

# Tompkins County Strategic Tourism Planning Board

Wednesday, February 21st, 2017; 3:00pm – 4:45pm

**Tompkins County Chamber of Commerce/CVB, 904 East Shore Drive, Ithaca**

<b>AGENDA</b>	<b>Start</b>
1. STPB Meeting Minutes	3:00
• ACTION – Approve January Meeting Minutes	
2. Privilege of the Floor	
• Limit of 3 minutes per person for members of the public to address the board	
3. Chair’s REPORT – Kelli Cartmill	3:05
4. Staff REPORT – Katie Borgella	3:10
5. Outdoor Recreation Tourism Implementation updated plan – Andy Zepp	3:15
• ACTION – Vote to approve the draft plan	
6. Adworkshop Presentation - Peggy Coleman	3:30
7. ACOD Panel Update –John Spence	3:50
8. STPB Member Goals for 2018 –	
SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION – break up in groups to discuss the below questions	3:55
• 2018 STPB Goals: What should the board focus on in 2018?	
• How should we begin to prioritize board values in regards to the future Strategic Plan?	
• What special presentations, off-site meeting locations, and board education topics would you like to see as part of STPB meetings in 2018?	
STPB Member Goals for 2018 – LARGE GROUP DISCUSSION	4:15
9. Adjournment	4:45

## Agenda Packet

1. January 2018 draft STPB meeting minutes
2. STPB Annual Report
3. Revised Draft Outdoor Recreation Tourism Implementation Plan
4. Copy of 2017 STPB Goals



MISSION: The Strategic Tourism Planning Board is charged by the Tompkins County Legislature with providing oversight and strategic direction for tourism initiatives that *promote economic development* and *enhance the quality of life* in Tompkins County.

## Tompkins County Strategic Tourism Planning Board (STPB) Draft Meeting Minutes – January 17, 2018

1 **Date:** January 17, 2018  
 2 **Time:** 3:00-4:30pm  
 3 **Location:** Hilton Garden Inn, Lower Level, 130 E. Seneca St., Ithaca, NY 14850  
 4

5 **Attendees:**

Name	✓	Representation	Name	✓	Representation
David Blake	P	At-Large	Martha Armstrong	P	TCAD, Non-Voting
Brett Bossard	E	Arts-Culture	Peggy Coleman	P	Chamber, Non-Voting
Kelli Cartmill	P	Lodging	Gary Ferguson	P	DIA, Non-Voting
Josh Friedman	P	Arts-Culture	Dan Klein	E	TC Legislature, Non-Voting
Steve Hugo	P	At-Large		P	Transportation, Non-Voting
Ken Jupiter	P	At-Large	Dwight Mengel		
Anne Kellerman	P	At-Large	John Spence	E	CAP, Non-Voting
Doug Levine	P	Arts-Culture	Jennifer Tavares	P	Chamber, Non-Voting
Mike Mellor	P	At-Large			
Cara Nichols	P	Ithaca College	Ethan Ash	A	Associate Member
Stephen Nunley	P	At-Large	Jim Brophy	A	Associate Member
Barbara Romano	P	Cornell University	Carol Kammen	A	Associate Member
Sue Stafford	P	TC3	Jon Reis	E	Associate Member
Julie Swigart	P	Lodging	Mary Kate Wheeler	A	Associate Member
Baruch Whitehead	P	Arts-Culture			
Scott Wiggins	E	At-Large	Tom Knipe	P	Staff
Andy Zepp	P	Recreation	Kristin McCarthy	P	Staff
VACANT	N/A	Agriculture			

7 **Guests:** Ronda Roaring (ilovethefingerlakes.com); Rod Howe (History Center); Susan Holland, Pat  
 8 Longoria (Historic Ithaca); Sarah Imes (CVB); Dan Fenton, David Holder, Bethanie Parker,  
 9 Geraldine Guichardo (JLL)

10 Chair Kelli Cartmill called the meeting to order at 3:04 pm.  
 11

12  
 13 **Opening Remarks** – Kelli welcomed the group to the meeting and reminded them of the  
 14 reception for Tom Knipe taking place afterward in Kilpatrick’s. Everyone was invited and  
 15 encouraged to attend.  
 16

17 **December 20, 2017 STPB Meeting Minutes**

18  
 19 **ACTION:** Cara Nichols moved to approve the December minutes. David Blake seconded. Motion  
 20 carried.  
 21

22 **Privilege of the Floor** -- Ronda Roaring shared a warm anecdote and thanked Tom Knipe for his  
 23 contributions to tourism in Tompkins County.  
 24

25 **Changes to the Agenda** -- None  
 26

27 **2018 Officer Election – STPB Nominating Committee**  
 28

**Tompkins County Strategic Tourism Planning Board (STPB)  
Draft Meeting Minutes – January 17, 2018**

29 **ACTION:** Cara Nichols moved to nominate Kelli Cartmill as Chair of the STPB. David Blake  
30 seconded. Motion carried.

31

32 **Chair's Report**

33

34 Kelli continues to work on draft committee assignments and asked anyone who has not signed up  
35 for a committee to do so at their earliest convenience. She also noted there are still vacancies for  
36 a few committee chair positions.

37

38 **Heritage Tourism Implementation Update – Rod Howe and Susan Holland**

39

40 Rod began the presentation by introducing Susan Holland, the new director of Historic Ithaca. Rod  
41 and Susan gave a quick overview of the Heritage Tourism Implementation Plan, which a few  
42 people in the audience helped write, as well as shared strategies the Heritage Tourism team  
43 envisions implementing for 2019 and beyond. Rod reported that the County Legislature had  
44 passed the grant proposal submitted by Historic Ithaca to help fund a staff position. The Ithaca  
45 Heritage website lists the numerous tours available in our area, and meeting attendees were  
46 encouraged to provide feedback on other tours they'd like to see take root in the County. Ideas  
47 included the history of higher education, Underground Railroad, historic theaters tour, and barn  
48 tours. Susan mentioned the PocketSites app and reported the Walk and Talk tours will continue  
49 throughout 2018. Also, the Tommy Plane will fly on September 22. Rod said that a steering  
50 committee will be forming to create a business plan for the Tompkins Center for History and  
51 Culture, which is scheduled to open in 2019, and spoke about the Heritage Ambassadors program  
52 launching this spring.

53

54 **Membership & Bylaws Committee Report – Kelli Cartmill**

55

56 **ACTION:** Kelli Cartmill moved to recommend Monika Roth for the Agriculture seat. Sue Stafford  
57 seconded. Motion carried.

58

59 Erica Frenay will be joining the STPB as an associate member.

60

61 **Planning & Evaluation Committee Updates – Ken Jupiter**

62

63 Ken reported that the committee received three Letters of Interest for Strategic Tourism  
64 Implementation Grants and they are recommending all of them. They included: \$30,000 for the  
65 Town of Dryden for a preliminary design study to extend the Dryden Rail Trail across Route 13;  
66 \$18,000 for the CVB for gap funding for the Agricultural Tourism Program; and \$9,000 for  
67 Workforce Development to underwrite a new ambassador program.

68

69 **Outdoor Recreation Tourism Task Force Presentation of Draft Plan – Andy Zepp and Tom Knipe**

70

71 Tom spoke for a few minutes about the background of the Outdoor Recreation Tourism initiative,  
72 which features heavily in the Strategic Tourism Plan for 2020 and, according to the last Visitor

**Tompkins County Strategic Tourism Planning Board (STPB)**  
**Draft Meeting Minutes – January 17, 2018**

73 Profile Study, is the second-largest draw to our community, after higher education. Andy next  
74 spoke about the process that went into drafting the plan, including a small committee that  
75 spearheaded the effort, a public workshop attended by roughly 60 people at the  
76 Space@Greenstar, and outreach to various stakeholder groups. Tom then spoke about our area's  
77 various natural assets, including lower-profile ones like the Emerald Necklace. Other projects Tom  
78 mentioned included the Black Diamond Trail, Gateway Trail, South Hill Recreationway, Dryden  
79 RailTrail, ithacatrails.org, various events at the Ithaca Children's Garden, Cayuga SUP CUP, and  
80 Ithaca Bike Trail. Andy said the Finger Lakes Land Trust is coordinating with the Town of Ithaca on  
81 developing a trail from Robert Treman State Park to downtown. Tom pointed out the Six Mile  
82 Creek Gorge has a lot of potential to attract visitors, but for now it is not managed for recreation  
83 and lacks necessary signage and other infrastructure. Possible structural changes included in the  
84 draft plan are capacity building support to groups that would develop capital grant programs.  
85 Andy added that it could be that such a group has yet to form. A second funding proposal is for a  
86 capital reserve fund for outdoor recreation. A question-and-answer session followed.

87

88 **CVB Monthly Report – Peggy Coleman/Visitor Profile Study Update – Dan Fenton, David Holder,**  
89 **Bethanie Parker (JLL)**

90

91 Peggy asked if there were questions regarding the latest monthly report, which was included in  
92 the agenda packet, especially regarding group sales because Sarah Imes, director of that  
93 department at the CVB, was in the audience. Peggy added that each month a staff member from  
94 the CVB will be joining her at the STPB meeting. She then yielded the floor to Dan Fenton, David  
95 Holder, and Bethanie Parker from JLL, who were there to update the group on the Visitor Profile  
96 Study. Through the study, Dan said they hoped to study the behavior not only of people who did  
97 visit Tompkins County, but also of those who did not take the trip, to identify what is missing from  
98 the area to entice them to visit. He encouraged the group to think of the survey in terms of what  
99 it might reveal in terms of possible future initiatives, and in what we would like to learn. Dan also  
100 asked the group for feedback on what sorts of questions they'd like to see included in the survey.  
101 They strategized on key locations for their staff to perform visitor-intercept studies. They are  
102 going to look at both those intercept studies and the broader survey results.

103

104 **Staff Report – Tom Knipe**

105

106 In lieu of a staff report, everyone gave Tom a round of applause and headed downstairs for his  
107 after-party. Josh Friedman thanked Kelli, the Hilton, and Kilpatrick's for the hospitality and said a  
108 few remarks would be given on Tom's behalf at 5 pm.

109

110 The meeting was adjourned at 4:30 by Chair Kelli Cartmill.



TOMPKINS COUNTY

# Tourism

Promoting Economic  
Development & Enhancing  
Our Quality of Life

# Program



# STRATEGIC TOURISM PLANNING BOARD

*“Dedicated service to the community through tourism”*

Since its establishment by the County Legislature in 1999, the Strategic Tourism Planning Board (STPB) has been tasked with advising the Legislature on all aspects of tourism development in Tompkins County including making recommendations for allocations of hotel room occupancy tax funds; reviewing and evaluating the activities of organizations receiving these funds; overseeing Tourism Grant Programs; and developing tourism policies and strategies. Members are appointed by the Tompkins County Legislature and collectively dedicate thousands of hours in pursuit of the board’s mission.

**MISSION**  
The Strategic Tourism Planning Board is charged by the Tompkins County Legislature with providing oversight and strategic direction for tourism initiatives that promote economic development and enhance the quality of life in Tompkins County.

# TOMPKINS COUNTY TOURISM PROGRAM

The Tompkins County Tourism Program invests more than \$2 million annually of visitor room tax dollars in the amenities we all love: a vibrant arts community, outstanding outdoor recreation, a farm-to-table culture, an exciting downtown entertainment district, and fun festivals and events.

This community-based approach to building tourism is strategic and sustainable, generating high rates of return in economic benefit for each dollar we invest, while creating a beautiful, distinct place loved by residents and visitors alike.

## CHAIR’S MESSAGE

We are fortunate to live in a county with a holistic, sustainable approach to allocating its hotel room occupancy tax funds. In addition to the typical funds for marketing that bring tourists and investments into our community, 40% of the tax is dedicated to product development. This funding enables a rich profile of events, programs, and infrastructure. The division in spending reflects the Tourism Program’s dual goals of enhancing local quality of life and promoting economic development through tourism initiatives, and its success is seen in the growth in room tax revenues over time.



2017 saw great strides in many of the tourism programs and policies. Thanks to staff and intern Dylan Tuttle’s efforts, we created an in-depth analysis of the County’s room tax spending from 2004 to 2016. The analysis presented trends and total investments over the years, positioning the board to make well-informed future decisions.

The board also made significant progress on a Diversity & Inclusion Assessment, becoming the first Tompkins County advisory board to create such a statement. We thank the County Workforce Diversity and Inclusion Committee for their thoughtful feedback and support.

The Planning and Evaluation Committee, under the dedicated leadership of board member Ken Jupiter, took up many long-standing issues, among them discussions of the relationship between transportation and tourism.

In 2018, the board will begin to lay the groundwork for a new strategic plan. It will work with the Ithaca/Tompkins County Convention & Visitors Bureau, the lead agency implementing a new Visitor Profile Study, to gather vital research regarding our current visitor demographic. An Outdoor Recreation Tourism plan will be completed, and other studies and plans, such as the opportunity for a downtown conference center, will advance.

On behalf of the board, I would like to thank Tompkins County Legislators, the Tompkins County Planning and Sustainability Department, the Tompkins County Chamber of Commerce, and our many partners within and beyond Tompkins County. A special thanks goes to the staff of the Ithaca/Tompkins County Convention & Visitors Bureau (a division of the Chamber), who significantly revitalized relationships between the County and its institutions of higher education in 2017. They have time and time again shown creative, flexible, innovative thinking and success in their marketing and support efforts. Their achievements on social media and at the new Taughannock Falls Visitor Center have made the visitor experience even more user-friendly, as shown in their insightful evaluation reports.

