

Essex County Destination Master Plan

*Designed by organizations and leaders
from the destination of Essex County, New York*

Facilitated by Egret Communications
Through the Essex County Destination Master Planning Process

(The planning process was largely funded by a DEC Smart Growth Grant to the Lake Placid/Essex County Visitors Bureau and matched by some funds from the bureau. No county or residents' tax funds were used in the execution of this planning project.)

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The carefully planned growth of tourism in Essex County presents opportunities to raise the quality of life for residents, generate jobs and business opportunities, and protect our Adirondack lifestyle.

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Vision: Growing Tourism, Essex County Style

We will work together to grow tourism in Essex County in ways that reinforce and protect our lifestyle, generate jobs and business opportunities for residents, improve quality of life, care for both natural and cultural resources, and deliver great visitor experiences.

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Executive Summary

Essex County will take steps to support the engineered growth of tourism in Essex County and the “common” needs of the six target communities that have developed destination master plans under the Essex County Destination Master Planning Project.

To that end, the Board of Directors will set up an Essex County Tourism Council, chaired by the CEO of the Lake Placid/Essex County Visitors Bureau and initially comprised of the five supervisors who represent the communities that have developed destination master plans under the county initiative. This Tourism Council will “suggest” actions to the Board of Supervisors and oversee county-wide implementation of the destination master plan. This council anticipates meeting quarterly – but can meet more often if the need arises.

Essex County will explore ways to assist in the development of current and competitive lodging county-wide, recognizing that this will require private investment and that it is key to the healthy growth of tourism in Essex County and the jobs and tax revenues it generates. Some of those efforts will be related to incentives for private investment. Others will be related to supporting the upgrade and/or removal of out-of-date or derelict lodging establishments.

The county will support efforts to upgrade tourism’s infrastructure, including the addition of bike paths along driving routes, recognizing that such moves are good for both residents and visitors. It will work to expand public transportation inside the county (to help residents commute to tourism and other jobs) and examine the possibility of adding bike racks to public transportation vehicles.

There will be a county-wide initiative to bring tourism education and hospitality training to residents. Tourism education will help residents understand the role of tourism in the county and their relationships and opportunities from having a strong tourism economy. Hospitality training will prepare residents for employment in the tourism industry and raise the competitive quality of the county’s tourism industry.

Essex County Destination Master Planning Project Overview

Essex County Destination Master Planning Project *Engineering Tourism to contribute to the future Essex County Wants*

Lake Placid - Essex County Visitors Bureau contracted with Egret Communications (www.egret.us) to guide a planning project designed to engineer future tourism for Essex County to meet the desires of communities and the tourism industry.

The goal of this planning project was to envision a sustainable tourism future for Essex County which will contribute economically to the people and communities of the county, which will help the county and its citizens realize important goals, and which will maintain the lifestyle and community character that is important to people living here. The planning project focused both on “dreaming” about a perfect tourism future and facing practical matters to make that a reality. It culminated in an action plan that is very specific, including designation of responsible parties and timetables for action.

This project was designed to build specific plans for six key destinations within Essex County:

1. Moriah
2. North Elba
 - a. Lake Placid
 - b. Saranac Lake
3. Schroon Lake
4. Ticonderoga
5. Wilmington

Each of those Essex County communities has its own unique set of community goals, needs, concerns, and tourism opportunities. The experiences they offer match up best with various visitor profiles and the steps each needs to take to move toward success (on their own terms) vary by the circumstances unique to the community. Each needs to have tourism engineered to circumstances and opportunities specific to the community.

Those six plans have been woven into an Essex County Destination Master Plan that integrates the specific needs, actions, and engineering in a comprehensive manner to ensure that:

1. each local destination makes its moves in a supportive environment, and
2. successes multiply beyond the boundaries of local communities.

The process of building a tourism master plan for Essex County was as important as having and using the plan itself. That process brought together the various businesses, organizations, and governmental entities that have strong interests in the success, marketing, investment, development, growth, and management of tourism into a strong, more collaborative relationship. All sides were heard in the process. The process was designed to strengthen and restructure the partnership among all the players that guide, support, participate in, and benefit from Essex County's tourism economy.

The planning process that Egret has outlined includes six crucial steps:

1. Assessment
2. Analysis
3. Designing the Future
4. Charting a Path
5. Integrating the five Destinations' Plans
6. Unveiling the Master Plan

A tourism destination plan needs to be "owned" by the destination's partners. That is, Essex County's citizens and tourism community should feel it is their plan; they should be determined to achieve its goals; and they should be committed to working to carry it through. The collaborative process of building the plan was designed to revitalize and reorganize the partnership among the tourism community, political leaders, citizens, resource managers and supporters in a way that achieves that goal.

Specifically, each of the six targeted communities needs to feel ownership of its plan – and to acknowledge that success of each community's plan is also dependent on success at a county level.

A tourism destination plan needs to be based on good tourism sense. ***Egret Communications managed the process of creating the plan to balance between writing a plan that includes the dreams of Essex County's destinations and tourism reality.*** Egret guided the process to ensure that goals and actions in the plan are reasonable and practical. Each component of the plan is there for a reason – a reason that makes sense to the host community and in the greater context of how tourism works.

The finished plan is designed to work in a practical manner. It embodies the aspirations of each community and prescribes a set of actions that have a solid basis for success. The plan has timetables and responsibilities laid out clearly, so everyone can see what is to happen, when, and who is responsible for moving each action forward.

The process of building the destination master plan for Essex County, and the individual plans for each of the targeted communities were conducted in a transparent manner. The process was open to view on a dedicated web site at www.essextourismplan.com

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The planning process was supported economically by the Lake Placid - Essex County Visitors Bureau and the New York State Dept. of Environmental Conservation Adirondack Smart Growth Program. The proposal for economic support was endorsed by each of the target communities and Essex County Government.

The Planning Process

The process of building a tourism master plan for Essex County was as important as having and using the plan itself. That process needed to bring the various businesses, organizations, and governmental entities that have strong interests in the success, marketing, investment, development, growth, and management of tourism into a strong, more collaborative relationship. All sides needed to be heard in the process – and all sides need to feel they have been heard and are involved in collaboration.

Egret Communications used a process that “consults” individually with key players and brings people together for managed discussions.

- The proposed process worked, in the early stages, to build a common understanding of each Essex County destination’s important tourism issues and opportunities.
- Then Egret worked with each tourism community (including public partners) to analyze the data and identify tourism gaps, strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and competitive threats.
- From that analysis, Egret led a collaborative discussion to create a vision for each destination’s tourism product and infrastructure development, management, marketing, and organization.
- Finally, key partners reviewed the vision and charted a path to make it happen.

The process itself was designed to strengthen and restructure the partnership among all the players that guide, support, participate in, and benefit from Essex County’s tourism economy.

