

4-2017

Phenomenological Study of Expectations of Business Owner/Operators for Tourism Investments in the City of Holdingford, Minnesota

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Phenomenological Study of Expectations of Business Owner/Operators for Tourism

Investments in the City of Holdingford, Minnesota

by

Michelle R. Kiley

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of

St. Cloud State University

in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the Degree

Master of Science in

Geography: Tourism Planning and Development

May, 2017

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Abstract

The advancement of new technology, specific to transportation modes has altered the influence of some “Main Streets;” transitioning from “essential” to “optional” destinations. Thus, the prominence of “Main Streets” in non-urbanized cities, as a point of commerce and facilitator of social activities, has been in a state of flux (Southworth, 2005). Based on William H. Whyte’s research, *The Social Life of Small Urban Space* (1980), Project for Public Spaces (PPS) has launched a new campaign ‘Streets as Places.’ This program suggests that through design, the/a ‘street’ can exceed the primary function of mobility and be a catalyst for civic engagement. It is less clear whose responsibility it is to lead investments along the street, as these spaces are potentially utilized by tourists and patrons.

To examine this role, additional research was conducted to understand the perceived value “Main Street” and the entity responsible for future investments in relation to tourism and aesthetics within the public space. The City of Holdingford served the geographic study area to better understand variations in the perspective of business owner/operators with the community on aesthetic investments along “Main Street.” This research assessed the perceived value of an existing non-urban “Main Street,” as a generator of commerce, specific to tourism by business owners/operators; determined the expectations of community business leaders to support investments within the shared, public spaces; and proposed recommendations towards the future development of “Main Street” as a tourism resource in non-urban communities.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank Ernie Schmit, former Mayor of Holdingford, for having the foresight to see value in a small, rural Main Street nestled in the heart of Minnesota. Your goodwill and tireless work will be a legacy with lasting impact in the lives of Holdingford's residents and business owners for generations to come. In addition, I would like to profusely thank Professor R. Baker for believing in a small-town girl searching for direction. Without your continued encouragement, this research would not have been possible.

I dedicate this work to my father John H. Binsfeld, PhD. You possessed the heart of a true entrepreneur, the gifts of an artist and the passion of an undying explorer. Dad, your impact in my life was beyond measure. Thank you for always believing in me and instilling the value of education.

“To accomplish great things we must not only act but also dream, not only plan but also believe.” *Anatole France*

Table of Contents

	Page
List of Tables	7
List of Figures	8
Chapter	
I. Introduction	10
Main Street as Community Space	11
Main Street as a Destination	12
Statement of Problem	14
The Study Area	15
Thesis Structure	15
Significance of the Study	16
Associated Terms and Delimitations	16
II. Literature Review	17
Introduction	17
Main Street	17
The Street: Topographic Influence	18
The Street: Economic Influence	20
Social Interactions along the Street	29
Culture, Community, and Tourism	30
Tourism Experiences	31
Summary	34

Chapter	Page
III. Research Methodology and Design	35
Study Area	35
2005 Community Visioning Session	44
Methodology	47
Research Process	47
IV. Analysis	52
Focus Group One	52
Focus Group Two	56
Focus Group Three	60
V. Study Findings and Conclusion	66
Study Findings	66
Conclusion	70
Recommendations for Further Study	73
References	75
Appendices	
A. 2005 Community Visioning Session: Survey Questions and Outcomes	80
B. 2010 Focus Group Participants	87
C. Photo Release Form	88

List of Tables

Table	Page
1. Population from 1970-2000, Holdingford, MN	38
2. Summary of Data Collected from the 2005 Community Meeting	46

List of Figures

Figure	Page
1. Train depot, Holdingford, MN	22
2. Hardware store front, Holdingford, MN	24
3. Langslet and Klish hardware store front in 1908, Holdingford, MN	24
4. Main street mid-1920s, Holdingford, MN	26
5. Minnesota map indicating the location of the City of Holdingford	37
6. Map of the City of Holdingford	39
7. South facing view of main street's streetscape	41
8. North facing view of main street's streetscape	41
9. Pedals to petals garden	43
10. Covered bridge over the Wobegon Trail and Two Rivers River	43
11. Questions posed to focus group participants	51
12. Group One: Perception of main street	53
13. Group One: Perception of tourism	53
14. Group One: Public, shared space	54
15. Group One: Investments in the public realm	56
16. Group Two: Perception of main street	57
17. Group Two: Perception of tourism	57
18. Group Two: Public, shared space	58
19. Group Two: Investments I the public realm	59
20. Group Three: Perception of main street	60

Figure	Page
21. Group Three: Perception of tourism	62
22. Group Three: Public, shared space	62
23. Group Three: Investments in the public realm	63

Chapter I: Introduction

“Main Streets” have become iconic symbols almost synonymous with small towns and local businesses; identified as key geographic locations and influential social platforms. In 1920, American author Sinclair Lewis based his award-winning book *Main Street* (1920), on his life growing up in the small town of Sauk Centre (pop. less than 4000) in Stearns County, Minnesota. The characters and supporting narrative was built around the social constructs of a geographical place. In addition, Garrison Keillor in his 1985 book *Lake Wobegon Days* editorialized that “[L]ake Wobegon is the seat of tiny Mist County, the phantom county in the heart of the heartland” (Keillor, 1985, p. 10). Keillor’s experience living in the small town of Freeport, Minnesota served as a backdrop to this book and commentary for the Prairie Home Companion radio show; broadcasted across the country via public radio. The author artfully blended fiction with the reality of living in small communities interspersed across Central Minnesota. In 2001, Keillor released *In Search of Lake Wobegon*, a nonfiction book with a photographic archive of several communities in Stearns County, Minnesota. In this book Keillor stated, “[H]oldingford (pop. 635) is the town that looks most Wobegonic to me” (p. 17). He goes on to describe the buildings, storefronts, shop keepers and the street-scape of the community. He reflects on his inspiration to write *Lake Wobegon Days*, noting a desire to connect to the community and its residents as a new resident.

[A]s I sat in the Pioneer Inn and recalled the years I spent in Stearns County, it dawned on me where Lake Wobegon had come from. All those omniscient-narrator stories about small-town people came from a guy sitting alone at the end of a bar, drinking a beer, who didn’t know anything about anything going on around him. (Keillor, 2001, p. 20)

Within these small non-urban communities “Main Street” is the common name attributed to where people connect; the primary focal point for commerce, socializing and entertainment. The National Trust for Historic Preservation (NTHP) works to protect significant places that most represent the nation’s diversity. NTHP characterizes “Main Street” as the street which historically boasts (a) the largest collection of businesses, (b) carries the greatest volume of traffic, and (c) hosts much of a community’s social activity occurring in the public realm (Main Street America, n.d.).

Main Street as Community Space

Kost (1987) suggests the infrastructure of “Main Street” (also commonly referred to as “Broadway” and/or “First”) was established out of the necessity to buy and/or sell physical goods and/or services at plausible, geographical points of intersection. Businesses generate traffic patterns as movement occurs to and from locations using available infrastructure and transportation systems. Traffic patterns create connection points for commerce and simultaneously generated both formal and informal locations for social interactions. In addition, tourists and travelers share the public space as they transition between attractions and become consumers of local goods and services. Keillor (1985) provided insight into the potential influences of the shared public spaces and businesses storefronts creating opportunities, although at times misspent, to connect tourists, patrons, and/or residents to and within the community. The public realm (public/shared spaces) are seen as highly influential intersection points within a community for both daily commerce and tourism activity.

Main Street as a Destination

“Main Streets” have been key locations within a community throughout American history. This concept was further epitomized by Walt Disney who attempted to capture the essence of “Main Street” by incorporating key design elements within his theme parks. He noted that, “[M]ain Street, U.S.A. is America at the turn of the century—the crossroads of an era. The gas lamps and the electric lamps, the horse drawn car and the auto car. Main Street is everyone’s home town...the heartline of America.”

Transportation modes have changed the economic influences of some “Main Streets” as a key, community destination within the last half of the century. The advancement of new technology specifically transportation modes, has altered the potential role of some “Main Streets” transitioning them from “essential” to “optional” destinations. This created a competitive environment within cities to maintain and attract new businesses. Thus, the prominence of some “Main Streets” in non-urban sized cities have been in a state of flux (Southworth, 2005).

Project of Public Spaces (PPS) is a nonprofit organization that studies the role of public spaces in communities; providing training, education, research and resources to support community place-making. PPS believes that the priority placed on vehicular movement in the design and construction of streets has altered the connection points among residents, patrons, and visitors. Based on William H. Whyte’s (1980) research, *The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces*, PPS has launched a national campaign called “Streets as Places.” This program discusses the role of the street in influencing civic engagement, along with economic vitality, human health and environmental sustainability (Projects for Public Places, n.d.). It is

suggested by PPS, that the design of the/a street is foundational to the manner in which civic engagement occurs in a community.

As private interactions potentially spill into public spaces such as doorways, sidewalks, and streets, it is less clear whose responsibility it is to lead investments along the street utilized by residents, tourists and patrons. Tourism activities within the public realm may assist in stimulating non-essential commercial activity to serve both consumers and tourists. According to Explore Minnesota Tourism, dollars used to promote tourism within the State of Minnesota generates approximately \$84 in consumer spending annually (2014). If tourism sites share public spaces with local businesses as transitional areas to and from facilities, then decisions to invest along Main Street may influence other forms of economic development including potential tourism activities. A greater understanding of the perceived value of these public, shared spaces may provide insight on the role of “Main Street” for tourists [tourism] and patrons [commerce]. Additionally, information is needed to ascertain the perceived value of the “Main Street” as it intersects privately owned or rented spaces in a community where the “Main Street” is a predominant destination for commerce.

Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) are designated by the governor in metropolitan areas with a population density greater than 50,000 residents (U.S. Department of Transportation, 2015). When an MPO is not present (non-urban city), it is less clear who is responsible for leading decisions between the public entity and the private sector. Additional insight regarding the potential leadership expectations in a non-urban city, for investments in the public realm may enhance future stakeholder’s decision-making practices. If the intersection of residents, patrons, and visitors [tourists] are foundational to defining the

characteristics of a community's aesthetic experience, then the potential leaders in the community-based decision making processes would also be of importance. Various factors can potentially influence the success of a traditional "Main Street" as a business center in non-urban cities. The overall health of the global, national, state and regional economies undoubtedly have, and will continue to play an important role. The impacts of these economic factors seem to continually shift. This research focuses primarily on the connection between business owners/operators and local units of government.

Statement of Problem

Geographic re-location of businesses have altered the historical role of "Main Street" in the 21st century. The delicate balance between private/public shared spaces sets the stage for this research which examines the perception of the built environment/ aesthetic infrastructure of a non-urban "Main Street." The goal of this paper is to examine "Main Street" and contiguous, publicly shared spaces as a resource and catalyst for tourism development within a non-urban city. The results of this study will:

- 1) assess the perceived value of an existing non-urban "Main Street," as a generator of commerce, specific to tourism by business owners/operators;
- 2) determine the expectations of community business leaders to support investments within the shared, public spaces; and
- 3) propose recommendations towards the future development of "Main Street" as a tourism resource in non-urban communities.

The Study Area

The City of Holdingford, Minnesota and its “Main Street” served as a geographical study area for this research. This non-urban city (pop. 736) located in Stearns County provides the shared geography of both Garrison Keillor and Sinclair Lewis’ literature prose. In addition, the city recently underwent a community visioning session in partnership with the Initiative Foundation of Central Minnesota the result of which identified interest in developing and/or enhancing local tourism assets and commerce. This research continued the body of the Foundation’s work, by gathering additional input from owners/operators within the Holdingford area. The intent was to identify perception of the current “Main Street” and tourism as a potential for increased economic development opportunities.

Thesis Structure

Each of the five preceding chapters discuss in greater detail public, shared spaces stated previously. Chapter II gives an extensive review of existing literature specific to the functionality of “Main Streets,” architectural influences in development, community design elements and associated concepts in relationship to community tourism between the tourist and the traveler. Chapter III further defines the study area and methodology used to collect data. An analysis of the participant’s responses constitutes Chapter IV of this thesis. The final chapter (Chapter V) includes a summary and interpretation of the findings along with recommendations for further study of the role of Main Street and investments within the public shared space to create a destination of choice for tourists and patrons.

Significance of the Study

The Community Capitals Framework (Flora, Flora & Fey, 2004) outlines six core assets that impact both community and economic development-relevant to community-based tourism. One of the six key assets listed framework is “Political Capital.” This study may identify the political influence necessary to improve the public realm used by tourists/visitors. Accordingly, it could then aid non-urban city leaders as they look to increase “Main Street” commerce using tourism as a development tool among business owners and operators. In doing so, directly impact the vitality of the “Main Street.”

