

LAKE PLACID & NORTH ELBA DESTINATION MANAGEMENT PLAN 2030





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Everyone understands that tourism is our number one industry, and always will be. We just want a better balance where locals don't feel overshadowed by visitors.

— Lake Placid resident

CONTENTS

4	Executive Summary
6	Introduction: 5 Guiding Principles
8	Steering Committee & Project Team
10	State of the Industry
12	Project Research & Community Engagement
14	15 Key Takeaways
16	Local Enhancement & Advancement Fund (LEAF)
17	Strategic Framework
18	• Diversify and Optimize the Local Economy
22	• Increase Long-term Resident Housing Diversity
26	• Address Environmental Sustainability Regionally
30	• Develop a Dedicated Event Management Strategy
34	• Align Industry Investments to Benefit Everyone
38	• Engage All Local and Visitor Audiences
42	Case Studies

The Lake Placid & North Elba Destination Management Plan 2030 was produced by the Town of North Elba, the Village of Lake Placid, and the Regional Office of Sustainable Tourism (ROOST).



ROOST

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Tourism is Not the End Goal

The Lake Placid & North Elba Destination Management Plan is a strategic road map for the next 5-10 years that balances the needs of local residents, community organizations, and area businesses more effectively. Its primary aim is to establish high-level priorities, intended outcomes, and implementation strategies for the community, versus trying to solve all things for all people at a granular level.

A Destination Management Plan focuses on improving the relationships between visitors, the industry that serves them, the community that hosts them, and the environment. It's more inward looking with an emphasis on the needs of the community, versus destination marketing that strives exclusively to increase visitor numbers. Expanding tourism for its own sake is not the end goal. In fact, the objective of this Plan is to decrease the percentage of how much the Town and Village rely on tourism dollars. It's never ideal for one industry to make up 75-80% of all economic activity locally. Instead, the Plan looks at the tourism industry as an economic pipeline that should support the aspirations of more full-time residents and community organizations during more times of the year.

Accomplishing that requires a long-term approach that brings together solution-minded people invested in Lake Placid and North Elba's future in a structured and strategic manner. It also requires big picture thinking, because everything in remote mountain communities is connected. Tourism, economic development, the environment, full-time resident housing, visitor accommodations, workforce, events, education and healthcare, among many other things, influence each other to some degree. The opportunities and challenges they present must be addressed holistically in order to deliver positive, long-term change.

The Lake Placid & North Elba Destination Management Plan was developed with that systems-style approach. This Plan includes six interrelated objectives and 24 strategies based on a year of extensive research and community engagement. Implementing these strategies will require individuals with vision. Local leaders in the public, private and civic sectors will need to build coalitions of people and organizations to move these initiatives forward and make real world impacts.

Communities aren't something we have. They're something we do. A Destination Management Plan is only as successful as the amount of time, commitment and resources dedicated to action. In effect, this document is an action plan to guide community collaboration for the next decade.

Destination Management

This Destination Management Plan was initiated by the Town of North Elba, Village of Lake Placid and ROOST in 2019. The process began with an empirical destination assessment based on a comprehensive survey of public and private stakeholders. The results identified opportunities and challenges for the community through the lens of tourism, and they provided a series of prioritized action items.

That led to a year of community engagement that included a wide variety of 1-on-1 interviews, focus groups, town halls, visioning workshops and many meetings with community leaders. That was supplemented with an extensive review of existing research and planning documents to ensure the strategies in this Plan align and support other plans.

Throughout the entire process, during Covid-19, the community was clearly divided on many issues. However, there was a general consensus that life won't be much different in 2030 if those issues are not addressed more intentionally now. This Plan is designed to deliver on that with its strategic framework that unifies the community around shared goals and defined outcomes.

The two most important themes in the Plan are about diversifying economic development and expanding housing diversity for full-time residents. Those impact almost every aspect of tourism and general business strategy in Lake Placid and North Elba, as well as the future of the community overall.

