

Tompkins County Strategic Tourism Planning Board

Wednesday, March 21, 2018; 3:00pm – 4:30pm

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

AGENDA	Start
1. STPB Meeting Minutes	3:00
• ACTION – Approve February 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
• ACTION – Vote to approve 2018 goals	
4. Staff REPORT – Nick Helmholdt	3:10
5. Outdoor Recreation Tourism Implementation updated plan – Andy Zepp	3:15
6. 2017 CVB Annual Report and 2018 Work Program - Peggy Coleman	3:30
7. ACOD Panel Update –John Spence	4:00
• ACTION – Vote to approve ACOD grants	
8. STI Panel Update –Ken Jupiter	4:10
• ACTION – Vote to approve STI grants	
9. Member Announcements	4:20
10. Adjournment	4:30

Agenda Packet

1. February 2018 draft STPB meeting minutes
2. ACOD panel report from February meeting
3. Copy of 2018 STPB Goals
4. Revised Draft Outdoor Recreation Tourism Implementation Plan
5. CVB 2017 Annual Report and 2018 Work Program
6. ACOD panel recommendations 2018-2019
7. STI Grant Review Committee Report



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 – February 21, 2018**

1 **Date:** February 21, 2018
 2 **Time:** 3:00-4:30pm
 3 **Location:** TC Chamber of Commerce/CVB, 904 East Shore Drive, Ithaca, NY 14850
 4

5 **Attendees:**

Name	✓	Representation	Name	✓	Representation
David Blake	E	At-Large	Martha Armstrong	E	TCAD, Non-Voting
Brett Bossard	P	Arts-Culture	Peggy Coleman	P	Chamber, Non-Voting
Kelli Cartmill	P	Lodging	Gary Ferguson	A	DIA, Non-Voting
Josh Friedman	P	Arts-Culture	Anna Kelles	P	TC Legislature, Non-Voting
Steve Hugo	E	At-Large		A	Transportation, Non-Voting
Ken Jupiter	P	At-Large	Dwight Mengel	A	Transportation, Non-Voting
Anne Kellerman	E	At-Large	John Spence	P	CAP, Non-Voting
Doug Levine	A	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	Erica Frenay	E	Associate Member
Sue Stafford	P	TC3	Carol Kammen	A	Associate Member
Julie Swigart	E	Lodging	Jon Reis	E	Associate Member
Baruch Whitehead	P	Arts-Culture	Mary Kate Wheeler	A	Associate Member
Scott Wiggins	P	At-Large			
Andy Zepp	P	Recreation	N/A	P	Staff
*Monika Roth (pending)	N/A	Agriculture	Kristin McCarthy	P	Staff

7

8 **Guests:** Katie Borgella, Rick Manning, Ronda Roaring, Erin Rafalowski, Shelly Cihan, Kelly Sutliff,
 9 Eileen Mowry

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

12
 13 **Opening Remarks/Changes to the Agenda** – Kelli welcomed everyone. The Adworkshop
 14 presentation was moved to earlier in the agenda because of a winter travel advisory. Cara
 15 announced that the move-in date for Ithaca College students has been changed to Saturday,
 16 August 25. She asked the members to share the information with their networks as traditionally
 17 students have always moved in on a Sunday.

18
 19 **January 17, 2018 STPB Meeting Minutes**

20
 21 **ACTION:** Sue Stafford moved to approve the January minutes. Josh Friedman seconded. Motion
 22 carried. [Cara Nichols’ first name had been misspelled in the original draft of the minutes;
 23 however, it was corrected prior to today’s meeting.]

24
 25 **Privilege of the Floor** –

26
 27 Rick Manning of the Friends of Stewart Park expressed his appreciation for all the work put into
 28 the Outdoor Recreation Tourism Implementation Plan and asked if there would be a public
 29 comment period. Legislator Dan Klein, who is a member of ACOD review panel, raised his

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30 concerns about the allocation of room tax revenues in relation to the ACOD grant program versus
31 other programs funded by the Tourism Program.

32
33 **Adworkshop Presentation – Peggy Coleman**

34
35 Peggy Coleman introduced Erin Rafalowski, digital marketing manager for the CVB, to the Board
36 and welcomed Eileen Mowry, Shelly Cihan, and Kelly Sutliff from the integrated marketing firm
37 Adworkshop. The Adworkshop team gave a presentation on the results of their search marketing
38 program and its application with the CVB website in 2017. Here are some highlights from their
39 talk:

- 40
- 41 • Google is tending to keep searchers within its own products; local search is gaining
- 42 prominence; voice search technology increasing; and Google is mixing images and features
- 43 from different sites in its search results
- 44 • Website traffic is up, with a spike in searches around Fourth of July; users from New York
- 45 City and Ithaca are driving most of the traffic to the site
- 46 • Top referrals to visitithaca.com came from cornell.edu, facebook.com, columbiabb.com,
- 47 Ithaca.edu, pinterest.com, newyorkupstate.com, and cornellbigred.com; top users are
- 48 ages 25-34 and predominately female, according to Google Analytics.
- 49 • The Paid AdWords program is performing 200 percent better than industry average, with
- 50 an overall bounce rate of 29%
- 51

52 **Chair’s Report – Kelli Cartmill**

- 53
- 54 • Kelli welcomed Scott Wiggins back to the STPB in his new role as At-Large member. She
- 55 also thanked Monika Roth, who was still awaiting her official appointment by the
- 56 Legislature to the Agriculture seat, for attending the meeting. She should be sworn in by
- 57 the March meeting.
- 58 • Rod Howe is seeking an STPB representative for the newly formed Heritage Tourism
- 59 Steering Committee. Interested parties should contact Kelli.
- 60 • Kelli introduced Anna Kelles as the Board’s new legislative liaison.
- 61 • Copies of the 2017 Annual Report were distributed to the Board members during Kelli’s
- 62 report. Brett thanked Cara and Ithaca College for printing them.
- 63 • The Budget Committee still needs a chair. [Update: Sue Stafford and Scott Wiggins will be
- 64 co-chairing.]
- 65

66 **Staff Report – Katie Borgella**

- 67
- 68 • Katie Borgella swore in Scott Wiggins, Cara Nichols, Josh Friedman, and Kelli Cartmill to
- 69 their new terms on the STPB. Jennifer Tavares notarized their oath cards.
- 70 • Nick Helmholdt, the County’s new tourism director, starts Monday, February 26. Katie
- 71 thanked the Board for helping to keep things running smoothly during the transition.

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- Kristin McCarthy will reach out shortly to schedule Grant Review Committee meetings for the Spring 2018 round of applications. She is also working with Peggy and Erin Rafalowski to pull together the Outdoor Recreation Tourism Implementation Plan.

Update: Outdoor Recreation Tourism Implementation Plan – Kelli Cartmill

The members discussed the revised version of the draft Outdoor Recreation Tourism Plan, which was included in the agenda packet for today’s meeting. Before departing the County, Tom Knipe addressed concerns about the plan raised at the January STPB meeting and incorporated relevant changes accordingly. Kelli invited the members to take a few minutes to look over the plan and share additional feedback. Baruch Whitehead expressed concern about the lack of diversity represented in the photos used for the plan, and Anna had questions regarding the budget breakdown outlined in the plan. The plan will next be released for public comment, before returning to the STPB for final approval in April. Peggy, Kelli, Andy, and Nick will work together to fine-tune this process.

ACTION: A motion by Brett Bossard, seconded by Mike Mellor, to release the draft Outdoor Recreation Tourism Implementation Plan for public comment was approved unanimously.

Update: ACOD Grant Review Committee– John Spence

The ACOD panel met but the members were unable to achieve a consensus on distribution of the 2018 funds. For that reason, the STPB will not vote on the current round of applications until the March meeting. There were many more requests for grants than there were funds available. John gave some background context to the budget issues raised by Dan during Privilege of the Floor. A written copy of John’s report to the STPB is included in the March 21st meeting agenda packet.

STPB Member Goals for 2018 – Small Group Discussion

The members broke into smaller groups to strategize over goals to pursue for 2018. The entire group then reconvened to recap what thoughts and ideas had surfaced during the discussion.

STPB Member Goals for 2018 – Large Group Discussion

Each group had an unofficially appointed note-taker, who will forward his or her notes to Kelli following the meeting. Kelli will compile everything into a draft goals list and present to the Board for a vote at the March meeting. Here are some highlights from the discussion.