Our final thanks goes to Thomas Knipe for his six years’ leadership developing the County Tourism Program with robust, transparent procedures and a bold vision. Its success is due in large part to Tom’s ability to identify and act on opportunities, connect partners, and expand programs. This report itself, a first for the program, was initiated by Tom to further open communication with our community. Our best wishes go with him as he transitions to the City of Ithaca as Deputy Director for Economic Development in 2018.

—Anne Gossen, Strategic Tourism Planning Board, 2017 Chair

## PROGRAM DIRECTOR’S MESSAGE

As we reflect on the accomplishments of the Tompkins County Tourism Program in 2017, it is also a moment to look back on the incredible growth of the program over the past six years, during which I have had the honor of serving as the County staff member responsible for tourism.

Since 2011, annual visitor spending has increased from \$165 million to more than \$200 million today, and these dollars coming into our community from outside now generate \$673 in local tax relief for every household in Tompkins County. Meantime, annual room tax revenues increased 45% from 2011 to 2017, now topping \$2.75 million. Although this year our area accommodations have experienced some dips in occupancy, long-term trends for the lodging industry have remained strong: in the past 18 months, the supply of local hotel rooms has increased 14%, with the addition of the downtown Marriott and Holiday Inn Express and more supply growth expected with completion of the Canopy by Hilton in 2019. The growth of tourism in Tompkins County over the past six years has outpaced tourism growth in other communities in the region and in Upstate NY, and we have grown in a sustainable way by building up local institutions and protecting and enhancing the unique characteristics of our communities.



Why have we been so successful? In addition to our outstanding natural, cultural, and institutional assets, at the heart of our success is the entrepreneurial and creative spirit of Tompkins County residents and organizations, which have been empowered to contribute to local tourism. It is also the strength of each of the programs described in this annual report, the combination of which add up to a unique place-based approach to tourism development that benefits residents and visitor alike. Finally, it is our strategic approach. Since the adoption of the 2020 Strategic Tourism Plan in 2012, the STPB has further identified priority actions for tourism development through the completion and adoption of five detailed implementation strategies for Agriculinary Tourism, Heritage Tourism, Wayfinding and Interpretive Signage, Priority Trails, and the Cayuga Lake Blueway Trail. Working to align funding with these and other priorities identified in the 2020 Plan, the board created a new targeted funding program, the Strategic Tourism Implementation grant, all while maintaining a strong base of funding for our core programs, including the Convention and Visitors Bureau, Beautification Program, Arts & Culture Organizational Development Grant Program, and Tourism Capital Grant Program, among others.

A number of exciting new initiatives were launched in 2017 that will begin to yield tangible results in the years ahead, including continued feasibility work for a downtown conference center and laying the groundwork for the Tompkins Center for History and Culture, which received a transformative \$1.3 million state grant in November and is on track to open to the public in early 2019.

Thank you to the STPB and the Tompkins County Legislature for their sustained commitment to our balanced approach to tourism development in Tompkins County, and thank you to our 80+ partners who made meaningful contributions to economic development and quality of life through tourism in 2017.

—Thomas Knipe, Principal Planner / Tourism Program Director

# TOMPKINS COUNTY TOURISM PROGRAM AIMS

These aims are the highest-level description of values that align with the mission of the STPB and the Tompkins County Tourism Program.

**PROVIDE MEMORABLE EXPERIENCES** and legendary service that will educate, delight, and relax visitors, compel them to tell others and motivate repeat visits.

**CREATE DEMAND** through excellent marketing of appropriate tourism sites and services and cultural and recreational assets in Tompkins County.

**IMPROVE ECONOMIC CLIMATE** through a vibrant tourism program that builds jobs, raises tax revenues and helps make our county a great place to live, work and invest.

**PRESENT THIS UNIQUE PLACE** by building on special characteristics of its people, culture, history, geography, environment, economic activity and institutions.

**IMPROVE AND NEVER HARM** the quality of life for local residents, businesses and institutions. Tourism programs should enrich the lives of all who live here.

**ENCOURAGE DEVELOPMENT OF STRONG PROGRAMS** and facilities to serve as the tourism "infrastructure" upon which future projects can be developed.

## TOURISM FOUNDATION

# programs

Supporting a Strong Tourism Infrastructure

**In 2017,**  
the Tompkins County Tourism Program invested \$1.3 million in tourism marketing and product development through several line-item funded programs, including the following:

### 1 Ithaca Tompkins County Convention and Visitors Bureau, a Division of the Tompkins County Chamber of Commerce

The CVB is the County's designated Tourism Promotion Agency and leads the community's efforts in destination marketing, group sales, and visitor services.

2017 Highlights include:

#### HUGE MEDIA EXPOSURE

Thanks to proactive pitching and partnering with regional and NYS partners, media reach for Tompkins County tourism partners and the county as a destination was over 938 million. We are especially proud of the feature in the *New York Times* Travel Section and for being named 2017 Emerging Nature Destination of the Year by *Luxury Travel Guide*.

#### EXPANDING THE BRAND WORLDWIDE

Thanks to a revised retail program at the Visitor Center at the Taughannock Falls Overlook, 3,495 visitors in 36 countries and 43 states are proudly wearing "Ithaca is Gorges" T-shirts, sweatshirts, hoodies, hats and more. Top countries outside the USA include Canada, UK, Israel, Germany, Australia, and Russia. CVB staff are using this experience to help formulate a retail

business plan for the new Tompkins Center for History and Culture retail shop in 2019.

#### DEDICATED STAFF TO AGRICULTURAL TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

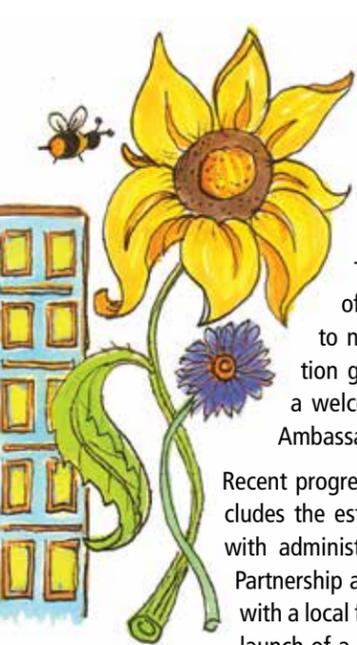
By dedicating a part-time staff person, the CVB is now able to move forward with ready-to-purchase vacation packages and the first round of micro-grants to help farmers and producers achieve visitor



readiness. Short-term successes include a partnership with **Escapemaker.com** to promote our producers and product experiences to visitors from NYC. This partnership has resulted in media exposure of over 14 million in less than five months, including *Food Network Magazine* and *Heritage Radio Network*.



*In 2017, the CVB Sales team hosted three familiarization tours for 26 tour companies from China, UK, Ireland and Scotland. New presence on VisitUSA-UK launched in late September has already delivered engagement with UK travel trade.*



2

## Beautification, Signage, and Public Art Program

The purpose of the Tompkins County Beautification, Signage, and Public Art Program is to increase the perception of Ithaca and Tompkins County as an outstandingly beautiful and distinct community that is simple for visitors to navigate. The program invests in attractive public plantings in high traffic and gateway areas, rural beautification grants, Public Art Grants, and the maintenance of a welcoming urban core through the Downtown Ithaca Ambassadors Program.

Recent progress on the Program's 2016-2020 Strategic Plan includes the establishment of a formal public art grant program with administrative support provided by the Community Arts Partnership and where room tax funds are matched one to one with a local foundation, the further expansion of planting areas, launch of a business sponsorship program, and creation of an awards program to recognize and encourage the beautification efforts of local businesses, groups and individuals.

*\$141,386 of room tax investment in 2017 in the Beautification, Signage and Public Art Program leveraged an additional \$181,335 in community investment (a match of 56%) through the work of Cornell Cooperative Extension of Tompkins County, the Downtown Ithaca Alliance, Community Arts Partnership, Tompkins County Chamber of Commerce, and Tompkins County Planning and Sustainability Department.*



Beautification Brigade volunteers Carol Beeman and Dan Klein, Tompkins County Legislator and former Beautification Program Coordinator, plant beautiful fall mums. The "Rotary Rotary" was officially dedicated through a sponsorship by the Rotary Club of Ithaca in 2017. 600 Beautification Brigade volunteer hours were donated to the Beautification Brigade. Photo Credit: Martha Gioumousis



CAP also administers the Public Art Grant program, which is partially funded by the Tourism Program. Mary Beth Ihnken received a 2017 Public Art Grant to paint this extensive new mural on the exterior of the Dryden Road Collegetown Parking Garage. The depiction of blue skies, clouds at sunset and bird silhouettes adds a bit of art and wonder in the heart of Collegetown.



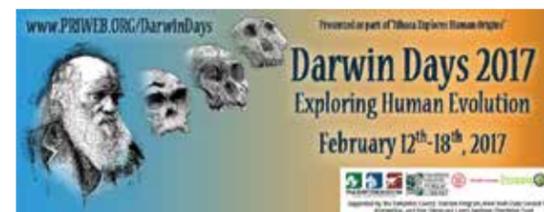
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## Discovery Trail

The Tourism Program invests in the Discovery Trail to collectively promote eight local organizations that have a dual mission of education and tourism promotion: Museum of the Earth, Cornell Lab of Ornithology, Cornell Botanic Gardens, Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art, Cayuga Nature Center, Sciencenter, the History Center, and the Tompkins County Public Library. In 2017, The Discovery Trail distributed 45,000 rack cards to prospective visitors through NY State. The eight Discovery Trail sites collectively welcomed over 720,000 visitors in 2016, an increase of 1.5% over the previous year.

*"The Discovery Trail is unique in the museum field worldwide. No other community has been able to create and sustain a collaborative group like it."*

—Charlie Trautmann, former Discovery Trail board chair, quoted in 2017 in the Informal Learning Review Journal



Every two weeks the Discovery Trail features an event taking place at one of its eight partner sites. Last winter, the Discovery Trail partners participated in the "Ithaca Explores Human Origins" joint exhibit which started with the Smithsonian traveling exhibit on display in the Tompkins County Public library, a Discovery Trail weekend with five different events/exhibits at the different partner sites, culminating with the Museum of the Earth's Darwin Days in February 2017.

5

## Hospitality Workforce Development

The Hospitality Workforce Development program is designed to build an awareness of and encourage interest in hospitality and tourism career pathways in Ithaca/Tompkins County. The program involves outreach, career exploration, workshops, events, meetings and coaching, industry recognized credentials, ambassador training and modules for entry, mid-level and manager/supervisory level employees. Partners include the Workforce Development Board, Tompkins Workforce New York Career Center, Convention and Visitors Bureau, Downtown Ithaca Alliance and Tompkins Cortland Community College.

Beyond its popular multi-day Hospitality Star training, in 2017 the program launched "Ithaca 101 - Unlocking Ithaca's Best Kept Secrets," a new pilot series of ambassador training sessions reaching many dozens of additional participants, including Hotel Ithaca, Hilton Garden Inn, Convention and Visitors Bureau, LaTourelle, Sheldrake, Sciencenter, and Ithaca is Foodies. The program also conducted three sessions of summer youth career exploration and provided ServSafe and online manager/supervisory skills training.



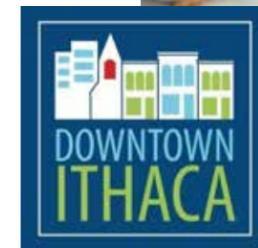
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## Tompkins Festivals Program

The Festivals Program is a project of the Downtown Ithaca Alliance and Tompkins County Tourism Program. By providing training, technical assistance and equipment lending, it works to enhance the overall success

and attraction of events and festivals county-wide. In 2017, the program provided more than 300 hours of direct technical assistance to 27 events and festivals and lent event equipment to 62 more, saving organizers thousands of dollars. The partners are a mix of major events that draw thousands of visitors from outside Tompkins County like Ithaca Skate Jam, Wizarding Weekend and Ithaca Festival, and beloved local events like Porchfest, the Dryden Lake Festival and the First People's Festival. Fewer than half are tourism grant recipients. A number of resources are available on an ongoing basis through the program website: [www.tompkinsfestivals.com](http://www.tompkinsfestivals.com)

*Emma Frisch of Firelight Camps and Food Network Star fame gives a live chef demonstration at the Experience! the Finger Lakes Culinary Festival in June. The foodie festival was one of 27 events that the Tompkins Festivals Program assisted in 2017.*  
Photo Credit: Allison Usavage



# programs

Competitive Tourism Funding Opportunities

**In 2017,**  
the Tompkins County  
Tourism Program invest-  
ed more than \$750,000 in  
74 projects and 49 local  
organizations through the  
following competitive  
grant programs:

*“Tompkins County’s tourism grant programs have been essential to the Sciencenter’s own success. Currently, the Sciencenter sees 110,000 visitors through its doors. This is a growth of 10,000 over the past five years – growth that we strongly attribute to the new exhibit offerings made possible by Tompkins County Tourism Program grants. The Sciencenter has also been able to leverage these grants to bring in additional funding from outside the region to the tune of approximately \$1,000,000 each year. Outside grant money is then spent locally, helping to grow the local economy.”*

—Monika Collins, Senior Director of External Relations, Sciencenter

## 1 Strategic Tourism Implementation (STI) Grants

These targeted grants support significant implementation of the 2020 Strategic Tourism Plan, related implementation plans and other strategic priorities established by the STPB. 2017 investments supported the Tompkins Center for History and Culture, Agriculinary Tourism Initiatives and a project with Cornell Design Connect to develop a local placemaking toolkit.



