

Pinckney, Michigan Area



Community Tourism Action Plan

Lead Proponent:

Village of Pinckney



Plan Outline

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Introduction

Purpose and Use of Plan

The Pinckney Area *Community Tourism Action Plan* (CTAP) was developed based on two workshop sessions on May 5 and June 23, 2026. Ten people with an active interest in Pinckney tourism growth were involved in these discussions including the Village Manager, elected village/township officials, numerous community/visitor industry proponents, and Explore Brighton Howell Area senior leadership who are highly supportive in the preparation and implementation of the enclosed action plan.

The purpose of the tourism action plan was five-fold:

1. To understand clearly the current tourism situation in the Village of Pinckney and area including opportunities for new destination development and marketing
2. To know the critical issues and challenges facing Pinckney area future visitor potential
3. To determine the Pinckney area destination brand vision and current visitor brand promise
4. To identify and prioritize the Village of Pinckney visitor-related programs and projects
5. To acknowledge the critical factors for successful Pinckney area tourism growth.

The *Community Tourism Action Plan* is to be used as a directional and guideline document for the effective development and marketing leadership of Pinckney Village and surrounding area's tourism resources. Its intent is to provide an agreed-to and consistent focus on priority tourism initiatives over the next several years that will allow increased visitor spending and overall beneficial impact to the community.

Details on the components of this initial CTAP follow.

Community Tourism Situation

Tourism Accomplishments

Based on the planning discussions and a review of relevant community documentation, the key accomplishments of the Village of Pinckney and area tourism over the past five to ten years were determined to be the following (not in priority order nor exclusive):

- Consistent schedule of downtown and township events, including parades and seasonal celebrations
- Recognized gateway to outdoor recreation in Livingston County
- Anchor attractions such as Zukey Lake Tavern and Silver Lake recreation area
- Emerging support for small-scale manufacturing and cottage industries through MEDC grants, which may enhance local tourism-related vitality
- Growing visitor draw from North Star Reach bringing families and groups into the area
- Established outdoor recreation offerings, including kayaking, camping, fishing, and trail use

Community Tourism SWOT Analysis and Conclusions

Based on the workshop dialogue, a SWOT (strengths-weaknesses-opportunities-threats) analysis was conducted from a visitor perspective and covered commentary on Pinckney's tourism experience, marketing and advocacy communications and organization leadership. This analysis follows with conclusions.



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Strengths (present advantages)	Weaknesses (present disadvantages)
• Small, rural village with scenic natural beauty and access to lakes and trails • Quiet, laid-back, and outdoor-focused destination • Close-knit community with a strong local identity • Known more for recreation and nature than traditional downtown tourism • Abundant outdoor recreation resources (i.e., lakes, trails, camping, fishing, kayaking) • Proximity to Pinckney Recreation Area and Potawatomi Trail, nationally known for mountain biking • Lakelands Trail as a key regional asset attracting cyclists and outdoor enthusiasts • Strong draw from Hell Survivors Paintball events • Adjacent to Hell, a unique attractive tourism destination • Motorcycle-friendly routes and scenic rides	• Limited recognition of downtown Pinckney as a destination (more a pass-thru area) • Distance from major expressways limits visibility and access • Minimal downtown retail, dining and visitor amenities • No hotels or traditional lodging with some STRs • Lack of nightlife and evening activities • Limited wayfinding signage • Visitors not consistently aligning outdoor activities to village downtown use • Village financial constraints (restricted funding on new project program) • Fragmented coordination between village and township



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Opportunities (potential advantages)	Threats (potential disadvantages)
• Better connection of outdoor recreation users to downtown businesses • Develop trail connections (e.g., DTE Energy Trail linkage, beginner-friendly trails) • Leverage North Star Reach visitors with targeted experiences • Expand wayfinding signage due to distance from freeways • Position Pinckney as an “outdoor hub” or basecamp recreation destination • Support small-scale, local business growth (e.g., artisan/cottage industry) • Package experiences (trails + dining + Hell, MI + lakes) • Expand programming tied to trails, lakes and recreation • Strong desire to maintain small town character and avoid overdevelopment	• Strong anti-growth sentiment limiting development potential • Lack of funding for infrastructure and tourism initiatives • Competition from better-developed nearby destinations • Continued pass-through visitation without economic spend capture • Risk of underutilizing strong natural assets • Limited infrastructure to support increased tourism

Given the SWOT analysis, it was generally found that there was good potential for:

1. A ‘pass-thru’ place becoming a ‘day/overnight’ destination
2. Activation of new tourism development (enhanced wayfinding signage from US 23/36 and I 96/19, nature tourism/outdoor recreation programming and packaging, boutique hotel investment and trails improvements)
3. Strengthened relationships with Putnam Township, and nearby Hell, MI unique experiences.