- A) Sue’s Group: Budget Surplus -- Think “big picture” and consider pursuing projects long on the Tourism Program wish list, such as Wayfinding. Per Sue’s words, “We should not just feed the animals but expand the zoo.” Brainstorm ideas for an orientation for Nick to help with the learning curve.
- B) Scott Group’s: Start preparing for the Strategic Plan update.
- C) John’s Group: Consider re-evaluating the long-term budget for ACOD.

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- 116 D) Anna's Group: Focus on recruiting a more diverse membership.
117 E) Peggy's Group: Review the grant process -- are we missing out on opportunities because of
118 how things are structured?
119 F) Brett's Group: Update the PDEQ Committee on the work of the STPB. Include Anna in
120 orientation for Nick.

121

122 The meeting was adjourned at 5:10 by Chair Kelli Cartmill.

123

124

From the recently issued Tourism Program Report

- Page 11 - \$2.81 million generated by room taxes in 2017
- Page 12 – 2017 Budget = \$2,640,740
 - Creating a surplus of \$169,000

ACOD - In 2016

- The amount of available **funds grew 2.5%** from 2015 numbers
 - \$192,000 to \$197,000
- The number of organizations deemed eligible to apply for funding **grew 43%**, from seven to ten
- The **Cayuga Chamber Orchestra** saw a **26% reduction** in their funding for 2016 and 2017
- The **Museum of the Earth/Cayuga Nature Center** saw a **25% reduction** in ACOD funding
- The **History Center** saw a **19% reduction** in funding
- The **Hangar Theatre** saw a **10% reduction**
- The **State Theatre** saw a **8% reduction** in ACOD funding
- The **Kitchen Theatre** received a **10% boost** in funding
- The **Sciencenter** saw a **18% boost** (They had been receiving smaller grants, 2/3rd of other agencies)
- New agencies were funded well below typical levels
 - **Cinemapolis** ½ the average grant
 - **CSMA** ¼ the average grant
 - **Ithaca Shakespeare** 1/5 the average grant

ACOD – In 2018

- We again had 10 organizations applying for funds
 - Requests totaling \$302,600 (\$85,100 over funds allotted)
- The ACOD program received a 10% increase in available grant funds through a 1.5% general increase, a \$6,000 Over Target Request (OTR) and \$7,000 in unspent funds from previous years.
 - Granting funds of \$197,000 increased to \$217,870 for 2018
 - The \$217,870 was to give the option, without guarantee, of restoring the cuts to the original seven organizations, funding each at their 2015 levels
 - Not taking into account the two organizations that had received \$3,000 boosts in 2016
 - And leaving new organizations funded at an arbitrarily low level.

From the 2017 report - Tompkins County Room Tax Investment 2004 – 2016

- In 2004 – the ACOD program was receiving 12% of the Room Tax Budget funding seven organizations.
 - 12% of the Room Tax Budget would equal \$316,889 in 2016
- In 2016 – the ACOD program was receiving 8% of the Room Tax Budget funding 10 organizations

A Potential Request for additional \$26,900 in 2018 funding - \$244,400 Total

- Funding five the original seven organizations at their 2015 levels
- Allowing two of the seven to keep the increases received in 2016
- Funding the three newer organizations at a level more appropriate to their applications



[Hikers at Lick Brook. Photograph by Kelly Makosch]

TOMPKINS COUNTY OUTDOOR RECREATION TOURISM IMPLEMENTATION PLAN 2018

Adopted by the Tompkins County Strategic Tourism Planning Board on April 18, 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, the "Ithaca is Gorges" slogan, and our community at large, have received many outdoor recreation accolades because of our natural features. As a Tourism Board, a County Tourism Program, and a 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.



[Two Cyclists. Photograph by Kristian Reynolds for Ithaca/Tompkins County Convention & Visitors Bureau]

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 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

FROM THE OUTDOOR RECREATION TOURISM TASK FORCE (CONT.)

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 advancing outdoor recreation tourism as a tailored approach that takes commitment over time, coordination, planning, and investment from a wide variety of sources is required to develop and improve these public assets as high-quality visitor-ready attractions.

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 & Running, Bicycling, Kids in Nature, and Niche & Adventure—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 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



[Hiker on Finger Lakes Trail through Shindagin Hollow State Forest. Photograph by Edie Jodz]

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 Eastern U.S., a place that is widely known as the #1 Outdoor Recreation Community in Central New York 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, as well as additional supportive actions categorized by five specific areas of opportunity: Water-Based Recreation, Hiking & Running, Bicycling, Kids in Nature, and Niche & Adventure Outdoor Recreation.



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

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 either 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 such projects to develop and improve our outdoor recreation amenities. Further discussion by the Strategic Tourism Planning Board will help determine which of the options for increasing investment in physical outdoor recreation tourism infrastructure is the best fit.



[Roy H. Park Preserve. Photograph by Bill Hecht]

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.

Priority Trails Strategy¹ -

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

Cayuga Lake Blueway Trail² -

Actively develop and implement the water trail.

Planning and Development for Enhanced Access to Public Lands and Waters -

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 & Organizations -

Partner and invest in attractions and organizations supporting kids in nature, such as Ithaca Children's Garden, Cayuga Nature Center, and others. Create synergies among participating stakeholders and support events that bring visitors to the County.

Cayuga Lake Birding Trail -

Develop a 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. Investments would include marketing and signage as well as an interactive website.

TOTAL NEW INVESTMENT = THE TWO NEW STRUCTURAL CHANGES RECOMMENDED IN THIS PLAN COULD BE FUNDED BY AN ALLOCATION OF \$100,000 TO \$150,000 FROM ROOM TAX MONIES. OTHER KEY ACTIONS COULD BE SUPPORTED BY EXISTING ROOM TAX-FUNDED TOURISM GRANT PROGRAMS, OUTSIDE GRANT FUNDS, AND PARTNERS.



[Paddlers. Photograph by Kristian Reynolds for Ithaca/Tompkins County Convention & Visitors Bureau]

¹ The Tompkins Priority Trails Strategy is accessible online at: <http://www.tompkinscountyny.gov/tourism/tourism/plan>

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

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



**HEALTHIEST CITY IN
NEW YORK STATE**
- WALL STREET JOURNAL

[Trail running. Image by Genna Hartung for VisitIthaca on Instagram]

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 fine-grained set of strategies. Core Task Force members were Andrew Zepp, Ian Golden, Peggy Coleman, and Tom Knipe.

OUR GOAL: “TO SUSTAINABLY 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 several 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 “Strengths Weaknesses Opportunities Threats” (SWOT) analysis exercise, and in January 2017 the Task Force hosted a workshop with more than 60 industry stakeholders at The Space @ 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 and 3,500 jobs. It also greatly enhances our local quality of life by supporting the attractions and amenities that make this a great place to live, work, go to school, grow a business, and retire.

The Strategic Tourism Planning Board 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 goal for this plan and also lists three “critical actions,” which are underway: 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.

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 many outdoor recreation tourism 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 totaling \$615,466 can be found in the appendix of this plan.

OUTDOOR RECREATION TOURISM IS ALREADY THE SINGLE MOST IMPORTANT DRAW FOR VISITORS TO OUR AREA AFTER CORNELL AND ITHACA COLLEGE.



[Cayuga Lake aerial. Photograph by Nico Johnson for Ithaca/Tompkins County Convention & Visitors Bureau]

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 given by 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.

In contrast, support from the Tompkins County Tourism Program towards outdoor recreation tourism has not been commensurate with its top ranking as a motivator for visitation. A 2017 study³ conducted by a graduate student in the Cornell Department of City and Regional Planning, in partnership with the Tourism Program, considered the nature of investments by the Program between 2004 and 2016. It 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 Edutourism⁴.

PERCENT OF TOURISM GRANT FUNDS INVESTED BY FOCUS AREA 2004-2016^{3,4}

64% - ARTS & CULTURE

41% - DOWNTOWN ITHACA

27% - EDUTOURISM

10% - OUTDOOR RECREATION

6% - AGRICULINARY

Outdoor Recreation is big business and we gain by tapping more aggressively into this established audience and industry. Fifty-two percent of New York State residents engage in outdoor recreation activities every 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.”⁵ Outdoor Recreation further supports communities in achieving other important goals, especially health and quality of life.

³ Tompkins County Room Tax Investments, 2004-2016; a report prepared by Dylan Tuttle, Cornell Department of City and Regional Planning, for the STPB, Winter 2017.