*In 2017, the Tompkins Center for History and Culture project received two STI Grants and a Tourism Capital Grant in support of early planning, design and project management. These modest early investments of room tax have played a critical role in establishing incredible momentum for this project, a collaborative partnership of The History Center, the Chamber of Commerce and its CVB’s Downtown Visitor Center, the Community Arts Partnership, Wharton Studio Museum, Ithaca Aviation Heritage Foundation, Dorothy Cotton Institute, Historic Ithaca, and others. The project received grants from New York State totaling \$1.365 million in 2017, towards a \$3.685 million capital campaign supporting renovations and exhibits. The project is on track to open the doors to the public in the former Tompkins Trust building on the Ithaca Commons in early 2019.*

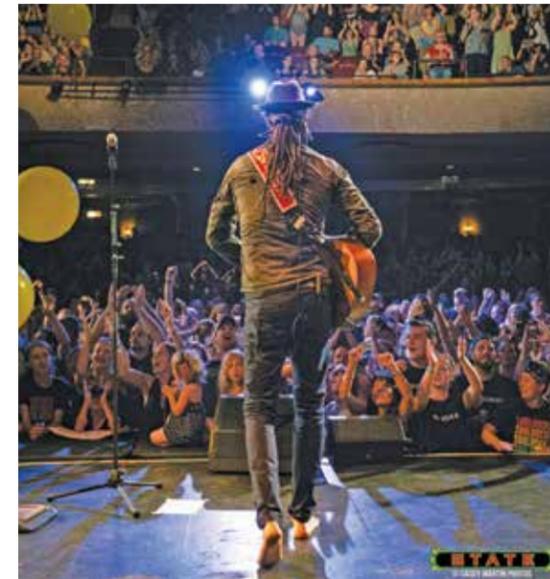
## 2

### Arts & Culture Organizational Development (ACOD) Grants

Tompkins County’s vibrant arts and cultural community makes it stand out as special place in Upstate New York. Its reputation as a tourist destination in the Finger Lakes region relies upon the strength of our major arts and culture organizations. Since its inception in 2003, the Tompkins County Tourism Program has sought to secure the financial and operational stability of the county’s major arts and culture organizations through the ACOD program. In 2017, the program awarded \$197,000 to 10 local organizations. The program is administered on behalf of the County by the Community Arts Partnership.

#### 2017 ACOD GRANT RECIPIENTS:

- |                           |                    |
|---------------------------|--------------------|
| Cayuga Chamber Orchestra  | Ithaca Shakespeare |
| Cinemapolis               | Kitchen Theatre    |
| Community School of Music | PR/CNC             |
| and Art                   | Sciencenter        |
| Hangar Theatre            | State Theatre      |
| The History Center        |                    |



*Backstage view of Michael Franti at The State Theatre of Ithaca on June 24, 2017. Over 50,000 people visit The State Theatre every year, with 40% coming from beyond Tompkins County. During the 2017/18 Season, the theatre will host over 30 internationally touring artists such as Joe Bonamassa, Ray LaMontagne, David Crosby, Modest Mouse, Amos Lee and Ladysmith Black Mambazo. ACOD funding supports a portion of The State Theatre Marketing Director’s salary, helping to expand the reach of their marketing and grow their visitor audience.*

## 3

**Tourism Capital Grants** expand major visitor generating facilities, and fund feasibility studies for potential projects. The Capital Grant Program is administered by Tompkins County Area Development (TCAD), with grant review committee participation from STPB members and TCAD Board of Directors. In 2017, the program awarded \$177,000 to nine new projects with a combined project value of just under \$2,000,000.



*The Finger Lakes Land Trust’s preserve along Lick Brook Gorge hosts one of the most popular segments of the Finger Lakes Trail in Tompkins County. This section connects Buttermilk Falls State Park through Lick Brook Gorge to Robert H. Treman State Park and is a major recreational resource for visitors and residents alike. Lick Brook is visited year-round by tourists and residents who want a glimpse of Ithaca’s famous gorges. The Finger Lakes Land Trust received a Tourism Capital Grant in 2017 to help improve the trail. Photo Credit: Brian Maley*

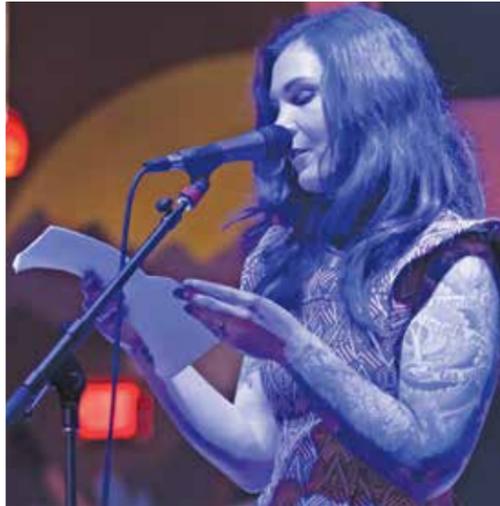
*The Friends of Stewart Park awarded the STPB and Tompkins County Tourism Program with a 2017 “Stewardship” Award. The Award recognized the Program’s support of planning and capital improvements in Stewart Park and its role in many park revitalization successes achieved by Friends of Stewart Park and the City of Ithaca. In 2008, the Chamber of Commerce Foundation was awarded the first of four planning and feasibility studies for the preparation of a Stewart Park Rehabilitation Action Plan which recommended the formation of a “Friends of” or conservancy organization to spearhead and steer the revitalization of Ithaca’s main lakefront park. In 2017, the park received a Tourism Capital Grant to support further renovation of the large pavilion. Pictured (Left to Right): Diana Riesman (Friends of Stewart Park), Tom Knipe (Tompkins County Tourism Program), Anne Gossen (Strategic Tourism Planning Board), Martha Armstrong (TCAD, Tourism Capital Grant Administrator), Rick Manning (Director, Friends of Stewart Park). Photo credit: Andrea Bruns*



**4 New Tourism Initiative Grants and Tourism Project Grants** support significant new tourism generating initiatives that flow from and are consistent with the Strategic Tourism Plan, and other tourism-generating single projects.

\$137,627 was awarded to 15 projects in 2017. A typical return on investment for these grants was 17:1; for every \$1 in grant funding received by the project, \$17 was returned through the community through visitor spending associated with the project.

The Tompkins County Tourism Program awarded grants totaling \$6,770 for support of the Community Arts Partnership's annual "Spring Writes Literary Festival," which features over 35 literary events over four days in early May in a dozen downtown Ithaca locations. Gina Keicher was one of 100 regional writers who read her work at the Festival. This reading was called "Genre Savvy presents Science Fiction."



**5 Tourism Marketing & Advertising Grants** help promote events and projects likely to attract visitors in a manner consistent with the CVB's marketing strategy. The program awarded 18 grants in 2017, matching partner investments dollar for dollar on campaigns designed specifically to attract visitors living outside of a 90 mile radius of Tompkins County.



Aila Peck and Thom Dunn in BRAHMANI: A One Hijra Stand-Up Comedy Show by Aditi Brennan Kapil at the Kitchen Theatre Company. The Kitchen Theatre received Tourism Marketing & Advertising Grant support for a targeted cable television advertising campaign in 2017, promoting the Kitchen's season to potential visitors in Rochester, Buffalo, Albany, Syracuse and Binghamton markets. Photo Credit: Dave Burbank

**6**

**Community Celebrations Grants** support observances, commemorations, jubileations, inaugurations, presentations, or other "red letter days" that have meaning for the community. Celebrations are not required to draw additional visitors to Tompkins County to receive grant funding, but many do, and all add to the visitor opportunities to experience the unique, authentic cultures and communities of Tompkins County.



Top: 485 people, including 231 children, attended the 2017 International Mud Day at the Ithaca Children's Garden, a family fun celebration of art, play, community, and getting muddy. Muddy opportunities included mud cloth paintings, mud pies in a "mud kitchen," and mud experiments in the "mud lab." The full transformation of the Hands on Nature Anarchy Zone into a muddy wonderland, with help from the Ithaca Fire Department, allowed kids of all ages to experience mud baths, mud pits, and mud slides, and a populous community of muddy residents. Mud Day received a Spring 2017 Community Celebrations Grant.

Bottom: The Town of Lansing celebrated the history of agriculture in the Town as part of its Bicentennial Celebration this year. Community Celebrations grants support rural communities in Tompkins County in celebrating aspects of their local heritage.

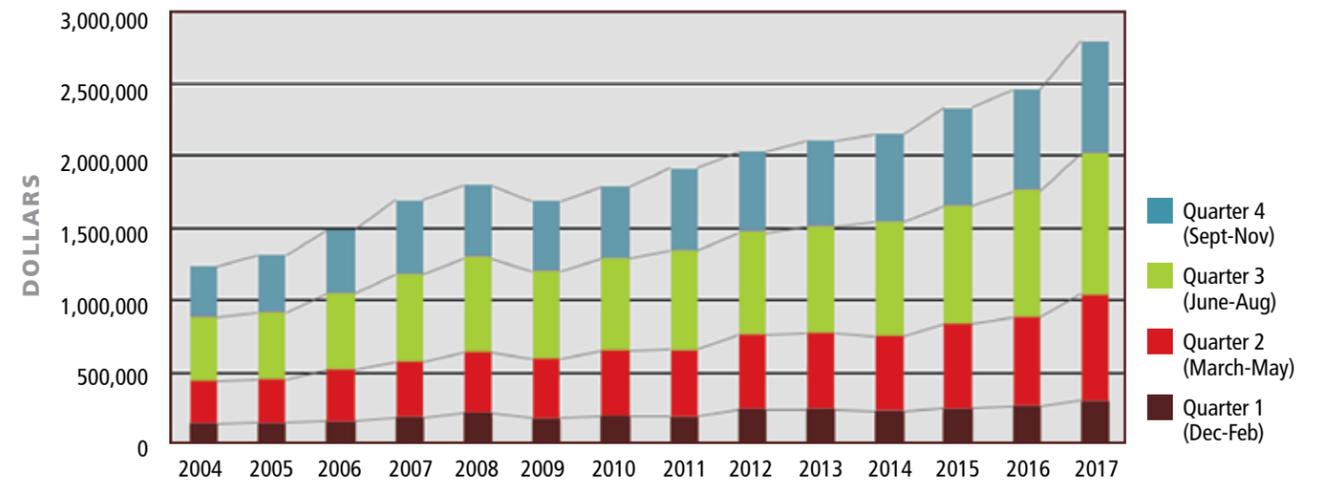
**TOMPKINS COUNTY**

**Hotel Room Occupancy Tax:**

**A Growing Base of Support for Tourism Development**

**In the** decade between 2007 and 2017, Tompkins County Hotel Room Occupancy Tax revenues grew at an average annual rate of 5.4%

**TOMPKINS COUNTY HOTEL ROOM OCCUPANCY TAX REVENUES BY QUARTER 2004-2017**



**Tompkins County Tourism Industry by the numbers:**

- 3,351 annual jobs sustained by tourism – (2016, direct and indirect jobs)
- \$198 million in annual visitor spending / community revenues (2016)
- \$2.81 million annual room tax revenues (2017)
- \$14.87 million in local taxes generated by tourism (2016)
- \$673 per household tax benefit (2016)

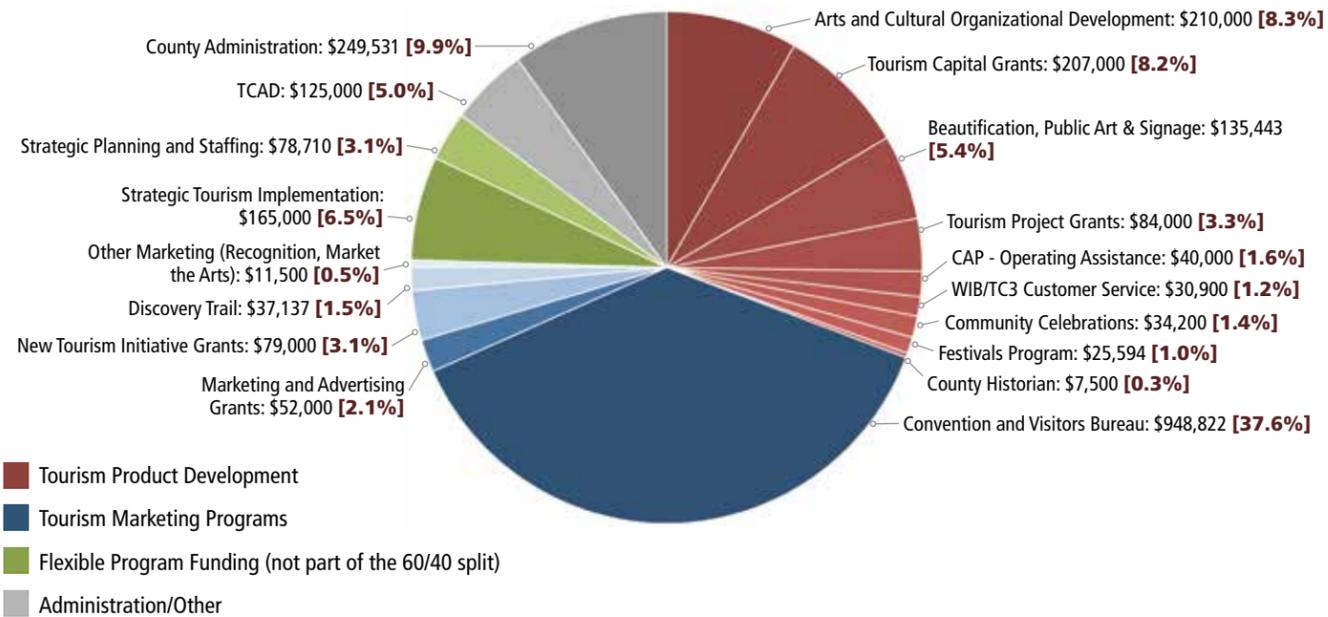
Sources: Tourism Economics, Tompkins County Finance Department

**Were it not for tourism-generated state and local taxes, the average household in Tompkins County would have to pay an additional \$673 to maintain the same level of government revenue.**