Associated Terms and Delimitations

Focus group discussions can be difficult to capture, analyze, and accurately summarize. Observations are grouped subjectively by the researcher. The recorded conversations in this research reflect existing business owners/operators in one non-urban city in Central Minnesota. These findings were gathered from one non-urban city and may not necessarily apply to or reflect all non-urban cities within the State of Minnesota or elsewhere. This research does not take into consideration the opinions of residents of the City of Holdingford or its elected officials.

Chapter II: Literature Review

Introduction

Chapter II reviews existing research which lays the foundation for this study. First, the concept of “Main Street” is defined geographically (spatial), illustrating the chronological evolution (historical) of this roadway in the United States with somewhat of an emphasis on mid-west development themes. Second, the (social) influence of the “public space” or “public realm” as it relates to local commerce will be explored. A correlation between the public realm and the perceived value of tourism’s influence on generating commerce will be considered. This should establish the need for additional research to explore the value, perception, and responsibility of future investments along these streets conducive to tourism, as it pertains to the connections between the built environment, business and tourism.

This literature review explores the historical role of the “street” and its influence on the development of geographic locations which transformed physical spaces into important economic incubators in communities. The conversion of paths carved out from the natural landscape into routes, then to designated roads and potentially central streets for commerce, illustrates the functionality of transportation in economic development. In a non-urban city, these initial streets often became recognizable archetypes and reoccurring infrastructure in small towns across the United States (Francaviglia, 1996).

Main Street

In American history, “Main Street” is often identified as a necessary connector and influential hub of development, social activity and place-making. In the article *American Roads, Roadside America*, Karl Raitz (1998) states,

[H]ilaire Belloc's road begins as a geographical entity, a linear route of passage linking settlements to resources and enabling circulation, interchange, and the flow of ideas from place to place. This road harbors spatial, historical, and social dimensions. Jean Baudrillard's road is a window into the soul of an America that has embraced mass production and the resulting mass consumption. (p. 2)

Roads as physical constructs, have affected how people conduct business within a specific geographic location. Francaviglia (1996) stated, “[T]he more visible or accessible a property or building on Main Street, the more valuable it will be as commercial property” (p. 83). He further described the spatial design relationship between the street and surrounding buildings in Bellevue, Ohio stating, “[T]he feeling is not solely created by the actual structures themselves, for similar structures exist in other towns that possess a more open feeling, but rather by their placement in a complex configuration of angled, built-up lots; the feeling thus is determined, in part, by the pattern of streets” (p. 83).

In addition to the buildings, the arrangement and placement of distractive open spaces helped shape the character of “Main Street.” This literature suggests that economic development and topography influenced the construction of the street, its sanctioned uses and what occurs along its edges. The relationship between these elements shaped how individuals and groups interacted within a given geographical area both historically and in the present day.

The Street: Topographic Influence

As outlined in the video *America by Design: The Street*, narrator Spiro Kost (1987) discusses the evolution of trade and commerce transpiring at locations that possessed an important resource(s) and/or a logical, geographical location in which people intuitively converged. In some areas, the discovery of a resource became the dominant force in attracting

people. Another important factor included topographical barriers, such as bodies of water or mountains. These barriers limited the movement of people and products. Settlers tended to cluster at specific locations in which the obstacles were mitigated, such as a river crossing, clearings in a valley or a passage through a mountain. These sites created important opportunities to trade, buy or sell goods and services. Some travelled to access these goods and services, while others established homesteads and trading posts in close proximity to these locations.

Economic development. Historically the dynamics of supply and demand are the foundation for the development and retention of local and regional businesses within United States (U.S.) and are still somewhat relevant today (Kane, 2004). People drive the need for the importation and exportation of goods. The number of people in a given area, determines how much product is needed. The demographics and interests of these individuals influences the variety of services desired. The types of businesses that emerge are in response to these needs and desires. Locations in which businesses became established were often in response to increasing population densities.

Storefronts were connected and clustered to draw patrons to a key location to purchase goods and services. The way in which an individual could access a good or service was predetermined by the mode of transportation available. Therefore, a key factor influencing where these prime locations were constructed, was the predominant mode(s) of transportation at the time of settlement (National Trust for Historic Preservation, 2010).

The Street: Economic Influence

Prior to the 1900s, people within the mid-west traveled predominantly by boat, horse [wagon] and on foot. Travel speed and distance was condensed; livery-change stations and inns would accommodate traveler(s) within approximately a 10 mile radius. Ultimately, the design of the street within the community needed to be walkable (Raitz, 1998). The first type of infrastructure was in the form of flatboats or rustic roads constructed out of rocks, mud and tree stumps. Surfaces of common paths were hardened to permit horse drawn trucks to move products such as coal and wheat from docks and railroad yards to factories and mills; or to haul raw materials and finished goods between factories and warehouses (Tiemann, 1976). Initially paved sections of roads and bridges were constructed by private investors to begin to build small towns and communities that relied on the movement of goods or to access services.

The 1820s marked the establishment of man-made waterways, locks and rail systems in which business districts began to develop parallel to the most dominant form of transportation or transportation system. The Railroad Act of 1862 supported the establishment of a trans-continental system of trails across the United States connecting the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans (Library of Congress, 1862). This process also facilitated the establishment of key cities, such as Minneapolis, Chicago and Seattle along with countless smaller towns and (non-urban) cities along its route.

Kost (1987) further describes the connection between transportation and commerce through a historical account of the transformation of the American streetscape. He began with rail transport, intended to carry raw supplies long distances and concludes with a depiction of

the modern-day street utilized predominately by automobiles and truck traffic. Raw materials were processed at businesses established near rail stations, such as a mill or pickle factory. Refined products from these sites were then dispersed to businesses in other nearby locations by wagon. Rail construction was sponsored through grants of public land to new immigrants and laborers. These facilities ran alongside canals and rivers into previously unmapped territories. Warehouses, mills and other processing facilities were pressured to move further west to accommodate the increase in settlements. Stations were located at strategic intervals and often ran parallel to rivers with a series of perpendicular streets, when topographically feasible. The evolution of commerce as it connects to the movement of goods is reflected in Figure 1, a photograph of the City of Holdingford's train depot with commercial buildings being established in proximity to the train as a dominant transportation system.

Structural dimensions. This basic network of streets is still evident in many cities and towns; serving as the key infrastructure designed to move goods to and from the station at depot sites. A core street was often erected to support most of the businesses within a community worth the establishment of a more formalized market area. Structures were built to shield the goods and/or patrons from the natural environments such as rain, snow and sun. In communities in which the street became more affluent, it was often named First Street, Canal, Broadway or Main. For the purposes of this research these streets are referred to as "Main Street."



Figure 1. Train depot, Holdingford, MN.

“Main Streets” began to grow in size and prominence prior to the 1920s, and reflected a common infrastructure and street-scape. These streets often extended two to three blocks in length, were wider in comparison to other local streets and opened on either end to farmland. Flanking both sides of the street were two rows of narrow, multilevel buildings that housed a collection of small businesses. To reduce the distance between businesses for pedestrians in a range of climates, buildings often shared a common wall. The footprints of these structures were narrow and deep, with a height twice that of the width. Living quarters were constructed above the main floor; rented and/or occupied by the business owners (Pierce, 2004).

Architectural designs were initially constructed to “human scale” which is proportionate to the average height of an individual. Elements of scale in relation to humans are applied under the field of anthropometrics, which studies how humans interact with their surrounding environments; based on an individual’s physical dimensions, capabilities and limitations (Imrie, 2003). For example, windows in business buildings along Main Street tended to be higher (vertical) to appeal to pedestrians walking in front of a store. Displays took into consideration the average height of person standing in front of the window to advertise goods and encourage patrons to enter the stores. Figure 2, is a historic photo of a hardware store illustrating the common height and width of the windows in relation to the average height of person. Figure 3 is an image, taken of the same hardware store featured in Figure 2 some years later. These two images illustrate the evolution of “Main Street” in which businesses were constructed in human scale in both height and distance with little to not space between the outside walls.



Figure 2. Hardware store front, Holdingford, MN.

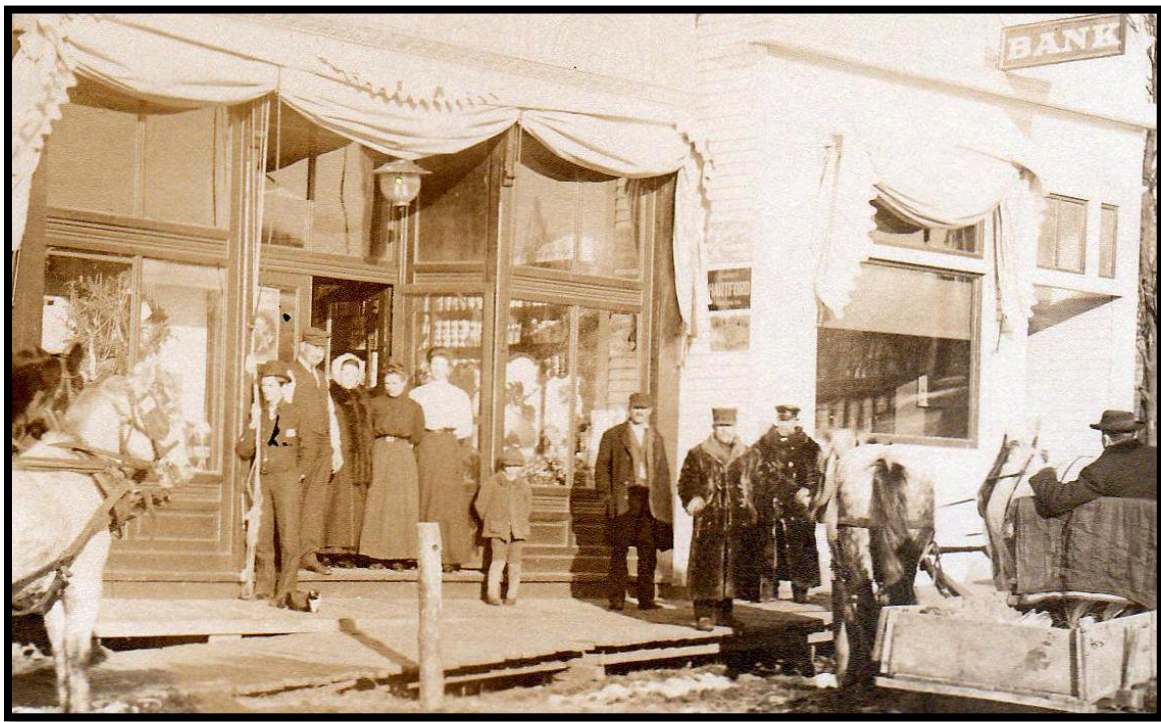


Figure 3. Langslet and Klish hardware store front in 1908, Holdingford, MN.

Technology increases mobility. Transportation modes determines the time and distance traveled to and from a site to buy or sell a good and/or service. New technological advancements increased options for homesteading and corresponding business locations. As transportation alternatives evolved, key locations became more defused. The arrival of the automobile at the beginning of the 20th century allowed people to increase the distance traveled from home, work, or a service with relatively the same amount of time invested in travel by increasing the overall speed of travel. Baudrillard (1989) observed that moving at high speeds produces a kind of invisibility or transparency in things, a triumph of effect over cause. Venturi, Brown, and Izenour, (1977) believed that as speed increases, the view of the road narrows; reflecting a singular, forward facing corridor.

Between 1910 and 1940, roads were seen as both corridors for movement and high-density markets to the mobile. The mass production of automobiles increased demand for improved road infrastructure as depicted in Figure 4.



Figure 4. Main street mid-1920s, Holdingford, MN.

By 1921, this technology also assisted in the introduction of a truck-trailer type of transportation, reducing the reliance on horse-drawn wagons and sleds to move goods (Perry, 1921). In addition, the emphasis of the railroad began to slowly decrease as a mode of transport of both goods and people. According to MacDonald and Cavaaluzzo (1996, p. 80), “[B]y the 1970s, three mid-western railroads had entered bankruptcy.” This journal article noted financial weakness led to the physical deterioration of many systems. Railroad infrastructure such as changing stations, depots, and tracks eventually reduced in number and occupancy rates; lessening its role moving freight and/or passengers. By the late 1900s many non-urban cities began to demolish or redevelop this infrastructure as community sites with rest areas and paved trails. This change of use redefined the purpose of the rail system in non-urban cities like Bowlus, Albany, and Holdingford, Minnesota as a recreational amenity (i.e.,

The Wobegon Trail System), opposed to the movement of raw materials or commuting.