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

⁵ OIA report 2017. Access online at: https://outdoorindustry.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/OIA_RecEconomy_FINAL_Single.pdf

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



[Images from Ithaca Children's Garden]

AUDIENCE (CONT.)

While Tompkins County holds some limited potential to further develop adventure activities like ice climbing, kite-boarding, advanced whitewater kayaking, and backpacking, these activities have smaller overall market potential than activities like running, hiking, flatwater paddling, and bicycling. Moreover 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 can be enjoyed by a broad audience of people interested in experiencing the outdoors as part of a larger trip. This fits with our overall strength as a destination with 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.



[Image from Ithaca Children's Garden]

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 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, Buttermilk Falls, and Robert Treman State Parks have all experienced closures due to the presence of e-coli and/or turbidity. In addition, the emergence of blue-green algae in Cayuga Lake as a vital threat to outdoor recreation tourism cannot be overstated.

[“It’s bad and it’s everywhere: Harmful algal blooms plague Owasco, Skaneateles, Cayuga lakes”](#)
- Sept. 2017 [Auburnpub.com](#) headline

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 four-point initiative to aggressively combat harmful algal blooms in Upstate New York, including Cayuga Lake, is an encouraging development that local tourism groups should watch closely and look for opportunities to support.



[Cayuga Waterfront Trail.]

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. However, progress has been slow and has occurred in fits and starts. The Black Diamond Trail was first envisioned in the 1970s, and the 8-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 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 “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 due to 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 faster progress, which in turn will further assist partner agencies, including local governments, to advance these 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 onto the sides of roads for several miles in some sections, which degrades the hiking experience. In addition, limited parking and interpretive signs make access more challenging at some 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.

Improvements Needed for Public Access to Open Space Lands and Waters

Unlike City and State Parks, many of our local public lands have not benefited from significant investments in public access improvements. 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 Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC); 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. A lack of safe, free swimming areas also constrain outdoor recreational opportunities in Tompkins County. To take advantage of such opportunities would require a renewed approach and increased capacity for planning and implementation.

Greater Institutional Capacity Needed to Advance Outdoor Recreation Tourism Initiatives

Outdoor recreation tourism lacks the same level of clear organizational mission and dedicated staff to support tourism development. These aspects are inherent in other sectors. For example, arts and culture tourism has well established local not-for-profit organizations with missions and staff that include tourism and direct control over bricks-and-mortar physical attractions, like theatres and museums. In the case of outdoor recreation tourism, physical asset owners (such as the state and local governments) are less likely to have outdoor recreation tourism as a core element of their mission

Seasonality of Visitation

Tourism is slower during the winter months 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-tire 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 Eastern U.S., 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 EASTERN U.S., 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 for outdoor recreation tourism. In addition, several "supportive actions" are identified which can be advanced as timing, willing partners, capacity, and opportunities allow.

The actions are listed 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 & Running, Kids in Nature, and Niche & Adventure Outdoor Recreation.



[Cayuga Waterfront Trail. Photograph by Kristian Reynolds for Ithaca/Tompkins County Convention & Visitors Bureau]

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 sources for outdoor recreation tourism will significantly increase our capacity to improve our County's 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 advance outdoor recreation tourism development 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, lands bordering Six Mile Creek, multi-use trails that are part of the Tompkins Priority Trails Strategy, the Finger Lakes Trail, the Ithaca Falls area, Cascadilla Gorge, State Forests, and public lake access sites.

This fund is proposed to be structured much like the existing ACOD Grant program – that is, 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.

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

Outdoor Recreation Tourism Capital Reserve Fund.

Use room tax to either

- A) create a new County capital reserve fund for outdoor recreation, or
- 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.

STRUCTURAL CHANGES (CONT.)

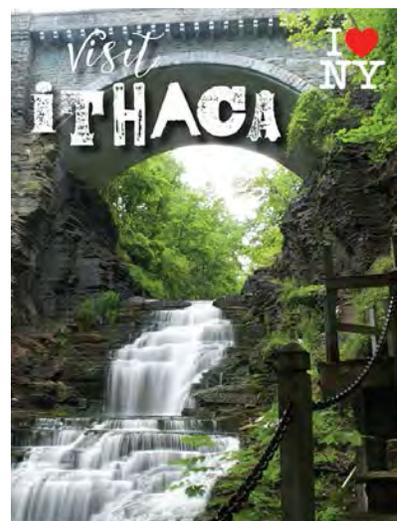
Although it has supported some investments in park and trail amenities, the existing Tourism Capital Grant program is primarily set up to consider proposals for bricks-and-mortar capital projects, not investments in outdoor recreation tourism. Meanwhile, the County has an existing program supported by 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) supporting 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 the Finger Lakes Trail, and providing protected buffers to the Black Diamond Trail and Cayuga Lake Scenic Byway, and 2) funding 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 taxes 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, capital improvements to the Ithaca Falls area, 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 feet of natural lakeshore), implementation of physical improvements identified in current related plans (Priority Trails Strategy, Blueway Trail), or future plans.

To balance the competing demands of natural area conservation and outdoor recreation, it is essential that capital investments are only made when suitable maintenance and operational plans are presented.

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



[Cycle-CNY Group Ride; Ithaca/Tompkins County Convention & Visitors Bureau Travel Guide cover 2018]

SUPPORTIVE ACTIONS – STRUCTURAL SUPPORT

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

Action Title	Action Description	Lead Organization(s)
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 ⁶
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

⁶ 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.

WATER-BASED RECREATION

CURRENT LANDSCAPE

Tompkins County is a land of lakes, creeks, and waterfalls. There are plentiful opportunities for water-based recreation such as 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, paddleboarding from Myers Point, or taking in one of the City’s many waterfalls with family. Organizations providing support to water-oriented locals and visitors include Puddledockers, Cascadilla Boat Club, Paddle-N-More, Cornell’s Merrill Family Sailing Center, and several marinas. Cornell Outdoor Education, the Cayuga Outrigger Canoe Club, the Cornell Outing Club, Plastic Tides, SUP Cayuga, 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 hosts 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

- 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, Merrill Family Sailing Center/ East Shore Park, Puddledockers, Paddle-N-More
- Water! Cayuga Lake, Six Mile Creek, Fall Creek
- The Cayuga Lake Scenic Byway organization is interested in partnering on the Blueway Trail.
- Robert H. 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 Counties, the Tompkins County Planning and Sustainability 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 the 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

SUPPORTIVE ACTIONS – WATER-BASED RECREATION (CONT.)

Action Title	Action Description	Lead Organization(s)
City of Ithaca Water Recreation Committee	Work with the City of Ithaca on an ongoing basis to improve 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



[Paddleboarding on Cayuga Lake]

HIKING AND RUNNING

CURRENT LANDSCAPE

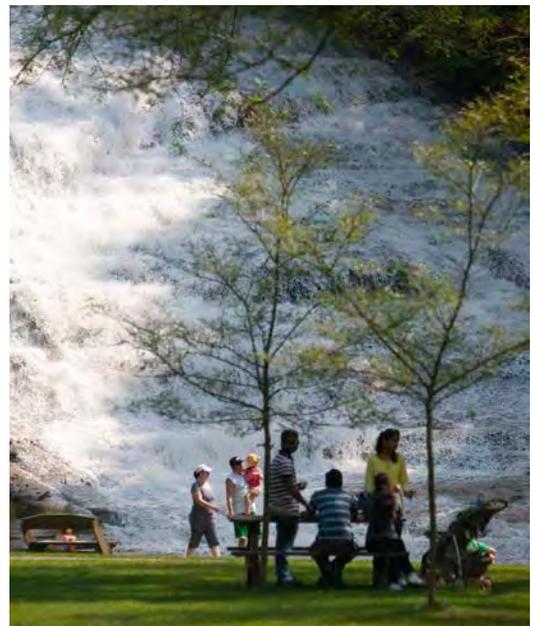
With a multitude of City and State Parks, Forests, and nature preserves, some of which are highlights of the Finger Lakes, our combined natural areas and the trails they keep may serve as the largest tourism draws in the County. Much progress has been made in expanding recreational resources for locals and tourists alike by building on and developing assets such as the Finger Lakes Trail, Cayuga Waterfront Trail, Black Diamond Trail, and other emerging rail trails, as well as the launching of information resources such as ithacatrails.org and gofingerlakes.org. 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 the Finger Lakes Trail 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.