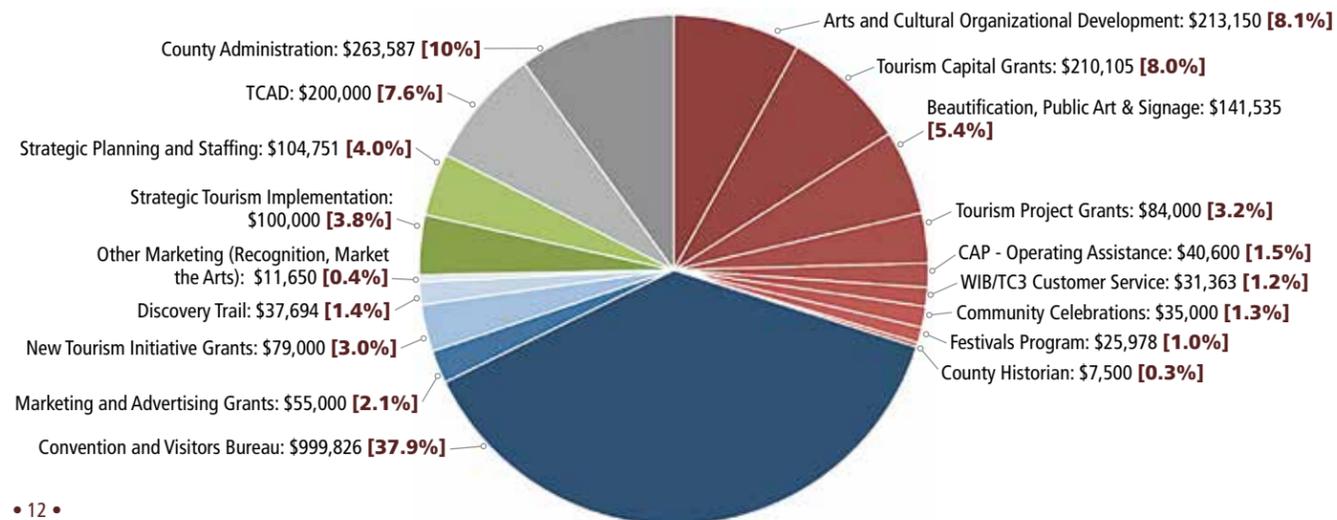
# Tourism Program Budget

Room tax mainly supports tourism product development programs and tourism marketing programs. Between the funds budgeted for these two categories of programs, 60% supports marketing and 40% supports product development. In addition, two flexible categories support both marketing and product: Strategic Planning & Staffing, and Strategic Tourism Implementation grants. Finally, Tompkins County government receives 10% of the funds to support administration, and the County also uses room tax to support a portion of its annual contribution to Tompkins County Area Development.

**2016 TOMPKINS COUNTY HOTEL ROOM OCCUPANCY TAX ADOPTED BUDGET**  
 \$2,521,337 in Expenses (\$2,495,315 Revenues + \$26,022 Reserves)



**2017 TOMPKINS COUNTY HOTEL ROOM OCCUPANCY TAX ADOPTED BUDGET**  
 \$2,640,739 in Expenses (\$2,635,870 Revenues + \$4,869 Reserves)



# 2017 TOURISM GRANTS MADE



## Arts & Culture Organizational Development Grants

APPLICANT ORGANIZATION	PROJECT	AMOUNT AWARDED
7th Art Corporation of Ithaca (Cinemapolis)	Arts and Cultural Organizational Development	\$13,500
Cayuga Chamber Orchestra	Arts and Cultural Organizational Development	\$20,000
Center for the Arts at Ithaca, Inc. (Hangar Theatre)	Arts and Cultural Organizational Development	\$24,500
Community School of Music and Arts	Arts and Cultural Organizational Development	\$7,000
Kitchen Theatre	Arts and Cultural Organizational Development	\$30,000
Paleontological Research Institution	Arts and Cultural Organizational Development	\$30,000
Sciencenter	Arts and Cultural Organizational Development	\$20,000
State Theatre of Ithaca, Inc.	Arts and Cultural Organizational Development	\$25,000
The History Center in Tompkins County	Arts and Cultural Organizational Development	\$22,000
The Ithaca Shakespeare Company, Inc	Arts and Cultural Organizational Development	\$5,000

## Tourism Capital Grants

APPLICANT ORGANIZATION	PROJECT	AMOUNT AWARDED
Center for the Arts at Ithaca, Inc. (Hangar Theatre)	2017 Hangar Theatre's A Christmas Carol	\$20,000
Center for Transformative Action	2017 Floating Classroom Edu-Tourism Feasibility Study	\$5,500
Community School of Music and Arts	2017-Third Floor Performance Space Capital Improvements: Phase 2	\$16,500
Finger Lakes Land Trust	2017 Connecting Tompkins County's Gorge Parks: Enhancing Public Access at Lick Brook	\$10,000
Friends of Stewart Park	2017 Picnic Pavilion Phase 2	\$25,000
Ithaca Youth Bureau	2017 Cass Park Ice Rink Enclosure - Phase 2, Year 2	\$50,000
Paleontological Research Institution	2017 Smith Woods Preservation	\$5,000
Sciencenter	2017 Get Fit! Gallery	\$20,000
The History Center	2017 Heritage Education Center	\$25,000
	Full Architectural/Exhibit Construction Documents and Administration	\$25,000

## Community Celebrations Grants

APPLICANT ORGANIZATION	PROJECT	AMOUNT AWARDED
Al-Huda Islamic Center of the Finger Lakes	2017 "Share Our Table" Dinner	\$1,700
Child Development Council	2017 Playdate in the Park	\$850
City of Ithaca	2017 GIAC Festival	\$1,200
City of Ithaca	2017 Double Dutch Tournament of Champions	\$1,200
Dorothy Cotton Jubilee Singers	2018 The Quilt Speaks: Signs and Symbols from the Underground Railroad	\$2,000
Dryden Town Historical Society	2018 Homestead Heritage Fair	\$2,000
Enfield Community Council, Inc.	2017 Enfield Harvest Festival	\$1,700
Historic Ithaca, Inc.	2017 Tompkins County Bicentennial Walk and Talks	\$1,000
Ithaca Carshare/ Bike Walk Tompkins	2017 Streets Alive! Ithaca	\$1,600
Ithaca Children's Garden	2017 International Mud Day	\$1,500
Ithaca Children's Garden	2018 Festival of Fire & Ice	\$1,750
Latino Civic Association of Tompkins County	2017 Latin Heritage Month	\$1,600
Multicultural Resource Center	2017 First Peoples Festival	\$1,300
Social Ventures	2017 Latino Multicultural Festival	\$1,000
Southside Community Center, Inc.	2017 Juneteenth	\$1,600
Southside Community Center, Inc.	2017 Kwanzaa	\$1,400
The History Center in Tompkins County	2017 Celebrating Our Rural Heritage	\$1,000
Town of Dryden	2017 Dryden Lake Festival	\$1,700
Town of Groton	2017 Treasures of Groton's Past	\$950
Town of Lansing	2017 - Town of Lansing Bicentennial Celebration Ag Day	\$1,200
Town of Newfield	2017 Newfield Old Home Days	\$1,700
Town of Newfield	2018 Newfield Music Series at Mill Park	\$775

Triphammer Arts Inc.	2017 Watermusic and Dancing on the Water	\$1,200
Trumansburg Area Chamber of Commerce	2017 WinterFest	\$1,000
Village at Ithaca	2017 Lift Every Voice: We are the Village! Community Concert	\$1,200
Village of Groton	2017 Groton Free Community Night	\$700
Village of Groton	2018 Groton Cabin Fever Festival	\$1,000

### Tourism Marketing & Advertising Grants

APPLICANT ORGANIZATION	PROJECT	AMOUNT AWARDED
Cayuga Wine Trail, Inc.	2018 CeleBrunch - Cayuga Lake Wine Trail	\$5,000
Center for the Arts at Ithaca, Inc. (Hangar Theatre)	2017 Come for the Gorges, Stay for a Show	\$5,000
Community Arts Partnership of Tompkins County	2017 Spring Writes Literary Festival	\$3,270
Cornell Cooperative Extension of Tompkins County-Primitive Pursuits	2017 Regional Marketing for Overnight Camp	\$3,000
Cooperative Extension Association of Tompkins County	2017 Reuse Trail Extravaganza	\$1,300
Downtown Ithaca Alliance	2017 Ice Festival	\$2,500
Ithaca Festival	2017 Ithaca Festival	\$1,000
Ithaca Shakespeare Company Inc	2017 Summer Shakespeare Festival	\$1,000
Ithaca Tompkins Regional Airport	2018 China Welcome	\$5,000
Ithaca Underground	2017-2018 Big Day In, Naked Noise, November Music Series, One Fest	\$4,050
Kitchen Theatre Company	2017-2018 Cable TV Advertising	\$5,000
Kitchen Theatre Company	KTC Marketing	\$5,000
Paleontological Research Institution	2017 Mapping the Planets	\$2,800
Paleontological Research Institution	2018 Skulls	\$250
The Cherry Arts Inc.	2018 Production Enhancement	\$2,000
Trumansburg Area Chamber of Commerce	2017 Trumansburg Area Marketing and Advertising	\$1,145
Ulysses Community Council	Village of Trumansburg Walking Tour Brochure	\$750
Wharton Studio Museum	2017 Ithaca Fantastik Film Festival	\$2,600

### Tourism Project and New Tourism Initiative Grants

APPLICANT ORGANIZATION	PROJECT	AMOUNT AWARDED
Center for Transformative Action	2017 Market Research to Launch Educational-Tourism on Cayuga Lake	\$3,500
Community Arts Partnership of Tompkins County	2017 Spring Writes Literary Festival	\$3,500
Cooperative Extension Association of Tompkins County	2018 Savor the Finger Lakes	\$3,800
Downtown Ithaca Alliance	2017 Wizarding Weekend	\$15,000
Downtown Ithaca Alliance	2017 Ice Festival	\$12,000
Ithaca Children's Garden	2017 Visual Tour Guide Project	\$5,100
Ithaca Children's Garden	2018 Discovery Docks	\$14,850
Ithaca Festival	2017 Ithaca Festival	\$3,000
Ithaca Shakespeare Company Inc	2017 Summer Shakespeare Festival	\$6,627
Ithaca Tompkins Regional Airport	2018 China Welcome	\$25,000
Ithaca Underground	2017-2018 Big Day In, Naked Noise, November Music Series, One Fest	\$8,750
Paleontological Research Institution	2018 Skulls	\$3,000
Sciencenter	2017 Science Playground	\$18,000
The Cherry Arts Inc.	2018 Production Enhancement Funding	\$3,000
Wharton Studio Museum	2017 Ithaca Fantastik	\$12,500

### Strategic Tourism Implementation Grants

APPLICANT ORGANIZATION	PROJECT	AMOUNT AWARDED
The History Center	Tompkins County Heritage Center	\$35,500
Cornell Design Connect	Tompkins County Tactical Placemaking Toolkit	\$500
Tompkins County Chamber of Commerce	Agriculinary Tourism Plan Implementation	\$30,000
The History Center	Tompkins Center for History and Culture - Project Mgmt and Project Website Support	\$28,000

# STRATEGIC TOURISM PLANNING BOARD

## 2017 VOTING MEMBERS

David Blake	At-Large
Brett Bossard	Arts-Culture
Kelli Cartmill	Lodging
Josh Friedman	Arts-Culture
Ian Golden	Recreation
Anne Gossen	Arts-Culture
Steven Hugo	At-Large
Ken Jupiter	At-Large
Anne Kellerman	At-Large
Doug Levine	Arts-Culture
Michael Mellor	At-Large
Cara Nichols	Ithaca College
Stephen Nunley	At-Large
Barbara Romano	Cornell University
Susan Stafford	TC3
Julie Swigart	Lodging
Mary Kate Wheeler	Agriculture
Andrew Zepp	At-Large

## TOMPKINS COUNTY TOURISM PROGRAM STAFF

Thomas Knipe	Principal Planner / Tourism Program Director
Dariele Drake	Senior Account Clerk, Tompkins County Department of Planning & Sustainability
Kristin McCarthy	Administrative Assistant, Tompkins County Department of Planning & Sustainability

## EX-OFFICIO / NON-VOTING MEMBERS

Martha Armstrong	Tompkins County Area Development
Peggy Coleman	Ithaca Tompkins County Convention and Visitors Bureau
Gary Ferguson	Downtown Ithaca Alliance
Dan Klein	Legislature Liaison
Dwight Mengel	Government Transportation
John Spence	Community Arts Partnership
Jennifer Tavares	Tompkins County Chamber of Commerce

## ASSOCIATE NON-VOTING MEMBERS

Ethan Ash	Associate - Former STPB Member
Jim Brophy	NYS Parks
Carol Kammen	County Historian
Jon Reis	Former STPB Member

## IN AUGUST, STPB MEMBERS TOURED

Trumansburg visitor attractions and met with local officials, including a visit to the Visitors Center at Taughannock Falls Overlook.

Front row (left to right): Dwight Mengel, Steve Hugo, Doug Levine, Brett Bossard, David Blake, Elizabeth Thomas (Town of Ulysses Supervisor), and Susan Stafford. Back Row (left to right): Fred Bonn (Finger Lakes Regional Director, NYS Office of Parks, Recreation & Historic Preservation), Marty Petrovic (Mayor, Village of Trumansburg), Jodi LaPierre (Visitor Experience Manager), John Spence, Julie Swigart, Cara Nichols, Ken Jupiter, Anne Gossen, Barbara Romano, Anne Kellerman, Kelli Cartmill, Michael Mellor, Jennifer Tavares, Nana Monaco (President, Trumansburg Chamber of Commerce), Elain Springer (Trumansburg Chamber of Commerce), Tom Knipe, Ronda Roaring.