The focus on the economy and housing is deliberate. The most ambitious outcome of this Plan is, as one resident stated:

"We need to ensure steady and secure employment with family wages and full benefits for all jobs in the Town and Village. Any employer, public or private, that benefits from community-driven economic development efforts should be expected to employ workers with wages high enough to support a family."

That requires re-aligning and re-balancing tourism, economic, community, and workforce development. Of course, not everyone will agree where that balance is exactly right. This Plan, however, outlines what a broad aggregate of the local community said is the right balance.

Below are the six primary objectives for the Destination Management Plan. A full contextual analysis and description of the objectives, actionable strategies and intended outcomes begins on page 17.

- 1. Diversify and Optimize the Local Economy**
- 2. Increase Long-term Resident Housing Diversity**
- 3. Address Environmental Sustainability Regionally**
- 4. Develop a Dedicated Event Management Strategy**
- 5. Align Industry Investments to Benefit Everyone**
- 6. Engage All Local and Visitor Audiences**

INTRODUCTION

5 Guiding Principles

Five guiding principles steered the direction of the Lake Placid & North Elba Destination Management Plan. They provided a north star for aligning the interests of government, the community and the business sector to deliver a shared vision for the future. Everyone understands that a robust economy and high quality of life are critically important, but there's not so much agreement on how to balance the two. These five principles identify what the community does agree upon. That helped navigate this project through all of the diverse local opinions from residents about the best possible future for the Town and Village.

- 1. Collaborate with the community to develop strategy:** Every strategy in this Plan comes from residents. Some locals stated they don't necessarily trust government and local business leaders to consider their needs as much as visitors. For this Plan to be effective, there has to be ongoing community input so residents participate and support the efforts of the people and organizations implementing the strategies. Traditionally, tourism organizations have solely focused outward by promoting the destination to drive visitor demand. That was their mandate. Today, however, tourism leaders nationwide are much more engaged with their communities to co-develop overall strategy. This Plan is an example of that intentional shift.
- 2. Give residents more professional opportunities:** It's hard to strive for a better life where you live when you don't see potential opportunities for growing your career, family and/or business. For a community to thrive, it needs to continually diversify the array of local companies and jobs. That requires experts in the field of economic development, which includes attracting and supporting companies, diversifying the types of industries in the community, and expanding employment options for people of all ages, backgrounds, and income levels. In Lake Placid and North Elba, there is a recognized need for more middle income professional jobs, both in tourism and other sectors. The end goal is to provide more local residents with better employment opportunities.
- 3. Full-time residents need a place to live:** This was the biggest theme during all of the community engagement. When many full-time residents can no longer live in a community, then it's not really a community — at least not the one most people wish for. It's harder to attract and retain teachers, nurses, police and other critical employees who serve the needs of the community. It's also difficult to help companies that provide good wages expand in the area, and it's especially challenging for growing families to stay. Furthermore, it's not just about helping



people find a place to rent. It's also crucial that local full-time residents have more options to buy their own home and establish themselves. People crave a sense of community among neighbors with shared values related to mountain living. It's difficult to achieve that when real estate prices continue to increase year-over-year, and there isn't the necessary diversity of housing stock for many different segments of full-time residents in Lake Placid and North Elba. Yes, there are some housing developments that are helping to improve the situation, but housing needs to be a top priority in perpetuity.