Although a less predominant mode of transportation, some renewed interest in rail began in the latter half of the 20th century re-investing in regional rail systems in the form of light-rail or commuter rail corridors that connect larger, often urban cities.

As automobiles became more accessible to the masses, neighborhoods began to include single and eventually double car garages. Existing travel paths were expanded to become streets and the borders of a community expanded. Eventually new roadways were constructed with treated surfaces including crushed rock, concrete and bituminous (Kost, 1987). According to the National Trust for Historic Preservation (2010), “[W]ith improved transportation routes, people found it easier to travel longer distanced to work and shop. Roads that once connected neighborhoods to downtown now carried residents to outlying shopping strips and regional malls”. Raitz (1998) noted, “The roadside became a new kind of space occupying the unstable zone between the discipline of the road and the informality of the countryside, a spatial contradiction that gave license to a new, free-wheeling, mercantile logic, an improvisational departure from the staid formality of *Main Street*” (p. 18). The statement implies that “Main Street” business owners/operators needed to make subjective determinations as to how, and if they can compete to stay relevant.

Infrastructure impacts of street expansion. According to Southworth (2005), by the 20th century distance to and from goods and services was no longer seen as a barrier. This initiated the transitioned away from one concentric location to virtually unlimited possibilities for business location. Raitz (1998) accounts for this stating, “[A]ccess to good roads and the ability of the automobile to fulfill the dual roles of entertainment and necessity allowed the

roadside to become a logical place in which to experiment with the possibilities of mass consumption” (p. 17). To accommodate automobiles, businesses saw new opportunities to expand their potential customer base. Large, single story buildings were constructed in more remote locations. The commercial strip and atrium malls began serving as an extension of “Main Street.” These horizontal structures boosted auto friendly signage, parking and extensive lighting. Southworth (2005) states, “[T]he US public landscape changed dramatically in the 1950s with the invention of the suburban shopping mall as the primary setting for retail activity. In the 1960s there were four square feet of retail space, per person in the USA and 38,966 malls across the country” (p. 152).

“Main Street’s” response was reflected architecturally with expanded windows carved out of adjoining storefronts. As space became available on “Main Street” some business owners purchased the neighboring building(s), removing the common wall to elongate the front display windows to compete with the other larger stores. Elongated store front windows increased the visibility of goods as potential customers drove pass at increased speeds. Auto influenced displays need to be readable at a glance, and simplified with bigger letters and fewer words (Southworth, 2005).

Car-centric city planning continued to encourage the sprawl of development sites to accommodate automobile movement at increasing speeds not easily achieved within the confines of a traditionally development “Main Street.” Pedestrian amenities and social activities were not accommodated to the same extent in the design of these new infrastructures (Doxiadis, 1963).

Another ramification was reflected in the retail industry as the type of businesses interested in establishing on traditional Main Street fluctuated based on desired goods and services. Building became vacant as businesses closed or relocated closer to highways in an attempt to increase storefront visibility. Today, a majority of retail businesses in a community can be seen along larger roadways that carry higher volumes of traffic and are often fronted by expansive parking lots.

Southworth (2005) notes the influence of these massive, enclosed structures [malls] began to wane as the desire for smaller scaled, walkable streets regained influence in the beginning of the 21st century; “[T]here seems to have been a revival of the street as a social/functional space and the notion of street-side retail” (p. 152). In the preceding years, there was an architectural movement to replicate a traditional “Main Street” by reconstructing symbolic street elements.

Social Interactions along the Street

Streets are the points of interaction between residents, customers and visitors created by intentional and unintentional social interactions as people come into physical, face-to-face contact with other people. In addition, the form of the buildings and the spaces between these structures becomes the stage for people to engage others, as well as interact with the surrounding environment supported by the design and aesthetics of a given location.

Francaviglia (1996) identifies the strategic positioning of the dominant commercial streets in relation to a) public square, b) singular, linear axis point, c) county seats, d) river, and (e) rail corridors. Suggesting that these held the greatest points in which people interact as they intersect one another’s paths of travel.

Rural “Main Streets” are seen as key physical locations in which pedestrians could interact. These streets were historically perceived as the social hub of activity. The advent of the automobile de-personalized how this interaction took place. It created a real and perceived barrier between people; altering the physical environment in which these interactions occurred. It could be suggested that it transitioned away from person-to-person connections on foot, to less personal interactions involving person-to-automobile, or independent interactions such as automobile-to-automobile adjacent to and within “Main Street.”

Culture, Community, and Tourism

Accordingly to Merriam-Webster’s Dictionary (2012), culture can be defined by a group of people who share a common set of ideologies. These values and beliefs are not necessarily associated with set or contrived geographic boundaries; they could be without borders. Therefore, the term “community” is loosely applied throughout this paper; referring more specifically to a society [culture] of people whom define themselves as a collective group. As such, a community’s “sense of place” is often derived from how its members view themselves in the context of their surroundings. It can be argued that the stronger the historical character and heritage, the more distinct a community is in an ever-changing society where globalization and standardization has become the norm.

“Main Street” is the name of a community revitalization program of the National Trust for Historic Preservation that began in the late 1970s. The focus of the “Main Street” program is the preservation of the built environment by engaging in historic preservation. The “Main Street” program identifies a “4-Point” approach to revitalization that includes design, promotion, economic restructuring, and organization. It was originally established to support

large urban downtowns. However, over the years the program expanded to include towns of various sizes and even small, neighborhoods. Various journal articles have been published discussing the nostalgic role of “Main Streets” synonymous with non-urban cities [small towns]. The intent of this literature review is not to discount these psychological and historical connections, but merely note their prevalence is the establishment and revitalization of “Main Streets” throughout the proceeding decades. This is evident in planning and community development practices. For example: the commercial policies outlined in Mixed Use Corridor design brief states,

[T]he quality of the public realm also contributes to the quality of life, community health, walkability, sense of place and adds economic value. A significant component of the public realm is the streetscape, which includes the distinguishing elements of the street and the building facades facing the street. (City of Kitchener, 2012 p. DB-D-1.1)

Tourism Experiences

Tourism can be used as a platform to connect a visitor(s) to a community. The ability and desire of a tourists to interact within a community may vary based on the design of the shared, public space(s). Potential and realized negative consequences to tourism has been document in various journal articles. For example, Butler’s (1980) resort cycle theory discusses a decrease in the quality of life within a given area as a result of tourism development. However, tourism research also suggests that a positive relationship between the tourist and the host community could exist. Overtime, cultures are inevitably influenced through exposure to other ideologies, products and people. In the article *Nostalgic Tourism* (2008), Russell studies why tourists select specific locations. He suggested that the intent of travel was not merely to experience authentic cultures, but to better define ones-self and

connect to the historical fiber of a community through this process. Beeton (2005) discusses the ability of tourism to provide a more desirable alternative to current social and/or economic situations within the framework of a supportive tourism industry by enhancing a location. Medina (2003) suggested that culture and authenticity may be defined as products mutually constructed by locals and tourists through their interactions. This theory asserts that products invented for the purpose of tourism may over time become incorporated into and be perceived as manifestations of local culture. Other research suggests that tourism has the ability to act as a powerful catalyst through business practices. Hughes (1995) asserts that, “[R]ather than being naturally given, authenticity in tourism is held to have been produced by a variety of entrepreneurs, marketing agents, interpretative guides, animators, institutional mediators, and the like” (p. 783). According to Reid, Mair, and George (2004), “[T]ourism development is generally the prerogative of entrepreneurs or special interest groups in community, most of which treat tourism like other commercial forms” (p. 623).

Rural tourism is defined by Beeton (2005) as, “[T]ourism that occurs in non-urban areas or settings in which human activity is present” (p. 142). Hausmann (2007) reviewed a host of communities investing in cultural sites and identified the following theme; “[O]ne of the more suitable means of increasing the revenue situation on an ongoing basis is to improve and expand the cultural tourism offerings” (p. 174). In the United States, \$3.7 billion dollars is generated annually in association with cultural tourism; providing opportunities for tourists to connect with a unique social heritage and character (McKercher & Du Cros, 2002). The state of Minnesota reports annually that the leisure and hospitality industries have an economic impact from gross sales of \$11.9 billion and \$4.1 billion in wages. Specifically, “[T]ravel and

tourism has a positive economic impact, supporting a wide variety of Main Street businesses across the state” (Explore Minnesota Tourism, 2013). In addition, Medina (2003) proposed that culture and authenticity may be defined as products mutually constructed by tourists and locals through their interactions. This theory asserts that products invented for the purpose of tourism may over time become incorporated into and perceived as manifestations of local culture. Deducing that said cultures manifested over time are continually changing and redefining themselves and ultimately, what is authentic. Uzzell (1984) suggests that the community “image” is a publicly held, visual element consensually representative of the overall community. According to Lee (1968), images of the built environment are constructed through “socio-spatial schemata” in which both people and place serve as fundamentally equal elements in the aesthetics of public spaces.

Marketing has always been an important tool used to sell a product; even if said product is a culture or tradition the same techniques used in to sales and promotions apply. Richards and Wilson (2004) reviewed marketing’s emerging role in the development of a community’s identity (imaging/branding) to attract revenue from private sector investors, and compete for limited public sector resources. Robert MacDonald (1994) state, “...tourism often becomes another tool to help create jobs and to raise the standards of living” (p. 307). Therefore, tourism may be viewed as an additional, viable means for place making, community development and potentially supporting local businesses as a supplemental customer base.

Summary

Natural barriers and limited mobility that once championed the development of specific geographic locations, are no longer seen as insurmountable barriers. Most notably, the advancements made in the design and mass production of the automobile has reduced the time and distance to and from businesses (and tourism) destinations. This has significantly altered the economic impact of “Main Streets” which historically catered to patrons with limited accessibility; shifting its influence over the past century from premiere to optional locations. The built environment and the public realm serves as stage or public space in which tourists move within a community. Tourism has the potential to serve as an economic driver to encourage additional traffic along “Main Street,” patronizing businesses and ultimately strengthen the economic impact within the community. However, it is unclear if small business owners/operators recognize the connections between business [economic development], tourism [tourists], public space [the street] and aesthetics. A more in-depth look at a non-urban city, was needed to identify if there is a consensus among the business community.

Chapter III: Research Methodology and Design

External factors cited in Chapter II, suggest that the status of a rural “Main Street,” not currently located next to or on a major roadway, may no longer be the primary location (connection point) for business. A host of books and journal articles published between 1980 and 2000 discuss this fundamental shift in influence; emphasizing the necessity of a well-connected business location to access suppliers, customers and key marketplaces. Greater mobility and the desire for many businesses to be located next to a highway or interstate roadway(s) has contributed to the sprawl of potential economic generators. Therefore, what is the perceived value of the street from the perspective of existing business owners/operators? And, what is the role of business leaders in making investments in aesthetics of and adjacent to “Main Street” with the understanding that tourism can be an economic development tool?

Study Area

For the purposes of this study a non-urban city in a rural community is considered as having a population of less than 2,500 residents. The term “rural” and “local” communities are referred to as “non-urban” cities throughout this study. Ideally, a minimal transportation infrastructure would reduce the influence of arterial traffic to and from the community. In doing so, it would require a geographic location to develop as a destination for regional tourism, independent of the dominant modes of transportation.

The City of Holdingford, Minnesota was selected based on its current and historical population size, geographic location and minimal transportation infrastructure. In addition, the community conducted a visioning session in 2005 with local residents that was facilitated by the Initiative Foundation, a nonprofit established in 1986 that serves 14-counties across

Central Minnesota. The Foundation specializes in grassroots, community and economic development programming. Participants had an opportunity to discuss the future of City of Holdingford. When surveyed, four key areas of focus were identified. A relationship was made between the priority areas and the potential need to examine the physical spaces shared by residents, patrons and visitors. An examination of the aesthetics of “Main Street,” was completed after the community visioning session. Based on the researcher’s observations, the need for additional visual and structural improvements along the street would be highly recommended. These factors supported the geographic location for this study.

The City of Holdingford is located in Stearns County (Latitude: 45.73 N, Longitude: 94.47 W) in the central region of Minnesota; approximately one-hundred miles northwest of the state capitol in St. Paul (Figure 5). Randolph Holding, an early pioneer, settled the area in 1868. He placed his homestead on the west side of a ford along a small river and established a general store on the south side of Two Rivers River. “In 1872 he was appointed the 1st postmaster of *Holding’s Ford*, located at his general store where he platted out his vision for the future village” (City Data, 2014).



Figure 5. Minnesota map indicating the location of the City of Holdingford (City of Holdingford, 2006).

