

Tompkins County – Draft Strategic Tourism Plan

Overview / Background

- The Strategic Tourism Planning Board (STPB) advises the TC legislature on all matters relating to tourism
- This draft plan sets priorities for the Tourism Program and STPB through 2027
- Once the plan is endorsed by the legislature, the plan will inform:
 - o A review and revision of the policies of the STPB
 - o Changes to Tourism Program grant guidelines and related documents
 - o Development of new initiatives
- The plan update began in August 2018 when STPB formed a Steering Committee
- A new Visitor Profile Study (VPS) was completed in August 2019
 - o VPS findings are summarized in the “Setting the Baseline” section & appendix 3
 - o VPS collected 2,070 responses from online surveys and in-person intercepts
 - o Some key findings include:
 - High repeat visitation (76%)
 - Knowledge from past visits & college websites inform most travel plans
 - Leisure (38%) and College (32%) were top travel purposes
 - The majority of overnight respondents reported staying 2-3 nights
 - High share of visitors identified as LGBTQIA+ (20%)
- Community Engagement
 - o Online Survey (winter 2018/19; 309 Responses)
 - o Stakeholder Meeting w/ Non-Profit Organizations (April 22; 21 participants)
 - o Public Comment Period (October 23 – November 11; 14 submissions)

Values

The following value statements are intended to guide the goals and actions proposed in this plan.

1. Leverage Local and Regional Assets
2. Improve Connectivity within the County
3. Create Multi Day and Off-Peak Travel Demands
4. Develop Accountable and Transparent Programs
5. Advocate for Policies that Affect Tourism
6. Thoughtfully Support New Economic Growth
7. Enhance Visitor Experience
8. Present our Inclusive, Accessible, Vibrant and Sustainable Community

Overall Goals

1. Increase average overnight trip length by one night from 2-3 nights to 3-4 nights
2. Increase average visitor spending by 5% from \$366 to \$384 per day in established downtowns and villages
3. Offer indoor and outdoor visitor programming year-round
4. Increase visual and physical access to Cayuga Lake through collaborative efforts with municipal and private stakeholders
5. Increase the share of new visitors from 24% to 30%
6. Provide accurate information to decision makers on legislation and policies that affect tourism
7. Continuously refine communication techniques and media to grow awareness of our destination and its assets
8. Foster collaboration among tourism partners to achieve common goals

Focus Areas:

The following thematic categories were defined in the STP. Three focus areas are new to this edition of the plan (see below). The focus areas are organized into four categories: priority, foundation, emerging, and destination services. Individual goals and actions are associated with each focus areas.

- Agriculinary
- Arts & Cultural Heritage
- Beautification & Placemaking
- Conferences & Groups
- Diversity & Inclusion (NEW)
- Downtown Ithaca
- Festivals
- Higher Education
- Marketing & Sales
- Outdoor Recreation
- Planning & Evaluation (NEW)
- Sports
- Transportation & Connectivity
- Visitor Experience
- Waterfront (NEW)

Next Steps

- Address comments and revise plan as appropriate
- Present 2nd draft to STPB at November 20 meeting
- Present 2nd draft to HED at November 22 meeting
- Complete graphic design and layout of final plan document
- Present final draft to STPB at January 16 meeting for endorsement recommendation
- Present final draft to HED at January 23 meeting for endorsement recommendation
- Present final draft to TC Legislature at February 6 meeting for endorsement