



Tompkins County
DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING
AND SUSTAINABILITY

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TO: Tompkins County Legislature
FROM: Tom Knipe, Principal Planner / Tourism Program Director
CC: Strategic Tourism Planning Board (STPB)
DATE: November 6, 2017
RE: **Award of Fall 2017 Strategic Tourism Implementation Funding to two projects:
the Tompkins Center for History & Culture and the Tompkins County
Placemaking Toolkit**

Action Requested

Award Strategic Tourism Implementation funding for the following projects:

Tompkins Center for History and Culture	\$28,000
<u>Tompkins County Placemaking Toolkit</u>	<u>\$500</u>
Total	\$28,500

Background

In fall 2016, the STPB established guidelines and a process for award of Strategic Tourism Implementation (STI) funding, a special line in the Tompkins County Tourism Program budget to support “significant implementation of critical actions identified in the 2020 Strategic Tourism Plan and related tourism implementation plans”. Projects which have been identified as priorities and which are to be implemented directly by the County are also eligible.

- The grant guidelines and proposals for projects currently under consideration are available at this link: <http://www.tompkinscountyny.gov/tourism/2017FallSTIGrants>.
- The 2020 Strategic Tourism Plan and related tourism implementation plans are available at this link: <http://www.tompkinscountyny.gov/tourism/tourism/plan>.

Two organizations - The History Center and Historic Ithaca - submitted letters of interest for two separate applications in mid-2017, both of which would implement different elements of the STPB’s Heritage Tourism Implementation Plan. Both were invited to submit full proposals based on review of the letters by the Planning & Evaluation Committee of the STPB. In addition, Tompkins County Tourism Program staff submitted a request for funding to implement one of the actions from the Tompkins County Beautification, Public Art and Signage Strategic Plan. This project was considered by the STPB under Category C, as an “internal project identified as a priority by the STPB/Tompkins County Tourism Program”.

A grant panel then reviewed these three proposals and submitted their recommendations to the STPB. Panel members who participated in the review were Ken Jupiter (chair), Anne Kellerman, Josh

Friedman, Martha Armstrong, and Mike Mellor. The full STPB voted unanimously to approve these recommendations at their October 2017 meeting.

Specifically, the committee made the following recommendations:

1. The History Center, “Tompkins Center for History and Culture” – award funding in full: \$28,000 in 2017 for project management support and a project website; and \$100,000 in 2018 towards a \$900,000 County capital project to improve the Tompkins Trust Building for occupancy.
2. History Ithaca, Inc, “Joint Heritage Tourism Program of Historic Ithaca & The History Center” – delay decision on request for \$55,150 annually for two years beginning mid-2018. A decision is delayed until early 2018 pending the applicants providing additional clarifying information.
3. Tompkins County Tourism Program, “Tompkins County Placemaking Toolkit” – award funding in full: \$500 stipend for Cornell Design Connect to develop the toolkit.

Summaries of each of the three projects are provided below.

Tompkins Center for History and Culture (TCHC)

This is a proposal from the History Center on behalf of all of the partners involved with the Tompkins County for History and Culture. TCHC will bring several complementary nonprofits together in a new County-owned space to become a dynamic center for Ithaca and Tompkins County. This new collaborative entity will serve as a community hub that celebrates our rich history, heritage and culture in an exciting, synergistic way.

Based on the results of the engineering study commissioned by the County, one of the significant costs associated with the entire project buildout is \$900,000 in building improvements for code compliance. The County has committed to contributing to \$450,000 of those costs with the other half being embedded in the capital campaign. This proposal seeks \$100,000 in 2018 Strategic Tourism Implementation funding to help with the code compliance costs (which will reduce from \$450,000 to \$350,000 the County’s obligation specific to these costs from other sources). The proposal also seeks an additional \$28,000 in 2017 funding to cover expenses related to:

- Project Team Leadership. Jean McPheeters, for 13 months, December 1, 2017 – December 31, 2018. Seeking: \$20,000 for this grant request. Jean is the principal of Jean McPheeters Consulting LLC, which was founded in 2014. Her consulting practice focuses on board development, strategic planning and contract administration.
- Development of a Tompkins Center for History and Culture website. Iron Design, December 1, 2017 – January 31, 2018. Seeking \$8,000 for this grant request. Design, development and launch of 10-30 page project website.