In 1896, the village was incorporated as the City of Holdingford. Moderate growth in density and overall population occurred from 1970-2000 which is illustrated below in Table 1. By 2000, the population reached its highest point totaling 736 residents (City Data, 2014). The total population never exceeded 2,500 and therefore fits within the parameter of this study as a non-urban city.

Table 1

Population from 1970-2000, Holdingford, MN

Holdingford (city)	1970	1980	1990	2000
Population	551	635	561	736
Land Area (sq. mile)	0.30	0.37	0.36	0.62
Density (persons per sq. mile)	1,836.7	1,716.2	1,558.3	1,182.1
Housing Units	170	234	228	297
Households	--	224	222	286
Persons Per Household	--	2.83	2.53	2.55

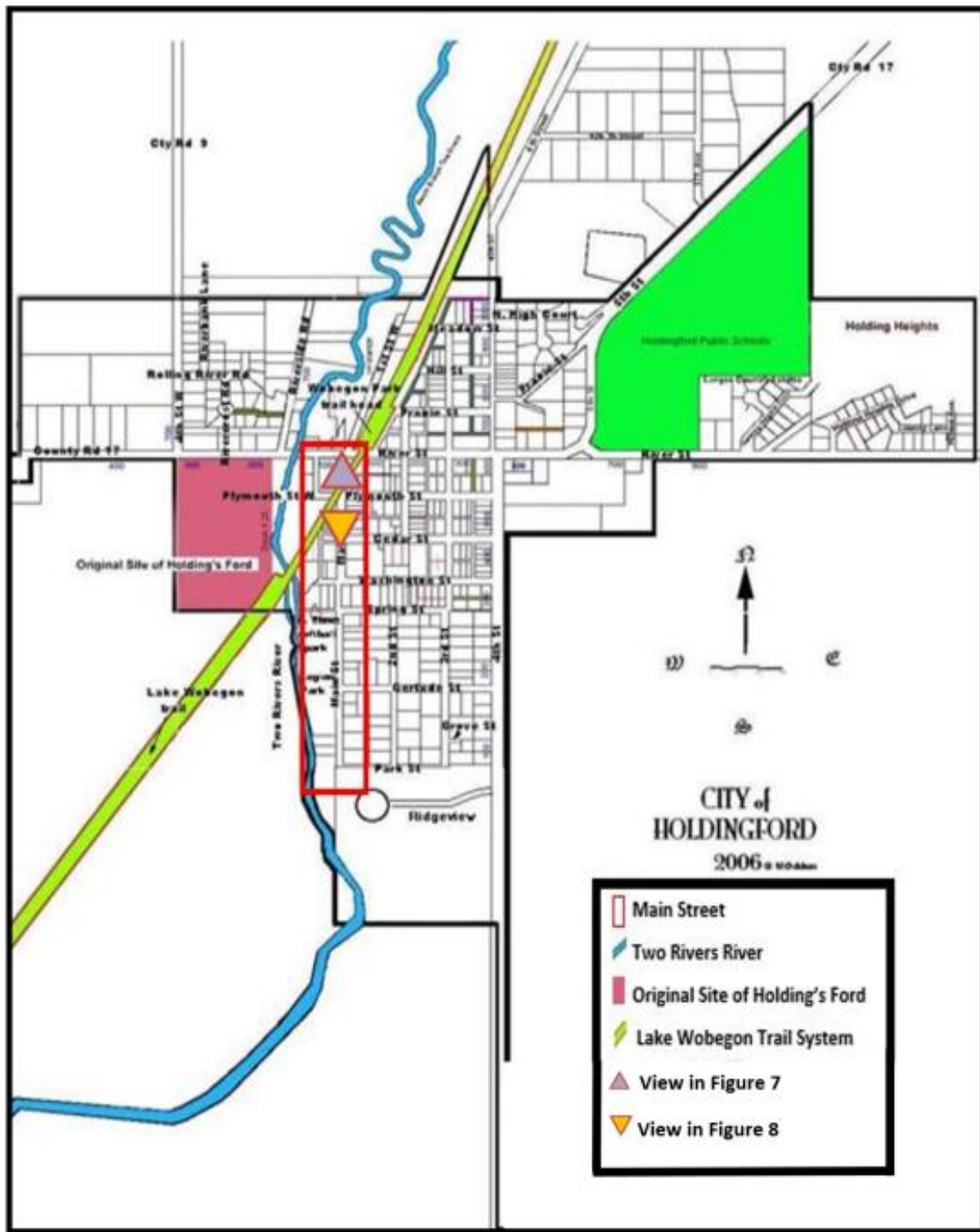


Figure 6. Map of the City of Holdingford (City of Holdingford, 2006).

Transportation infrastructure. As defined by the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) in the *Summary of Functional Classification Guidelines*, “[R]ural systems are composed of principal arterials, minor arterial, collector and local roads. Collectors link larger towns and major traffic generators not served by arterials, collect traffic from local roads and provide for intra-county travel. Local roads primarily provide access to adjacent land” (Preston, 2014). Holdingford’s streets are comprised of two rural collector roadways, County Road 17 and County Road 9 that support traffic moving into and through the city. These county roads are augmented by a series of local streets. No major arterial roadways directly serve the city. Interstate 94 (principal arterial) is located 9 miles south and Highway 10 (minor arterial) is 13 miles east of the current city limits. Figure 6 depicts the city’s jurisdiction with a red box illustrating the study area. Holdingford’s Main Street runs parallel to Two Rivers River to the west. The northern boundary is bisected by River Street (County Road 9) which is a continuous route that carries traffic east and west through the city. The southern portion of “Main Street” ends as it intersects with Park Street. A total of 6 streets run perpendicular to “Main Street” operating as small arterials.

Land use. All of the “Main Street” businesses are located along the three city blocks between River and Washington Streets. Figures 7 and 8 provide a street level view wide lanes and parallel parking. It also depicts common walled buildings flanking each side of the road between River and Cedar street; with limited public space beyond the standard eight-foot sidewalk and small garden. In addition, the city has two large industrial businesses located on “Main Street.” along Washington Street.



Figure 7. South facing view of main street's streetscape.



Figure 8. North facing view of main street's streetscape.

Outside of business, non-motorized activity is generated along the Lake Wobegon Regional Trail System, which bi-sects the northern edge of “Main Street” at a diagonal. This is a component of Stearns County’s regional trail project that began in the later 90s in which abandoned rail segments were turned in to trails to support a variety of recreational amenities. The city is identified as a “Trailhead” by the Lake Wobegon Trail Association. A covered picnic area was constructed north of River Street offering outdoor seating and public restrooms. A small wooden train and historical box car with two murals, completed by a local artist were added to the grounds.

In 2008, the longest covered bridge in the state was constructed along the trail spanning the Two Rivers River, southwest of “Main Street.” Pedals to Petals, a triangular-shaped community flower garden is located at the intersection of River and Main. In partnership with the city, volunteers maintain the garden. It has limited seating, flower gardens, a small fountain feature and a path connecting to the regional Lake Wobegon Trail system. The park is strategically located adjacent to downtown businesses, serving as a type of gateway to “Main Street.” Figures 9 and 10 depict the garden juxtaposed at the intersection of River and “Main Street” and in connection to the Lake Wobegon Trail System which runs along the western edge of the commercial buildings on “Main Street.”



Figure 9. Pedals to petals garden.



Figure 10. Covered bridge over the Wobegon Trail and Two Rivers River.

The southern tier of city blocks hosts a large, open community gathering space between Spring and Park Street. This long, contiguous space is positioned southwest of “Main Street” and east of Two Rivers River. It supports a small playground, baseball field and a temporary ice rink during the winter months. The southeastern edge of “Main Street” is zoned residential.

2005 Community Visioning Session

Five years prior to this study in 2005, the City of Holdingford partnered with the Initiative Foundation to conduct a community visioning session with local residents. The purpose was to encourage and support conversations with stakeholders to identify community assets and challenges. The results were intended to identify and prioritize projects and/or services that could be established or enhanced to benefit the city.

More than 150 individuals attended as self-defined “stakeholders” interested in discussing the future of Holdingford. During this meeting, attendees were asked three questions about the community of Holdingford:

- 1) What do you like?
- 2) What do you dislike?
- 3) What do you want?

Each participant was given an opportunity to provide input in both small and large group discussions for each of the questions. Responses were documented by the Foundation’s staff and local community leaders using flipcharts. At the end of the session, participants were given three stickers in the shape of dots, and asked to rank their top three projects and/or

programs. This was done by placing the dots on the flipcharts next the descriptions of what the participant would like most to see in Holdingford.

Summary of the visioning session. The stakeholders at the community visioning session identified an interest in supporting “Main Street,” aesthetics, business growth (emphasizing retail) and tourism. The 2005 data collected shows that (a) arts and culture, (b) commercial*, (c) community identity and leadership, and (d) recreation received more than 50% of the community votes. A complete list of the desired outcomes for the 2005 community visioning session can be found in Appendix A.

Table 2 demonstrates common responses or ideas by sector from the community visioning session. Responses were grouped and tallied by sector. Arts and culture, commerce, recreation and community leadership/identity are depicted in the shaded boxes. It should be noted that tourism was referred to as commercial activity in the data sheet provided by the Initiative Foundation. Participants were given the opportunity to vote on their top three priorities from the entire list of ideas presented. Each time a sector was mentioned a point was added to the total number of votes it received from the stakeholders. The percentage of total votes is captured in the column on the far right.

In 2006, the Holdingford in Partnership (H.I.P.) committee was established to organize and implement projects, programs and/or services that aligned with the 2005 community visioning session priorities. This information served as the foundation of and catalyst for, the collection of additional data specific to tourism. This study builds on the outcomes of the visioning session and focuses on the perspectives of business owners/operators. Accordingly, research was conducted in support of H.I.P. and under the guidance of the then mayor of

Holdingsford, Ernie Schmit. The mayor served as the principal investigator supporting the collection of the research but was asked to not be present at the focus groups. Costs including postage, meals for focus group participants and copies of materials were covered by the H.I.P. committee. Sessions were facilitated by a researcher who lived near the community but did not own or operate a business in the city in 2010. The role of the moderator was to (a) lead small group discussions by presenting and posing questions, (b) collect group responses, (c) keep conversations relevant to the session's desired outcomes, and (c) document observations.

Table 2

Summary of Data Collected from the 2005 Community Meeting

Sector	Times Referenced	Total Votes**	% of Total Votes
Arts & Culture	3 out of 97	14	4%
Commerce*	13 out of 97	91	24%
Community Identity & Leadership	13 out of 97	51	14%
Recreation	9 out of 97	45	12%
Subtotals	38 out of 97	201	54%
<i>Data continued...</i>			
Education	4 out of 97	12	3%
Faith	1 out of 97	4	1%
Housing	4 out of 97	5	1%
Human Services	13 out of 97	32	8%
Infrastructure	1 out of 97	9	2%
Labor Force	4 out of 97	13	3%
Land Use	1 out of 97	2	~1%
Local Government	19 out of 97	78	21%
Public Safety	4 out of 97	20	5%
Transportation	1 out of 97	1	~1%
Totals	97	377	100%
* Tourism was referenced as a commercial activity in this dataset.			
** One point was added each time a sector was mentioned (times referenced) to the line item votes to determine total votes			

Methodology

Qualitative research. Qualitative research methods seek to understand the perspectives of a given population through the collection of opinions, values, and relative social context used to gain a greater understanding of a specific research problem (Mack, Woodsong, MacQueen, Guest, & Namey, 2005). Phenomenological methodology was determined to be the most suitable form of qualitative data collection. Leedy and Ormrod (2005) affirms this method of qualitative research seeks meaning units described by a “lived experience.” Information can be obtained orally from a targeted sample of individuals that participate in unstructured interviews. Data collected are associated with typical experiences connoted by common language and descriptive words, as well as verbal and nonverbal observations documented by the researcher. It considers aspects such as physical, social and cultural environments portrayed by notions, beliefs or attitudes. For this study, primary data was collected using a phenomenological research methodology in small group settings. The intent was to gain a greater understanding regarding attitudes of existing business owners/operators towards “Main Street” not currently evident based on the existing secondary data.

Research Process

A phenomenological study was conducted in 2010 to collect data from local business owners/operators in relation to their proximity to the City of Holdingford’s “Main Street.” Three geographically segregated focus groups were organized. The conversations held by each group was compiled and aggregated using common themes that reflected the core questions posed in this research. The data was compiled based on four key areas of perceived value: 1) historical “Main Street,” 2) tourism, 3) existing public spaces, and 4) local

leadership. The data themes from all three focus group discussions were compared to identify commonalities and/or variances between each sub-group of business owners/operators.