- 4. Lake Placid and North Elba are about more than sports:** The world's most iconic mountain towns from Aspen to Zermatt don't consider themselves merely great outdoor recreation destinations. They're just great destinations, period, with a high quality of life that everyone envies. They may have started out as ski hills decades or centuries ago. Today, they're robust, year-round communities with multi-layered appeal in arts, culture, music, food and beverage, social enterprise, etc. In Lake Placid and North Elba, there is significant untapped opportunity to strengthen community networks related to all of the above lifestyle interests, which benefit all local businesses, organizations and residents.
- 5. Be a champion for Adirondack Park:** It's easy sometimes to under-appreciate the majesty of Adirondack Park and the pull that has on the hearts of people. The Park was established in 1892 to protect the forests and watershed, and reconnect men and women with nature and themselves. That therapeutic, life-affirming element is both more fragile and more in-demand than ever today. The Town and Village, and everyone who visits and lives in the community, are caretakers of the Park's legacy. They are protectors of the original founders' vision. All of the high-level decision-making throughout the development of this Plan was explored through that lens.

STEERING COMMITTEE & PROJECT TEAM

The Steering Committee for the Lake Placid & North Elba Destination Management Plan provided critical guidance and support throughout the entire development of the Plan. Thank you to these community members for their thoughtful leadership, long-term vision and invaluable contributions.

Donna Beal
Catherine Bemis
Haley Breen
Tom Broderick
Roger Catania
Tom Connors
Dean Dietrich
Lori Fitzgerald

Sylvia Getman
Brad Hathway
Seth Jones
Jackie Kelly
MJ Lawrence
James Lemons
Lisa Lester
George Leveille

Emily Politi
Butch Martin
James McKenna
Bill Moore
Mike Pratt
Ashley Walden
Brendan Wiltse



Vancouver-based MMGY NextFactor is the tourism industry consultancy that led this project from conception to completion in Q1 2022. It is designed to be a living document that will continue to deliver value as the community builds coalitions of people and organizations to implement the strategies collaboratively. The project team included:

- Paul Ouimet** - Partner & President, MMGY NextFactor
- Greg Oates** - SVP, Innovation, MMGY NextFactor
- Cassandra McAuley** - VP, Destination Planning, MMGY NextFactor
- Shelly Green** - Executive Consultant, MMGY NextFactor
- Cheryll Girard** - Operations Manager, MMGY NextFactor



STATE OF THE INDUSTRY

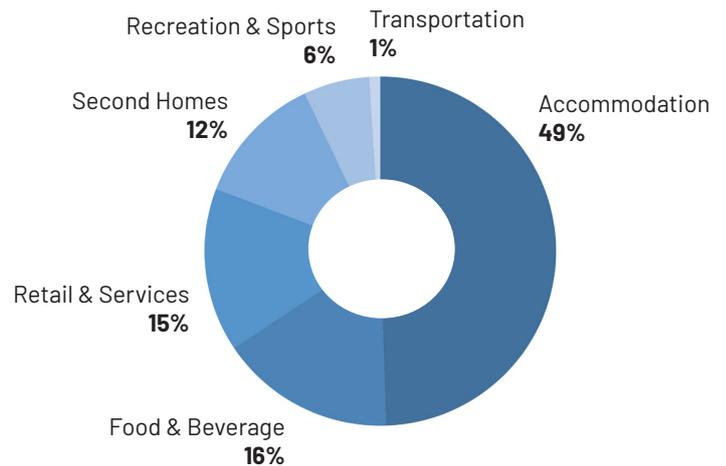
Quality data is critical to inform decisions about how to diversify the economy, increase year-round revenue for local small businesses, and communicate with residents and visitors based on facts. One of the consistent themes throughout this Plan is the need for improved data collection and analysis tools to guide tourism and economic development strategy. Without that business intelligence, it's challenging to build a common ground for collaborative decision making. The following data was produced by Tourism Economics* — a subsidiary of Oxford Economics — in 2020.

