



Q2 2020 - CVB Report to the Board

The CVB team continues to work diligently to keep our destination top of mind for consumers and media, to produce economic impact through tourism to Tompkins County. We continue to work to move the Ithaca Downtown Conference Center development project forward, as a key tool for our community's recovery.

In addition, we have spent considerable time and effort to support all tourism businesses in the county with information and resources through NY Pause into NY Forward, be that sharing the industry specific guidelines, helping to source PPE, or simply checking in to see how our partners are doing. In June we began reentry into our East Shore Drive offices, staggering shifts to comply with the required reduction in occupancy.

Marketing:

After a steep drop in website sessions in March, the second quarter of 2020 is seeing a positive increase in activity exceeding what we had anticipated at the end of Q1. Travel guide requests and email signup began to pick up steadily in May as people began to feel more optimistic about considering travel, especially to destinations with natural assets such as Tompkins County.

Consumer messaging through the second quarter has shifted from strictly inspiration waterfall images “*the places where you feel calm*” to also providing specific education about safety expectations and sharing how restaurants and attractions have adapted their offerings. The Masks are Gorges video project, in collaboration with DIA, TCAD, Flair Communications and City of Ithaca, to encourage mask wearing has had over 2,000 views on YouTube alone, as well as numerous shares across other social media.

2020	April	May	June	Q1	Q2	YTD
Website VisitIthaca.com						
Sessions 2020	19,343	34,310	50,634	84,474	104,287	188,761
Sessions 2019	44,322	47,950	59,436	94,936	151,708	246,644
Unique Users 2020	16,195	28,264	41,011	69,432	85,470	154,402
Unique Users 2019	34,899	37,859	45,979	74,527	118,737	196,264
Pageviews 2020	33,435	64,635	115,536	190,838	213,606	404,444
Travel Guide Flipbook views 2020	138	370	585		1,031	
Travel Guide Flipbook views 2019	802	886	1236		2,907	
Email signups via website 2020				287	331	618
Email signups via website 2019				387	473	860

Although website traffic from all sources combined is down YoY, in June we have begun to see an increase YoY in website sessions from organic search. **Organic traffic brought in 44,290 sessions in June, an increase of 10% over June 2019.** Outdoor attractions and activities, assets which allow for social distancing, have the most

traffic.

The COVID-19 Information for Visitors page had 6,850+ unique pageviews, with approximately 85% of traffic from outside the local Ithaca area. **Of a sample of 552 website inquiries from 2020 Q2, including travel guide requests & email signup: 335 were from outside NY state; 217 were from New York; 18 were international.** This demonstrates the value of VisitIthaca.com as a central hub/authority in assisting people looking for Ithaca and Tompkins County visitor information.

Much of our paid advertising, both traditional and digital, was put on hold beginning in late March. We have renegotiated and pivoted some paid promotional relationships, such as with Finger Lakes Tourism Alliance, New York's Best Experiences, and Escapemaker. The "Remember the Places Where You Feel Calm" messaging was used to reengage our previous consumer contacts and group tour operators, as well as Escapemaker.com's 50K+ email list.

We have used the time to work through website audits and updates with partner websites ILOVENY and FingerLakesTravelNY. Visitors to a new page featuring a Guide to Buy Cider Online on average spent over 5 minutes on the page.

Projects on hold due to COVID-19:

- Kendall was scheduled to moderate and speak on the panel: Promoting Cider as a Value-Added Product: Selling Regionalism, Including Sparking Tourism at the North East Cider Conference in March of 2020.
- Continued relationship with OurBus to provide Ithaca info prior to travel as well as continue the discount code program.
- Cider focused media hosting to follow-up with leads gained in 2019.
- A second Finger Lakes Craft Beverage Festival on Pier 17 in New York City was in the planning phase to with fellow Finger Lakes DMOs, wine trails, and EscapeMaker.

Projects still potentially in the pipeline, depending on Covid-10 impacts:

- Bike Out tour company is still looking for ways to host their ~15 people for a 5-day biking, camping and touring event in August.
- Cornell Cooperative Extension is investigating ways to continue Open Farm Days in 2020.
- Finger Lakes Cider Week and various other events have not been decided upon yet.

Sales:

As the full weight of the COVID pandemic hit, the April Spring Sales was cancelled but Katie maintained frequent contact with association meeting planners to keep Ithaca and Tompkins County top of mind. She also continued to reach out to meeting planners who cancelled or postponed events in 2020 with the goal of rebooking these events into future years. Katie became engaged in Conference Center updates and discussions and assisted Peggy as needed.

Sarah prepared for and attended the first ever Virtual TAP Dance conference with 26 appointments and had the special opportunity for Laura Winter Falk to join in the appointments as a partner. At the conference, Visit Ithaca was awarded the cover of TAP's 2020 Dream Destinations catalog featuring our very own Taughannock Falls - a huge win for the destination! Placement in the catalog is included in our Guild Member investment.

No travel during Q2 allowed the time to make much needed updates and additions to our sales tools, in collaboration with the marketing team. Updates include: fresh and more complete content on the Visit Ithaca website, updated content on the TourOperatorLand web portal including the addition of new content in the MICE (meeting and incentive) page, and the creation of a new streamlined proposal template in simpleview

that presents our community and partners more professionally, with more informative material for clients. Group tour itineraries with regional destination partners were refreshed. A working group made up of hotel partners was created to brainstorm ideas on county-wide incentive programs to boost Meeting and Conference business to our destination. Efforts continue to organize digital assets for the creation of virtual site tours of our partner properties and attractions, to replace in- person site visits restricted by Covid-19.

January-June 20220:

	Cancelled – Covid	Definite	Tentative	Lost	Grand Total
# of leads	2	15	13	12	42
Total room nights	70	2543	11,584	5114	19,311
Economic Impact	\$23,960	\$278,581	\$943,460	\$505,706	\$1,751,707

Visitor Experience:

The Visitor Experience team continues to see month over month increase in chats, emails, phone calls and travel guide requests. Most inquiries are to learn what reopening phase our community is in and what is open.

Preparations have begun to ready Taughannock for a mid-July opening and to re-launch the online store. A refresh of the 24-hour lobby was completed with a deep clean, fresh green paint, and the replacement of the broken plastic brochure racks with the wooden racks that were in the former downtown visitor center. Be sure to stop by to see it if you are in the area. With our diminished budget and diminished staff, the 24-hour visitor lobby will serve as the primary visitor contact point at East Shore Drive, allowing us to shift resources to fully staff the Overlook at Taughannock Visitor Center.

Our team has been closely monitoring the re-openings of hotels, trails, stores, and restaurants through the various phases. Our CRM, Simpleview, launched business continuity amenity features allowing us to better track this information and make it available to the all members of our team answering these questions.

By the Numbers:

	June 2020	June 2019	YOY % Change	YTD 2020	YTD 2019	YOY % Change
Phone	105	193	-46%	647	1117	-42%
ESD Traffic	0	496	-100%	286	1362	-79%
DVC Traffic	0	570	-100%	748	1245	-40%
Taug. Traffic	0	5735	-100%	0	10021	-100%
Chats	392	301	+30%	1266	1325	-4%
TG Requests	444	724	-39%	2231	3020	-26%
Off-Site Events	0	0	0	913	10495	-91%
Total	941	8019	-88%	6091	28585	-79%

*2019 Closed DVC for 2 weeks in April due to construction delay at TCHC.

*No exterior signs on DVC since move to TCHC in April 2019.