Focus groups and participants. Focus groups may assist in learning, problem solving, or creating a forum to influence community planning by providing insight on complex issues and situations that cannot be easily gathered remotely or by using a standard multiple choice survey (Mack et al., 2005). Participation in the focus groups was restricted to business owners/operators that associated with the City of Holdingford based on geographic proximity to “Main Street.” Visual surveys, a membership data base from the local Commercial Club, and telephone book searches were used to assist in identifying a total of forty-nine businesses as potential participants. The list of businesses were further categorized by geographical location based on postal addresses. Three separated groups were identified. Group 1 owned/operated a business located on “Main Street” (located within the red box in Figure 6). Group 2 consisted of business owners/operators within the current city limits, but were not geographically located along “Main Street.” Businesses within Group 3 were located outside of the city limits, but still referred to Holdingford as their main city of reference for business.

Three focus group sessions were held at City Hall in April 2010. In an effort to maintain the integrity of the data, all three sessions were intentionally offered the same week: Group 1 was convened on April 14, Group 2 on April 15, and Group 3 on April 16. A total of 27 businesses participated in the focus groups representing approximately 55% of the total existing businesses in 2010. Refer to Appendix B for a complete list of focus group participants.

A free, catered lunch was provided to attendees along with an agenda, a list of questions that would be discussed, and a nametag. In addition, attendees were notified that the session would be recorded for the purposes of collecting input and opinion related to “Main Street.” Attendees were asked to sign an information release form giving permission to use the information collected for the purpose of research. For the purposes of this research, focus attendees are referred to as respondents.

The focus group sessions were scheduled for one hour during lunch. The tables and chairs were set in a circle so that each respondent could be visible to the entire group. All respondents were encouraged to speak one at a time. Generally, responses were offered rotating clockwise around the room. No one person dominated the conversation in any of the three focus groups. Each respondent was given equal time to provide opinions, input and feedback.

At the beginning of each session, a clearly defined purpose was presented to the groups which included the results of the 2005 community visioning meeting (focusing on the responses corresponding to Main Street, tourism, business retention and attractions), a definition of a focus group as a research tool, and the intent of this research to discuss Holdingford’s Main Street from the perspective of business owners/operators.

Figure 11 lists the questions posed to the respondents during the focus group sessions to gather insight into the hypothesis and validate the problem statements outlined in Chapter I. During each focus group session, the participants introduced themselves. After outlining the agenda and desired outcomes, each question was asked one at a time. All participants were

given an opportunity to provide an oral response. A voice recording of each session was taken and observations were documented by the focus group facilitator.

Chapter III reviews of the previous data collected by City, under the direction of the Initiative Foundation during a community vision session. The participants identified a strong interest in community-based tourism in relation to arts, culture and commerce. A series of three focus groups were conducted with business owners/operators within the community, to gather qualitative data regarding future investments along “Main Street.” Chapter IV analyzes the data collected in the focus group sessions.

- 1) The perceived value of a historical Main Street
 - a. What considerations did you take into account when you decided where to locate your business in Holdingford?

Subsequent question:

 - What does Main Street Holdingford represent today?
- 2) The perception of tourism amenities
 - a) When tourists/customers visit Holdingford, what can they experience and see?

Subsequent questions:

 - How does the business community benefit from these activities?
 - Do you have ideas of what Holdingford could do to support or develop tourism activities along Main Street?
- 3) Aesthetics in public, shared spaces
 - a. In your own words, how would you describe Main Street Holdingford today?

Subsequent questions:

 - What do they see in the windows, along the side-walk, etc.
 - Have tourists/customers shared opinions with you about Main Street's appearance?
 - What is the impression of Main Street as people walk, drive, or bike along the street?
 - Should the appearance of Main Street be changed?
- 4) Leadership and responsibility for investments
 - a. Does Holdingford have adequate resources and services along Main Street?

Subsequent questions:

 - There are two buildings on Main Street that the City has purchased and are scheduled for demolition. Why do you think these buildings were left to deteriorate opposed to being reused as a form of commerce?
 - Is there anything that deters development and commerce in this community?
 - Who should spearhead financial investments along Main Street?
 - Who should spearhead aesthetic investments along Main Street?

Figure 11. Questions posed to focus group participants.

Chapter IV: Analysis

The data collected during each focus group session was compiled independently in relation to the four main areas of interest for this research which include the perception of Main Street, tourism, the public space and leadership. Based on the summary data, common themes among all three focus groups and potential variations between the groups based on geographic representation were identified.

Focus Group One

Group one (G1) represented business owners/operators located directly on Main Street. Ten of the 14 existing businesses in operation were represented at the focus group session. It should be noted that the buildings used for storage or those vacant were not represented at this session unless the owner of said building(s) owned or rented another building(s) in which they currently operated a business (i.e., Opatz Metals, Headley Hardware, etc.). G1 represented business on Main Street from 42 to two years in operation. In addition, the Municipal Liquor Store was not invited to participate in the focus groups, as it is publically owned and operated by the City of Holdingford.

Figure 12 represents the perception of Main Street based on its historical influence as a key location, the current level of activity along the street and its situational value as perceived by Group 1 respondents. The conversation is reflective of the strength/ concentration of opinions based on the repetition of key descriptors and observations made by the researcher.

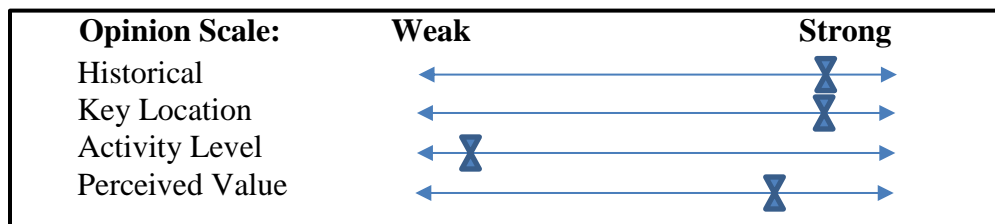


Figure 12. Group One: Perception of main street.

G1 responses identified “Main Street” as a historical marker of the past and represented the heritage of the community. The number of older, historic buildings were seen as an asset. “Main Street” was often referenced in terms of what it “used to be” (past tense). The discussion connoted a more nostalgic view of “Main Street” as “the place to be” or a “busy city center with angled parking spaces that were occupied most evenings during the week.” Several responses suggested that [Main Street] is seen in terms of a loss (past tense) opposed to a current asset. One respondent stated, “[Stearns] bank and Headley Hardware are the only viable businesses today.”

Figure 13 represents the perception of tourism based on existing amenities, benefits to the community and potential for future tourism.

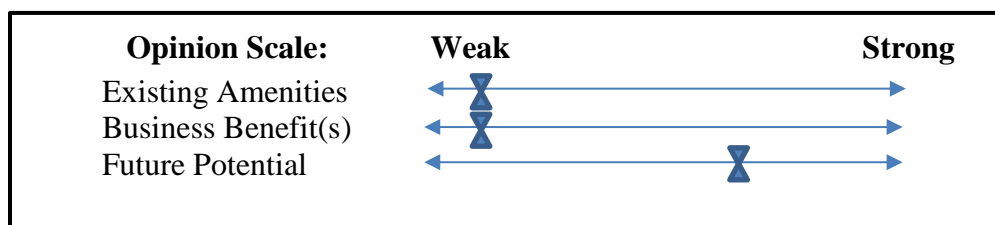


Figure 13. Group One: Perception of tourism.

The local Commercial Club was mentioned by G1, noting a singular purpose of coordinating the annual community festival, Holdingford Daze on behalf of business owners, but with little complimentary programming or business support. The annual festival seemed to

be viewed as a negative investment of time and too narrowly focused. Despite the representation of retailers, restaurant owners and other direct service businesses, no recognizable connection was made to the potential benefit(s) related to commerce. The covered bridge, along the Lake Wobegon Trail that transverses the Two Rivers River, and the large recreational amenities located on both the northern and southern edges of Main Street (Trail Head and Veterans Park) which currently attract tourists to the community were not mentioned.

It seemed that respondents in G1, despite their location on Main Street, did not attribute tourism activity with the potential for increase consumer activity in support of established businesses. Tourism was almost seen as a form of community engagement and/or pride opposed to a tool for commerce. The potential for future tourism activity was more evident in discussions recognizing the talent of local crafters. Respondents encouraged the establishment of a farmers market to showcase local community talents.

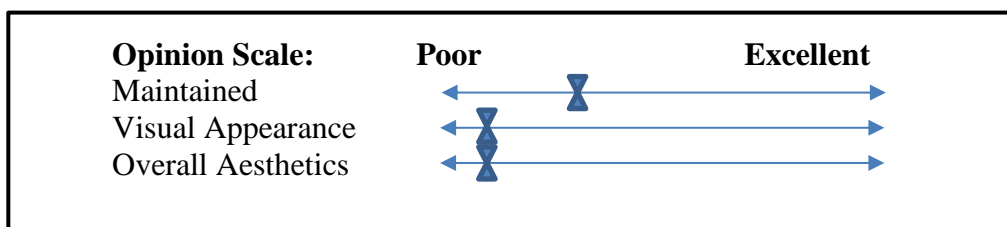


Figure 14. Group One: Public, shared space.

Figure 15 illustrates the perception of the current public area related to how well they are maintained, their visual appeal and overall aesthetics of the shared spaces. Words mentioned in association to “Main Street’s” visual appearance (aesthetics) included sad, abandoned, and [electrical] wires. The group identified the desire to encourage art murals, additional benches, increased safety of sidewalks and the continuation of the railroad theme,

in some capacity along the street. A majority of the respondents liked the speakers mounted to the electrical polls running along “Main Street” which plays music from a local radio station during daytime, business hours. The music is provided and maintained by a local business owner and member of the Commercial Club which is a membership based group of local business owners/operators in the Holdingford area. The triangle garden, Pedals to Petals, was only mentioned in terms of additional profit gains as a farmer’s market vendor, disconnected to the conversation related to “Main Street” aesthetics and not noticeably viewed as a current visual asset to “Main Street” itself.

Figure 15 overviews the preference of business owners and/or operators in identifying and leading future investments along “Main Street.” The respondents stated that the city did not “drive entrepreneurship” and “allowed people [business owners/operators] to do what they wanted.” It was noted that after a given period of time buildings had been left to deteriorate and then renovation became impractical due to costs associated with repair. High taxes, a lack of employment opportunities, lack of business diversity and the percentage of existing buildings being used for storage and vacant properties were seen as unfavorable business factors along “Main Street.” The respondents suggested welcoming newcomers to the business community to encourage new ideas. The group saw value in utilizing the bike trail more, the possibility of establishing a farmers market at which the garden club could split and sell perennial flowers grown in the triangular garden. Although the respondents concluded that investments in the public realm needed to be a partnership between the business owners/operators and the city, their comments regarding the deteriorations of buildings and the high number of structures being used for storage suggested the need for strong city

leadership. The enforcement of how a privately-owned building is utilized [storage/retail] and/or maintained [structural investments and aesthetics] was clearly seen as the role of the city. Little evidence or conjecture was given by any business owner/operator regarding their role in maintaining the exterior façade, window displays and/or sidewalk in front of their building(s).

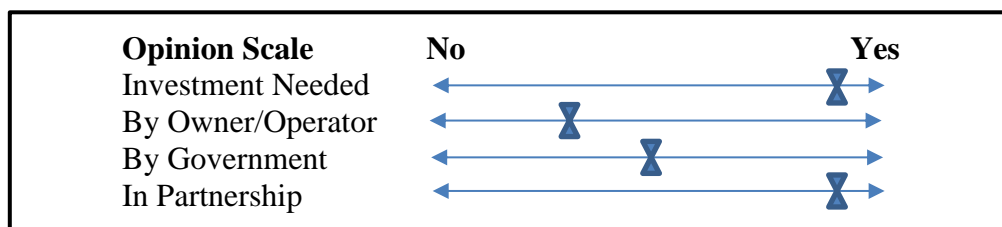


Figure 15. Group One: Investments in the public realm.

Focus Group Two

Group Two (G2) represented business owners/operators located within the City of Holdingford that did not have a “Main Street” address. Nine of the 21 possible businesses were represented at the focus group session.

Figure 16 illustrates the perception of “Main Street” of G2 respondents regarding its historical value, as a key location, the current level of activity along the street and overall perceived locational value. The respondents stated that they chose to locate in Holdingford because it was “friendly.” They liked it’s “hometown feel” and noted the “history and celebrated traditions” within the community as assets. One respondent stated that they “liked the local community and decided to purchase an existing business.” Respondents generally agreed that “Main Street” was a key location (mostly past tense), citing that there are currently “less places to shop” with more service oriented businesses.