The planning process that Egret outlined includes six crucial steps:

7. Assessment
8. Analysis
9. Designing the Future
10. Charting a Path
11. Integrating the five Destinations’ Plans
12. Unveiling the Master Plan

Characteristics of the Plan

A tourism destination plan needs to be “owned” by the destination’s partners. That is, Essex County’s citizens and tourism community should feel it is their plan; they should be determined to achieve its goals; and they should be committed to working to carry it through. The collaborative process of building the plan will revitalize and reorganize the partnership among the tourism community, political leaders, citizens, resource managers and supporters in a way that achieves that goal.

Specifically, each of the six targeted communities needs to feel ownership of its plan – and to acknowledge that success of each community’s plan is also dependent on success at a county level.

A tourism destination plan needs to be founded in common understanding. The process described here starts with getting the facts about local tourism to the table in a way that everyone can start the discussion from a common understanding.

A tourism destination plan needs to be based on good tourism sense. ***Egret Communications managed the process of creating the plan to balance between writing a plan that includes the dreams of Essex County’s destinations and tourism reality.*** Egret guided the process to make sure goals and actions in the plan are reasonable and practical. Each component of the plan is there for a reason – a reason that makes sense to the host community and in the greater context of how tourism works.

A tourism destination plan needs to be actionable. It is a waste of everyone’s time and energy to build a plan that simply cannot practically be carried out. And worse, when a poorly conceived plan doesn’t work, it’s harder to keep the faith in the destination and to continue to work together to make a positive tourism future. So, while this plan embodies the hopes and dreams for tourism in each Essex County destination, it is also designed in a way that will work.

A tourism destination plan needs to have a timetable. “Someday” isn’t good enough when deciding whether to invest in a tourism future. A solid, practical plan, backed by a timetable and serious commitment of the partners, attracts investment (both capital and energy). It enables the business community to time investment so that businesses are able to capitalize on new opportunities. And it gives the public sector the support it needs for infrastructure investment.

A tourism destination plan needs to lay out a clear understanding of responsibility. The success of tourism in and for Essex County requires careful balancing of free enterprise and a democratic government that must look out for both the well-being of its citizens and the health of the county’s economy. Moving forward toward cooperatively identified goals requires that everyone knows what party is responsible for carrying out which part of the plan. It also gives local ownership (and responsibility) to each of the communities targeted in this planning process. The plan clearly lays out leadership responsibilities, processes for decision making, communications pathways, and protocol.

A tourism destination plan needs to be flexible and to have a built-in process for responding to changing tourism reality. Essex County's tourism economy operates in a world environment, a fact we were all reminded of in the fall of 2001. Natural and manmade events in that environment continue to shape the realities that local tourism must adjust to in order to succeed in a competitive environment. This tourism plan includes periodic review of Essex County's tourism environment, of plan performance, and timetables and includes a process for updating and adjusting the plan to improve performance and results.

A tourism destination plan needs a monitoring mechanism. This plan outlines specific monitoring steps to ensure critical data is available to those guiding tourism's development and marketing.

Assessment

The first step in this project, and the foundation of tourism planning, was to conduct an assessment of Essex County's tourism and specifically of each of the targeted destinations within Essex County. This may seem redundant if one assumes that those involved in tourism already have a good grasp of the tourism situation. First, it is important to view those products through an "outside eye", from the vantage point of someone who understands tourism but is not caught up in the Essex County tourism scene. With the variety of communities targeted, there is no sweeping generalization that covers target markets, state of tourism infrastructure, nature of tourism experiences, or priority issues which must be addressed. Most importantly the assessment provided a common understanding from which to engage in serious collaborative discussions about each Essex County target destination's tourism future.

For each of the six targeted communities, we created a snapshot of current tourism, focusing on:

1. infrastructure
2. experiences
3. products
4. gaps (missing products or infrastructure that are barriers to success)
5. seasons
6. quality
7. rates
8. competitiveness
9. positive and negative impacts
10. benefits
11. visitors (demographics)
12. visitor satisfaction

We also looked at the potential each community has for tourism products and experiences, both developed and undeveloped. During this process we paid special attention to products and services that “match” the complexion of the local destination and strengthen the overall “draw” for the region.

The focus looked toward community needs, wants, and concerns that intersect the benefits and negative impacts that tourism can potentially bring to each of the six communities. That process looked at both present and potential issues and opportunities such as:

1. creation of jobs and business opportunities
2. careers for young people growing up in the communities
3. exposure to outside ideas
4. infusion of outside investment
5. new people moving to town
6. tourism supporting services a town can't support on its own
7. increasing real estate values
8. opportunities for aligned non-tourism businesses
9. changes to local quality of life (both good and bad)

The project looked at Essex County from the visitors' view:

1. It looked at the products and experiences that Essex County's visitors associate with Essex County – with a particular focus on those that influence travel to the destination.
 - a. It examined the same issue for each of the target communities
 - b. It looked at how each community fits into the broader Essex County picture
2. The project also looked closely at what defines Essex County as a destination. What products, facilities, experiences are crucial to
 - a. having patrons make the choice to come to Essex County,
 - b. supporting a destination experience in Essex County, and
 - c. sending patrons home with a sense of having had a destination experience.
3. The destination definition reflects a combination of the local geographic and political boundaries and the visitors' views of Essex County.
4. Similarly, the project sought to establish tourism interests among both the private sector and public sector, with an eye toward pulling all interests into a partnership that will strengthen each community's tourism products, experiences, and ability to function as a cohesive destination.

The project looked at the demographics of Essex County tourism. It's important in planning to understand who is patronizing each kind of tourism products and experiences. The project looked at key visitor groups to understand

- What draws each
- When each comes
- What each does while in the region
- How satisfied each is by their experience in Essex County, with a particular focus on
 - Do they come back
 - Do they refer
- How each group spends

Next, the assessment looked at Essex County's tourism marketing. The project looked at how the overall destination is branded and how that brand plays in various target markets. It looked at what markets are being actively targeted. The project explored what channels are being employed to reach those target markets and what messages are being sent through those channels to the targets. The team looked at how the destination converts interest into patronage. And close attention was given to how Essex County's tourism marketing is evaluated – and how success is measured.

There was also a careful look at the marketing of each of the six target community destinations within Essex. Or, to say it differently, the project examined how the marketing of Essex County drives patronage for each of the six target communities. And, how each of the target communities contributes "iconic" material that contributes to the marketing image for the county.

The assessment phase took a good hard look at how Essex County (and each target community) is organized as a destination.

1. It was important to understand the relationships among the various players in Essex County's tourism picture.
2. The team explored the county and each target community's tourism community and looked closely at the roles played by each organization, agency, government, and significant private party.
3. The project outlined leadership roles.
4. It looked closely at the communications patterns in Essex County and each target community.
5. It studied how decisions are made (and who is involved in decision making).
6. The process tracked how funds move from visitors to where they are used for marketing and destination development/improvement.
7. The process looked at how the public sector could support needed investment in product and infrastructure.