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 used to take me here (Taughannock) as a kid every year, and I intend to do the same for my grandkids."



[Buttermilk Falls State Park. Photograph by Kristian Reynolds for Ithaca/Tompkins County Convention & Visitors Bureau]

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 Finger Lakes Trail

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 close to 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. Many trails that are also suitable for cross country skiing and snowshoeing in the winter
- IthacaTrails.org and GoFingerLakes.org promotional trails websites
- Several 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.

To protect the integrity of natural areas for hiking and running, tourism-focused investments in natural areas should only be made where funding for maintenance and operations is available. Project sponsors should clearly indicate how they intend to manage the additional impact of increased visitation to sites.

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.”

SUPPORTIVE ACTIONS - HIKING & RUNNING

Other potential supportive actions include the following:

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 trails 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, NYSDEC, 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 single-track trails 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, realizing the vision put forth in the Tompkins Priority Trails Strategy for a 51-mile interconnected 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 Ithaca College 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.

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.



[Cycle-CNY Women's Clinic]

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!”

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
- Cayuga Lake Scenic Byway organization supports 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 is 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 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 that 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 (NYBC), 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 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." Consider developing a "youth" or "beginner 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, Winter 'Fat Bike' rides, etc	Private Event Organizers

KIDS IN NATURE

CURRENT LANDSCAPE

Tompkins County is a place with so many child-supportive organizations and so many accessible and safe parks, natural areas, open space, and outdoor family-friendly events, that 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! the first on-the-ground model of the Just Play Project. ... Founded in 2017, the Just Play Project works to develop 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

Provide Investments in Attractions and Organizations Supporting Kids in Nature

Through its existing grant programs, the Tompkins County Tourism Program has funded 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.



[Family recreation. Photograph by Kristian Reynolds for Ithaca/Tompkins County Convention & Visitors Bureau]

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
Integrate Discovery Trail programs	Continue to develop Discovery Trail programming and events that span across all trail sites	Discovery Trail
Create "nature play spots"	At a variety of places (e.g. nature centers, 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



[Images from Ithaca Children's Garden]

NICHE & ADVENTURE OUTDOOR RECREATION TOURISM

CURRENT LANDSCAPE

Located within the Atlantic Flyway, Tompkins County sits on a key migratory route for North American birds. Cayuga Lake hosts the largest population of osprey in the Finger Lakes 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 a launching point for a region prolific in birding opportunities, including the Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge on the northern end of Cayuga Lake.

In regards to other Niche & Adventure tourism offerings, Tompkins County hosts gorges with winter icefalls that are readily accessible from the urban core and could be opened for seasonal ice climbing and spring flows that local whitewater kayaking enthusiasts love to paddle. Several enthusiast communities exist that could tap into these recreation offerings including windsurfing, kiteboarding. 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. However, it is unlikely that outdoor adventure activities locally will grow into major visitor draws like they have in some other areas. Said another way, while some people do enjoy these activities here, Ithaca is unlikely to become another Ouray, Colorado, for ice climbing, or Hood River, Oregon, for kiteboarding, nor does it want to be.



[Renwick Information Panel]

KEY ACTION

Cayuga Lake Birding Trail

Work with the Cayuga Lake Scenic Byway, Cornell Lab of Ornithology, New York Audubon Society, 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 an 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.

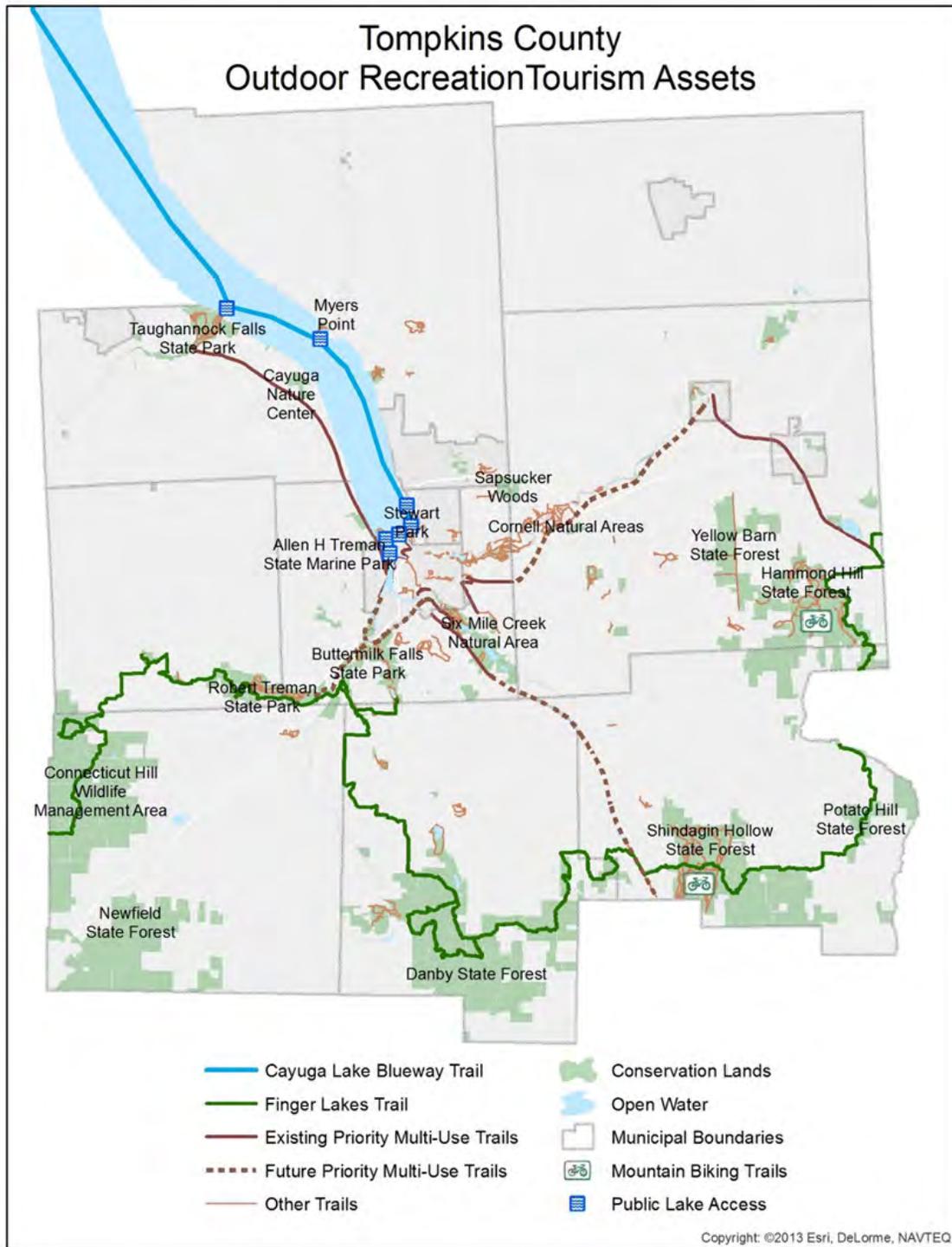
SUPPORTIVE ACTIONS - NICHE & ADVENTURE

Other potential supportive actions include the following:

Action Title	Action Description	Lead Organization(s)
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 and 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)



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	Lick 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
2015-2016	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
		Totals 2005-2017	73	\$615,466

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.

Visit
ITHACA



**Ithaca/Tompkins County
Convention & Visitors Bureau**
2017 Annual Report





A Message from Peggy Coleman
VP, TOURISM/CVB DIRECTOR



Focus on Quality

In 2017, the CVB team focused on quality, including a concerted effort to increase and improve communications with tourism industry partners, the travel trade, and our higher education community.

We hosted several roundtables and presented educational sessions in 2017 ranging from What your CVB can do for You, to Ambassador Training, to Becoming Group Friendly. We worked to create more connectivity to niche industry segments, to help build visitor readiness including sessions specifically for Outdoor Recreation partners and Agriculinary Tourism partners. It's exciting to see the new collaborations, itineraries and getaway packages developed as a result.

The CVB created a part-time Agriculinary Tourism Coordinator position, supported by a Strategic Tourism Implementation grant, whose sole focus is to help local farmers and producers become visitor-ready and to create opportunities for tourism industry partners to collaborate in a Farm to Fork experience. As you will see later in the report, this position has made a positive impact in just five months.