The STPB meets each third Wednesday at 3pm. Agendas, minutes and meeting locations are available at [www.tompkinscountyny.gov/tourism/board](http://www.tompkinscountyny.gov/tourism/board)







1/23/18 DRAFT

# Tompkins County Outdoor Recreation Tourism Implementation Plan 2018

Adopted by the Tompkins County Strategic Tourism Planning Board on March X, 2018

## LETTER FROM THE OUTDOOR RECREATION TOURISM TASK FORCE

Natural beauty. Accessible hiking and biking. Outstanding parks and natural areas. Cayuga Lake. Waterfalls and gorges. We're known for these. Indeed, "Ithaca is Gorges" and our community has received a number of outdoor recreation accolades as a result. As a Tourism Board, a County Tourism Program, and set of partner organizations, we have been working collectively over the past several years to build upon this strength to enhance outdoor recreation experiences by supporting initiatives such as the Cayuga Lake Blueway Trail, the Tompkins Priority Trails Strategy, the Cayuga Waterfront Trail, and several other trail and natural area enhancements.

Yet, we can do more to fully live up to the image of Tompkins County as an outstanding destination for experiencing outdoor recreation by identifying and then investing strategically in key priorities. By doing so, we stand to reap significant economic return through more visitation, longer stays, higher spending, and above all more inspiring experiences of the natural world right out the back door of elite global institutions of higher education and a vibrant downtown.

One of the unique challenges related to supporting outdoor recreation tourism compared to other local tourism sectors is that there is no partner organization or set of established groups that have the capacity to independently push forward an outdoor recreation tourism agenda. Contrast this with other tourism focus areas like the arts or downtown Ithaca, which do have these actors in place, partly thanks to long-standing investments by the Tourism Program. In addition, unlike a performance, event or gated attraction, all of which have fairly straightforward methods for gaining a picture of return on investment, investment in outdoor recreation tourism requires an understanding that improving our outdoor recreation assets is a long-term strategy in the overall attraction of the community as a destination. A third unique aspect is that the places where visitors access these experiences and where the experiences occur are either publicly owned parks, trails, and roads or a patchwork of public, quasi-public or privately owned areas like the Finger Lakes Trail. This adds a challenge to advance outdoor recreation tourism; because most of the lands are publicly owned, they are less nimble to have private businesses invest in making the resource better. Developing and improving these public assets as high-quality visitor-ready attractions will take commitment over time, coordination, planning, and investment from a wide variety of sources.

In light of the above, a targeted approach for developing outdoor recreation is needed. In addition to identifying six key actions in the five activity areas prioritized by the plan – water-based recreation, hiking and running, bicycling, kids and nature, and adventure/niche – this plan proposes the establishment of new funding mechanisms specifically in support of outdoor recreation tourism by the Tompkins County Tourism Program. First, investing strategically in growing the organizational capacity of partners who can push forward the outdoor recreation tourism agenda is critical. Second, targeted investment in key physical outdoor recreation infrastructure will improve the experience and expand the overall draw to our area.

We are pleased to present this vision for outdoor recreation tourism to the community. Thank you to all of the partners who contributed to the development of this plan, and we look forward to working with you on implementing it.

Andrew Zepp, Chair, STPB Outdoor Recreation Tourism Task Force

Thomas Knipe, Principal Planner & Tourism Program Director

## Executive Summary

*Goal:* The goal of this plan is to leverage our outstanding assets and address existing challenges to expand outdoor recreation and other tourism related to our outstanding natural amenities: Cayuga Lake, gorges and waterfalls, trails, parks, and natural areas.

*Vision:* We have the potential to become recognized as one of the truly premier outdoor recreation towns of the mid-Atlantic, a place that is widely known as the #1 Outdoor Recreation Community in Central NY and the Finger Lakes.

### Tourism Program Investment

This plan proposes two new structural changes to the Tompkins County Tourism Program investments, along with six other key actions which the Program will work to advance or support partners in advancing along with a variety of additional supportive actions categorized by five specific areas of opportunity:

Water-Based Recreation, Hiking and Running, Bicycling, Kids in Nature, and Adventure / Niche Outdoor Recreation

### Two New Structural Changes

Outdoor Recreation Tourism Capacity Building Grants - Establish a new grant fund using room tax dollars to grow the capacity of local organizations to advance outdoor recreation tourism development at key physical areas and critical outdoor recreation tourism infrastructure opportunity sites. Capacity support could include funding for staff resources to move outdoor recreation projects forward that are sorely lacking at this time.

Outdoor Recreation Tourism Capital Reserve Fund - Use room tax to A) create a new County capital reserve fund for outdoor recreation tourism, B) expand the funding sources and eligibility criteria of the existing Capital Reserve Fund for Natural, Scenic, and Recreational Resource Protection to support outdoor recreation tourism infrastructure improvements or C) increase support for the existing Tourism Capital Grant (TCG) program while modifying TCG grant guidelines to encourage more of these types of projects to come forward under that grant. Infrastructure support could include trail easement acquisitions, parking improvements, trailhead signage, and other types of projects to develop and improve our outdoor recreation amenities. Further discussion by the STPB will help determine which of the options for increasing investment in physical outdoor recreation tourism infrastructure is the best fit.

### Six Key Actions

Blueprint for Better Bicycling - Improve street bicycle infrastructure in Ithaca's urban core to create safe, comfortable on-street connections between the downtown and waterfront, between multi-use trails, and between visitor attractions.

#### ACTION FRAMEWORK:

2 New Structural Changes

6 Key Actions

26 Supportive Actions

Key Actions and Supportive Actions are listed under 5 thematic areas of opportunity:

- Water-Based
- Hiking & Running
- Bicycling
- Kids in Nature
- Niche & Adventure

Priority Trails Strategy<sup>1</sup> - Support the expansion of the Tompkins County network of multi-use trails.

Cayuga Lake Blueway Trail<sup>2</sup> - Actively develop and implement the water trail.

Planning and Development for Key Underdeveloped Public Lands - Create clear plans for outdoor recreation enhancing physical improvements in key underinvested areas such as the Six Mile Creek Natural Area and Hammond Hill State Forest, among others. For important trail access points, identify a clear set of priority capital improvements involving trail enhancement and expansion, trailhead signage, mapping, interpretation and parking.

Kids in Nature Attractions and Organizations - Continue to partner and invest through existing grant programs in attractions and organizations supporting kids in nature such as Ithaca Children's Garden, Cayuga Nature Center, and others.

Cayuga Lake Birding Trail - Develop a new Cayuga Lake Birding Trail with a dozen or more sites in proximity to Cayuga Lake with anchor sites at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge to include marketing and signage and interactive website.

Total new investment = \$100,000 to \$150,000 through two new grant programs funded by room tax. Other key actions to be supported by existing tourism grant programs, outside grant funds, and partners.

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<sup>1</sup> The Tompkins Priority Trails Strategy is accessible online at:

<http://www.tompkinscountyny.gov/tourism/tourism/plan>

<sup>2</sup> The Cayuga Lake Blueway Trail Plan is available online at: <http://cayugablueway.weebly.com/>

## Introduction

The purpose of this plan is to identify steps we can take collectively as a community in the next several years to develop and promote Ithaca and Tompkins County as a premier regional destination for outdoor recreation.

The Strategic Tourism Planning Board (STPB) is charged by the Tompkins County Legislature with providing oversight and strategic direction for use of the County's hotel room occupancy tax funds. In performance of its policy-making role for tourism, the STPB established a 2020 Strategic Plan for Tourism in 2012. Outdoor Recreation Tourism was highlighted as a focus area, and in early 2016 the STPB established the Outdoor Recreation Tourism Task Force and charged this group with coming up with a more fine-grained set of strategies for this sector. Core Task Force members were Andrew Zepp, Ian Golden, Peggy Coleman, and Tom Knipe.

**Our goal:** "To expand outdoor recreation and other tourism related to our outstanding natural amenities: Cayuga Lake, gorges and waterfalls, trails, parks, and natural areas."

The Task Force conducted a number of interviews with key stakeholders and extensive research to establish the scope and focus for this work. A focus group was convened in spring 2016 to perform a formal SWOT analysis exercise, and in January, 2017 the Task Force hosted a large workshop with more than 60 industry stakeholders at The Space at Greenstar. The Task Force drew extensively from the collective wisdom coming out of this workshop as well as other research and industry knowledge to develop this plan which sets the stage to significantly advance investment and action in support of outdoor recreation tourism in the next three to five years.

Notably, the scope of this plan does not include sports tourism, which has its own set of unique challenges, actors, and opportunities and therefore deserves separate treatment. In addition, the Task Force determined early on that while the area hosts excellent fishing, hunting and camping opportunities, those opportunities would not be the focus of this plan because, simply, these activities, while a valuable part of the mix, do not represent a competitive advantage for our community relative to other nearby communities in Upstate New York and Northeast Pennsylvania.

## Context for Outdoor Recreation Tourism in Tompkins County

Tourism is an important sector of our local economy, accounting for approximately \$200 million in economic activity, 3,500 jobs, and also greatly enhances our local quality of life by supporting the attractions and amenities that also make this a great place to live, work, go to school, grow a business and retire. The STPB has identified outdoor recreation tourism as one of several key focus areas for tourism development between now and 2020. The Tompkins County 2020 Strategic Tourism Plan establishes the

### Outdoor Recreation Accolades:

Bronze-level Bicycle Friendly Community – League of American Bicyclists

Best Swimming Spot in New York State – (Robert H. Treman State Park – Weather.com

America's Five Best Mountain Biking Towns – Bike Magazine

Healthiest City in New York State – Wall Street Journal

Best River Town – America (top 25) – Outside Magazine 2012

#5 Best Place to Live – Outside Magazine Reader Poll 2014

Road Runners Club of America – Runner Friendly Community 2017

goal for this implementation plan and the 2020 Plan also has three “critical actions” which are currently being implemented: 1) supporting the completion of priority multi-use trails and the Finger Lakes Trail, 2) implementing the Cayuga Lake Blueway Trail, and 3) supporting the Stewart Park Rehabilitation Action Plan.

Outdoor recreation tourism is already the single most important draw for visitors to our area after Cornell and Ithaca College.

The Tompkins County Tourism Program reinvests local hotel room occupancy tax funds in a variety of ways to support both product development and marketing. Annual room tax revenues topped \$2.75 million in 2017. In the past several years, the Program has supported a number of outdoor recreation tourism related projects, including the Cayuga

Waterfront Trail, Stewart Park, the Ithaca Children’s Garden, the Cayuga Lake Blueway Trail, IthacaTrails.org and GoFingerLakes.org websites, and a variety of outdoor recreation related events including the Cayuga Lake SUP Cup and Cayuga Trails 50. A full list of outdoor recreation related investments between 2005 and 2017 through 73 grants totaling \$615,466 can be found in the appendix of this plan.

### Audience

According to the 2010 Tompkins County Visitor Profile Study report, 45% of leisure visitors ranked “Gorges and State Parks” as an important motivator for their trip to Tompkins County. This was by far the top ranked reason for leisure visitors. In addition, 26% of leisure visitors ranked “Cayuga Lake” as an important reason for their visit. What this means is that outdoor recreation tourism is already the single most important draw for visitors to our area after Cornell and Ithaca College.

<u>Percent of Tourism Grant Funds Invested by Focus Area 2004-2016<sup>3,4</sup></u>
64% - Arts & Culture
41% - Downtown Ithaca
27% - Edutourism
10% - Outdoor Recreation
6% - Agriculinary

In contrast, support from the Tompkins County Tourism towards outdoor recreation tourism has not been commensurate with its top ranking as a motivator for visitation. A 2017 study<sup>3</sup> conducted by a graduate student in the Cornell Department of City and Regional Planning in partnership with the Tompkins County Tourism Program looking into the nature of investments by the Program between 2004 and 2016 found that among Established and Emerging Tourism Focus Areas (as defined in the 2020 Strategic Tourism Plan), Arts, Culture & Heritage Tourism saw the most investment, followed by Educational Tourism and Downtown Ithaca. All other Focus Areas saw

substantially less investment, including Outdoor Recreation. Specifically, around 10% of all flexible investments outside of core tourism infrastructure investments like the Convention and Visitors Bureau were tied to Outdoor Recreation Tourism, while 64% of investments were linked to Arts & Culture, 41% to Downtown Ithaca, and 27% to Edutourism<sup>4</sup>.

Outdoor Recreation is big business and we gain by tapping more aggressively into this established audience and industry. 52% of New York State residents engage in outdoor recreation activities every

<sup>3</sup> Tompkins County Room Tax Investments, 2004-2016; a report prepared by Dylan Tuttle, Cornell Department of City and Regional Planning, for the Strategic Tourism Planning Board, Winter 2017.

<sup>4</sup> Inclusive of overlapping primarily, secondary and tertiary focus areas, hence the total figure adding to greater than 100%.

year. According to a recent Outdoor Industry Association (OIA) report, “The outdoor recreation economy in New York State generates 313,000 direct jobs, \$41.8 billion in consumer spending, \$14 billion in wages and salaries and \$3.6 billion in state and local tax revenue. Outdoor recreation is a powerful economic engine that contributes to businesses and healthy communities and is a vital and sustainable sector that relies on investing in and protecting our area’s public lands and waters.”

<sup>5</sup> Outdoor Recreation further supports communities in achieving other important goals, especially health and quality of life.