During the assessment phase, Egret met with key community and industry leaders to gain insights into all the issues listed above. In those meetings, Egret also explored community views on tourism's positive and negative impacts on the economic and social well being of Essex County. The conversations explored whether there are pressure points where tourism does or could create unacceptable impacts for the people of Essex County or the target communities. Those conversations also explored whether there are limits that should be considered for any particular tourism activity or type of development. Those conversations also explored how each community's social and economic future would look without a successful tourism industry.

The assessment phase culminated in a document that has become the "common understanding" of the Essex County tourism situation (with specific discussions of each target community) and the basis for analysis and planning.

Analysis

Once the assessment was formed, it was important to analyze the data to find opportunities, competitive threats, gaps that interfere with success, strengths and weaknesses. The process of gathering that analysis was a combination of private interviews, interactive group sessions, and team analysis. The process itself primed the later discussion regarding the future of Essex County tourism.

The analysis keyed in on five important themes:

- Products and Experiences
- Infrastructure
- Patrons
- Marketing
- Guiding the destination

Much of the analysis was derived by looking at the data and seeking explanations for things that are out of line with expectations. The analysis identified key opportunities where product and experience development, infrastructure investment, and marketing energy and expenditure will pay off. It also highlighted weak areas that need shoring up. And it helps each community understand which parts of its tourism portfolio are really paying off, which investments could really make a difference, and which aspects are simply not going to be profitable.

Analysis also carefully looked at the relationship among patron groups, products, and seasons for each community. We looked hard at who's coming, to do what, when for each community – and explore ways to strengthen weak flows, create new flows, or change patterns in a way that is more socially rewarding or economically profitable. Analysis showed that there are ways to raise revenues in Lake Placid's summer season without significantly raising visitor volume, a key consideration for managing tourism's impacts. Analysis also found that specific product improvements or developments may open the door to a stronger flow of visitor revenues to one or more of the other target communities.

Some demographic groups of visitors will patronize the region during times that may reflect local products, but may also reflect conditions "at home". Understanding how visitor flows and product performance interact to create peaks and valleys in volume and spending is important to charting a successful tourism plan.

Analysis explored competitive products, combinations of products, and marketing in other destinations that compete with Essex County for the same patron groups. It found opportunities for each community to capture larger target market shares (when desirable) and identify areas where the competition is clearly ahead.

This part of the project also identified patron groups that are a good match for each target community's tourism products and experiences – but who are not coming. It was important to see how these opportunities "fit" into Essex County's tourism picture, what they do in terms of changing the balance, and how they might affect profitability.

There was an analysis of destination leadership and how it guides the destination. Analysis showed what issues (or old ghosts) complicate the process of making decisions, advancing product improvement, succeeding at attracting patrons, and delivering great visitor experiences.

The tone of the analysis was to find opportunities. The process didn't avoid addressing problems, or listening to needed venting, but did, in the end, seek to find positive directions that each target community and the overall destination can go.

When the analysis is complete, a number of opportunities were clearly identified and on the table for discussion. At the same time, there was clear understanding of which combinations of product and patron are not worth significant new energy and investment.

Assessment and analysis were necessary work to create a common understanding of each target community's tourism situation and of the way Essex County fits together as a destination – and interfaces with visitors. Once this common understanding was achieved, the fun (and hard work) of imagining each target community's tourism future began.

Designing the Future

Once the homework (assessment and analysis) was finished, it was time for the fun and creative part of the process. Egret managed this “designing the future” phase to be highly interactive, with an understanding that it is just as important to build an excitement and momentum as it is to craft a future that is practical and productive.

The point of envisioning the future was to

1. Figure out a strategy to persevere and improve on the tourism products, experiences, marketing and target markets that Essex County (and each target community) is successful at now
2. Decide what needs to be done to strengthen products, experiences, marketing, target patrons that are underperforming but worth developing
3. Decide what new patron groups should be attracted and paint a picture of how they'll fit into the existing tourism picture
4. Decide what new products and experiences might be developed that would improve each target community's (and the overall destination's) performance with existing visitors, and/or attract new visitors
5. Outline infrastructure changes that will help achieve tourism success
6. Imagine how each community's (and the county's) tourism leadership can work better together, communicate more effectively, and have a better process for making decisions
7. Think through issues requiring funding (how much is needed and where it comes from)
8. Address other issues and ideas that arise through the process
9. Paint an image of how each community's (and Essex County's) tourism image will look to visitors (precursor to branding)

This process was designed to collect visioning ideas, put them on the table for everyone to see, and then prioritize those ideas through interactive sessions. The sessions were tailored to reflect the communications styles of each group and to emphasize the issues and opportunities that seem most important to Essex County's visitor industry and community.

At its completion, each target community painted a picture of a tourism future

- that is exciting (to both the community and potential visitors),
- that is “doable”,
- that will increase tourism’s short and long term profitability,
- that will generate specific benefits while minimizing impacts,
- that the tourism professionals and local community (including supporting agencies and organizations) are determined to achieve,
- that will improve each community’s (and the overall destination’s) relationships with its existing patrons and forge new and positive relationships with additional patrons,
- that has an understandable process for making decisions, and
- that has clearly defined leadership roles and relationships among the various parts of the tourism industry and community

Charting a Pathway to the Future

“Designing a vision for the future” was a conversation that was inclusive and brought as many voices to the process as possible. Charting the specific tasks and actions was better accomplished quietly among the players that will end up driving the process. Hence the task of designing the steps, laying out the roles and responsibilities, and building the timetable was handled by a few carefully selected partners.

The pathway was laid out as a timetable of carefully orchestrated steps that address

1. Management
2. Infrastructure
3. Product Development and Improvement
4. Marketing
5. Monitoring Progress
6. Renewing the Vision

There are clear opportunities for product development and improvement in all of Essex County. Each community and the local tourism industry had a chance to prioritize those product-related moves that will be critical to achieving community-specific goals and objectives. There need to be public/private solutions to stimulate key development and shape improvement. There really needs to be an excitement, momentum, and buy-in on product changes – and a sense that those product changes will be critical to new tourism realities.

The key partners plan to launch an annual review of each target community’s and Essex County’s tourism in which the plan can be adjusted and updated. The process should be very inclusive and transparent and should be managed to build confidence and momentum.

Unveiling the Plan

We live in a world where “rights of passage” are important – we need weddings, funerals, graduations, etc. to realign the way we think and act. Essex County and the target communities need to move from “**building a plan**” to “**implementing “our” plan**”.

This “right of passage” event should be a celebration of accomplishment – and a public ratification (by every important partner) of determination to carry out the plan.