In 2017, we welcomed new presidents to all three of our higher educational communities. Each has brought a new energy and a renewed spirit of collaboration to the county. We are grateful for the support we have received from the higher educational communities, especially for the CVB sales team, allowing us to invite international visitors to our community as well as potential sporting events. We look forward to continued partnerships into 2018 and beyond.

We continue to see record numbers of visitors at the Overlook at Taughannock Falls, serving more visitors in six months than the number of residents who live in the City of Ithaca. The addition of retail at the Overlook Visitor Center has helped to extend our destination brand to nearly 3500 visitors in 26 countries and 46 states who purchased "Ithaca is Gorges" gear.

The CVB will work to improve communications, systems, training opportunities, and targeted high-yield leads to provide the best return on investment possible to the residents of Tompkins County. We are proud to report that in 2016, visitors to Tompkins County spent \$197.8 Million, which generated \$25.9 Million in state and local taxes to the county. This visitor spending sustained 3,451 tourism industry jobs and provided \$673 tax relief per household in Tompkins County.

Safe travels,

Peggy Coleman
VP, Tourism/CVB Director

2017 Lodging Market Performance

	Tompkins	% Change YOY	NY Excl. NYC	% Change YOY	USA	% Change YOY
Occupancy Rate	57.6	-6.1%	53.2	-0.4%	65.9	+0.9%
Average Daily Rate	\$160.42	+1.9%	\$124.47	+1.1%	\$126.72	+2.1%
Revenue Per Available Room	\$92.44	-4.3%	\$66.20	+0.6%	\$83.57	+3.0%
Revenue	\$55,812,162	+4.2%				

- ✓ Total Visitor Touchpoints are up 6% over 2017
- ✓ The Overlook at Taughannock serves 20% of all visitor touchpoints
- ✓ Destination Brand expands to 26 countries thanks to new retail outlet at Taughannock

GOAL: Develop a comprehensive, coordinated strategy for providing more visitor information to campus visitors, including parents, alumni, prospective students and their families, and conference attendees.

RESULTS: The Visitor Experience and Sales teams engaged with over 25,000 visitors on campus and throughout the community. The addition of monthly touch base meetings with Cornell University and Ithaca College core teams have helped the CVB to increase its outreach to meeting and event planners, office professionals, prospective students.

Brand Awareness: Gorges Gear Goes Global!

Visitors from 26 countries and 43 states made purchases at the Overlook at Taughannock during 2017. The top countries outside of the US were Canada, United Kingdom, Israel, Germany, Australia and Russia. The top transactions from states outside of NY were PA, OH, NJ, CA, FL.

Total Sales: \$75,321

Total Receipts: 3,495

Average sale per transaction: \$21.55

Bragging rights: Priceless!

How May We Help You?

Chat continues to be utilized as an additional way for visitors to reach us and one they find extremely helpful.

3,944 Total Chat Inquiries



- Lodging/Camping
- Waterfalls/Outdoor Recreation
- Events
- Attractions
- CVB/Chamber
- Off Line Chats
- Restaurants
- Transportation/Directions
- College Visits/Information
- Other/Misc.

“Excellent service and great for visitors to have access to someone for advice.”

– Chat guest from Oleans, Ontario, CA



Welcoming Our Guests:

The Visitor Experience Department welcome centers and outreach efforts continue to be successful, demonstrating a 6% increase in touchpoints over 2016.

2017 Top Domestic Feeder Markets by Travel Party:
NY: 50% PA: 12% NJ: 7%

2017 Top Int'l Feeder Markets by Travel Party:
US: 84% Canada: 5% Israel: 2%
UK: 1% Germany: 1% China: 1%

Visitor Touchpoints YOY

	2017	2016	YOY% Change
TG Requests	3756	4376	-14.2
Phone Calls	1709	1850	-7.6
Website Chats	3944	3096	+27
DVC Walk In	6520	9932	-34.4
ESD Walk In	4543	7649	-40.6
TFSP Walk In	32,146	25,908	+24.1
Offsite Events	24,950	20,227	+23.3
Total	77,568	73,038	+6.2

- 40,017 Ithaca is Gorges Facebook followers
- 1,664,110 VisitIthaca.com pageviews
- Dedicated Agriculinary Tourism Coordinator on staff

GOAL: Enhance Visitor oriented capabilities of IthacaEvents.com

RESULTS: Our new events calendar has 138,163 page views, the most viewed page on the website! The search functions allow visitors to get event results based on their specific interests.

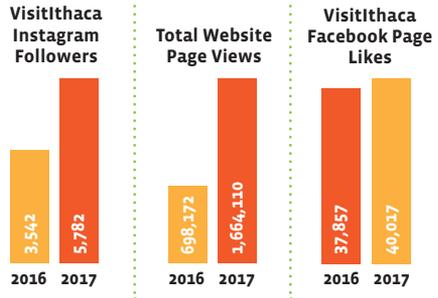
Dedicated Agriculinary Staff: Farming New Visitors!

The CVB now has a person dedicated to the development of visitor ready farms and culinary experiences, thanks to both a USDA grant and an STI grant from Tompkins County Tourism Program. Some early successes include 20 new visitor-ready farms, new photo stories about agriculinary tourism experiences, increased social media engagement, and an extremely successful countywide Open Farm Days in August 2017. The event brought in 640 people on the Saturday, and 756 on the Sunday of Open Farm Days weekend. 32% of these visitors were from outside of Tompkins County. The biggest draws were the animal farms, most notably Bel Canto Farm and Glenwood Farm which both received over 200 visitors.

	AUG	DEC
Followers	1,213	2,442
Engagement	4,500	10,000

Digital Growth

Website analytics, Instagram, and Facebook demonstrate that waterfalls still receive top engagement. Unique website users to VisitIthaca.com was 362,902 (2% growth over 2016). We also saw a 4.4% increase of website traffic from China, which we'd like to attribute to the work of the Sales team. #1 referral to VisitIthaca.com is Facebook.



Ithaca is People Instagram Takeover

Ithaca is People Instagram account continues to be curated by Tompkins County residents each week, resulting in a 67% increase of new followers in the first half of 2017.

"I really had fun, and we got a nice little bump in followers at the Johnson to boot."

- Andrea R. Potochniak
Editorial Manager,
Herbert F. Johnson
Museum of Art





PUBLIC RELATIONS

- ✓ 860 million+ media reach for Tompkins County
- ✓ Canadian Campaign generates nearly a half-million cross-border impressions
- ✓ PR: 2017 Emerging Nature Destination of United States!

Luxury Travel Guide 2017 Emerging Nature Destination of the USA

The CVB is proud to share that Ithaca has been named the 2017 Emerging Nature Destination of the United States by Luxury Travel Guide, just one of the many top tier features about our destination.



A Welcome Surprise: Cross Border Showcase

Our continued partnership with the largest Canadian tourism campaign in the country, including inserts in the Toronto Star, has reached approximately 350,000 people out-of-market in 2017. Radio Spots aired averaged a total of 120,000 listeners in 5 targeted regions in the Canadian market.



2017 County Specific Media Reach 860,856,865

The CVB's pitching efforts helped Ithaca & Tompkins County reach over 860 million people with features in media outlets such as Pure Wow, WCNY, Thrillist, Live for Live Music, New York Times Travel Section, Travel + Leisure, LA Times, and Food Network.



- ✓ Trade show attendance brings 115 appointments with tour operators
- ✓ 45 leads converted to bookings, \$1,201,092 in revenue, 4,301 projected room nights
- ✓ 3 FAM tours for international groups from UK/Ireland and China

GOAL: Market Themed International Group Travel

RESULTS: Partnered with I Love NY & Brand USA to host three familiarization tours for 27 people representing 26 companies from China, UK, Ireland and Scotland.

Meetings: Building Tools & Rebuilding Relationships

The Sales team create the tools needed to better represent our destination to meeting, conference, and event planners including: new downtown meeting event imagery, more robust website content, more compelling profile sheet, new content for LinkedIn and NewYorkMeetings.com. By adding of a dedicated meeting and conference sales manager in March, we grew partner and campus engagements to 76 in the last three quarters of 2017 and have nurtured 200 relationships.

Tour & Travel: Hello World!