While Tompkins County holds some limited potential to further develop adventure activities like ice climbing, kite-boarding, advanced whitewater kayaking, and wilderness backpacking, these activities have smaller overall market potential than activities like running, hiking, flatwater paddling, and bicycling. And competitive destinations with stronger natural assets to support adventure activities, like Lake Placid, exist within New York State. Our competitive advantage therefore lies in developing outdoor recreation tourism around our existing land, water, and organizational assets to attract more families, HENRY (High Earning Not Rich Yet) visitors, and people coming for the experience of visiting Ithaca as a whole. The strongest strategic approach is to improve and develop new infrastructure that aims at a broad audience of people who are interested in having outdoor experiences as part of a larger set of trip purposes. This fits with our overall strength as a destination of having a lot of interesting things to do in a comfortable, distinct, attractive setting. To use the example of trails, more miles of trail and better trails will lead to more visitation and increased visitor spending over time.

### Challenges

Set against outstanding assets and advantages to build upon for further developing outdoor recreation tourism are several important challenges.

#### Declining water quality

Local water-based outdoor recreation and indeed the overall image of the Finger Lakes as an attractive destination rely on clean water in our gorges and Cayuga Lake. Swimming areas at Taughannock Falls State Park, Buttermilk Falls State Park, and Robert Treman State Park have all experienced closures due to the presence of e-coli and/or turbidity. In addition, the emergence of blue-green algae as a vital threat to outdoor recreation tourism cannot be overstated.

#### Outdoor Recreation’s Many Community Benefits

“Studies demonstrate that, in addition to economic prosperity, outdoor recreation delivers personal and social benefits on which healthy, happy communities thrive. Investment in outdoor recreation may also help ease financial and social burdens.

Investments in outdoor recreation programming and infrastructure have also been shown to reduce crime rates, improve educational outcomes for elementary, secondary and post-secondary students, including attention and test scores, retention and high school graduation rates, lower long-term individual and public health care costs by reducing stress and obesity rates, improving physical fitness and strengthening social bonds with family and friends. Communities across the US recognize that outdoor recreation supports healthy communities, contributes to a high quality of life and—perhaps most importantly— attracts and sustains businesses and families.”

- Outdoor Industry Association Report 2017

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<sup>5</sup> OIA report 2017. Access online at: [https://outdoorindustry.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/OIA\\_RecEconomy\\_FINAL\\_Single.pdf](https://outdoorindustry.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/OIA_RecEconomy_FINAL_Single.pdf)

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*“It's bad and it's everywhere: Harmful algal blooms plague Owasco, Skaneateles, Cayuga lakes”* - September, 2017 Auburnpub.com headline

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Addressing this threat will require a sustained commitment by a variety of actors over time. Governor Andrew M. Cuomo’s December 2017 announcement of a proposal to implement a \$65 million 4-point initiative to aggressively combat harmful algal blooms in Upstate New York, including for Cayuga Lake, is an encouraging development that local tourism groups should watch closely and look for opportunities to support.

#### Slow progress on multi-use trail development

As shown in the Tompkins Priority Trails Strategy, tremendous opportunities exist to expand and connect a multi-use trail network in Tompkins County. But progress has been slow and has occurred in fits and starts. The Black Diamond Trail was first envisioned in the 1970s, and the eight-mile Northern Section between Cass Park and Taughannock Falls State Park finally opened in late 2016, more than 40 years later. The Cayuga Waterfront Trail in the City of Ithaca is now complete, more than a decade after work first began. Extending the South Hill Recreation Way would seem straightforward as NYSEG owns the entire corridor and has expressed willingness to allow for its use as a trail, but progress has been slow because of bureaucratic and political complexity. The so-called ‘bridge to nowhere’ over Route 13 in Southwest Ithaca will have been in place for too many years before it finally connects to a trail, as expected in 2018.

Some of this is the inherent complexity of trail development, but with increased capacity and sustained effort, progress can advance more quickly, as recent successful efforts of the Dryden Rail Trail Task Force attest. This plan seeks to increase the capacity of local trail expansion and improvement efforts to support speeded progress. Increasing capacity for this work will further assist partner agencies, including local governments, to prioritize these multi-beneficial projects.

#### Loss of Finger Lakes Trail access

The Emerald Necklace, a 50,000 acre swath of public forest and open space across the Southern portion of Tompkins County and adjacent counties – Schuyler, Seneca and Tioga – hosts a 78 mile section of the 563-mile Finger Lakes Trail. Only 40 percent of the trail is on publicly owned land and the remaining 60 percent is hosted by 58 private landowners. Development pressures and other factors have already displaced the trail from private lands to onto the sides of roads for several miles in some sections, which degrades the hiking experience. In addition, limited trailhead access makes it more difficult than desirable to access the trail from key state route crossings. Meanwhile, local and regional trail groups lack adequate capacity to keep up with and address these issues. Increased capacity for Finger Lakes Trail protection and trailhead development could help address these challenges.

#### Many of our public lands are not primarily managed for recreation

Unlike City and State Parks, many of our local public lands are not managed and/or developed for outdoor recreation. Examples include the Six Mile Creek and Ithaca Falls Natural Areas in the City of Ithaca; Hammond Hill State Forest, Shindagin Hollow State Forest, and Salt Point, managed by the New York State DEC; and other municipal parks like Danby Town Park. Tremendous opportunities exist for

enhancing outdoor recreation opportunities in these areas, particularly Six Mile Creek with its beautiful natural area and trail network so close to downtown Ithaca. To take advantage of such opportunities would require a renewed approach and increased capacity for planning and implementation.

#### Lack of Inherent Institutional Capacity to Advance Outdoor Recreation Tourism Initiatives

Outdoor recreation tourism lacks the same level of supportive organizational and physical frameworks which are inherent to other sectors. For example, arts & culture tourism has well established local not-for-profit organizations with missions that include tourism and direct control over bricks and mortar physical attractions, like theatres and museums. In the case of outdoor recreation tourism, the major physical assets which can be developed in support of outdoor recreation tourism are primarily under public state and municipal ownership, which are less likely to have outdoor recreation tourism as a core element of their mission.

#### Seasonality of Visitation

Tourism is typically down in the winter in Tompkins County, compared to summer and certain fall and spring weekends. As such, the Tompkins County Tourism Program seeks opportunities to grow visitation in the winter. Many outdoor recreation activities that we seek to build upon through this plan are more likely to occur in warmer months. That said, many of the opportunities outlined in this plan to support hiking and running, such as improved visitor access on Hammond Hill, also support cross country skiing. Winter fat-bike riding on our growing network of multi-use trails has tremendous potential. And niche opportunities like ice climbing also provide a targeted means of growing winter outdoor recreation.

#### Vision

Our vision for the future development of outdoor recreation tourism is to expand and grow the quality of our existing natural assets in a way that fits with our community's overall mix of attractions, while also aspiring to become recognized as a premier outdoor recreation town of the mid-Atlantic, a place that is widely known as the #1 "Outdoor Recreation Town" in Central NY and the Finger Lakes.

We have the potential to become recognized as a premier outdoor recreation town of the mid-Atlantic, a place that is widely known as the #1 Outdoor Recreation Community in Central NY and the Finger Lakes.

## Actions

This plan recommends that the Tompkins County Tourism Program and its partners commit resources and energy to advance two structural changes and six key actions to achieve our vision and goal for outdoor recreation tourism. In addition, a number of “supportive actions” are identified which can be advanced as timing, willing partners, capacity, and opportunities allow.

The actions are categorized under one key “Structural Support” category, along with five topical categories that were identified as priorities by the STPB Outdoor Recreation Tourism Task Force and stakeholders: Bicycling, Water-Based Recreation, Hiking and Running, Kids in Nature, and Adventure / Niche Outdoor Recreation.

### Structural Support for Outdoor Recreation Tourism

As the successful Tourism Program’s Arts & Culture Organizational Development (ACOD) Grant program has done for increasing the capacity of local arts organizations to advance tourism goals, this plan recommends two significant new structural changes to the Tompkins County Tourism Program and several other possible supportive actions to increase the level of structural support to advance outdoor recreation tourism.

#### Two New Structural Changes

The creation of two new targeted funding opportunities for outdoor recreation tourism would significantly increase our collective capacity to improve and expand upon our natural outdoor recreation assets.

#### Outdoor Recreation Tourism Capacity Building Grants

Establish a new grant fund using room tax dollars to grow the capacity of local organizations to enhance advance outdoor recreation tourism development in at key physical areas and critical outdoor recreation tourism infrastructure opportunity sites.

Critical areas for investment as identified by this plan include Stewart Park and Cass Park, Six Mile Creek gorge, Multi-Use Trails that are part of the Tompkins Priority Trails Strategy, the Finger Lakes Trail, the Ithaca Falls area, State Forests, and public lake access sites.

This fund is proposed to be structured much like the existing ACOD Grant program - as an organizational development and capacity-building fund which will serve to advance planning activities and provide other types of structural support including staffing to significantly push forward the development of key assets.

Initial pilot funding in 2018 to set up a program could be established through the Tourism Program’s Strategic Tourism Implementation Fund, and in 2019 and beyond through the STPB’s annual budgeting process. The STPB and Legislature would then respond to proposals from applicants to possibly include ‘friends’ groups like the Friends of Stewart Park and Cayuga Trails Club, local governments like the City of Ithaca or Dryden Rail Trail Task Force, and not-for profit groups like the Finger Lakes Land Trust and Finger Lakes Trail Conference.

#### ACTION FRAMEWORK:

2 New Structural Changes

6 Key Actions

26 Supportive Actions

Key Actions and Supportive Actions are listed under thematic areas of opportunity:

- Structural Support
- Water-Based
- Hiking & Running
- Bicycling
- Kids in Nature
- Niche & Adventure

Initial proposed room tax investment: \$75,000 - \$100,000

Outdoor Recreation Tourism Capital Reserve Fund. Use room tax to A) create a new County capital reserve fund for outdoor recreation, B) expand the funding sources and eligibility criteria of the existing Capital Reserve Fund for Natural, Scenic, and Recreational Resource Protection to support outdoor recreation tourism infrastructure improvements or C) increase support for the existing Tourism Capital Grant (TCG) program while modifying TCG grant guidelines to encourage more of these types of projects to come forward under that grant.

Although it has supported some investments in park and trail amenities, the existing Tourism Capital Grant program is currently primarily set up to consider proposals for bricks and mortar capital projects, not investments in outdoor recreation tourism. Meanwhile, the County has an existing program supported by the general fund to support investment in conservation projects, including trails and outdoor recreation tourism assets in certain specific areas including the County’s established Natural Features Focus Areas. In the past, this program has been used for recreational resources including: 1) support for Finger Lakes Land Trust acquisition of the key conservation lands on and around the Cayuga Inlet in the Towns of Ithaca and Newfield, protecting a popular stretch of Finger Lakes Trail and providing protected buffers to the Black Diamond Trail and Cayuga Lake Scenic Byway, and 2) a recent grant to acquire a key parcel in the West Hill Wildway that includes a proposed trail that would extend from Robert Treman State Park to the northern end of the Town of Ithaca across West Hill. This program could be expanded by room tax. Yet a third option would be to create a new separate County capital reserve fund for outdoor recreation to be administered by the Tompkins County Tourism Program.

This plan is proposing to invest \$50,000 in room tax to either create a new fund or modify and expand one of the two existing capital funds to increase targeted investment in outdoor recreation tourism infrastructure. Example project proposals could include: Finger Lakes Trail enhancement, protection, and/or access, Six Mile Creek access improvements, trail development to connect the Six Mile Creek Creekwalk in downtown Ithaca into Six Mile Creek Gorge, priority multi-use trail access and enhancement, priority multi-use trail development, establishing new lake access on Cayuga Lake (e.g. Bells Station’s 3,000 ft of natural lakeshore), implementation of physical improvements identified in current related plans (Priority Trails Strategy, Blueway Trail), or future plans.

Further discussion by the STPB will help determine which of the three options described above for increasing investment in physical outdoor recreation tourism infrastructure is the best fit.

Proposed room tax investment: \$50,000

#### Supportive Actions – Structural Support

Other potential supportive actions for ‘structural support’ include the following:

Action Title	Action Description	Lead Organization(s)
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Incentivize Outdoor Rec Investments through Tourism Grant Programs	Modify Tompkins County Tourism Grant program guidelines to prioritize outdoor recreation tourism investments in a subset of elevated projects	Tompkins County Tourism Program <sup>6</sup>
Marketing Integration	Annually update Outdoor Recreation promotional efforts through VisitIthaca.com based on new developments and products.	CVB
Outdoor Recreation Tourism Network	Convene an outdoor recreation tourism network to coordinate implementation of this plan and build partner and B2B relationships, leading to stronger plan implementation and cross-sector partnerships.	Tompkins County Tourism Program

## Water-Based Recreation

### Current Landscape

Tompkins County is a land of lakes, creeks and waterfalls. Whether cooling off in one of “America’s Best Swimming Holes” at Robert H. Treman State Park, renting a kayak from Taughannock Falls State Park, setting off on the Blueway Trail from Cass Park, paddle-boarding from Myer’s Point, or taking in one of the City’s many waterfalls with family, there are plentiful opportunities. Organizations providing support to water-based locals and visitors include Puddledockers, Cascadilla Boat Club, Paddle’n’More, the Merrill Family Sailing Center, and several marinas. Cornell Outdoor Education, the Cayuga Outrigger Canoe Club, the Cornell Outing Club, Plastic Tides, SUPCayuga, the Cayuga Lake Watershed Network, and Ithaca Dragonboat Club also host outings and events that regularly get people out on the water, and Tompkins County plays host to two races that attract out of County participation – the Cayuga SUP Cup and the Finger Lakes International Dragonboat Festival.

Possible areas for improvement include expanding access for swimming in natural waterways, watershed protection to ensure high water quality, further development to support private-hire boating options, and expansion of slips for private and commercial use.

### Challenges and Assets

The Tompkins County Tourism Program and its partners will look for opportunities to address structural barriers related to water-based recreation where possible.