The event will be managed as a kickoff event for building the future for Essex County tourism, with public relations opportunities for all cooperating parties.

Essex County Summary Tourism Assessment

Essex County is a land, a people, an economy inside the Adirondack Park, the largest protected area of its kind in the eastern United States.

This is a region of small communities surrounded by outstanding natural resources. Many of the people and, indeed, the communities themselves are struggling economically. Many young people leave after high school and find it easier to build careers and raise families elsewhere in the world.

The Adirondack Park, a treasure that belongs to all of New York, is an experiment in the making. It has protected an amazing set of resources, and, as patterns for other protected areas develop here, it will become the primary economic generator for those who live in and around it. But, at this point, the people living inside the park have not kept pace economically with their counterparts outside the park. That disparity has added to the natural friction between a rural population and resource managers.

Understanding Essex County, as a people, as part of Adirondack Park, and as a tourism destination was incomplete until three things happened.

First, before dawn on several mornings, we pushed off in kayaks on quiet lakes, listening to loons call as we found solitude within a long day's drive of 100 million people.

Second, when the fall colors were at their peak in 2008, we toured Essex County in a light plane. Only then were we able to comprehend the magnitude of Adirondack Park, the percentage of it that is truly wild, and that people, for the most part, touch the edges of this wild place.

Third, we crossed into Essex County by ferry, from Burlington, Vermont. The blue-gray ridges of the Adirondacks reflected in the still waters of Lake Champlain, etching images in our minds that compete with those of other special places across the planet.

When the ferry landed in Essex County, there was no cluster of shops, no selection of lodgings, no collection of boutique restaurants that one would expect from any similar arrival at a destination. But there was a small town, filled with families, working hard to make a living in one of the most special places in the United States.

Tourism

Essex County, an important part of Adirondack Park, has amazing experiences to share with visitors – and it literally has more potential visitors within a day’s drive than it can ever serve. At this point in time, though, outside of Lake Placid the Adirondacks are not (in a broad sense) turning that potential into great visitor products, successful tourism businesses, or the personal income one might expect.

Lodging, again outside Lake Placid, is generally out of date, often poorly kept, and frequently lacking the amenities needed to enable it to compete in today’s market. And, a visitor exploring Essex County (and throughout the Adirondacks) will drive past many derelict lodging establishments which appear abandoned and in poor repair. The perceptions left in visitors’ minds from those views drive down the value of the experience, the price that they are willing to pay for lodging and meals, and the length of time they choose to stay.

Outside Lake Placid, there are few opportunities to enjoy creative cuisine (Adirondack or other), and many of those are only available seasonally. There are inadequate opportunities to take home souvenirs of a wonderful time in Essex County – and many of the crafts offered for sale are international knock-offs of regional crafts, devaluing the work of regional artists and craftspeople.

While there is a steady flow of visitors to the lakes and trails of Essex County and the Adirondacks, the region has not evolved significant products related to that experience. A weekend of hiking amongst some of the most beautiful scenery of the Northeast does not necessarily leave much revenue behind for the people who live in the Adirondacks. The region lacks experience-related products and services – especially outside Lake Placid.

Essex County has a rich association with history that holds incredible potential for the delivery of a steady flow of visitor traffic and receipts. The strength in this product lies along the Champlain coast, where significant events that shaped the development of and relationship among nations took place. Fort Ticonderoga is the only significant attempt to turn this potential into solid economic gain – and that effort has proven inconsistent in recent times. Again, there are significant issues with the tourism infrastructure (lodging, dining, retail, history experience-based products) that preclude strong marketing efforts and result in visitors who spend money outside Essex County.

Lake Placid, having a special relationship with the Olympics and competitive sports, has its own set of issues. Two Olympics and an aggressive events economy have, over the past decades, yielded a base flow of visitors that has enabled tourism investment. Lake Placid has current and competitive lodging, diverse dining (need more view dining), and a vibrant retail zone.

While the rest of the Adirondacks has struggled to keep tourism profitable and to meet critical mass of patronage, Lake Placid has posted peak days that are on the edge of capacity. Surrounded by public lands, Lake Placid is feeling the squeeze, finding that congestion from tourism sometimes degrades the experience of living in Lake Placid, that front line employees often cannot afford to live in Lake Placid, and that residents have concerns about more tourism growth.

There are far more details in the Assessments of each of the six target communities.

The challenge in Essex County has been to find ways to grow tourism county-wide, while managing that growth in Lake Placid to avoid growing social impacts. Further, the challenge in all regions has been to engineer tourism in ways that benefit county residents in terms of jobs, business opportunities, quality of life, and the opportunity to plan careers inside Essex County.

Overview Analysis and Outline of Engineering Challenges

When designing a destination tourism economy, one needs to examine it from three key positions:

- ***Visitor Perspective***
- ***Local Perspective***
- ***Structural Perspective***

From the ***Visitor Perspective***, it is important to ask ***“What will it take to succeed at tourism?”*** What products and experiences will combine to create a destination experience that visitors will seek out, patronize, find rewarding, pay well for, and both return and send others in their footsteps? What quality level do those products and experiences need to meet in order to succeed? Does something about this destination stand out and compel visitation? Where are the edges, beyond which the destination fails to attract its intended visitors? How does this destination (its products and services) stack up against other destinations vying for the same visitors? Is marketing succeeding at creating a demand for the destination – and is that marketing targeting patrons who will go home satisfied, ready to repeat and refer?

From the ***Local Perspective***, it is important to ask ***“What will it take to make tourism worthwhile for those who live here?”*** While individual tourism business might be very successful, a tourism economy is only successful if it creates benefits that the local population is seeking. Local goals can include the creation of jobs and entrepreneurial opportunities, the protection of valued community attributes, the enhancement of quality of life, the creation of opportunities for young people to choose careers where they grew up, and the flow of capital into the community.

From the ***Structural Perspective***, it is important to ask ***“Are all the pieces there to make this tourism economy function well?”*** or ***“What pieces are needed to make this economy function well?”*** Where do visitors sleep? Are there adequate dining opportunities? Do the lodging and dining facilities meet the quality levels expected by the target visitors? Is the destination rich in visitor activities (both products and experiences) that match up well with potential target visitors? Do visitors have the opportunity to purchase mementos that reflect their experiences? Can visitors buy needed supplies and equipment to make their visits successful? Are there support businesses and services available to ensure that the primary tourism products and experiences function smoothly (plumbers, electricians, accounting services, and so on)? How much of the tourism revenue stays in the local economy? Are there mechanisms in place to capture visitor dollars and channel them back to marketing the destination? Is there a process in place to guide the evolution of the destination to ensure that it is competitive, sustainable, and beneficial to the host community?