In 2017, the Sales team partnered with I Love NY & Brand USA to host three familiarization tours for 27 people representing 26 companies from China, UK, Ireland and Scotland. Our new presence on VisitUSA-UK in late September has already delivered 156 profile views, 164 views on the Ideas section (What to do in Ithaca, Craft Beer, Gorges ½), 70 views on brochure section (Travel Guide, Cayuga Lake Wine Trail), and 20 views on our group tour video.

“What a FAB.U. LOUS tour for a bus full of “girlfriends,” ranging from 35 to 85!!! I never heard so much spontaneous applause or happy cheers...or so much chatter!! Our 52 ladies absolutely loved each and every meal and attraction.”

– Sandy from Starr Bus Charters and Tours, NJ

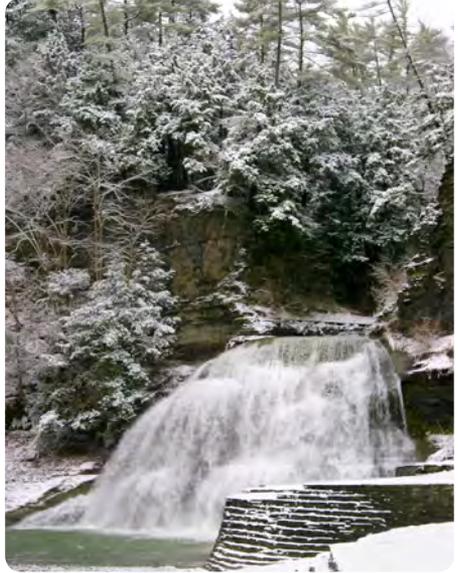


	Leads Sent	
	2016	2017
Meet/Conf	11	31
Athletic	23	5
Tour/Social/Wed	82	41
Total Leads	116	77
Potential Economic Impact	\$2,108,225	\$2,612,882

	Leads Booked	
	2016	2017
Meet/Conf	2	17
Athletic	13	4
Tour/Social/Wed	61	24
Total Booked	76	45
Conversion %	65.5%	58.4%
Actual/Booked Economic Impact	\$1,184,180	\$982,814

Top reason stated for lost business is insufficient facilities. In April 2017, the results of a feasibility study conducted by Hunden Strategic Partners, indicated that there is pent up demand for a conference center in downtown Ithaca. Work continues see this critical tourism infrastructure project move forward to fruition.

2017: Another great year in Tompkins County!





Ithaca/Tompkins County Convention & Visitors Bureau Staff Contacts

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Justin Scheidweiler | Taylor Smith**



Visit Ithaca is a division of the Tompkins County Chamber of Commerce



In 2018, the Chamber and CVB will meet strategic objectives through the efforts of the dedicated and talented team, with a keen focus on our core organizational mission and service to our stakeholders.

The mission of the **Tompkins County Chamber of Commerce & CVB** is to foster sustainable economic growth through strategic advocacy, workforce development, destination marketing, and quality of life investments.

2018 WORK PLAN

CHAMBER

- Overarching Chamber Management & Administration Goals
- Membership Growth & Engagement
- Quality Events & Programs
- Education & Workforce Development
- Advocacy, Community & Quality of Life
- Marketing, Outreach & Image

CVB

- Overall CVB Management & Administration Goals
- Group Sales
- Marketing
- Visitor Experience
- Leadership, Collaboration & Education for Tourism Program

Overarching CVB Annual Work Plan Goals

Below is a summary of the overarching goals which pertain to the management of the destination, to the administration of the CVB, to increasing awareness about the CVB and the work we do with all stakeholders, and to special projects for 2018 which impact multiple departments. We will continue to build on highly successful programming which supports and enhances the goals of the County’s 2020 Strategic Tourism Plan Critical Action Items.

The **primary target audience** is college-educated visitors from a three to five-hour drive radius as well as guests flying into Ithaca Tompkins County Regional Airport, with a household income of \$100K+. The **secondary target audience** is visitors associated with our higher educational communities, as individual consumers or as part of a group meeting or tour. The **tertiary target audience** is day-trippers, located within 90 miles of Tompkins County. While our nearby neighbors are less likely to produce overnight stays, they are very likely to produce multiple visits, impacting the economy over time and during slow or shoulder seasons.

Work Plan Goals	Strategic Plan Critical Action	Evaluation
<p>Special Project: Lead County Visitor Profile Study</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lead project throughout study, collaborating with tourism partners, to ensure updated study meets the needs of the TCTP, CVB, Discovery Trail, and tourism program partners • With Tompkins County Tourism Program Director, begin framework for 2021-2024 County Strategic Tourism Plan • Develop and implement new marketing seminars to support new requirement for all TCTP grant recipients 	<p>Tourism Program Foundation</p>	<p>Project completion Stakeholder engagement</p>
<p>Administrative, Finance, and Human Resources Functions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invest in professional development and cross-training for all depts. • Establish Director of Marketing & Communications to improve organizational cohesiveness • Seek broader funding base and diversified revenue stream for special projects • Identify and evaluate technology to provide reliable conversion research • Develop community volunteer base in partnership with RSVP and academia to support special projects and events • Complete integration of Simpleview to improve staff productivity and accountability to stakeholders 	<p>Tourism Program Foundation</p>	<p>DOSM hired by 1st Quarter 2018 Revisit cooperative marketing programming for late 2018-early 2019 Volunteer core trained by late summer Stakeholder engagement with extranet</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop relationships with key RTOs • Identify vehicle for Wine Waters, & Wonders partnership 		
<p>Meetings, Small Conferences and Retreats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain relationships with departments at Cornell, Ithaca College, and TC3 to provide education about CVB services to assist with bringing conferences and meetings to Tompkins County • Plan and execute Office Professionals Day Event to educate meeting planners on the campuses about the services that the CVB provides • Attend ESSAE annual meeting, trade show, and 2 quarterly meetings to educate meeting planners that Ithaca is a viable meeting option. • Plan and execute meeting planner sales mission in Albany in collaboration with Tompkins County meeting venues and hotel DOS • Identify opportunities to collaborate with NYSDMO for meeting market outside NYS • Cultivate relationships with MPI planners through regular engagement. 	#8, #24, #25, #35	<p>Increased leads for academic based meetings by 10% over 2017 Sales mission completed by July 2018 Meeting leads increased by 10% over 2017</p>
<p>Sports & Sporting Events</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update product inventory list and relevant imagery • Work with Marketing to revise content on website and develop collateral • Collaborate with Cortland County Sports Commission for bid opportunities focused on winter sports business • Identify trends in sport tourism and develop plan to capitalize on trend • Identify opportunities to collaborate with NYSDMO for sports market outside NYS 	#12, #13	<p>Inventory completed Marketing plan developed with focus on winter sports Key lead generator researched and implemented</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with Digital Marketing Manager to raise the profile of agricutinary tourism product on Visit Ithaca • Develop and implement monthly communications plan for social media and email marketing content to grow database for re-engagement campaign • Partner with CCE on the coordination of Open Farm Weekend • Administer Microgrants • Coordinately quarterly networking/educational events for producers • Update print collateral and digital map of visitor-ready agricutinary businesses • Assist partners with development of agricutinary overnight packages • Track results for grant reporting 	#1	<p>Increased traffic at Open Farm Days by 10% over 2017</p> <p>100% microgrant project completion by June 30th</p> <p>Increased visitor ready farmers/producers by 20 over 2017</p> <p>4 new evergreen agricutinary packages</p> <p>4 new seasonal agricutinary packages</p>
<p>Niche Tourism Initiative Support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outdoor Recreation program implementation • Cultural Heritage tourism program implementation • LGBTQ product development and destination readiness implementation • Assist County Tourism Program Administrator with Event Marketing Grant 	#1, #2, #5, #6, #8, #9, #10, #18, #33	<p>asset development, website integration of sub-domains, increase social engagement, trackable overnights</p> <p>more cohesive marketing plans with destination plan</p>

Visitor Experience Work Plan Highlights

In 2018, the Visitor Experience Team will continue to identify opportunities to go to where visitors are, to better serve their needs and the needs of tourism businesses. We will continue to expand our presence on campuses to share our community knowledge with the goal of developing lifelong destination champions. Training in product knowledge and upselling is key for our team. In partnership with Tompkins County Workforce Development Board, we will launch a new ambassador training program, to impact a larger number of frontline staff. We will prepare to move the downtown visitor center into the Tompkins Center for History & Culture in early 2019.