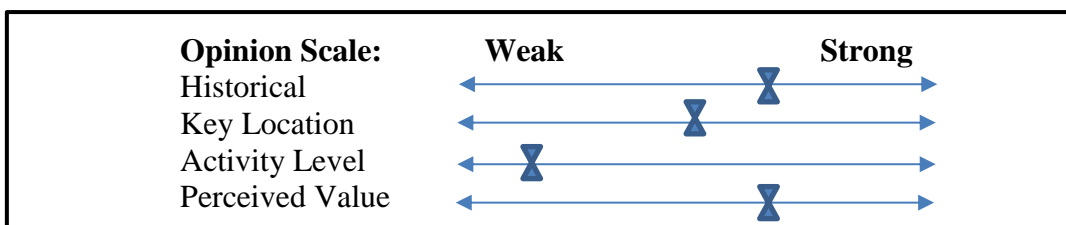


Figure 16. Group Two: Perception of main street.

The “potential” for additional retail businesses was mentioned, stressing the need to increase employment opportunities. Like G1, respondents in G2 reflected on the former businesses and high level of activity once present along “Main Street,” giving the impression of a loss that could be interpreted as sadness and even dismay.

Figure 17 reflects the opinion of G2 respondents related to tourism. Respondents noted the importance of maintaining buildings closed for business, increase the use of the wide city streets for alternative purposes [civic engagement] and the need for novelty shops that would support tourism/tourists. G2 quickly linked the necessity to improve the public spaces for civic engagement within and along the “street”. The benefits to existing businesses and future investors was mentioned suggesting “novelty shops” and encouraging future investments supporting tourism activity.

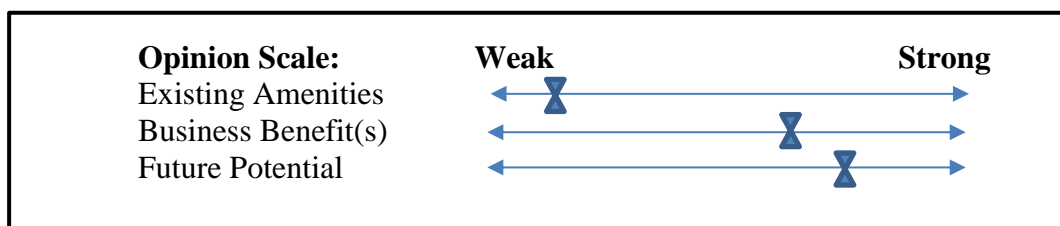


Figure 17. Group Two: Perception of tourism.

Figure 18 illustrates the perception of the public, shared spaces of G2 respondents specific to how well these areas are maintained and current aesthetics. Respondents’ word

association with “Main Street” was “messy,” “under used,” “retrofitted building styles” and “closed.” Suggestions were made to increase the use of the street and strongly noted the need to improve the overall appearance. G2 also noted appreciation for the streaming of music audible from the public spaces along “Main Street” during business hours. The overall feeling was respondents thought “Main Street” was wasting available resources [vacant buildings]. G2 seemed disappointed in the existing aesthetics. It was uncertain if business owners/operators took ownership in its appearance as representatives of the business community, even though they did not have a storefront along “Main Street.”

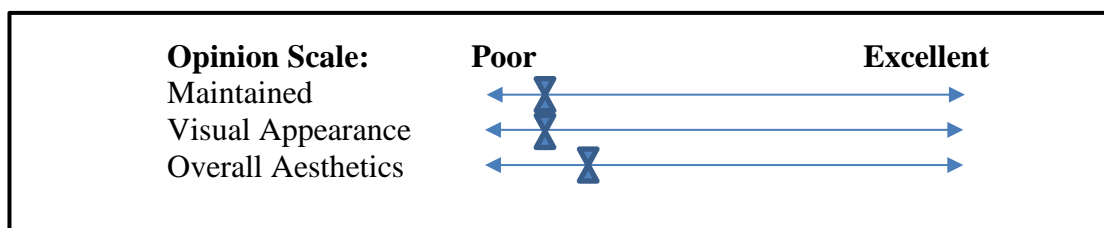


Figure 18. Group Two: Public, shared space.

The preferred leadership and shared interest in future investments within the community along “Main Street” is depicted in Figure 19. G2 noted disappointment in the number of empty storefronts and at times discussed negative competition between existing businesses. Respondents felt that new businesses were thought of unfavorably, “seen as competitors” for the same consumer. This was associated with the introduction of new products sold by a recently established business that were soon duplicated by a seasoned businesses to increase their customer base. Some respondents stated that at times, the city was “counterproductive to business.” Also, G2 shared disappointments with some building owners’ unwillingness to rent space, currently vacant buildings, as an disincentive to establish a new business in the community. However, the respondents seemed to agree that there was a

need to strive to become more competitive regionally in terms of product pricing with larger retail stores to prevent the leeching of dollars outside the Holdingford area. In addition, respondents stated the need to develop, publicize and acquire resources to retain existing, as well as attract new businesses. One respondent noted interest in “expanding” their operations if they would be offered alternative tax structures similar to the incentives offered new businesses. In addition, businesses that have taken advantage of these incentives stressed their role in bringing “higher paying jobs” to the area.

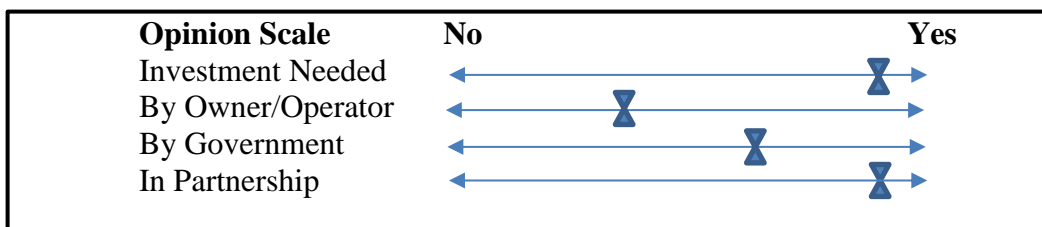


Figure 19. Group Two: Investments in the public realm.

In response to the question about the deteriorating buildings the city recently acquire for demolition, the respondents noted the cost of renovation, the preference for new structures, and the bad economy as plausible reasons why these buildings were abandoned. In relation to vacant and underutilized spaces, respondents stated the need for a stronger mix of businesses in both size and diversity; noting the need to entice home-based businesses to establish on “Main Street.” One respondent stated that, “99% of all expansion [business development] comes from within the community.”

G2 seemed to convey a “them” verses “us” attitude. Sometimes this was reflected between businesses and other times it was between the city and an existing business owners/operators. The respondents of this group linked local employment to local spending. They were more vocal about shared “incubator facilities” to increase the number of potential

businesses and to buy down the initial investments in capital for small businesses. Although this group noted a partnership was needed for additional investments along “Main Street,” they repeatedly stressed the role of the city in establishing these shared facilities, providing incentives, and seeking additional federal and state resources to support new, as well as existing businesses. It was apparent that G2 respondents viewed their role primarily as business owners/operators and less as leaders in community investments along “Main Street.”

Focus Group Three

Group Three (G3) represented business owners/operators that referred to the Holdingford area as their primary geographic location of business/operation, but did not reside within the currently city limits. Eight of the 13 possible businesses were represented.

Figure 20 provides an analysis of the G3 findings regarding the perception of Main Street. G3 respondents discussed the tradition of owning/operating a business in the community. The importance of belonging as a “member” to an association or club was discussed. Most respondents seemed to have lived, at some point in their formative years in a small town, similar to Holdingford-if not Holdingford itself. One respondent mentioned their disconnect between their business and/or operation to the city and “Main Street” given the distance from town stating the city’s lack of connection and outreach to them as a business owner/operator.

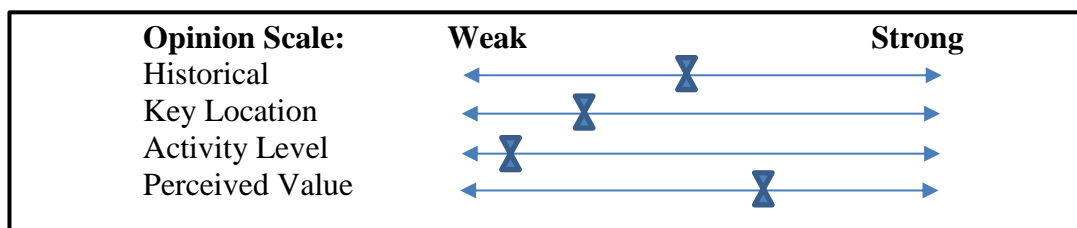


Figure 20. Group Three: Perception of main street.

Similar to G1 and G2, respondents echoed the former glory of “Main Street” which seemed to be in direct contrast to its current condition or presence in the community. “Main Street” was described as a “dying community” and “vacant.” Respondents noted that many [businesses] are “lured to the outskirts” of town. The large number of “vacant buildings” and desire to see the buildings “revitalized” was mentioned; the condition of “Main Street” could be reversed by making it a “meeting place” and “cultural city center.” One respondent stressed the need to relocate the existing recycling center, located one block west of City Hall, away from “Main Street.”

Respondents in G3 seemed to have less ownership in “Main Street” but were still vocal about the importance of making it a successful center for businesses. It should be noted the slight connection made by G3 respondents when describing “Main Street” as a “dying community” opposed to a dying street. This suggests that the respondent(s) associated the vitality of Main Street with the overall health of the community.

Figure 21 illustrates the perception of tourism based on existing amenities, the current benefit to community and potential for additional tourism facilities. Respondents from this group noted the connection between the local parks, covered bridge, the regional trail head, and local amenities accessible to both residents and visitors [tourists]. They cited the importance of marketing existing facilities to attract tourists including, the trail, camping facilities, restaurants, softball fields, and the city’s annual festival-Holdingford Daze. The possibility of additional signage within and to the city along with the development of a community identity through branding was discussed at length.

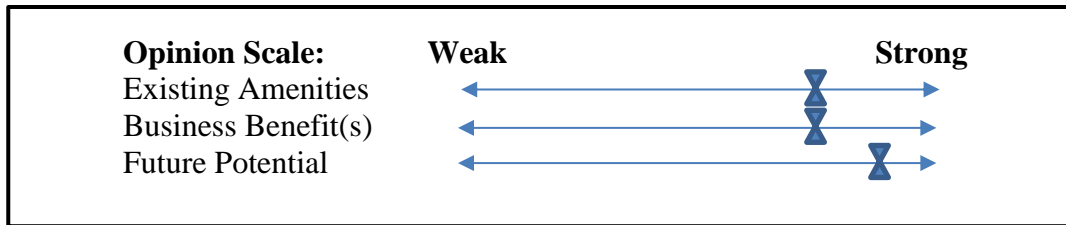


Figure 21. Group Three: Perception of tourism.

This is was the only group that directly associated the public, shared spaces connected to “Main Street” as tourism assets. G3 respondents seemed to see existing assets as more matter of fact. Additional ideas about potential attractions were easily brainstormed within the time allotted. The group stayed the longest amount of time afterwards to continue conversations.

Figure 22 depicts the value of the public shared space as perceived by the respondents in G3. Words associated with Main Street included “pathetic,” “eyesore,” and “lousy telephone lines.” The group encouraged the start of demolition on the abandoned buildings. More positive comments included the flower pots located along Main Street, the triangle garden (Pedals to Petals), and the renovation of a storefront that was in keeping with its historical character despite its current use as an overflow storage facility. Responses seemed to mirror G1 and G2 but G3 took additional time to discuss the existing streetscape; providing a more detailed depiction of the physical environment.

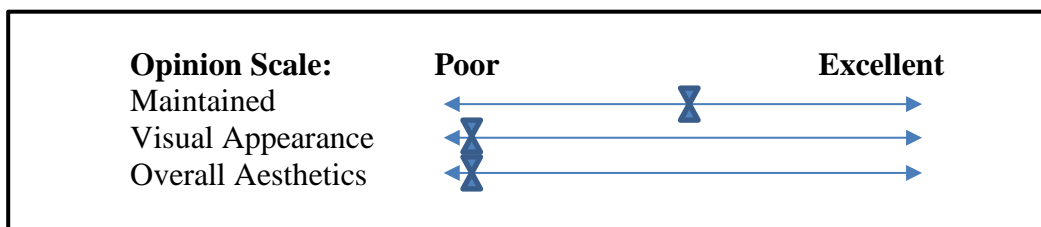


Figure 22. Group Three: Public, shared space.