- a. Limited lake/shore access
- b. Lack of rental vendors for boating
- c. Lack of slips for bringing boats
- d. Water quality threats including plant growth and toxic algae

### Our Water-Based Recreation Tourism Assets

<sup>6</sup> Where listed as a lead organization, the “Tompkins County Tourism Program” means the combination of STPB, County Legislature, and Tourism Program Staff resources in the Tompkins County Department of Planning & Sustainability.

- Marinas and Parks with Access: Myers Point, Finger Lakes Marina, Ithaca Yacht Club, Alan H. Treman State Marine Park, Ithaca Boating Center, Taughannock Falls State Park, Cornell’s Merrill Family Sailing Center / East Shore Park, Puddledockers, Paddle-N-More
- Water! Cayuga Lake, Six Mile Creek, Fall Creek (particularly upper)
- The Cayuga Lake Scenic Byway organization is interested in partnering on the Blueway Trail.
- Robert Treman and Buttermilk Falls State Parks for publicly accessible swimming in natural gorges.
- Taughannock Falls State Park and Myers Point Park (Lansing Town Park) for lake swimming
- Active local groups focused on water recreation.

**Key Action**

Cayuga Lake Blueway Trail - Continued development and implementation of the water trail.

With its partners in Seneca and Cayuga County, the Tompkins County Planning Department has secured a \$100,000 grant from the Department of State Local Waterfront Revitalization Program, as well as local Tourism Capital Grant support and in-kind support, to implement the first phase of Cayuga Lake Blueway Trail Plan, which was completed in 2013. The project aims to promote Cayuga Lake as a destination for paddling (kayaking, canoeing and stand-up paddleboarding) and consists of several types of signage identifying launch sites from both the road and the water, as well as interpretive signage; physical improvements such as new docks and ramps designed for paddlecraft in Stewart and Cass Parks; and marketing including a new interactive website, a user map, and promotional collateral. The project will focus on establishing launches of water trail “trailheads” at 15 locations around the lake and also establish a partner program to encourage up to 30 additional private sites around the lake such as restaurants or wineries with lake access to join the trail program. A long-term management partnership is also being pursued with the Cayuga Lake Scenic Byway.

**Supportive Actions – Water Based Recreation**

Other potential supportive actions include the following:

Action Title	Action Description	Lead Organization(s)
Recruit partners to fill product gaps in water-based recreation	Boat-sharing and rental: Encourage local use of emergent peer-to-peer boat sharing platforms - boatsetter, boatbound, getmyboat. Boat tours: Work with local partners like the Floating Classroom to expand boat tours on Cayuga Lake. Kite-board rental. Aquabike rental. Transient slips: work with partners to address the lack of transient slips for short term docking. Kayak Livery service.	Tompkins County Tourism Program Staff
Treman Marina Partnership	Work with State Parks to establish an informational resource at Treman Marina such as a kiosk for educational information on water-based recreation opportunities, water access, boat rental opportunities, boat tours, etc.	Tompkins County Tourism Program Staff, CVB
City of Ithaca Water Recreation Committee	Work with the City of Ithaca on an ongoing basis improving water access through its Water Recreation Committee. Initiatives include adding seasonal boat storage racks in proximity to put-ins, discussions about swimming in natural water areas, and establishing a paddling concession in the City with rentals and tours.	City of Ithaca, Tompkins County Tourism Program Staff

Water-Based Recreation Events	Expand existing water based recreation events such as paddling competitions and establish new events to improve tourism potential as well as support resource development.	Private Event Organizers
Watershed Protection to Protect Water Quality	Engage in state funding and municipal and intermunicipal planning activities to protect and enhance water quality.	Municipal Planning Departments

## Hiking and Running

### Current Landscape:

With a multitude of City and State Parks, Forests, and nature preserves, some which are highlights of the Finger Lakes, our combined natural areas and the trails they keep may serve as the largest tourism draws in the County. With singular assets such as the Finger Lakes Trail corridor, private investment from entities such as the Finger Lakes Land Trust and Cornell Botanic Gardens, via public and State work projects to expand resources available to hikers and runners such as the Cayuga Waterfront Trail, Black Diamond Trail and other emerging rail trails, and information resources such as the recently launched [ithacatrails.org](http://ithacatrails.org) and [gofingerlakes.org](http://gofingerlakes.org) websites, much progress has been made in expanding resources available to locals and tourists alike. Additionally, groups such as the Cayuga Trails Club, Finger Lakes Land Trust, Finger Lakes Runners Club, the New York State Parks, and private vendors such as Finger Lakes Running Company, Eastern Mountain Sports, and Old Goat Gear are organizations providing support to locals and visitors alike interested in hiking and running. Combined, these efforts have led to Ithaca recently being awarded "Runner Friendly Community" status by the Road Runners Club of America.

Possible areas for improvement include re-routing of "on-road" sections of Finger Lakes Trail (FLT) to "off-road"; extension and connection of trails to create longer hiking/running options and to connect trails to areas with services; better maps, parking, and signage; project funding and ongoing maintenance of natural areas; and aligning involved entities and policy making.

### Challenges and Assets

The Tompkins County Tourism Program and its partners will look for opportunities to address structural barriers and build upon assets related to hiking and running where possible.

#### Structural barriers/weaknesses

- Disconnected groups and networks
- Lack of maps/signage
- Inadequate parking/facilities
- On-road sections of FLT

## TESTIMONIAL

### Mike Ostrand

Syracuse, NY

Age Range: (45-65)

Reason for Visit: Camping at Taughannock Falls Taughannock Visitor Center

"Our family has been coming to Ithaca to enjoy the parks for years. We always make it a point to at least do a weekend away here with the family- hike the trails, check out the water falls... eat some good food! My dad use to take me here (Taughannock) as a kid every year, and I intend to do the same for my grandkids."

## Our Hiking and Running Tourism Assets

- 3 State Parks within 5 miles of downtown
- 240 miles of public trails, including:
  - i. Finger Lakes Trail
  - ii. Many trails within close proximity of downtown including Cascadilla Gorge, Fall Creek Gorge, Six Mile Creek watershed
  - iii. 100+ miles of additional trails on lands held by NYSDEC, Finger Lakes Land Trust, and Cornell.
  - iv. Accessible and popular multi-use trails.
  - v. A number of trails that are also suitable for cross country skiing and snowshoeing in the winter.
- IthacaTrails.org and GoFingerLakes.org promotional trails websites.
- A number of local running events and active local running and hiking communities.

### Key Action

#### Planning and implementation of improvements for key underdeveloped areas

At existing but underdeveloped public and non-profit lands, work to identify a clear set of priority capital improvements including trail enhancement and expansion, trailhead signage, interpretation and parking. Work with the NYSDEC, City of Ithaca, other municipalities, not for profits, and/or friends groups to implement specific improvements in key underdeveloped areas. Underdeveloped areas may include Finger Lakes Trail trailheads, key trail access points in State Forests including Hammond Hill, Shindagin Hollow, and Danby State Forests, and Six Mile Creek gorge.

### Supportive Actions - Hiking & Running

Other potential supportive actions include the following:

### TESTIMONIAL

#### **Tory Valiano**

Cortland, NY

Age Range: (18-25)

Reason for Visit: Hiking/State Parks  
Taughannock Visitor Center

“I come to Ithaca to hike and trail run often. There are so many trails to take advantage of, and the scenery never gets old. It’s not too far from Cortland either- which is a plus.”

Action Title	Action Description	Lead Organization(s)
Establish a formal "Trail Town" network for businesses and organizations	Explore the use of the Trail Towns Program’s proven assessment, network, and business development tools to link trail with local tourism and business development opportunities.	Tompkins County Tourism Program Staff
Take the Finger Lakes Trail to the next level	Provide direct financial support through the new capacity building program proposed by this plan to trails group(s) to implement trailhead, signage and access improvements and secure additional public lands needed to eliminate lengthy on-road sections to make the Tompkins County section of the Finger Lakes Trail regionally recognized as top-notch.	Cayuga Trails Club, Finger Lakes Trails Conference, Finger Lakes Land Trust

Invest in the Completion of the Priority Trails Strategy	Complete expansion projects. Connect existing trails! Provide appropriate support through the capital program proposed by this plan.	City of Ithaca, NYS Parks, Towns of Ithaca, Dryden, Ulysses, Danby, Caroline
Support Hiking Amenities	Encourage supportive amenities for families, short hikes like additional services, interpretation, benches, overlooks, etc.	Municipalities, Tompkins County Tourism Program Staff, NYCDEC, NYS Parks
Enhance access to existing public lands	Investment, access/parking, trails	City of Ithaca, NYSDEC, municipalities, others.

## Bicycling

### Current Landscape

With miles of rolling wide-shouldered paved roads with beautiful vistas and enough available singletrack in Shindagin Hollow and Hammond Hill State Forests and trail culture to have been named one of America’s top Mountain Biking destinations, Tompkins County has much to offer both road cyclists and mountain bikers. The recent completion of the Cayuga Waterfront Trail and northern section of the Black Diamond Trail between Cass Park and Taughannock Falls State Park significantly expands the opportunity to promote safe off street trail biking experiences to families and casual cyclists. This will grow as rail trail extensions and connections are added, the vision put forth in the Tompkins Priority Trails Strategy for a 51-mile inter-connected network of multi-use paths.

Meanwhile, the City of Ithaca has made progress with on-street bike infrastructure including establishing an initial bike boulevard network and on-street bike lanes on several key corridors. This was an important reason why Ithaca was named in November 2016 as a Bicycle Friendly Community for the first time by the League of American Bicyclists, at the Bronze Level. These efforts will be bolstered in 2018 by a new project being led by Bike Walk Tompkins to develop a “Blueprint for Better Bicycling” for Ithaca and Tompkins County. Additionally several bike shops, two bike rental locations, active local clubs - both road and mountain bike oriented – and biking programs through the Cornell and IC campuses are available to serve locals and visitors alike. A new bike sharing service was established in 2017 on the Cornell University campus, and a grant-funded pilot project will expand bike sharing to the larger community in 2018.

### TESTIMONIAL

#### Joe Kilmer

Tigard, Oregon

Age Range: 45-65

Reason for Visit: Visiting  
Friend

Taughannock Visitor Center

“The biking is just phenomenal. We’ve gone 30 miles today and been to three different state parks and seen 4 different waterfalls all from our bikes- now that’s something special... and the black diamond trail... what a gem!”

Areas for improvement include creating a complete bicycle infrastructure network through the Ithaca urban core, not yet fully realized connections and mileage of recreation-ways to make them visitor draws, and limited capacity and funding to make mountain biking areas fully accessible and sustainable.

### Challenges and Assets

The Tourism Program will look for opportunities to address structure barriers related to bike tourism where possible.

- a. Disconnected groups and networks
- b. Lack of maps/signage
- c. Inadequate parking/facilities
- d. Seasonal status

### Our Bicycle Tourism Assets

- Rolling hills with scenic vistas, quiet country roads, and state highways with wide shoulders
- Several established rail trails
- Finger Lakes reputation as an overall destination
- Cayuga Lake Scenic Byway organization is supportive of bicycle tourism
- Active local cycling groups focus on recreation (Finger Lakes Cycling Club), mountain biking (Cycle CNY), and transportation/advocacy (Bike Walk Tompkins)

### Key Actions

Blueprint for Better Bicycling Improve on-street street bicycle infrastructure in Ithaca's urban core.

Work with the City and Town of Ithaca and Bike Walk Tompkins to create and implement a shared vision for infrastructure improvements in the urban core to make cycling comfortable and accessible for all types of visitors. As we build and expand the County's multi-use trails network – a key asset to continue supporting and leveraging - the most impactful way to grow our reputation as a bicycle friendly community and expand bike-related tourism, it to make it so that people of all cycling abilities including casual cyclists and families feel comfortable and safe riding on city streets through the urban core and downtown core as they navigate between the trails, downtown hotels and restaurants, and other attractions and destinations.

Priority Trails Strategy Support the expansion of the Tompkins County network of multi-use trails.

Tompkins County is on its way to having a truly outstanding network of off-street multi-use trails which are ideal for families, beginning bicyclists, and casual cyclists. Five additional sections are currently under various stages of planning and development: the City section and Southern section of the Black Diamond Trail (BDT) which will eventually create a trail link between all four state parks in Tompkins County, the Gateway Trail which will connect Buttermilk Falls State Park and the BDT to the South Hill Recreation Way, an extension of the South Hill Recreation Way to Brooktondale and the Dryden Trail which envisions linking up the Jim Schug Trail with the East Hill Recreation Way through Dryden, Freeville, Etna and Varna. The Tompkins Priority Trails Strategy was written by Tourism Program staff and adopted by the STPB in 2014.