Work Plan Goals	Strategic Plan Critical Action	Evaluation
<p>Product Knowledge/Upsell Training/Ambassador Training:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partner with TCWDB to implement Visitor Journey A2D ambassador training • Plan, schedule and implement A2D in-person classes, fam tours, and quarterly networking events for program graduates • Schedule, plan and attend monthly off-site product knowledge tours • Cross-train Sales & Marketing department staff for emergency coverage 	#30, #37	STI grant award # of participants trained # of classes completed Product knowledge throughout organization
<p>Retail:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update business plan for retail at ESD, Taughannock and online store • Develop business plan for retail at Tompkins Center for History & Culture • Source high quality products which resonate with the community with multiple price points • Work with marketing department to develop collateral and marketing plan • Evaluate POS system that integrates across all store platforms 	#33	YOY increase in Gorges Gear Increased online store sales
<p>Off-Site Touchpoints:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek opportunities to partner with organizations that bring large numbers of guests to our community to offer visitor services • Estimate staff costs and fees to increase presence at annual/community festivals • Continually develop off-site touchpoint opportunities through college Grad Fairs, Parent's Weekends, Orientations, and Open Houses at both Ithaca College & Cornell University • Develop TripAdvisor presence for all three visitor center locations • Support Tourism Program in data collection at grant funded events for ROI evaluation • Evaluate potential for community Hop on Hop off visitor bus pass 	#8, #30, #35, #36	Increased Consumer Contacts Higher TripAdvisor ranking
<p>Winter Recess:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarify goals and ROI with partner organizations (Downtown Ithaca Alliance, Chamber) for 2018 Winter Recess program • Use data from 2018 participant and partner surveys to adjust for 2019 program • With marketing, develop 12-month marketing plan • Identify group tour operator potential for 2019 festival 	#7	Increased registration for Winter Recess; Increased social engagement and visitation from out of state
<p>Downtown Visitor Center transition to Tompkins Center for History & Culture:</p>		Budget completed by April 30 th

Arts and Culture Organizational Development Program of The Tompkins County Tourism Program

2018-2019 Applications Review Panel Recommendations

Intent of the Arts and Culture Organizational Development (ACOD) Grant Program

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 on the strength of our major arts and culture organizations. Since its inception in 2003, this 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.

Eligibility requirements to receive ACOD funding

ACOD funding is specifically for 501(c)3, non-university and college affiliates, performing and visual arts organizations and museums whose programs are demonstrably geared to visitors and the general public.

Funded organizations must have paid staff and have sound governance, as demonstrated by having to at least five of the following six items:

1. A Board-approved Mission Statement
2. Board meetings, a minimum 4 times a year, documented with minutes
3. Current strategic plan and evidence of long-range planning
4. An annual audit or financial review conducted by an independent auditor
5. A Board-approved annual operating budget
6. Standing committees. For example; Executive, Finance, Development & Nominating Committee

... and have met all of the threshold criteria listed on this page for three years or more.

Funded organizations must have a total annual public audience 5,000 or more people and the number of days in a year in which public programming is actively presented meet or exceeds 20 days.

Grant Process

The application process consisted of two parts, the first established the applicant's eligibility as outlined above before a full application would be considered. The second part consisted of the application itself which required the proposed use(s) of ACOD funding, and a year-end report on the uses made of 2017 funding if applicable. Also required were the organization's financial profit and loss statements, balance sheets, and budgets from the last completed fiscal year and current year-to-date, and their most recent audit. We also asked for a roster of their current board of directors.

Funding approval, and the associated contracts will be for two years, 2018 and 2019.

The application process timeline has been as follows

10.23.17	Applications invited / program promoted
11.17.17	Prequalification documents due to CAP
12.1.17	Eligibility determined / Organizations informed
1.5.18	Full applications / year-end reports due from previously funded org.s
2.9.18	Review panel met and resolved to request additional funding
2.21.18	Request for additional funding made to STPB – Denied
3.15.18	Review panel met for the second time
3.16.18	Panel recommendation forwarded to Nick Helmholdt

As dictated by the grant guidelines, a panel staffed by the CAP Executive Director, and consisting of the members of the Strategic Tourism Planning Board who occupy the designated Arts and Culture seats, at least one community member, and at least one member of the Tompkins County legislature will review applications for the program annually. This panel will make grant recommendations to the Strategic Tourism Planning Board for approval.

The maximum annual award for a single organizations is \$30,000. Merged organizations may apply for the maximum of \$60,000. No applicant is guaranteed funding at any level prior to the grant awards being made.

For the purposes of the application review, each panel member was provided a worksheet to facilitate his or her evaluation of each application submitted for funding. The result helped facilitate the panel's conversations and direct the panel's decisions regarding the amount of funding awarded to each applicant. Evaluation categories include the following:

- Evidence of long-term planning
- Contribution of requested funds toward organization's long-term goals
- Demonstrated financial need
- Value of program/organization to tourism industry (i.e. Return on investment/Value of investment)
- Value of program/organization to the community
- Clarity of program/organizational mission
- Demonstrated successful historical use of ACOD funds (Organizations previously funded)

The complete ACOD Guidelines can be found at:

<http://www.tompkinscountyny.gov/files/tourism/ACOD%20Guidelines-2016%20Rev%20FINAL.pdf>

The Applicants

The panel appreciates the good work of each applicant and acknowledges their contributions to the branding of Tompkins County as a vibrant arts and culture destination. The panel's deliberations were difficult in light of a total of \$302,600 in requests for the \$217,870 in available funds.

Organization	Amount Requested	Recommended 2018	Recommended 2019
Cayuga Chamber Orchestra	\$29,800	\$23,000	\$23,000
Cinemapolis	\$22,000	\$18,370	\$18,370
Community School of Music and Art	\$29,800	\$10,000	\$10,000
Hangar Theatre	\$30,000	\$20,000	\$20,000
The History Center	\$26,000	\$24,000	\$24,000
Kitchen Theatre	\$30,000	\$30,000	\$30,000
PRI/CNC	\$60,000	\$30,000	\$30,000
Running to Places	\$15,000	\$15,000	\$15,000
Science Center	\$30,000	\$20,000	\$20,000
State Theater	\$30,000	\$27,500	\$27,500

Cayuga Chamber Orchestra

Requested \$29,800

Panel recommendation \$23,000

Funding request to cover

- Support overall strategy implementation to expand audience
- Support operational infrastructure, marketing, program quality, donor cultivation

The panel felt that the CCO might look at applying for Tourism Marketing grants for ads placed in publications outside Tompkins County.

Cinemapolis

Requested \$22,0000

Panel recommendation \$18,370

Funding request to cover

- Develop a Strategic Plan
- Enhance fundraising through expanded staff support
- Technology updates for lobby/ ticket sales

The review panel was favorably impressed with the proposed use of ACOD funds which was supported by well-articulated details.

Community School of Music and Art

Requested \$29,800

Panel recommendation \$10,000

Funding request to cover

- (Focusing on the development of the third floor performance space) Implementation of strategic plan
- Building marketing infrastructure, improve marketing strategy , tools, and content

The panel supported the ongoing development of CSMA's third floor performance space.

Hangar Theatre

Requested \$30,000

Panel recommendation \$20,000

Funding request to cover

- Support year-round programing including annual holiday show and community partnership events.
- Develop the Hangar as an arts and culture tourism destination.
- Expand collaborative programing
- Launch the new brand of the Hangar Performing Arts Center

The panel supports the Hangar's ongoing efforts to expand to year-round programing and the development of an annual holiday show. There was a feeling that the submitted documents did not provide the kind of specifics that the application requested.

History Center

Requested \$26,000

Panel recommendation \$24,000

Funding request to cover

- Transition support as they prepare and execute their move to their new home on the Ithaca Commons.

The panel was impressed with the History Center's recent progress and with the level of detail provided in support of their current request.

Kitchen Theatre

Requested \$30,000

Panel recommendation \$30,000

Funding request to cover

- Expansion of new play development
- Increased community engagement through greater opportunities for inclusion and accessibility
- Long term planning

The panel was favorably impressed with the use the Kitchen Theatre has made of past funding and their projected use of funding for 2018 – 2019.

Paleontological Research Institute

Requested \$60,000

Panel recommendation \$30,000

Funding request to cover

- Support marketing efforts for CNC and MOTE
- Support fundraising
- Revise long term plan

The panel struggled, as they have in the past, with a lack of specificity provided in the application.