This tourism destination planning project is working with six communities in Essex County:

1. Ticonderoga
2. Moriah
3. Schroon Lake
4. Wilmington
5. Saranac Lake
6. Lake Placid

In the first five communities, the challenges surround growing an existing tourism economy, evolving an existing tourism economy to function differently, or building a new tourism economy. In Lake Placid, the challenges are related to growing the revenues of a very successful tourism economy while managing both quality of life and quality of visitor experience issues.

There are some basic issues common to all six target communities.

First, there is a very well designed occupancy tax that applies to all of Essex County. That tax is “programmed” to be used for marketing and is successfully channeled to the Lake Placid/Essex County Visitors Bureau. The bureau has a professional staff and a good track record of using those funds to leverage future tourism. It should be noted that currently the overwhelming majority of the occupancy tax is generated in North Elba. However, as lodging expands in other parts of the county those areas will contribute more to the tax and hence the marketing effort.

All six communities share a relationship with the Adirondack Park. With Adirondack-related experiences as key offerings by all six communities, the park provides much of the physical platform for the delivery of visitor experiences. That platform includes lakes, rivers, ponds, mountains, forest, trails, boat launches, scenic driving routes, and more. Further, park policies do much to protect the quality of outdoor visitor products and experiences both now and into the future. There is no similarly sized tract of protected park land east of the Mississippi that visitors can access in the way they can in the Adirondack Park. Some have observed that Park policies make it difficult to develop lands (especially outside hamlet boundaries), but those constraints are more than offset by the great visitor experiences and long-term tourism economy (and local recreation) possible on Park lands and because of Park status.

There are some other issues that are common to the first five communities (Ticonderoga, Moriah, Schroon Lake, Wilmington, and Saranac Lake).

From the ***Visitor Experience Perspective***, each of these communities has the opportunity to create a set of unique and competitive products and experiences. Each has a wonderful relationship with water (lakes, rivers, and ponds) which is an important part of an Adirondack experience and important when people choose destinations. All of the communities put visitors in a great place to canoe, kayak, raft, power boat, and fish (rivers, lakes, and ice).

Each community is in a great position to host visitors who are seeking an experience related to Adirondack forests and trails. Visitors waking in these communities are also poised to ascend Adirondack peaks or climb rock faces.

Each of these communities has a unique relationship with history. In each case, that history creates an opportunity related to tourism. Ticonderoga has an existing flow of visitors related to history and a huge opportunity to build a solid flow of history-related patrons. Moriah has opportunities related to mining history. Schroon Lake has an iconic tourism history which may well provide a template for its future tourism. Wilmington is home to what may be the nation's first "theme park". And Saranac Lake has its own historic relationship with wellness.

While each of these communities is rich in experiences for visitors, most of the visitor experiences don't involve the exchange of money – hence they are not tourism products and don't in and of themselves contribute to the tourism economy. There is ample opportunity in all five communities to develop products based on the great outdoor experiences of the Adirondacks. Most also have significant product development opportunities related to history and culture.

Each of the five communities has the potential for developing a key iconic identity that can be used to attract key target markets. Ticonderoga is already "branded" as a history designation, although way too many visitors recognize the historic importance of the fort without noticing an equally important role of the town. Saranac Lake is certainly associated with outdoor recreation. Wilmington is known for Santa's Workshop. And Schroon Lake was once known as a great Adirondack lakeside retreat. The development of key products and the refining of experiences will need to be coupled with branding and targeted marketing to create iconic identities that will drive travel.

All five of these communities are challenged by the lack of adequate lodging and dining products. Many of the existing lodging facilities are outdated or in poor repair. Most of the facilities are matched to visitors in the mid to lower economic ranges. Ticonderoga has a new Best Western and Saranac Lake has a relatively new Best Western and the development at Ampersand Bay – giving those two destinations a start at meeting the lodging challenge. While there are some notable exceptions, most of the dining offerings sit below the quality expectations of travelers. Few of the dining opportunities are associated with view or experience. And, there is a lack of both capacity and variety in the offerings.

There are similar issues related to retail. While Schroon Lake has a focused zone for retail downtown, tourism-related retail in the other four communities is scattered about and sometimes not readily apparent to new visitors. Further, visitors seeking authentic regional handicrafts are often offered knockoffs from overseas. This both diminishes the visitor experience and contributes to economic leakage from the regional economy.

There is a strong potential in the Adirondacks to attract and serve visitors throughout much of the year. Each of these communities has unique experiences that could contribute to the development of the sense of a year-round destination – and that development would build lasting relationships and impressions on the region’s visitors.

In summary, there are many opportunities and challenges related to successfully growing the tourism economies of the five target communities as viewed from the **Visitor Experience**. Egret feels that the opportunities far outweigh the challenges – but that each community will need to have a solid plan of action and motivated locals to push the implementation forward.

The **Local Perspective** from the five communities shows a rather homogenous set of goals for tourism output. All of the communities would benefit from the creation of meaningful jobs and business opportunities. The presence of a vibrant tourism economy in each of the towns would support retail and dining businesses that local people would like to have thriving instead of struggling. A vibrant tourism economy that spawns jobs and business opportunities would present new choices for young people, enabling more of them to consider a career in the community they were raised in.

There is a real sense that all five communities really value what they are and are aware that poorly managed tourism has the potential to take that away. None of the communities want to be swallowed by unbridled tourism development, or to lose the sense of who they are.

Each of the communities is fully aware that tourism brings second home development that drives up the cost and value of housing. There is a legitimate concern that tourism be managed in a way that doesn't displace locals from the community, just because others with more resources can outbid locals for housing.

It is important then to carefully manage the "ramp up" of tourism so that it does not overwhelm local residents. It is also important to have a good local representation in entrepreneurial activity so that most decisions about tourism development and management are made by people living in the communities.

From a *Structural Perspective* there are a number of moves that need to be made to yield fully functioning tourism economies. The good news is that the majority of those moves involve the development of profitable businesses.

Each of these communities needs additional lodging that is current, attractively designed, oriented to experiences (views of lakes, ponds, rivers, forests, mountains, or historical sites), aimed at an upper mid level market, and designed to convey an Adirondack look and feel. These don't have to be huge enterprises – in fact it would be better to have plural lodging facilities in the 20 to 60 room range than lodges that would dominate a community.

Each of these communities needs additional dining that is oriented to views and/or located near to visitor retail zones. A tourism economy should present visitors with choices along with quality and décor that is not a step down from what they have at home. And some of this dining should be accomplished in an environment that is full of energy and fun!

Many of the tourism experiences in Essex County are free to visitors (trails, use of boat launches and waterways, climbing, scenic drives, self-guided walks, museums). While a tourism economy can function when the majority of the experiences are free there are certainly lost opportunities to capture visitor dollars. Each of the local working groups has expressed interest in guided tourism which would enrich visitor experiences, manage visitor safety and impacts, create jobs and businesses, and raise visitor spending. If Saranac Lake continues toward to "learn to" vacations, those same outdoor recreation activities become products. Similarly, Ticonderoga's proposal for a reconstructed and operational historic sawmill makes tourism interactive and creates an opportunity for visitor spending.