Figure 23 illustrates the respondents' views on the need for future investments along the street and the leadership role of both the business community and local government. Respondents targeted the loss of businesses and subsequent deterioration of buildings with the change in transportation modes (loss of railroad and advent of the automobile) and increased mobility. In addition, respondents discussed "access and the lack of resources to bring in people and new industries to increase the employment rate." Respondents noted the need for a local grocery store and/or a delivery service for products that cannot be purchased locally.

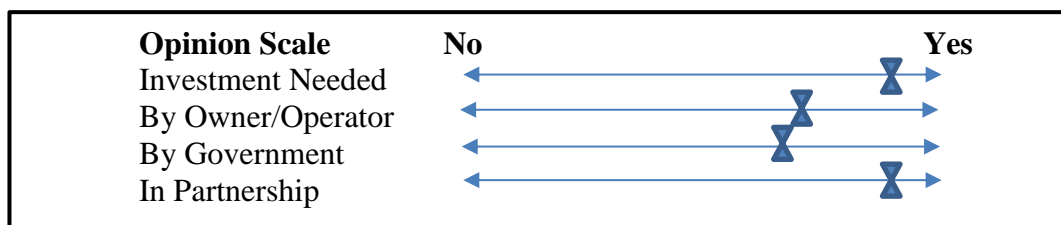


Figure 23. Group Three: Investments in the public realm.

Several solutions were presented including the need to "stand out from other communities" and find "specialize businesses." G3 discussed pooling resources in terms of advertising, but stated that it is still difficult to compete with "big box store pricing." Respondents wanted to identify grants, new land and acquire assistance from professionals [point of contact] to support business retention and expansion efforts; "lack of resources and programs" put businesses at an "economic disadvantage." One respondent noted that Jobz dollars may not be the answer stating that "[Jobz] created a competition for the same resources within the same geographic location." The "difficulty in attracting professionals to the area," was noted, suggesting that generally professionals prefer to live in a larger community. A respondent encouraged the identification of new businesses with workforce needs that matched the local skills. G3 discussed incubator businesses (including a strip mall),

seed funding, support from local bank, access to [vacant] buildings, and economic development resources into the Holdingford area.

It should be noted that G3 was the only group that mentioned expanding the existing geographic boundaries of “Main Street,” north and west “connecting to Two Rivers River.” In addition, G3 made statements about the percentage of people [residents] they believed did not want to see the community change, suggesting that business owners/operators and the city be sensitive to the wishes of the tax payers [residents]. Respondents stressed the importance of a community to support local businesses for it to succeed, advocating for “small changes” when feasible.

Unlike G1 and G2, respondents in G3 did not view competition negatively. The importance of a partnership was noted with G3. Respondents only encouraged the City to take the lead as an enforcer of community based decisions by business owner/operators and/or residents. It appeared that the City should lead in the securing large, Federal and State resources. The need for professional help as “a point of contact” and a resource to support businesses was strongly suggested. It may be the result of G3’s understanding of the City’s limited resources to assist business owners/operators.

Using the phenomenological qualitative research method, additional was data collected from business owners/operators in the City of Holdingford, Minnesota to better understand the perceptions of existing shared spaces and identify the potential expectations for investments along “Main Street.” Chapter V will further analyze the commonalities and differences between the focus groups and their perception of the “Main Street” as it intersects privately owned and/or rented space in a community. Recommendations resulting from this

data may be used to inform community leaders in non-urban cities regarding future investments pertaining to the public realm with may enhance community-based tourism.

Chapter V: Study Findings and Conclusion

The data presented in Chapter IV is examined to assess the perceived value of an existing non-urban “Main Street” as a generator of commerce from the perspective of a business owner/operator, and to better understand the expectations of business leaders to support future investments in the public realm. Responses from each of the focus groups are summarized, noting key commonalities and core differences based on the geographic location of the owner/operator’s business. Findings are then reviewed in relation to key strategies for community-supported tourism development. Finally, based on the parameter in Chapter I, recommendations for to further study are identified.

Study Findings

Perceived value of “Main Street”. The perceived value of a non-urban “Main Street” by existing business owners helps to understand its status as a key destination for visitors. This research intended to identify both similarities and variations that existed between respondents based on the geographical location of their business. To better understand this connection, focus group questions were centered around “Main Street” in a historical context and the present day. Respondents were asked to articulate the current level of engagement or activity along the “Main Street.”

In the City of Holdingford, business owner/operators believed “Main Street” had a moderate to strong historical value; only slight variations occurred in relation to the location of the respondents’ businesses. It appeared the closer the business operation was to “Main Street,” the perception of “Main Street’s” historic value elevated. Therefore, the strongest perceptions of the “Main Street” were reflected in responses made by Group One, which

consisted of individuals owning/operating a business located on “Main Street.” Group Two felt it had moderate to strong historical value, while only a moderate value was seen by Group Three respondents; the group located the furthest distance from “Main Street.” Similarly, the perception of “Main Street” as a key location had a positive correlation based on proximity; the closer the business was geographically located to “Main Street,” the more it was seen as a key location by the respondents. Consistencies across all three focus group responses were conveyed specific to “Main Street’s” activity level in which it was associated as “weak.” Responses reflected the current state of commerce generated along the street as well as opportunities to gather socially. Accordingly, the overall perceived value of “Main Street” was moderate garnering a nearly identical response from each group.

Perception of tourism. As indicated in Chapter II, tourism has the ability to enhance economic development within a community, region and/or state by generating commerce from the attraction of visitors. Communities that offer tourism engagement opportunities may also support the patronization of existing businesses and inspire the development of new enterprises. This study examined the awareness of current attractions utilized by tourist to further understand the perceived benefits of these amenities, and potential opportunities to generate commerce through community-based tourism planning and development.

Holdingsford respondents in Groups One and Two were limited in both their interpretation of existing attractions and overall understanding of tourism; only recognizing the annual community festival as a tourism event. Respondents did not acknowledge other amenities including parks, gardens, public art, trails, etc. The community event is hosted by the local Commercial Club on a single weekend each year with various activities offered

along “Main Street.” All three groups conveyed disappointment in the narrowed focus of the club and noted interest in adding attractions and activities as a result of the memberships dues collected annually. Only Group Three respondents identified the amenities that drew in residents and tourists along the southern most edge of “Main Street;” citing existing assets including the ball fields, veteran’s park, playground, and community shelters as key areas to engage residents and visitors.

All three groups felt that there was potential in tourism along “Main Street” as a moderate to strong overall response. However respondent ideas, opportunities and understanding of tourism by respondents/businesses increased as their geographic location from “Main Street” increased. Accordingly, the benefits of tourism to local businesses were recognized more strongly by Groups Two and Three. This implies that Group One has a more narrowed perception of what constituted tourism or tourism amenities/activities. This may imply the need for additional education around defining tourism and identifying the potential economic benefits to existing and/or future tourism attractions and amenities. A respondent from Group One stated his belief that the annual festival had a disproportionate benefit to eating/drinking establishments and gas/service stations, noting little return on marketing investments for his retail businesses.

Public, shared spaces. The public realm is the space in which a visitor first engages with a community. Community-based tourism has a symbiotic relationship with shared spaces as it helps to tell the story of the community both past and present as emphasized by the built environment. This study sought input on the perspective of local business leaders on the overall aesthetics of Holdingford’s existing “Main Street” as the prominent location housing

the largest percentage of the city's businesses. Its influence on the experience of both patrons and visitors directly correlates to the physical environment conveying (consciously or unconsciously) a visual story about the community. The story may be reflected in (or lack of) a window displays, lighting, architecture or signage present in the public space.

Respondents were asked to evaluate "Main Street" using word associations. Responses were collated into common themes indicative of how well "Main Street" is maintained, e.g., cleanliness/lack of trash, safety along the sidewalks, snow removal, potholes in the streets, along with the visual appearance of "Main Street" to derive an overall assessment of current aesthetics. "Main Street" Holdingford was perceived as moderately-to-poorly maintained, with all three groups indicating strong negative perceptions of the overall visual appearance of "Main Street;" citing extremely wide lanes, prominence of electrical wires, inconsistent storefront façades, dirty windows, and the lack appealing displays. Positive responses referred to relatively new additions along the street including the triangular community garden, flower pots near fronts and music streamed through speakers mounted along "Main Street." Therefore, the overall aesthetics along "Main Street" was deemed poor by respondents in all three focus groups.

Investments. Improvements to "Main Street" and its shared spaces requires financial investments. "Main Street" and the shared spaces along the roadside are often publicly owned locations that intersect privately-owned business façades/storefronts. This study sought a greater understanding of the correlation between the location of a business owner's property along the street and interests in future investments in the public realm, along with leadership expectations of business owner/operators.

Respondents from all three groups strongly agreed that additional investments were important along Holdingford's "Main Street." Respondents in Group One, the group representing business located directly on "Main Street," indicated the least amount of responsibility in investments. Group Three indicated the strongest response to the need for them as business owners/operators to make investments along "Main Street." These responses may have been reflective of the perception of costs assessed to businesses: greater investments would be assumed by businesses located on "Main Street." Regardless of the respondent's geographical location, all three groups clearly stated that the city should take the primary lead; indicating interest in collaborative discussions around future investments in partnership with the local business owners/operators.

Conclusion

In 2005, the City of Holdingford supported a community visioning session in partnership with the Initiative Foundation. More than 50% of the responses captured through this process identified the desire to enhance tourism, defined as arts, culture and recreation opportunities. In addition, participants sought increased commerce and the development of a community identity through stronger local leadership. Serving as supporting data, this research investigated the perception of the local business leaders (owners/operators) in the identification and investment in tourism as a response to the community visioning session.

Findings indicated a limited understanding, among business leaders of what constitutes tourism, as well as its ability to generate commerce. Local leaders could benefit from professional resources to support a more detail analysis of current community assets and potential opportunities for businesses to grow commerce derived from tourism activities

and/or amenities; the results of which could also support the development of a unified community understanding of tourism.

Research indicates that the “Main Street,” within the City of Holdingford is still viewed as a key location by business leaders. Responses reflected more nostalgia than appreciation for the current state of the “Main Street.” In addition, regardless of the geographic location of their business, respondents from all three focus groups echoed the strong need to enhance the overall aesthetics along “Main Street,” with additional investments led by the city.

The primary role of a local government focuses on adequately meeting the public infrastructure and safety needs of the community. A city’s revenue correlates to its population size and number of established businesses. In non-urban communities, staff resources (time) is generally allocated primarily in support of the city’s communication and fiduciary responsibilities. As elected officials, the mayor and city council often oversee the planning function of the city opposed to trained city planners or community developers often hired in larger urban cities. These factors may significantly affect the prioritization of key projects and programs. Hosting conversations and investing in the shared spaces outside of the necessary infrastructure and safety improvements can be challenging under these circumstances. City staff and elected officials must intentionally seek additional resources in both investment dollars and expertise to successfully support the planning, development and installation of community-based tourism attractions such as amenities, programs and/or projects. Large projects with a singular focus solely on the minimum infrastructure, without the forethought

given to how individuals connect in and move through the shared space can be detrimental to “Main Street” as a destination.

All stakeholders need to understand how each of their decisions, specific to time and financial investments affect others. Business owners/operators are often not in the position to make large scale investments such as trees along the median, widening sidewalks or installing cobblestones within pedestrian crossings. Nor can they make these decisions on major improvements without the consent of the city. Investment funds generated from businesses, can better serve small projects such as flowers, flags, or other aesthetic enhancements. However, these type of investments will most likely not make a significant economic impact without considering comprehensive tourism-based amenities. Business leaders can and should take ownership in creating a unified community identity (visual story) through signage, collaborative marketing/programming, creating a welcoming business culture and the overall maintenance of their storefronts. In addition, businesses owners/operators have the ability to coordinate programs and activities that could increase engagement with and generate interest in the shared spaces. These efforts will not only support their business but also encourage future entrepreneurs seeking a location to consider “Main Street” as a competitive and essential destination.

Non-urban cities must continue to convene conversations on how infrastructure improvements can serve as a catalyst for vibrant spaces and foster businesses along “Main Street.” Identifying the advantages of additional investments along the “Main Street” in the public spaces with business owners/operators is critical, and should be viewed as mutually beneficial to both the city and the business community. These benefits may be more quickly

be qualified by the business owners/operators through increased number of patrons, potential revenue and overall strength of the local business community. Conversely, benefits to a city can be measured overtime by the reduction of vacant buildings, length of time it takes to sell a business (time on the real-estate market) and the potential increase in the overall tax-based which results from an enhanced, thriving business community.