### Supportive Actions – Bicycling

Other potential supportive actions include the following:

Action Title	Action Description	Lead Organization(s)
Local Bicycle Friendly Business Program	Work with New York Bicycling Coalition, League of American Bicyclists, Parks and Trail NY, Tompkins County Chamber of Commerce, and local groups to promote the expansion of bicycle friendly business practices through training and a recognition program.	Tompkins County Tourism Program
Finger Lakes Cycling Promotion	Work with partners in the region to establish a promotional website and program to promote bicycling in the Finger Lakes (with ride routes, maps, itineraries, resources, events, guided tour options, etc)	Finger Lakes Cycling Club
Adventure Cycling Route	Work with NYBC and Adventure Cycling to establish an official Adventure Cycling route through Ithaca and the Finger Lakes.	New York Bicycling Coalition
New Mountain Biking Trails	Work with Cycle CNY to develop new trails in areas of the County outside of the established trail systems in Shindagin Hollow and Hammond Hill. Develop a "Blueprint to enhance mountain/trail infrastructure". Include a "beginning area" for mountain biking development for kids, elders, newbies.	Cycle CNY
Partner with Bike Tour Companies with Concierge Support	Partner with Bike Tour companies to support the development of Ithaca and Finger Lakes guided tour packages	CVB Group Sales
Support the Establishment of new Bicycle Events	Mt. Bike Series, Downtown Criterium race, Single Day road ride, etc	Private Event Organizers
Youth Mt. Bike Skills Park	Work with a public land owner to establish a Youth Skills Park for mountain biking, with associated rentals and programming	

## Kids in Nature

### Current Landscape:

Tompkins County families know that with so many child-supportive organizations and so many accessible and safe parks, natural areas, open space, and outdoor family-friendly events, Tompkins County is a place where kids need not suffer from childhood “nature-deficit disorder”. Local groups like the Ithaca Children’s Garden, Cayuga Nature Center, YMCA, Primitive Pursuits, Cornell Botanic Gardens, Cornell Lab of Ornithology, Ithaca Youth Bureau 4-H, and many others provide myriad rich opportunities for kids to experience and learn about the natural environment of the Finger Lakes region. Further leveraging our child-friendly reputation is *Just Play Ithaca!* This initiative is The Just Play Project’s first on-the-ground model, which seeks to coordinate cross-sector collaborations to design child-centered communities – developing people, places, and policies for child-directed play. Ithaca is also home to one of the few United States Adventure Playgrounds, The Hands-On Nature Anarchy Zone at The Ithaca Children’s Garden.

### Key Actions:

#### Continue to Provide Investments in Attractions and Organizations Supporting Kids in Nature

Through its existing grant programs, the Tompkins County Tourism Program has supported a number of investments in the Ithaca Children’s Garden, Cayuga Nature Center and other projects supporting kids in nature. There is tremendous value in continuing to support these initiatives to grow the ability of these

organizations to attract visiting families and provide them with unforgettable experiences in and learning about nature.

### Supportive Actions - Kids in Nature

Other potential supportive actions include the following:

Action Title	Action Description	Lead Organization(s)
Stake the claim as the United States' #1 community for Kids in Nature	Support a PR effort to claim the title in national news media of Ithaca and Tompkins County as the nation's best community for Kids in Nature.	CVB, Tompkins County Tourism Program
Discovery Trail program integration	Continue to develop Discovery Trail programming & events that spans across all trail sites	Discovery Trail
Create "nature play spots"	At a variety of places ) nature ctrs, schools, parks, trailheads, etc. Create a "map of nature play".	Just Play Project
Support/cultivate child in nature-related events	Using Mud Day, Fire & Ice, Migration Celebration, Botanical Garden, Play Symposium, Kid's/Judy's Day as just a few existing examples, grow existing and add new child in nature related events	Event Organizers

## Adventure / Niche Outdoor Recreation Tourism

### Current Landscape:

Located within the Atlantic Flyway, Tompkins County and the Finger Lakes Region sits on a key migratory route for North American birds. Cayuga Lake hosts the largest population of Osprey in the region with over 50 nesting pairs identified in recent years. With the world-renowned Cornell Lab of Ornithology, and very active local groups including the Cayuga Bird Club, Tompkins County is a destination as well as launching point for a region prolific in birding opportunities, including the Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge on the Northern end of Cayuga Lake.

Tompkins County hosts gorges with winter icefalls that are uniquely accessible and could be opened up for seasonal ice climbing and spring flows that local whitewater kayaking enthusiasts love to paddle. A number of small local enthusiast communities to tap into these and other adventure-related outdoor recreation, including wind-surfing, kite-boarding. There may be significant public relations value in pursuing development of some of these as opportunities and willing partners may surface, and anything we can do to grow tourism in the coldest months of the year is good, but it is unlikely that outdoor adventure activities locally will grow into major visitor draws like they are in other places that are known for these. Said another way, while some people do enjoy these activities here, Ithaca is unlikely to be another Ouray, Colorado for ice climbing, or Hood River, Oregon for kite-boarding, nor does it want to be.

### Key Action

#### Cayuga Lake Birding Trail

Work with the Cayuga Lake Scenic Byway, Cornell Lab of Ornithology, New York Audubon, Montezuma National Wildlife Visitors Center, Cayuga Bird Club, Cayuga and Seneca Counties, and other

organizations to develop a new Cayuga Lake Birding Trail to include marketing and signage and interactive website. Coordinate signage with the Cayuga Lake Blueway Trail Project. Respond to tourism grant proposals and other opportunities for Birding Trail investment that may come forward.

**Supportive Actions – Adventure / Niche**

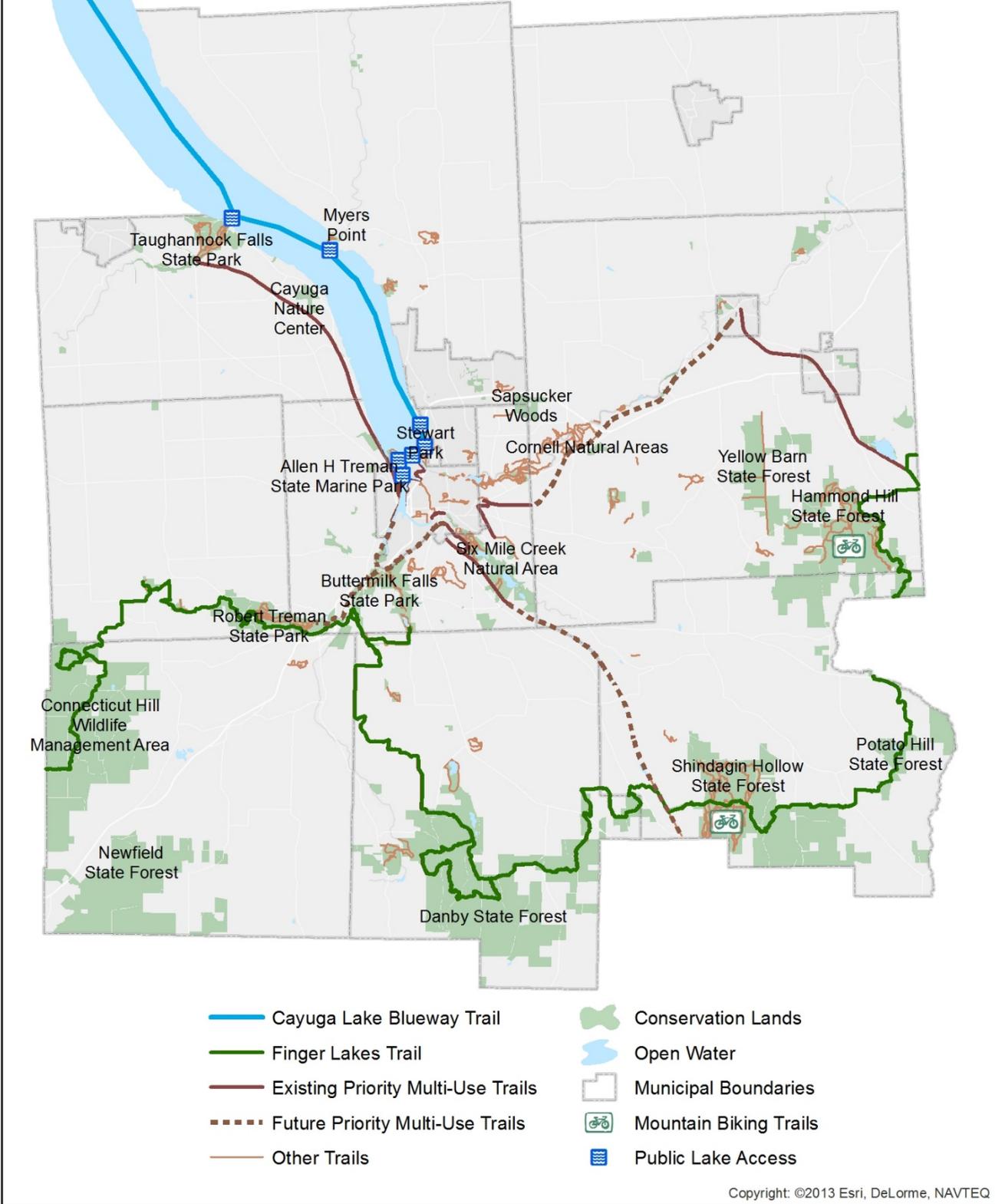
Other potential supportive actions include the following:

Healing Arts promotional campaign	Partner with local businesses (Firelight, Body Mind Restoration, Yoga Farm, etc.) on continuing to amplify Ithaca’s already prominent status as a “healing retreat location in upstate NY”	Business Groups
Ice climbing	Complete the Ice Climbing Feasibility study and work to implement in partnership with State Parks, City of Ithaca. Open initially in Buttermilk and Robert Treman.	NYS Parks

**Appendix –**

- A. Map – Tompkins County Outdoor Recreation Tourism Assets
- B. Tompkins County Outdoor Recreation Related Tourism Grant Investments
- C. SWOT Analysis Results (to be added...available upon request)
- D. January 2016 Stakeholder Workshop Summary of Feedback (to be added...available upon request)

# Tompkins County Outdoor Recreation Tourism Assets



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Appendix B

Tompkins County Outdoor Recreation Related Tourism Grant Investments 2005-2017

Year(s)	Recipient	Use / Project	# of Grants	Amount
2006	Tompkins County Chamber Foundation	Hike and Bike Brochure & Digital Map	1	\$2,750
2010	Floating Classroom	Floating Classroom Tourism Related Projects	3	\$11,500
2012	Cayuga Lake Scenic Byway	Cayuga Lake Scenic Byway Geocache Trail	1	\$2,000
2014	Natural Heritage Trust	Ice Climbing Tourism Development	1	\$13,800
2015	City of Ithaca	Lake Street Public Park Enhancement Project	1	\$20,000
2015	Finger Lakes Land Trust	Gofingerlakes.org Website	1	\$6,000
2015	Town of Ulysses	IthacaTrails.org Website	1	\$14,500
2017	Finger Lakes Land Trust	Look Brook Trail Enhancements	1	\$10,000
2017	Paleontological Research Institution	Smith Woods Enhancements	1	\$5,000
2005-2012	Tompkins County Chamber Foundation	Cayuga Waterfront Trail Enhancements	3	\$29,000
2005-2014	Ithaca Triathlon Club	Cayuga Lake Triathlon	9	\$29,045
2008-2016	Friends of Stewart Park	Various Stewart Park Studies and Improvements	6	\$155,500
2009-2017	Ithaca Children's Garden	Various Children's Garden Improvements	6	\$61,350
2012-2013	Finger Lakes Land Trust	Roy H. Park Preserve Access Enhancement Project	1	\$20,000
2012-2016	Cayuga Lake Watershed Network	Can You Canoe Cayuga? Paddling Event	7	\$15,200
2013-2014	The History Center in Tompkins County	Cayuga Trails 50 Trail Running Race	4	\$29,700
2014-2016	Cayuga Lake Watershed Network	Cayuga Lake SUP Cup	6	\$13,324
2015-2016	Tompkins County Planning Department	Cayuga Lake Blueway Trail	2	\$43,480
2015-2017	Ithaca Youth Bureau	Ithaca Bike Rental	5	\$22,000
2016-2015	Social Ventures - Dragon Boat	Finger Lakes International Dragon Boat Festival	11	\$105,317
2016-2017	Cornell Cooperative Extension of TC	Regional Marketing for Primitive Pursuits Camp	2	\$6,000
		<b>Totals 2005-2017</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>\$615,466</b>

# STPB 2017

## Goals, Offsite Meeting Locations, and Informational Presentations

### Membership & Bylaws

- a. Conduct long-range member recruitment planning and identify gaps or needs in membership.
- b. Establish definitions for seat representations.

### Planning & Evaluation, Budget

- c. Complete and adopt the Outdoor Recreation Tourism Implementation Plan.
- d. Consider three year budget projections.
- e. Review and accept report on history of past room tax spending.
- f. Discuss possible changes to the structure of the Tourism Program budget in light of past expenditures, long-range budget programs, possible programmatic shifts.

### Communications

- g. Engage in more board advocacy. Establish an annual calendar of presentations and opportunities.
- h. Complete an annual report for the Tompkins County Tourism Program.

### Diversity

- i. Write a statement on STPB commitment to diversity and steps that we as a program commit to take to achieving diversity goals.

### **2017 Offsite Meeting Locations of Interest (in order of preference by 2/15/17 voting)**

- Beer Trail site (the #1 choice for an off-site meeting location)
- Familiarization (FAM) tour for the board
- Johnson Museum
- New Marriott
- Ports of New York
- New Taughannock Inn
- Museum of the Earth

### **STPB Educational Programming and Meeting Topics**

## Priority

- 1) Host a Hotel GM Panel at an STPB meeting (Statler, Marriot, Homewood, etc. – mix of property types). Include a “Hotels 101” behind the scenes look at lodging and education about lodging indicators e.g. reading the STR report.
- 2) Familiarization (FAM) Tour for the board (also listed above as off-site meeting location)

## Other Ideas

- 1) Tom’s economic impact presentation to the city
- 2) AirBnB presentation
- 3) Value of the Finger Lakes Tourism Alliance (brief topic in future report by Peggy)
- 4) Downtown Conference Center Study
- 5) A higher-education working group
- 6) Search Marketing mid-year report
- 7) I love New York Tourism Program update
- 8) Best practices for preparation for receiving international travelers (CVB)

## **Possible 2017 or 2018 Goals**

### Ambassadorship Programming

- a. Review current ambassadorship/hospitality programming and consider enhancements to enhance overall total visitor experience and community image, including: review model ambassador programs, more engagement and training for front line staff, Image perception from airport on to total experience

### Increasing Tourism from Events

- b. Perform an analysis of how to leverage events for increased visitation and spending.