All of the communities need to improve on retail. In some, visitor-related retail is hard to find and mixed among retail offerings that are designed to serve local audiences. In others, retail is there, but often lacking in meaningful items to take home. The Adirondacks are famous for the works of artists and artisans. Maple syrup is crafted in the region. Foreign knockoffs of regional artisans work degrade the value of the artisan's legitimate products and the value of the destination in the minds of the visitors – and it sends money out of the region. While some of the current visitors may not complain (some actually buy them) they will be out of place as the region moves toward a better paying clientele.

Fortunately there is a mechanism in place to capture visitor revenues and channel them back to a very effective marketing program. And, this process will yield mechanisms to manage the future evolution of each local tourism economy.

Lake Placid has its own set of challenges as it has a vibrant nearly year-round tourism economy that, in many ways, has grown to a point where it generates some negative impacts on both local quality of life and visitor experiences. As Lake Placid seeks to grow profits while managing (or reducing) negative impacts to community residents and visitors, it will need to make some moves to evolve its product.

From a ***Visitor Perspective***, Lake Placid has an exciting mix of events, Adirondack experiences, and experiences related to competitive events including the Olympic venues, the Ironman, and the Horse Shows. It has a number of products that deliver exciting experiences covering a broad spectrum of interests, making it a well-rounded destination.

From Lake Placid one can experience the Adirondacks from every level – windshield tourism to serious rock climbing and backcountry camping. There are Adirondack experiences suited for families, others for those seeking the solitude of wilderness, and still more that enable people to challenge themselves to scale rock walls and ski world class terrain. From Lake Placid, there are countless ways and places to access world class lakes and streams to fish, paddle, and powerboat.

Some of Placid's Olympic venues are showing wear and are lacking upkeep, prominent figure skaters are choosing more "convenient" practice sites, and there is a discernable lack of knowledge among potential travelers related to ways they can interface and interact with the facilities. It is a fair observation that the Olympic Venues sit empty more often than they are bustling with visitors. This is one aspect of Lake Placid's visitor economy that has played a significant role in building and creating patronage of the Lake Placid destination. But, younger adult visitors may identify Lake Placid more with the Adirondacks and non-Olympic events like the Horse Shows and Ironman.

With its mix of experiences (Adirondack and competitive) and the healthy hosting of events, Lake Placid is nearly a year-round destination. That enables businesses to plan for and manage employees in a way that continues to build product quality and visitor satisfaction.

Lake Placid has a huge variety of lodging ranging from upscale and current, to old and in poor repair – including every step in between. Lake Placid competes with other destination mountain retreats and other regional destinations for the same visitors – and many of those have more upscale lodging options than Lake Placid. Lake Placid will need to continue to evolve its lodging products upward, at some point replacing those on the lower end with newer structures that are better oriented to views and better meet current lodging expectations.

Lake Placid hosts a variety of dining options, some with a view. Given the physically competitive theme of this destination and its clients, it is a little short on health-related dining. More dining – especially on the upscale end of quality and price – would be helpful. And, given the Olympic history of Lake Placid, it would be nice if cuisine would take on an international flair.

Lake Placid has an energetic retail zone. A first time visitor may find the associated congestion daunting – but then again most of those first time visitors are from urban areas within a day's drive (where congestions rules). Local retailers have developed successful strategies to rotate stock to present storefronts that appeal to those attending events hosted in Lake Placid. Once again, though, much of what is presented as Adirondack craft work has really been knocked off by foreign factories. That undercuts the experience of being in Lake Placid, devalues Adirondack crafts, and sends visitor dollars out of the local economy.

The trolleys are an acknowledgement that Lake Placid has issues related to congestion and traffic flow and a first step toward making a problem an opportunity. The highway cannot be rerouted from the retail strip downtown. There are substantial gains in the quality of visitor experience to be made by coaxing day visitors onto the trolleys at the outskirts of town and overnight visitors onto the trolleys at their points of lodging. In a related issue, Lake Placid could use an upgrade to its entry points, creating more of a sense of arrival.

From a *Local Perspective*, Lake Placid is clearly facing some quality of life and cost of living issues related to its tourism economy.

The congestion that may confuse and annoy visitors causes some locals to route themselves away from an important part of their own town. While many locals understand and put up with the short-term congestion associated with big events, clearly others are losing patience. As the economy becomes more “year-round” that patience may run thin.

Successful tourism has drawn many second-home buyers into the Lake Placid economy. Those buyers have both driven up home prices and stimulated development which is ballooning the size of Lake Placid, threatening its small town character.

To balance that, Lake Placid residents need only look to other Adirondack communities to realize that tourism has brought Lake Placid residents a rich variety of dining experiences, that they are an important part of the whole Olympic phenomenon, that they can shop for needed supplies without a long journey, and that their town has an upbeat self confidence often missing in the Adirondacks.

Further, as Lake Placid becomes more of a year-round destination, that will imply better incomes for locals who work in the industry. It will mean that many can become established residents of the community, contributing in ways that seasonal labor cannot.

There does not seem to be a healthy open line of communication between local residents and the tourism industry. That will be needed as Lake Placid seeks to grow its tourism revenues while keeping its host community on the winning side of tourism.

From a *Structural Perspective*, Lake Placid is in good shape, but will need to both manage growth and grow quality to continue to improve its bottom line while reducing impacts to locals and visitors.

Internationally, the quality of lodging is continually improving. Rooms are getting bigger and amenities are improving, all at a rate that doesn't allow any lodging property or destination a moment's rest. Lake Placid's collection of lodging averages at the lower end when compared with national and international destinations that compete for the same visitor. The improvements that are underway currently need to continue – and they need to be communicated to potential patrons. It is hard to imagine that some of the older and lower priced lodging establishments will survive for ten years in this competitive market – and it would be good for the destination if those rooms were replaced/retooled with more current offerings.

Lake Placid's dining selection is broad, but not as broad as in competing destinations. As Lake Placid aims at higher spending destination travelers it will need more, more varied, and more upscale dining offerings. Dining with a view is important – there is some of that now, but more is needed. And there definitely needs to be more dining with “fun”.

Lake Placid's retail sector shows a great deal of variety, and is obviously run by skilled entrepreneurs. Keeping most of those shops locally owned and upgrading Adirondack style crafts to those actually produced in the Adirondacks will help. Effectively managing congestion will give more people time to peruse the shops and require less time searching for parking.

It might be helpful, in the downtown strip, if (over time) the majority dining migrated to the Mirror Lake side (for the views) while more shopping opportunities migrated to the uphill side. That would create a more “valuable” visitor experience – which would be rewarded by higher expenditures.