Running to Places

2018 Request \$15,000

Panel recommendation \$15,000

Funding request to cover

- Support for the renovation and rental of a dedicated theatre space for R2P

The panel felt this was a good project supported by a well-articulated application.

Science Center

Requested \$30,000

Panel recommendation \$20,000

Funding request to cover

- Support a new planning process to build a strategic framework to guide decisions and create greater audience impact
- Provide a portion of a required match to a \$207 K grant.

The panel was favorably impressed with the use the Science Center has made of past funding and their projected use of funding for 2018 – 2019.

State Theatre

Requested \$30,000

Panel recommendation \$27,500

Funding request to cover

- Improve development efforts
- Further strengthen operations and continue to stabilize the organization.

The panel was favorably impressed with the use the State Theatre has made of past funding and their projected use of funding for 2018 – 2019 supporting the position of Development Coordinator.

2018 ACOD Panel Recommendation Summary

Requests totaled	\$302,600	Recommended	\$217,870
Available	\$217,870	Accounting Consultant	\$2,000*
Unspent	\$0	CAP Admin	<u>\$10,000</u>
		Total	\$229,870

*Kurt Behrenfeld of CNY Accounting and Tax Pros provided the panel with his impartial, professional insight after reviewing the financial documents provided by each of the applicants.

Panel Members

- Baruch Whitehead STPB, Chair - Arts & Culture
- Anne Kellerman STPB, At Large
- Dan Klein Tompkins County Legislature
- Leslie Ackerman Community Volunteer
- Amie Hendrix Community Volunteer
- Michael Mellor STPB, At Large

Administrative support

- John Spence, Executive Director - Community Arts Partnership, ACOD Administration

ARTS AND CULTURE ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT GRANTS				
<i>ACOD STPB Budget Calc 2017-2019</i>				
		Requested	Recommended	
	2017		2018	2019
Cayuga Chamber Orchestra	\$20,000	\$29,800	\$23,000	\$23,000
Cinemapolis	\$13,500	\$22,000	\$18,370	\$18,370
Comm School of Music and Art	\$7,000	\$29,800	\$10,000	\$10,000
Hangar Theatre	\$24,500	\$30,000	\$20,000	\$20,000
History Center	\$22,000	\$26,000	\$24,000	\$24,000
Ithaca Shakespeare	\$5,000			
Kitchen Theatre	\$30,000	\$30,000	\$30,000	\$30,000
PRI-MOTE/CNC	\$30,000	\$60,000	\$30,000	\$30,000
Running to Places		\$15,000	\$15,000	\$15,000
Sciencenter	\$20,000	\$30,000	\$20,000	\$20,000
State Theatre	\$25,000	\$30,000	\$27,500	\$27,500
TOTAL GRANTS	\$197,000	\$302,600	\$217,870	\$217,870
Prof Development	\$2,000		\$0	\$0
Accounting Consultant	\$1,800		\$2,000	\$2,000
Admin (CAP)	\$10,000		\$10,000	\$10,000
Total Used	\$210,800		\$229,870	\$229,870
PROGRAM Budget (Room Tax Allocation)	\$213,150		\$222,347	\$229,870
Previous years budgeted/unspent (Re-allocate via budget adjustment)	\$5,173		\$7,523	\$0
MODIFIED PROGRAM Budget	\$218,323		\$229,870	\$229,870
End of year balance	\$7,523		\$0	\$0
Average Grant	\$19,700		\$21,787	\$21,787

**Tompkins County Arts Culture Organizational Development Grant Programs
History of Grant Awards 2006-2017**

	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Cayuga Chamber Orchestra	\$20,000	\$22,000	\$23,275	\$18,700	\$21,373	\$21,800	\$22,236	\$27,000	\$27,000	\$27,000	\$20,000	\$20,000
Cayuga Nature Center	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$28,000	\$25,000	\$25,000	\$25,000	merged	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Cinemapolis											\$13,500	\$13,500
CSMA											\$7,000	\$7,000
Hangar Theatre	\$30,000	\$32,500	\$37,500	\$24,000	\$22,600	\$23,052	\$23,513	\$27,000	\$27,000	\$27,000	\$24,500	\$24,500
History Center	\$23,000	\$30,000	\$30,000	\$23,200	\$21,458	\$21,887	\$22,325	\$27,000	\$27,000	\$27,000	\$22,000	\$22,000
Ithaca Shakespeare											\$5,000	\$5,000
Kitchen Theatre	\$35,000	\$39,680	\$34,000	\$22,400	\$21,264	\$21,689	\$22,123	\$22,000	\$23,000	\$27,000	\$30,000	\$30,000
PR/CNC	\$20,000	\$25,000	\$30,000	\$18,000	\$15,000	\$15,300	\$15,606	\$40,000	\$40,000	\$40,000	\$30,000	\$30,000
Sciencenter	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$10,000	\$16,000	\$16,320	\$16,646	\$17,000	\$17,000	\$17,000	\$20,000	\$20,000
State Theatre	\$30,000	\$30,000	\$37,000	\$16,000	\$17,000	\$22,850	\$23,307	\$11,887	\$27,000	\$27,000	\$25,000	\$25,000
Grant Totals	\$158,000	\$179,180	\$191,775	\$160,300	\$159,695	\$167,898	\$170,756	\$171,887	\$188,000	\$192,000	\$197,000	\$197,000

Organization Twelve-Year Totals 2006-2017

Cayuga Chamber Orchestra	\$ 315,384
Cayuga Nature Center	\$ 103,000
Cinemapolis	\$ 27,000
CSMA	\$ 14,000
Hangar Theatre	\$ 383,165
History Center	\$ 346,870
Ithaca Shakespeare	\$ 10,000
Kitchen Theatre	\$ 378,156
PR/MOTE	\$ 318,906
Sciencenter	\$ 149,966
State Theatre	\$ 352,044

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Work with project engineer to achieve optimal design for visitor engagement• Estimate staffing needs and associated budget to fulfill visitor services and retail management• Research survey downtown merchants to identify retail product gap offerings• Develop physical move plan to ensure no gap in services• Monitor Center progress to prepare for physical move to new location		Retail business plan completed, retail agreements signed by all participating project partners, inventory researched Utilities transition plan prepared Move in date
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Strategic Tourism Implementation Grant Review Committee

March 14, 2018, 3:00 pm, Old Jail Conference Room, Tompkins County

Committee members present: Ken Jupiter, Josh Friedman, Anne Kellerman, Mike Mellor, Martha Armstrong, Doug Levine, and Peggy Coleman

Staff present: Nick Helmholdt, Katie Borgella

Ken Jupiter convened the Strategic Tourism Implementation (STI) Grant Review Committee to consider three applications. To aid in the evaluation, he passed out the criteria used to each person present.

Prior to the discussion he indicated that two of the three applications were for an amount below the minimum threshold indicated in the grant eligibility criteria. The committee members were willing to consider the grants and ask that the Strategic Tourism Planning Board (STPB) consider revising the eligibility criteria for STI grants.

- 1) The committee considered the first grant application: "CVB Auricular Tourism Plan Implementation - \$18,000 gap request." The Ithaca/Tompkins County CVB was the applicant. This application requested \$18,000.

The committee discussed the importance of auricular tourism, and the recent successes of this effort. Following the discussion, the committee unanimously voted to recommend this grant for funding to the STPB. The committee voted unanimously to request the STPB override the minimum grant amount indicated in the STI grant eligibility guidelines for this proposal.

- 2) The committee considered the second grant application: "Visitor Journey A2D Ambassador Training Program" from the Tompkins County Workforce Development Board. This application requested \$11,175.

The committee discussed the potential to increase the ambassador training program impact, and the relevance of this training for the private sector. Following the discussion, the committee unanimously voted to recommend this grant for funding to STPB. The committee voted unanimously to request the STPB override the minimum grant amount indicated in the STI grant eligibility guidelines for this proposal.

- 3) The committee considered the second grant application: "Dryden Rail Trail Route 13 Crossing Preliminary Design and F.H. Fox Bridge Railing Engineering" from the Town of Dryden. This application requested \$26,000.

The committee discussed the potential amount of time until the trail is completed, the possibility of outside funding to assist with the project, the impact of the project in a rural area, and the natural areas near the trail. Following the discussion, the committee voted (6 to 1) to recommend this grant for funding to STPB.

The committee asked Tourism Program staff to research alternative eligibility criteria for future STI grants.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:50 pm.