Visitor Spending Data (Essex County, 2020)*

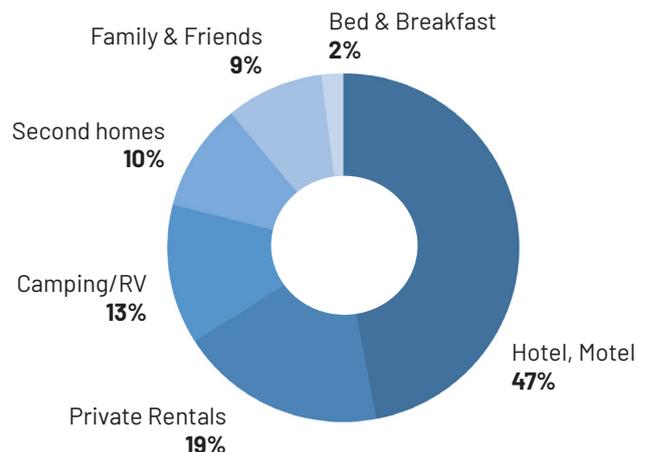
Data showing how visitors spend their dollars in Essex County provides direction about where to invest in business and infrastructure development. Interestingly, visitors in 2020 spent \$162 million on dining, drinking and shopping compared to \$32 million on recreation and sports:

- Accommodation: \$248.7 million
- Food & Beverage: \$82.4 million
- Retail & Services: \$80.3 million
- Second Homes: \$61 million
- Recreation & Sports: \$32.7 million
- Transportation: \$3.6 million

Also, the data defining where overnight visitors sleep is illuminating. Almost one in five visitors (19%) booked a privately-owned short-term rental accommodation. Another nearly one in five visitors (19%) stayed in their second homes or with family and friends. More data on both visitor groups would benefit strategic planning.



Above: Visitor spending behavior
Below: Visitor accommodations



Tourism Tax & Employment

Visitors contributed \$508.7 million in direct sales in Essex County in 2020. That delivered \$33.98 million in taxes to municipalities in the County, and \$26.27 million to the State*. According to Tourism Economics, tourism-generated state and local taxes also save Essex County residents an average of \$3,816 yearly per household. At the County level, those funds collected from sales tax help pay for local services, amenities, safety and infrastructure maintenance in Lake Placid and North Elba. The research also shows that tourism was responsible for between 35-39% of all labor income in Essex County in years leading up to 2020.

Increasing Visitor Age

Another interesting data point is the increase in visitor age, rising from 52-56 years old between 2016 and 2019. (For context, the average age of U.S. citizens increased about 1.3 years from 2011-2020, according to the U.S. Census Bureau.)

One initial goal for the 2023 World University Games was "to make Lake Placid relevant for young people again." This is a priority to ensure a diverse range of ages are consistently moving to Lake Placid and North Elba to maintain the vibrancy of the community in coming decades. Also, specific events and promotional content for younger generations expands the national perception of the area. For many people who have never visited, their perception of the region is often based solely on the 1980 Olympic Winter Games, or just winter sports in general.

Tourism-Generated Taxes (Essex County, 2020)*

Local taxes paid by visitors:
\$33.98 million

State taxes paid by visitors:
\$26.27 million

Average Age of Visitors (Essex County)*

2016: **52**

2017: **53**

2018: **54**

2019: **56**

PROJECT RESEARCH & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

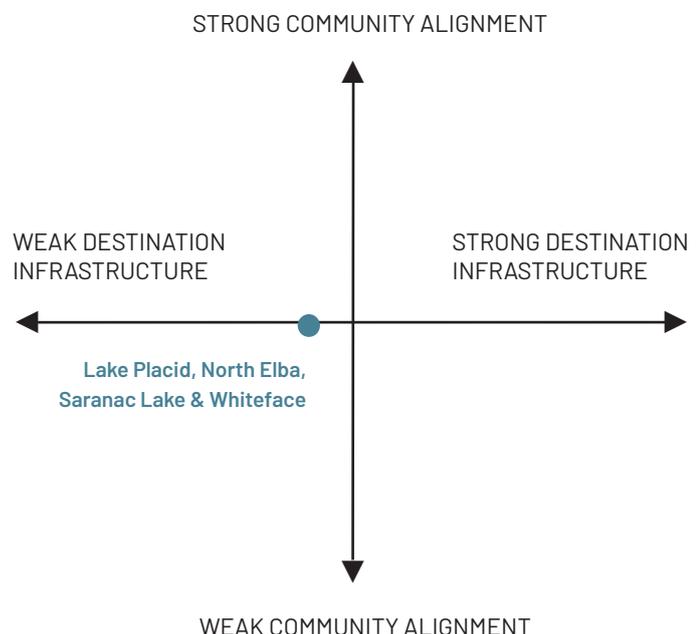
The development of the Lake Placid and North Elba Destination Management Plan engaged many community and industry leaders throughout the year-long process to ensure the widest breadth of input and collaboration as possible.