There has been a steady upswing in bicycling, both from those prepping for or wanting to test themselves on competitive routes and from those just wanting to ride amongst Adirondack scenery. The road system does not have adequate shoulders or parallel bike routes to support this growing activity. The addition of bike lanes or parallel but separate bike paths would greatly enhance both experience and safety.

Growth and inflating housing costs have pushed many of those who work in Lake Placid beyond its borders to find a place to live. Indeed, some long term residents feel “pushed out” by rising costs and willing outside buyers. This issue has the potential to “gut” the integrity of Lake Placid as a community and must be managed.

The Olympic image and Lake Placid's own Olympic history are an important part of Lake Placid. The Olympic venues (and the many experiences to be had in them) are exciting visitor experiences. These venues should be protected and even enhanced as time passes. Whether or not they are widely patronized by travelers, the Olympics continue to provide credentials for Lake Placid as a host for competitive sports.

Lake Placid, as mentioned above, is or is on the cusp of having a year-round tourism economy. Moving to a year-round economy opens an important structural change in the way Lake Placid works as a destination. It ramps up Lake Placid's ability to deliver a quality visitor experience. It can result in many businesses having a core of employees that have a long term interest in the success of both those businesses and the destination as a whole.

The issues of growth, reaching limits, impacts to visitor experience, impacts to local quality of life and cost of living all raise the issue of sustainability. Tourism has been the goose that has, year after year, laid Lake Placid's golden egg. This project is intended to devise ways to and build plans to protect the sustainability of Lake Placid as a destination, for the good of locals, visitors, and the tourism industry.

Lake Placid does have a great mechanism to capture visitor revenue and turn that revenue into skilled marketing moves. This project will result in the development of teams to address key aspects of the evolution of Lake Placid as a visitor destination, to provide a framework for actions and decisions, and to monitor future needs and outcomes.

Goals for Essex County Tourism

- Grow existing tourism economy without negatively impacting Essex County quality of life and lifestyles
- Create jobs and business opportunities throughout Essex County
- Evolve lodging to be more current and competitive
- Make sure tourism contributes to quality of life in Essex County
- Work to make this a sustainable year-round destination
- Base Essex County brand on the Adirondacks
- Strengthen relationship with neighboring destinations within the Adirondacks, across Lake Champlain, and which serve as “entry portals” for visitors.
- Develop community-specific tourism plans for every tourism-related community within Essex County

Actions

The actions, as follow, are those specific steps the Essex County intends to take to accomplish the goals described above, to help each of the targeted communities achieve success and to create an environment in Essex County that fosters tourism in a way that contributes to the well-being of county residents.

Each of these actions is tied directly to goals, has a demonstrated relationship to other actions, has a timeline, and has individuals and/or organizations who have taken on the responsibility of pushing those actions to completion by the specified timeline.

Note that one of the actions is to form an “Essex County Tourism Council” which will be responsible for overseeing the execution, review, and renewal of this plan.

Each “action” is presented as a detailed description. Those descriptions are followed by the “action tracker” which plots the actions against time, outlines responsible parties, and makes it easy for the destination to follow progress.

1. Form and operate Essex County tourism council

Related Goals:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grow existing tourism economy without negatively impacting Essex County quality of life and lifestyles • Create jobs and business opportunities throughout Essex County • Evolve lodging to be more current and competitive • Make sure tourism contributes to quality of life in Essex County • Work to make this a sustainable year-round destination • Base Essex County brand on the Adirondacks • Strengthen relationship with neighboring destinations within the Adirondacks, across Lake Champlain, and which serve as “entry portals” for visitors. • Develop community-specific tourism plans for every tourism-related community within Essex County
Action:	Form and operate Essex County tourism council
Responsible Players:	
Timeline:	Six Months
Expected Outcomes:	County enhances ability to make good decisions to support industry and use tourism to improve quality of life and create jobs
Notes and Details:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chaired by LPECVB • Members to include supervisors of communities involved in planning effort • Focus on making recommendations for county-wide actions
Related Actions:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support and secure funding for tourism infrastructure • Develop bike lanes along highways • Help secure the development of appropriately scaled, current and competitive lodging • Increase frequency of public transportation between communities and add bike racks to buses • Incubate new tourism businesses • Hospitality training • Tourism education for residents • Create incentives for new lodging development • Create a toolbox of support for upgrading present lodgings

2. Support and secure funding for tourism infrastructure

Related Goals:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grow existing tourism economy without negatively impacting Essex County quality of life and lifestyles • Create jobs and business opportunities throughout Essex County • Evolve lodging to be more current and competitive • Make sure tourism contributes to quality of life in Essex County • Work to make this a sustainable year-round destination • Strengthen relationship with neighboring destinations within the Adirondacks, across Lake Champlain, and which serve as “entry portals” for visitors.
Action:	Support and secure funding for tourism infrastructure
Responsible Players:	County Tourism Council, IDA, AEDC
Timeline:	Ongoing
Expected Outcomes:	Key public tourism infrastructure can be constructed
Notes and Details:	Stronger action may be possible on this once nation recovers from recession
Related Actions:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop bike lanes along highways • Help secure the development of appropriately scaled, current and competitive lodging • Increase frequency of public transportation between communities and add bike racks to buses • Create incentives for new lodging development • Create a toolbox of support for upgrading present lodgings

3. Develop bike lanes along highways

Related Goals:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grow existing tourism economy without negatively impacting Essex County quality of life and lifestyles • Create jobs and business opportunities throughout Essex County • Make sure tourism contributes to quality of life in Essex County • Work to make this a sustainable year-round destination • Base Essex County brand on the Adirondacks
Action:	Develop bike lanes along highways
Responsible Players:	Essex County Tourism Council
Timeline:	3 Years
Expected Outcomes:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved Safety • Less frustration for residents • Better visitor experiences • Longer association with competitive events
Notes and Details:	This will take concerted and political action to accomplish
Related Actions:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support and secure funding for tourism infrastructure • Increase frequency of public transportation between communities and add bike racks to buses

4. Help secure the development of appropriately scaled, current and competitive lodging

Related Goals:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grow existing tourism economy without negatively impacting Essex County quality of life and lifestyles • Create jobs and business opportunities throughout Essex County • Evolve lodging to be more current and competitive • Make sure tourism contributes to quality of life in Essex County • Work to make this a sustainable year-round destination
Action:	Help secure the development of appropriately scaled, current and competitive lodging
Responsible Players:	Essex County Tourism Council, IDA, AEDC
Timeline:	Ongoing
Expected Outcomes:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New investment in lodging • More visitor revenue in Essex County • More jobs
Notes and Details:	Needs to be a combination of demonstrating potential and momentum, and incentives
Related Actions:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support and secure funding for tourism infrastructure • Incubate new tourism businesses • Hospitality training • Create incentives for new lodging development • Create a toolbox of support for upgrading present lodgings

