

Ripple Effect Mapping of the Tourism Assessment Program



Tourism Assessment Program

Minnesota's Tourism Assessment Program (TAP) analyzes a community's tourism potential. The program includes identification of tourism assets by the community, a site assessment by visiting team of experts, and written recommendations developed by the University of Minnesota Tourism Center and Extension's Center for Community Vitality. Five Tourism Assessment Programs have been conducted in Minnesota communities since 2007. This research identified the changes the program has helped to stimulate.

Ripple Effect Mapping

Using Ripple Effect Mapping (REM), we engaged program participants and other community stakeholders within three of the communities in discussion groups to identify intended and unintended outcomes and impacts of Tourism Assessment Programs that were conducted in each community 5-6 years ago. Mapping the changes provided stakeholders a powerful visual of the progress they have made toward their tourism development goals. Several long-term impacts have been documented in three main areas: (1) increased community cooperation through relationship building, (2) enhanced marketing efforts resulting from a better understanding of their visitor markets and, (3) expanded awareness of area attractions. Coding results of this study within the Community Capitals Framework (Emery & Flora, 2006) can show each community how their involvement in the Tourism Assessment Program and subsequent development efforts could be targeted to have greater impact in supporting the long term sustainability and vitality of their communities. Utilizing REM to evaluate the program has also helped inform future Tourism Assessment Program design.

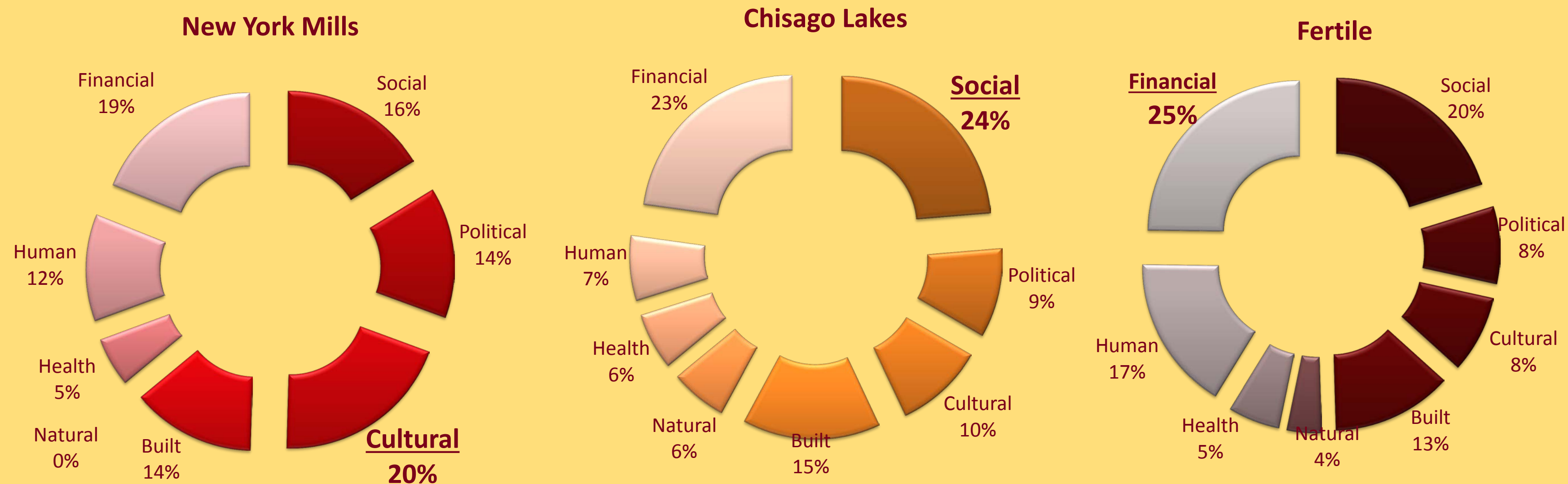
Participating Community Groups

New York Mills: 14 participants in REM 2013 discussion group, 20 in original 2007 Tourism Assessment Program.

Chisago Lakes: 18 community participants in 2013 REM discussion group, 55 in original 2008 Tourism Assessment Program.

Fertile: 22 community participants in REM 2013 discussion Group, 18 in original 2008 Tourism Assessment Program.

For the most part the proportion of influence for each of the capitals was similar across the three communities. The differences really reflected the core aspects of the community's tourism focus.



New York Mills

Assets Identified in 2007 TAP

- + Cultural Center
- + Finn Creek Museum,
- + Good regional connections.
- Limited lodging
- Weak community theme

Mapped Development Impacts in 2013

Relationships:
Large local manufacturer (Lund Boats) is more engaged in community.

Visitor Markets:
Through new open enrollment policy, a diversifying school student body is facilitating connection with other regional communities.

Community Infrastructure:
Farmers market established with support from Extension.



Chisago Lakes

Assets Identified in 2008 TAP

- + Swedish heritage
- + Lakes
- Limited lodging
- Lack of regional & community collaboration

Mapped Development Impacts in 2013

Relationships:
Tourism Committee with cities & businesses increased communication & collaboration.

Visitor Markets:
Participation in Tourism Assessment Program catalyzed joint regional marketing and development efforts.

Community Infrastructure:
Expanded lodging definition to include camping. Bought and refurbishing youth camp.



Fertile

Assets Identified in 2008 TAP

- + Nature based recreation
- + Polk County Fair
- Limited lodging
- Competition with other communities

Mapped Development Impacts in 2013

Relationships:
Participation in Horizons and Tourism Assessment Program helped catalyze deeper engagement between area businesses.

Visitor Markets:
Family focused branding of County Fair has increased attendance.

Community Infrastructure:
New Agassiz Environmental Learning Center bridge.

For more information on:
Tourism Development, see: Messer, C.C. et al. 2010. *Community Tourism Development*. 3d ed. University of Minnesota Extension.

Ripple Effect Mapping, see Hansen Kollock, D., Flage, L., Chazdon, S., Paine, N., and Higgins, L. 2012. Ripple Effect Mapping: A "Radiant" Way to Capture Program Impacts. *Journal of Extension* 50(5). Available online at <http://www.joe.org/joe/2012october/tt6.php>

Community Capitals Framework, see: Emery, M., and Flora C. "Spiraling-Up: Community Transformation with Community Capitals Framework." *Journal of the Community Development Society*. 37.1 (2006): Spring. Web. 07 Aug. 2013. <http://intranet.catie.ac.cr/intranet/posgrado/Met Cual Inv accion/MCIAP2010/Semana7/DocumentosSem710/Emery & Flora. 2006 Spiralin-up.pdf>