Destination Assessment

The project began in late 2019 when MMGY NextFactor conducted a comprehensive destination assessment survey with local elected officials, community leaders and industry stakeholders. The survey asked participants to rank the overall strength of the destination's infrastructure and the level of community alignment around 20 key variables. The data was aggregated and plotted in the scenario model below comparing the community against a national industry average.

The Town and Village plotted right on the industry baseline for community alignment, and a bit below relating to overall infrastructure. The data results also showed that stakeholders felt the biggest challenges were related to seven specific variables out of the 20: Accommodations, Air Access, Attractions & Entertainment, Communications & Internet Infrastructure, Meeting Facilities, Tourism Governance Model, and Workforce (which includes housing). That initial insight provided the empirical foundation and general direction to begin developing the Plan.

The crosshairs of the X/Y axes is the average of 250+ destination assessments conducted by the MMGY NextFactor project team.



Destination Research

The collaborative decision-making process behind every strategy in the Destination Management Plan took into account many existing planning initiatives to ensure consistency, validity and alignment.

The MMGY NextFactor project team analyzed a broad spectrum of public and private sector research from state, regional and local governments; New York universities and park agencies; economic development, community and sustainability organizations; ORDA; ROOST; and the Lake Placid/North Elba Community Development Commission. Special attention was given to recent research in economic development, relocation, housing and sustainability. These are just a sample:

- Lake Placid and North Elba Economic Diversification Report (2021)
- Economic Impact Analysis for the New York Olympic Regional Development Authority (2019-2020)
- Economic Impact of Visitors in New York / Adirondack Focus (2020)
- Market-Rate Rental Housing & Condominium Feasibility Study (2021)
- Adirondack Relocation Assessment (2021)
- Attracting New Residents: A Strategy for the Adirondack Park (2021)
- Community Housing Needs Assessment (2020)
- North Elba & Lake Placid Short-Term Rental Assessment (2020, 2019)
- Adirondack VISION 2050 (2021)

Community Engagement

Following the destination assessment, the next step of community engagement was the creation of a Steering Committee, consisting of residents in the public, private and civic sectors. The committee was consulted throughout the development of the Plan from the beginning through to their final feedback on the Plan's finished draft.

The MMGY NextFactor project team also conducted more than 60 individual interviews with an equally diverse scope of residents, elected officials, community leaders and industry stakeholders.

In addition, the team facilitated more than 15 virtual focus groups, resident town halls, and visioning sessions with various community and industry segments. A sample of the specific audiences represented in those group sessions include:

- Steering Committee (multiple sessions)
- Accommodations
- Arts, Culture & Heritage
- Environmental Stewardship
- Events & Festivals
- Outdoor Recreation
- ROOST Advisory Council (staff members)
- ROOST Board of Directors
- Shore Owners
- Sports Tourism
- Town of North Elba
- Village of Lake Placid

15 KEY TAKEAWAYS

The Past is Over and the Future is Fluid

The six primary objectives and 24 actionable strategies in the Lake Placid & North Elba Destination Management Plan are designed to address the most significant issues in the community. After hundreds of hours of community engagement with local residents and business stakeholders, these key takeaways provided a structured approach to identify and prioritize actionable strategies.