5. Increase frequency of public transportation between communities and add bike racks to buses

Related Goals:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grow existing tourism economy without negatively impacting Essex County quality of life and lifestyles • Create jobs and business opportunities throughout Essex County • Make sure tourism contributes to quality of life in Essex County • Work to make this a sustainable year-round destination
Action:	Increase frequency of public transportation between communities and add bike racks to buses
Responsible Players:	Essex County Board of Supervisors
Timeline:	Progress by one year, then more
Expected Outcomes:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helps get people to tourism jobs, other jobs, and other destinations in Essex County • Opens door to new one-way bicycle experiences
Notes and Details:	Do this for the people who want tourism jobs – and the added benefit will be opening the door to new tourism experiences
Related Actions:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support and secure funding for tourism infrastructure • Develop bike lanes along highways • Tourism education for residents

6. Incubate new tourism businesses

Related Goals:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grow existing tourism economy without negatively impacting Essex County quality of life and lifestyles • Create jobs and business opportunities throughout Essex County • Evolve lodging to be more current and competitive • Make sure tourism contributes to quality of life in Essex County • Work to make this a sustainable year-round destination
Action:	Incubate new tourism businesses
Responsible Players:	Essex County Tourism Council, Towns, Villages, Chambers, IDA, AEDC
Timeline:	Ongoing
Expected Outcomes:	New tourism businesses get off to a better start, are more likely to succeed, and create a more stable jobs situation
Notes and Details:	
Related Actions:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help secure the development of appropriately scaled, current and competitive lodging • Create incentives for new lodging development • Create a toolbox of support for upgrading present lodgings

7. Hospitality training

Related Goals:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grow existing tourism economy without negatively impacting Essex County quality of life and lifestyles • Create jobs and business opportunities throughout Essex County • Make sure tourism contributes to quality of life in Essex County • Work to make this a sustainable year-round destination
Action:	Hospitality training
Responsible Players:	LPECVB
Timeline:	Ongoing
Expected Outcomes:	A better trained industry generated better customer satisfaction, more return business, more revenue
Notes and Details:	
Related Actions:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help secure the development of appropriately scaled, current and competitive lodging • Increase frequency of public transportation between communities and add bike racks to buses • Incubate new tourism businesses • Tourism education for residents • Create incentives for new lodging development • Create a toolbox of support for upgrading present lodgings

8. Tourism education for residents

Related Goals:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grow existing tourism economy without negatively impacting Essex County quality of life and lifestyles • Create jobs and business opportunities throughout Essex County • Evolve lodging to be more current and competitive • Make sure tourism contributes to quality of life in Essex County • Work to make this a sustainable year-round destination
Action:	Tourism education for residents
Responsible Players:	LPECVB
Timeline:	Ongoing
Expected Outcomes:	<p>Better understanding of the tourism industry and its relationship to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality of Life • Employment • Sustaining the Adirondack Lifestyle • Generation of Tax Revenue for Government • Generation of its own marketing Revenue <p>Residents and Tourism become better partners</p>
Notes and Details:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to build a broad partnership among the media • Need to make use of local government TV broadcasts
Related Actions:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support and secure funding for tourism infrastructure • Develop bike lanes along highways • Increase frequency of public transportation between communities and add bike racks to buses • Hospitality training

9. Create incentives for new lodging development

Related Goals:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grow existing tourism economy without negatively impacting Essex County quality of life and lifestyles • Create jobs and business opportunities throughout Essex County • Evolve lodging to be more current and competitive • Make sure tourism contributes to quality of life in Essex County • Work to make this a sustainable year-round destination
Action:	Create incentives for new lodging development
Responsible Players:	Essex County Tourism Council, Towns, Villages, Chambers, IDA, AEDC
Timeline:	1 Year, Ongoing
Expected Outcomes:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New investment in lodging is stimulated, addressing a key identified issue • New jobs are generated through construction, then operation of new facilities
Notes and Details:	
Related Actions:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support and secure funding for tourism infrastructure • Help secure the development of appropriately scaled, current and competitive lodging • Incubate new tourism businesses • Hospitality training • Create a toolbox of support for upgrading present lodgings

10. Create a toolbox of support for upgrading present lodgings

Related Goals:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grow existing tourism economy without negatively impacting Essex County quality of life and lifestyles • Create jobs and business opportunities throughout Essex County • Evolve lodging to be more current and competitive • Work to make this a sustainable year-round destination
Action:	Create a toolbox of support for upgrading present lodgings
Responsible Players:	Essex County Tourism Council, Towns, Villages, Chambers, IDA, AEDC, New 501-C3
Timeline:	One year
Expected Outcomes:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current lodging establishments have support to upgrade to current and competitive standards • Improved facilities are more profitable and generate more employment • Improved facilities raise the value of all lodging and visitation to Essex County
Notes and Details:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economic support • Expertise • Positive press for accomplishments • Coordinate through new 501-c3 • It would be worth inviting neighboring counties to join this effort and generate support from foundation, states and federal sources
Related Actions:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support and secure funding for tourism infrastructure • Help secure the development of appropriately scaled, current and competitive lodging • Hospitality training • Create incentives for new lodging development

Essex County Destination Master Plan Action Tracker

Updated 9-16-2009

#	Action	<i>Key Actions</i>	<i>Priority</i>	<i>Timeline</i>	<i>Status</i>	<i>Responsible Players</i>
1	Form and operate Essex County Tourism Council	1	1	1		Board of Supervisors
2	Support and secure funding for tourism infrastructure	1	1	7		County Tourism Council, IDA, AEDC
3	Develop bike lanes along highways	1	1	5		Essex County Tourism Council
4	Help secure the development of appropriately scaled, current and competitive lodging	1	1	7		Essex County Tourism Council, IDA, AEDC
5	Increase frequency of public transportation between communities and add bike racks to buses	1	2	2, 7		Board of Supervisors
6	Incubate new tourism businesses		2	7		Essex County Tourism Council, Towns, Villages, Chambers, IDA, AEDC
7	Hospitality training		2	7		LPECVB
8	Tourism education for residents		2	7		LPECVB
9	Create incentives for new lodging development		1	2, 7		Essex County Tourism Council, Towns, Villages, Chambers, IDA, AEDC
10	Create a toolbox of support for upgrading present lodgings		2	2		Essex County Tourism Council, Towns, Villages, Chambers, IDA, AEDC, New 501-C3

Key to Timeline

By 6 months	1
By 12 months	2
By 18 months	3
By 24 months	4
By 3 years	5
By 5 years	6
Ongoing	7

Legend to group initials

LPECVB	Lake Placid/Essex County Visitors Bureau
IDA	Industrial Development Agency
AEDC	Adirondack Economic Development

Addenda