The committee and the STPB are recommending awarding funding in full - \$28,000 in 2017 and \$100,000 in 2018.

Committee Feedback

- Too good to not invest in. If this works, it is going to be a fantastic.
- The committee suggests that the exhibits that are eventually developed include the history of higher education in Tompkins County and the history of the area’s natural resources.

- The committee is highly supportive of bringing on additional administrative talent and leadership capacity. Kudos for engaging Jean McPheeters and Mack Travis.
- There was a suggestion to develop the History Center Board of Directors to include members with capital project knowledge.
- Contingency: If the Tompkins Center for History and Culture building is sold and the project does not move forward, the committee would like to see the \$100,000 contribution towards building improvements come back to the Tourism Program.

Joint Heritage Tourism Program of Historic Ithaca & The History Center

This is a proposal from Historic Ithaca and The History Center to support staff and marketing to continue progress on Heritage Tourism development. The major component is a shared staff position, whose role would be to implement and market heritage tourism programming.

This project builds on HI and THC's 2016-2017 progress on the strategies and actions outlined in the February 2016 Tompkins County Heritage Tourism Implementation Plan. Many of the plan's actions were completed or implemented by Historic Ithaca's current Events & Community Engagement Coordinator. The Coordinator position for this proposed project will be an enhancement of this position. Initial funding for the current position was through a 2-year, non-renewable grant from New York State Council on the Arts (NYSCA) Workforce Investment program.

The committee and STPB are not recommending funding for this project at this time. Rather, the applicant will be given an opportunity to respond to questions and the committee will take up review of the proposal again early next year in light of responses to their questions.

Specific Committee Feedback

- There is some concern about the need for support for staffing ever going away. Where is the revenue coming from to replace this County funding after a couple of years? What is the long-range plan for this position?
- There is some infrastructure development that is a part of this project, which is good: new products, database, program development, testing the work that they are doing.
- There is some concern about funding a position for two years. Perhaps a shorter period should be considered.
- This is a substantial ask without a lot of clarity around impact.
- A business plan including operating budget, earned revenues would be helpful.
- The committee would like to know if this position will support revenue generation for the organizations, which would be encouraged.
- It would be helpful to understand what the last two years of NYSCA funding have yielded in real measures, such as in terms of increased visitors, increased direct spending, etc.
- It would be helpful to see a projection moving forward of numbers of visitors impacted.

Tompkins County Placemaking Toolkit

This project grew directly out of the STPB's Beautification, Public Art and Signage Strategic Plan. The purpose is to develop a toolkit for tactical placemaking that is specific to Ithaca and rural communities in Tompkins County, NY to inspire municipalities, community groups and residents to implement placemaking projects in their communities. Plantings, public art, benches and streetscape improvements are all elements of Placemaking, which "inspires people to collectively reimagine and reinvent public spaces as the heart of our communities." Placemaking also refers to a "collaborative process by which we can shape our public realm in order to maximize shared value." (www.pps.org). A focus on enlivening specific places in the City of Ithaca and our rural communities with small scale

tactical placemaking projects can bring immediate benefits both to the spaces themselves and the people who use them, including visitors.

A team from Cornell Design Connect (a student led interdisciplinary low-cost consultancy) will develop a placemaking toolkit tailored to specific areas in Tompkins County. In developing the toolkit, the team will work with project partners and communities to identify specific locations as “focus areas” for placemaking improvements and then provide ideas and resources, along with micro-scale conceptual designs, plans or programs to consider for specific communities and focus areas. The final result should be a practical and visually appealing and inspiring ‘how-to’ guide that communities in Tompkins County can put to immediate use to enliven and improve their public spaces.

