 5 years from now as a tourism destination?***

- Walk/bike paths around that exterior of the park and around town. Larger business location here for relieving tax base to make it easier on local small shop's tax base.
- Plus awareness in Milwaukee, Chicago, Dubuque, and Rockford/Northern Illinois.
- People recognize Evansville as a "rich" destination. Niche businesses and boutiques.
- Connected trails to Brodhead, Fitchburg, and New Glarus.
- Two regional events/month May-October with one event per month November-April.
- Destination spot to go. Known regionally and beyond.
- Busy downtown during summer. Busy park during summer.

Conclusion: Evansville's primary vision focuses on leveraging the renovated downtown and the history and culture that envelopes the area. The heartbeat of small towns is found in its people and in the vitality of its downtown, and this is certainly true of Evansville.

According to Roger Brooks, communities should focus on the 10-10-10 "rule of critical mass"<sup>1</sup>. Brooks recommends that in just three lineal blocks, you must have a minimum of ten places that serve food: soda fountain, bistro, café, bakery, coffee shop or restaurant, to name a few. The second ten: destination retail specialty shops that might include art galleries, wine shops, book or antique stores. And finally, ten places open after 6:00 p.m.

The overarching development goal is to assemble supplementary tourism assets for the portfolio. Consider creating a new signature event or taking an existing event and breathing new life into it. You may want to keep in mind how the events become both a winter and summer offering (s). Benchmark other destinations that have been successful with historical reenactments, Civil War events and cultural experiences. Find best practices and emulate them.

To ensure that visitors stay in the area (they become an overnight visitor rather than a day-tripper) additional lodging choices are paramount. Rather than offer a standard brand, develop some unique boutique-type offering that would enhance the historic character of the area.

Make choosing Evansville easy by focusing on a viable niche market with a laser-like focus. Don't try to be everything to everybody. In the world of technology, identifying on-line communities and frequently communicating assets that appeal to distinct motivations will bring more visitors. Create itineraries to make it easy on the visitor and incent them with sales promotions and value. Finally, make sure the visitor can easily move around your area around. Signage must be carefully considered in the destination development plan.

Going forward, continued cooperation between Evansville's civic leaders, business owners, and involved citizens will be vital to a successful outcome for tourism development and promotion of the community.

Resources:  
Wisconsin Main Street Program  
UW Extension Community Development Tool Kit

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