- 1. There is broad consensus that tourism is the main economic engine in the community and always will be, but more balance is needed:** Accomplishing that requires the tourism industry, local governments and community work together more effectively to achieve shared goals. However, there is a surprising amount of cynicism, distrust, lack of knowledge, and even general hopelessness among a percentage of residents who feel that isn't likely or possible.
- 2. Everyone agrees that diversifying the local economy is critical, but there isn't a dedicated professional economic development organization in Lake Placid and North Elba to accomplish that:** Expanding local industries; attracting new businesses, investment and professional talent; and increasing economic activity during the entire year requires economic development leaders with experience beyond tourism and sports.
- 3. Local expertise in sports medicine and human performance can help diversify the economy:** The volume of sports-related medical and peak performance professionals in the community can help support a broader spectrum of full-time, middle and upper income professions.
- 4. The average age of visitors and residents is continually increasing year-over-year.** A thriving community, which most locals say they want, is made up of all ages of people who have an opportunity for professional development and home ownership. Ensuring age diversity and the future vibrancy of the community in 10 years needs to start now.
- 5. Almost every conversation about the future of Lake Placid and North Elba, if taken far enough, ends up about the lack of housing diversity:** The ability for all people in the community to rent or own a place to live impacts every other conversation in this Plan. There is also widespread confusion about short-term rental regulation and licensing, and the resources needed to enforce compliance. Clear, consistent and transparent rules governing short-term rentals in Lake Placid and North Elba will help assure full-time residents that the needs of the greater community are the priority.

- 6. Age and housing diversity, economic and workforce development, transportation and mobility, quality of life, child/healthcare, and affordability are all related:** The most significant challenges facing the local community must be addressed collectively because they are all interconnected. Ignoring that is why things don't change and residents lose trust.
- 7. The past is over and the future is fluid:** Ensuring the best possible future for Lake Placid and North Elba requires new ways of thinking about how people live, work, invest, and travel in a rapidly evolving world. There were many comments during the community engagement about how some people in the area are living in a past that no longer exists and will never return.
- 8. An aligned, community-first approach is needed to develop a shared vision for the future:** Among the 150+ local community members who contributed to developing this Plan, not one person felt there was a shared, long-term vision for the future of Lake Placid and North Elba.
- 9. Sustainability is regional:** The health of the local environment must be continually studied at a regional level across Adirondack Park to understand how climate change will potentially impact the long-range future of Lake Placid and North Elba. Business leaders say they are ill-equipped to understand how the evolving environment will affect their businesses 5-10 years from now.
- 10. Lack of a strong sense of community:** Many full-time residents stated they no longer feel they know their neighbors due to an increasingly transient community.
- 11. Event management is dividing the community:** There is widespread consensus that events bring needed economic benefits to the community, but how events are managed is one of the most polarizing themes between business owners and residents.
- 12. Opportunity to leverage best-in-class outdoor recreation:** Lake Placid and North Elba are home to one of the best outdoor recreation and trail systems in the country, but the area doesn't have the reputation it deserves. Also, more can be done to connect rural and town trails.
- 13. Arts, culture, culinary and the rest of the local creative economy are an untapped resource:** The people and organizations supporting arts, culture, food and beverage, and the local maker community are key for both economic diversity and community development.
- 14. Visitors spend more dollars on activities other than recreation:** Even though recreation might first attract visitors to the area, data shows that they spend about five times more money on eating, drinking and shopping than outdoor recreation and sports tourism. The biggest opportunities for local small businesses is diversifying what Lake Placid and North Elba are known for to increase average visitor spending year-round.
- 15. Critical need for more data-driven visitor and resident communication:** New data management tools for tourism organizations provide empirical rigor and fact-based evidence to inform all tourism strategy and engagement with residents and visitors.