Recommendations for Further Study

Tourism can be a key resource for local government and business leaders to tell the community's story (identity), generate commerce and enhance the visual and social aspects within the public space. The results of this research identified the potential lack of understanding by business leaders, regarding the economic and community benefits that results from the creation of vibrant, shared spaces in rural, non-urban communities And, the connection between economic vitality and collaborative tourism planning and development. Repetition of this research in other non-urban communities would be recommended to identify commonalities and differences in the perception of tourism as an economic development tool.

Although interest was expressed in creating a public/private partnership around future investments, the expectation was that the investments along "Main Street" were the sole responsibility of the city despite limited resources. Additional research specific to successful funding models and potential resources to support the design and development of community-based tourism projects may be beneficial.

The ideation process and implementation of projects/programs surfaced through community visioning, provides an opportunity to explore investments in the public realm. A

key component to this work lies at the intersection of community development and public interest design. Exploring community development principles and public interest design concepts in relation to the field of tourism could better frame conversations with stakeholders and encourage greater investments from foundations, along with state and federal entities.

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Wheel Spoke

Arts & Culture
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 Commercial
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 Community Identity & Leadership
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 Public Safety
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 Recreation
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 Recreation
 Recreation

Assets

Restaurants/Pizza
 History of community
 Family farms
 ◦ Honest business people
 Business: Post office, bank, etc
 Radio community (lots of waves)
 Character of people (Wobegon-ish)
 Community involvement
 English speaking
 Well kept yards
 Community pride
 Active community groups
 Peaceful
 People care
 Small town - know people
 Friendly
 Clean and neat
 School system, teachers
 Different churches/ diverse choices, backgrounds
 Christian
 Affordable living/housing
 Large city lots
 fitness center
 Retirement center
 Nursing program
 Assisted living
 Support for sr citizens, senior lunch
 Drs, dentists
 Good water treatment
 Good signage
 Infrastructure (good roads)
 Work ethic
 Competitive jobs
 Property rights
 Local government rapport
 Mayor/community leadership
 Average cost taxes
 Good mayor
 Close to interstate, but not too close
 Weather, beautiful sunsets
 Trees
 Scenic area
 Availability of land/space
 River
 Area lakes
 Low crime rate
 Emergency services (911, fire services, etc)
 Little flooding
 Safety
 School playground
 Community parks
 Variety of activities
 Wobegon trail
 Good baseball team
 Opportunities: youth activities
 Quiet area - minimal traffic
 Growing business/community
 Farming ++
 Close to large communities

Wheel Spoke

Commercial
 Commercial
 Commercial
 Commercial
 Commercial
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 Commercial
 Commercial
 Community Identity & Leadership
 Community Identity & Leadership
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 Community Identity & Leadership
 Community Identity & Leadership
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 Community Identity & Leadership
 Community Identity & Leadership
 Community Identity & Leadership
 Education
 Education
 Education
 Faith Community
 Housing
 Housing
 Human Services
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 Human Services
 Human Services
 Infrastructure Technology
 Infrastructure Technology
 Infrastructure Technology
 Infrastructure Technology
 Infrastructure Technology
 Infrastructure Technology
 Labor Force
 Labor Force
 Labor Force
 Labor Force
 Labor Force
 Labor Force
 Labor Force
 Local Government
 Local Government
 Local Government
 Local Government

Challenges to create industrial park

Challenges to create industrial park
 Small business district
 Short main street
 Need grocery store, etc
 No (diesel) fuel available (not enough)
 Need to be more supportive of area businesses
 Hard to start up business
 Lack of fast food
 Lack of retail stores (grocery)
 Rental housing on main street
 Main street issues - not viewed as a destination
 Need to keep small town atmosphere
 No local newspaper
 not viewed as a destination
 Use of main street for non-business
 Need historic building preservation
 growth affects home town feel
 No preservation of history/heritage (museum, etc)
 No flower garden club
 Better school funding decisions
 Lack of school funding/choices
 Problems with school board
 Limited religious choices
 Shortage of buildable lots
 Lack of single /transitional housing
 Lack of adequate child care
 Not enough local support services
 No library
 Wheelchair accessibility
 Not pedestrian oriented
 No laundromat
 Bus service for elderly
 Welcome new residents
 No natural gas
 Poor cell phone service
 Traffic issues (end of school)
 No DSL
 High water bills
 Lack of street improvements
 No wireless internet
 Need higher paying jobs
 Industrial land
 need job hotline, notification
 More job opportunities
 No high tech businesses
 Low income base
 Encourage new business/more jobs
 Lack of community plan
 Ineffective watershed district
 Need to go to liquor store to get burning permit
 No long range planning

Local Government	Lack of city services in new development
Local Government	attitude
Local Government	Lack of trust between city and township governments
Local Government	City owned liquor store
Local Government	Unorganized growth
Local Government	Regulations/enforcement, noise nuisances
Local Government	Lack of environmental actions
Local Government	Zoning issues
Local Government	Don't like 1 per 40 acres development
Local Government	Too much development, lead to encroachment
Local Government	High taxes
Local Government	Irresponsible pet owners
Natural Resources	Asian beetles
Public Safety	Meth problem
Public Safety	No traffic light @ CR9 & CR17
Public Safety	Bike safety on CR 17
Public Safety	higher crime rates
Public Safety	pedestrian safety
Public Safety	Problems with youth crime
Public Safety	Alcohol use by young
Public Safety	Distance to emergency services
Public Safety	Hydrant flushing
Public Safety	Full time law enforcement
Public Safety	Tornadoes, mosquitoes, rocks
Recreation	Cable options limited
Recreation	Lack of winter activities
Recreation	Lack of teen center
Recreation	Not enough free entertainment
Recreation	Community center/facility
Recreation	No dances
Recreation	Family/group recreation activities
Recreation	Youth activities
Recreation	Lack of support for farmers
Recreation	loss of farm land
Recreation	Lack of understanding of farming
Recreation	School not using heat system
Recreation	Truck traffic through town
Recreation	Resistance to progress
Recreation	Low farm prices
Recreation	Communication between organizations and community
Recreation	Fear of change
Recreation	Fencing along trail
Recreation	No ice cream outlet
Recreation	Unrealistic change expectations
Recreation	Not enough involvement by community citizens
Recreation	Need more community events

Wishes/Goals	Desired Outcome	Votes	Assmt	Challenge	Specifics	Potential Resource
Arts & Culture	Restaurants with entertainment	11				
Arts & Culture	Activities for ages 20-30	0				
Arts & Culture	History museum	0				
Commercial	Grocery Store	45				
Commercial	More retail stores	15				
Commercial	Promote growth	7				
Commercial	More main street businesses	3				
Commercial	Tourism support	3			Wobegon Trail	Army Corps of Eng. covered bridge
Commercial	Promote use of parks/business trails	2				
Commercial	Provide more incentives for businesses	1				
Commercial	Dollar store	1				
Commercial	Funding for retail and rental	1				
Commercial	Support reasonable prices even development	1				
Commercial	Hotel / motel / bed and breakfast	0				
Commercial	Clothing store	0			Retail	
Commercial	Agri-business supplies	0				
Community Identity & Leadership	Keep main street business-oriented and attractive	11				
Community Identity & Leadership	Redevelopment fund for demolition/restoration/development	9			Beautification	
Community Identity & Leadership	Garden club	5				
Community Identity & Leadership	Self liquor store	4				
Community Identity & Leadership	Move toward self sufficiency as a community	4				Draw consumers from outside community
Community Identity & Leadership	Create a destination	3				Local news
Community Identity & Leadership	Newspaper	1				
Community Identity & Leadership	Maintain small town atmosphere	1				
Community Identity & Leadership	Creating a lake near town	0				
Community Identity & Leadership	Mural facing wobegon trail	0				
Community Identity & Leadership	Youth retention	0				
Community Identity & Leadership	Central location for community information	0				
Community Identity & Leadership	No big chain grocery store	0				
Community Identity & Leadership	Improvements to school district	5				
Education	School board listens to community on budget issues	2				
Education	More adult classes at high school	1				
Education	More elective classes at school	0				
Faith Community	Protestant church	3				
Housing	Promote mid priced homes	1				
Housing	Promote housing development	0				
Housing	Maintain adequate building lots	0				
Housing	Promote co-op style housing	0				
Human Services	DSL/Internet	11				
Human Services	Laundromat	10				
Human Services	Privately funded community center	4				
Human Services	Handicap accessibility	4				
Human Services	Welcome package for new home and business owners	1				
Human Services	Provide new growth with city water and sewer	0				
Human Services	Day care	0				
Human Services	Solicit community input and take action	0				
Human Services	Ride share program	0				

Human Services	Community swap shop	0	
Human Services	Resident doctor	0	
Human Services	Grant writing	0	
Human Services	Library	0	
Infrastructure Technology	Blacktop all township roads	8	
Labor Force	New industrial park	7	
Labor Force	Higher paying jobs	2	
Labor Force	More jobs for females	0	
Land Use	Attract high tech, low impact business	0	
Local Government	New zoning regulations	1	
Local Government	Lower taxes	37	
Local Government	Township & city work together for growth issues	20	
Local Government	Township & city work together to support farming	13	
Local Government	Address environmental concerns with growth	7	
Local Government	Long range plan for city	6	
Local Government	Adult use ordinance	4	
Local Government	Respect individual ideas	2	
Local Government	Accountability to Two River watershed or dissolve	2	
Local Government	Enforce dog ordinance	1	
Local Government	More regulations for mobile home court	1	
Local Government	More maintenance, less money	1	
Local Government	Town hall	1	
Local Government	Trucking / nuisance / noise ordinances	1	
Local Government	Noise reduction	0	No junk breaking
Local Government	Respect confidentiality in business decisions	0	
Local Government	Municipal sewer services in township	0	
Local Government	Discount on city services for business	0	
Local Government	Address vacant properties	0	Respect private property rights
Local Government	Special assessments	0	
Local Government	Resilient growth	0	
Public Safety	Full time police	10	
Public Safety	Pedestrian safety	5	
Public Safety	Rental properties: criminal checks	1	Flashing lights, aid County funds (located on CR 17)
Public Safety	Precede neighborhood watch/association	0	
Recreation	Youth center	15	
Recreation	More entertainment for all ages	13	
Recreation	Build hometown baseball park	3	Self funding
Recreation	Consistent community rec	3	
Recreation	Golf course	1	west of existing
Recreation	Expand city park	1	
Recreation	Senior center	0	
Recreation	Use ballpark for Holdingford days	0	
Recreation	Bowling alley	0	
Transportation	Public Transportation	0	Especially youth and elderly

Appendix B: 2010 Focus Group Participants

FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPATION

Group One: April 14, 2010

Owners/operators from businesses located on Main Street

Attendees:

1. Donna Peuringer, American Legion
2. Lisa Pfannenstein, Briar Patch Primitives
3. Kevin Headly, Headly Hardware
4. Jeff Fromm, Helping Hands
5. Lori Barron, Lake Wobegon Café
6. Roseann Vos, My Hair Salon
7. Curt Nagel & Reid Nelson, Polar Manufacturing
8. Kelly Lange, Stearns Bank
9. Daniel Fiedler, Stearns Insurance Services
10. Tim Kelly, TK's Restaurant & Lounge

Group Two: April 15, 2010

Owners/operators from businesses located within the City of Holdingford, but did not have an address on Main Street.

Attendees:

1. Eric Berschied, Berkon Docks
2. Robb Berschied, Everything Signs
3. John Haas, Holdingford School District
4. Janice Paggen, Jim's Snowmobile and Marine
5. Andrew Neupent, Korner Gas and Grocery
6. Dave & Jordy Opatz, Opatz Metals
7. Bill Scepaniak, Scepaniak Construction
8. Ralph Vos, Vos Chevorlet
9. Bob Warzecha, Two Rivers Stainless Steel

Group Three: April 16, 2010

Owners/operators from businesses located outside of the city limits.

Attendees:

1. John Binsfeld, IR-IS Consulting
2. Ronald Scegura, Scegura Insurance Services
3. Jeff Haviland, Seitz Stainless Steel
4. Al Leinen, St. Rosa Lumber
5. Bernie Orbeck, Stearns Morrison Enterprise
6. Tony Kotten, Sunset Electric
7. Randy Rothstein, KASM Radio
8. Michael Kosik, 917 Repair Shop

Appendix C: Photo Release Form

Form

Release Form

I, Ernie Schmitt, hereby grant Ms. Michelle R. Kiley permission to publish and/or reprint images, illustrations, and/or maps which have been made available in electronic and/or print formats; originally given to and/or commissioned by the City of Holdingford Stearns County. By signing below, I understand that Ms. Kiley will use these items for the sole purpose of research; and, that they will not be reproduced or sold for profit in any capacity without explicit permission from the City Council.



Mayor, City of Holdingford

11-3-14

Date