The committee and the STPB are recommending awarding funding in full - \$500 in 2017.

Committee Feedback

- Driven internally. Small request.
- Supports smaller communities in the County.
- Comes directly out of the Beautification Committee. Exactly the kind of thing that Category C funding category is there for.
- Takes one of our programs and enhances it for not a lot of money.

Budget Implications

Strategic Tourism Implementation funds come exclusively from hotel room occupancy tax, and funds for these awards are available in the 2017 Tourism Program budget, as detailed in the table below. Additional letters of interest for this program will continue to be accepted on a rolling basis.

Summary of Available STI Funding

The 2017 Tourism Program budget identifies \$100,000 in its Strategic Tourism Implementation (STI) fund. An adjustment to the 2017 budget to include previous year’s allocated but unspent funds added \$265,000 to grow the total 2017 funding pool to \$365,000. The STPB has previously voted to recommend \$150,000 in STI funding for implementation of the Wayfinding and Interpretive Signage Plan. Formal allocation of those funds is likely to be considered in 2018. A combined \$69,000 was allocated earlier this year to other STI grants, and as described above an additional \$100,000 will be recommended for the Tompkins Center for History and Culture project in 2018. Taking all of these actual and expected allocations into account, this would leave up to \$152,500 available for new awards in 2018. As shown in the table, there are a number of known possible requests for this funding, in addition to any unknown possible requests.

Contact Information

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Details of Available Strategic Tourism Implementation (STI) Funding

Strategic Tourism Implementation Funding		
2017 Budget Allocation	\$100,000	<i>Budgeted</i>
2017 Budget Adjustment	\$265,000	<i>Adding previous year's allocated but unspent funds</i>
New 2017 Total Budget with Adjustment	\$365,000	
2018 Recommended Budget Allocation	\$135,000	
Subtotal	\$500,000	<i>2017 and 2018 combined budget</i>
Strategic Tourism Implementation Expected Allocations		
Wayfinding and Interpretive Signage	\$150,000	<i>STPB voted to recommend; not yet formally awarded</i>
Tourism Program Communications	\$3,500	<i>Approved early 2017</i>
CVB Agriculinary Tourism	\$30,000	<i>Awarded early 2017</i>
Heritage Education Center STI Grant #1	\$35,500	<i>Awarded early 2017</i>
Tompkins Center for History & Culture STI Grant #2	\$28,000	<i>Recommended Fall 2017 Award</i>
Tompkins County Placemaking Toolkit	\$500	<i>Recommended Fall 2017 Award</i>
Tompkins Center for History & Culture STI Grant #3	\$100,000	<i>Expected 2018 budget adjustment to capital proj.</i>
Subtotal	\$347,500	<i>STPB recommendations/awards - all combined</i>
Difference - 2017 Adjusted Budget Minus Actual & Expected Allocations	\$17,500	
2018 Recommended Budget Allocation	\$135,000	
Subtotal	\$152,500	<i>Remaining available for new STI grants in 2018</i>
*Strategic Tourism Implementation Possible 2017 and 2018 Proposals		
Outdoor Recreation Tourism	?	<i>New initiatives coming out of plan</i>
Historic Ithaca Heritage Tourism Implementation	?	<i>Proposal under review</i>
Agriculinary Tourism Implementation	?	<i>Continuation of 2017 STI grant funded initiative</i>
Downtown Conference Center Feasibility	?	<i>A proposal may come forth for Phase II Feasibility</i>
Downtown Conference Center Implementation	?	<i>STI is a possible initial source if project advances</i>
Visitor Profile Study	?	<i>Additional funds may be needed for this project</i>
Wayfinding Implementation	?	<i>Additional funds may be needed for this project</i>
Other Strategic Initiatives Directed by TCTP Staff	?	<i>Staff-directed strategic initiatives possible</i>

**note: no funds yet allocated or earmarked for these projects; this list includes only the known potential proposals. Other eligible projects may exist, and may come forward with proposals.*