LOCAL ENHANCEMENT & ADVANCEMENT FUND

The Local Enhancement & Advancement Fund (LEAF) was established in 2020 to support non-profit public and government agencies. The program is funded by a dedicated 2% Essex County occupancy tax, paid by visitors, to enhance quality of place and quality of life for residents. The criteria for receiving financial support is reviewed by the North Elba LEAF Committee, which makes recommendations to the North Elba Town Board for approval. The criteria includes:

- The initiative addresses a significant need in the community
- The applicant has sound administrative/financial management history
- The initiative doesn't require ongoing funding
- There are clear, realistic and measurable goals and outcomes
- There is a defined timeline from funding to completion

Community Funding

Organizations that have been awarded LEAF funding to date represent a wide range of community stakeholders in health and medicine, deed-restricted housing development, local schools, sustainability agencies, arts and culture organizations, and various municipalities to upgrade small infrastructure projects.

The motivation behind LEAF is to ensure tourism dollars are a significant pipeline for supporting the needs of the community.

Projects that earn LEAF funding are displayed publicly at roost.com/leaf.



THE STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

The six primary objectives and 24 strategies in the Lake Placid & North Elba Destination Management Plan present a shared community vision for the future. Together, they create a long-term road map for how Lake Placid and North Elba balance the needs of local residents and industry stakeholders. The six objectives are divided into three tiers based on their hierarchy of importance and who should be involved to help lead and direct implementation.

Public, Private & Civic Sector Leadership (1 & 2)

The first two objectives are the most complex, and they require the attention of leaders in every sector. That means government, community, tourism and economic development leaders must work together to address the most serious and difficult challenges in the community.

Sustainability Organizations & The Event Industry (3 & 4)

The third and fourth objectives require people with expertise in specific areas to educate residents and businesses about what can be done to improve sustainability and event management. The community was clear that it's time to address those issues and stop kicking the can down the road.

Tourism & Hospitality Industry (5 & 6)

The fifth and sixth objectives are typical in any strategic plan in tourism. They are focused on product development, destination marketing, data management, and community engagement.

6 Primary Objectives

- 1. Diversify and Optimize the Local Economy**
- 2. Increase Long-term Resident Housing Diversity**
- 3. Address Environmental Sustainability Regionally**
- 4. Develop a Dedicated Event Management Strategy**
- 5. Align Industry Investments to Benefit Everyone**
- 6. Engage All Local and Visitor Audiences**

Diversify and Optimize the Local Economy

Sustainable and equitable economic development is the #1 priority for cities and towns of all sizes. Every community wants to attract and retain businesses that provide year-round employment for all types of residents. For that to work, a lot of other things need to succeed related to housing, education, health, safety, and transportation, etc. Economic development professionals connect all of those dots in collaboration with local government and industry. As such, economic development is the very foundation that makes a "community" possible.

Today, tourism comprises around 75-80% of all economic activity in Lake Placid and North Elba. It is never optimal for any community to rely on one industry to that degree, especially an industry that is seasonal and weather dependent. Likewise, it is very rare and ill-advised for a tourism organization and/or sports agency to oversee overall economic development for an entire community. Those types of organizations are demand generators. They're designed to drive economic growth by attracting visitors and hosting events. They're not equipped to collectively address interconnected and complex challenges ranging from housing to healthcare to inform public policy.

One of the most significant revelations during the development of this Destination Management Plan was eye-opening. The vast majority of people in both the public and private sectors understand the benefits of a more diverse local economy. And yet, there isn't a professional economic development department or organization in Lake Placid and North Elba.

Such a department/organization plays a variety of roles. Attracting investment to diversify local business development is one. It is also the main office and clearing house for all input from stakeholders related to the long-term vitality of the community. Economic development professionals oversee the intersection of business and community needs, and they ensure that all stakeholders are on the same page to help build on their collective strengths. The depth and complexity of issues impacting local quality of life in Lake Placid and North Elba requires an official professional entity to address them effectively.