Main Tourism Challenges

From the SWOT analysis conclusions and related workshop commentary, it was determined that the primary challenges affecting the progressive growth of the Pinckney area and specifically the visitor experience are as follows:

1. Connecting outdoor recreation/adventure travel visitor to village downtown area hospitality services
2. Improving compatible relations between Village of Pinckney and Putnam Township
3. Expanding awareness of village downtown services to key target market segments
4. Investing in village wayfinding signage and strengthened amenities

Critical Factors for Community Tourism Success

For the Pinckney community to expand tourism, the following critical factors need to be recognized and focused on to reach success:

- Stronger integration of area's extensive outdoor recreation assets to the village's hospitality services
- Enhanced cooperation between Putnam County and Village of Pinckney governments
- Adoption of an improved and consistent wayfinding signage system.

Community Tourism Experience

Community Tourism Appeals and Brand Promise

From a Pinckney visitor image perspective, workshop participants identified the following destination functional characteristics and emotional attributes.

Functional (location and behavior-based)	Emotional (immediate and memorable feelings)
Outdoor natural environment access	Natural and scenic
Rural small-town atmosphere	Quiet and peaceful
Adventure travel activities (biking options and water-based pursuits)	Authentic and nostalgic
Nearby quirky Hell, MI location	Slower-paced and less crowded
Unique dining and cultural performances	Relaxing

Given these tourism appeals, a brand promise was formulated that can be currently delivered to visitors.

As an immersive 'chain of lakes' community, the Pinckney village area is the epitome of Livingston County's scenic natural and outdoor recreational environment with unique dining, cultural celebration, and water-based/notable biking trail experiences.

Community Brand Vision

Similarly, a 2035 brand vision for the Village of Pinckney was prepared to enrich the above brand promise and capitalize on the area's visitor potential as follows.

The Village of Pinckney combines the best of a downtown/hospitality experience in an outdoor recreational paradise with lake, wetland, trail and forest-based pursuits.



Community Tourism Strategy

Strategic Tourism Goals

To achieve its destination potential, Pinckney needs to accomplish four long-term tourism goals under the auspices of the Village of Pinckney and in partnership with EBHA and other local area proponents.

Community Tourism Development

To invest in the Pinckney destination brand experience through facilitation and support of high priority tourism-related development projects.

Community Tourism Marketing

To continue to promote and sell the Pinckney area brand experience through the Village of Pinckney and in partnership programming with EBHA.

Community Tourism Advocacy

To educate on the benefits of Pinckney tourism to representative stakeholders and residents.

Community Tourism Organization and Funding

To acknowledge the Village of Pinckney as the lead proponent along with other local partners and county and township entities to implement the *Community Tourism Action Plan*.



Priority Tourism Projects and Implementation Schedule

In order for the Pinckney area to realize its brand vision, meet its community/destination challenges and deliver effectively on its tourism brand promise, the following priority initiatives need to be undertaken. These initiatives are assigned to the Village of Pinckney and where required support from county, township, and other community-based groups. It is the intention that this CTAP will be updated annually and used by the village destination proponents to achieve its overall tourism mandate.

Project/Program	Priority Focus	Timing			Partners	Estimated Cost Budget (\$)	Investment Support (\$)
		2027	2028	2029			
Enhanced arterial gateway and welcoming signage					- VP - EBHA		
Development of integrated township/village wayfinding signage system (US 23/36 and I-96/19)					- VP - PT		
Continued trail connectivity (Pinckney Recreation Area, and Potawatomi, DTE Energy and Lakeland Trails)					- VP - PT - Parks/ Rec/Trail Leaders		
Themed downtown building façade improvements					- VP - DDA		
Investigation into the feasibility of a boutique recreation-themed lodging property					- VP - PT		
Creation of outdoor recreation/nature tourism online itineraries (programming/packaging)					- VP - DDA - EBHA		
Strengthened tourism relationships among Village, Township and Hell, MI proponents					- VP - PT - VH - EBHA		

Key

VH	Village of Hell	DDA	Downtown Development Association	PT	Putnam Township
VP	Village of Pinckney	EBHA	Explore Brighton Howell Area		

References

2005 Putnam Township Master Plan.

2020 Village of Pinckney Master Plan.

2021 Livingston County Destination/Tourism Brand Research and Strategies, EBHA.

2025 Livingston County Visitor Profile Results, EBHA.

2026 Village of Pinckney Community Tourism Action Plan (CTAP) Initial and Follow-up Workshop Notes, EBHA.