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The vast majority of people in both the public and private sectors understand the benefits of a more diverse local economy. And yet, there isn't a professional economic development department or organization in Lake Placid and North Elba.

New Industry Segments

In many successful communities, the process for diversifying and optimizing the local economy is based on capitalizing on existing clusters of industry expertise and investments.

In Lake Placid and North Elba, tourism and sports are the primary business clusters. Expanding on that, the area is also home to a broad base of experts in sports medicine, training, psychology, nutrition and human performance at the highest level. The intellectual capital in those clusters can be connected and optimized more intentionally to stimulate new industries revolving around human development, longevity, corporate training, and what's commonly referred to as "medical tourism," among other industries.

The goal is to enhance year-round small business development and economic activity across a wide spectrum of professional services and economic levels. Accomplishing that requires developing these industries and promoting them internationally. That further supports the need for a robust economic

development organization working with the sports community, tourism sector, local government departments, and others.

More Full-Time Residents

One of the most important intended outcomes for diversifying and optimizing the local economy is to provide greater opportunities for full-time residents of all ages. Due to rising costs of living, it is increasingly challenging for families raising kids and young residents seeking professional development opportunities. To have a thriving community, it is imperative that people across all social and economic segments have pathways for achieving their goals so they can afford to stay in the community.

Aligned with that, there was considerable input from the community that lower wage earners among year-round residents are priced out of many of the local experiences and attractions. One of the strategies in this section recommends the development of a local discount mechanism so all residents can be active participants in their community and help contribute to the local economy.

KEY TAKEAWAY

This primary objective related to diversifying and optimizing the local economy is the north star for the Destination Management Plan. The other five objectives in the strategic framework are designed to help support and accomplish that overarching theme.

STRATEGIES

#1 / Diversify and Optimize the Local Economy

a) **Create an economic development organization or department to attract and steward investments in the region**

A shared vision for the future of any community requires an economic development entity to inform public policy that addresses the collective needs of local industry and residents. Such an organization brings local leaders to the same table to ensure a collaborative and effective approach to improving quality of life and economic opportunities for all year-round residents.

b) **Leverage investments in regional sports venues and local professional expertise to expand industry segments**

Expand and attract investment and expertise in new industries and professional services to create a more diverse year-round economy. The ongoing investments in the sports industry and related local professional expertise provide a foundation to build upon to provide new pathways for business/career development and increase the local tax base.

c) **Develop a strategic plan to attract a broader base of new year-round residents across all age groups**

A community is defined by the vibrancy of its full-time residents, so it is critical that all age groups have a chance to thrive and contribute to the community's future. With the average age consistently increasing in Lake Placid and North Elba, there should be a constant influx of new residents to maintain a diverse social fabric.

d) **Create affordable opportunities for all locals to patronize area attractions and experiences**

Quality of life means that all residents can benefit from much of what the region has to offer. Ensuring all full-time residents can afford local pursuits of all kinds helps attract and engage them as important members of the community. That also further contributes to the local economy, especially during off-peak need times.

IMPLEMENTATION

#1 / Diversify and Optimize the Local Economy

Phase 1

- Convene appropriate public and private organizations to define the purpose, value and shared goals for diversifying the economy
- Establish the business case for creating an economic development organization (EDO), and how that delivers benefits for local businesses, organizations and residents across all socioeconomic segments
- Develop a governance and shared funding model, organizational structure, business plan, and strategic framework for the EDO
- Establish "where the organization will live" and hire the required experienced personnel
- Develop public messaging to highlight the benefits of the EDO for all residents and community leaders and business owners
- Engage community and industry leaders to develop affordable attraction passes for locals, and communicate the economic and social benefits of such efforts with industry partners and the community

Phase 2

- Convene local leaders to identify appropriate industries to expand, which can capitalize on existing infrastructure, ongoing investments, and clusters of professional expertise
- Invite outside businesses and associations within the priority industry clusters to meet with local leaders to explore new business relationships
- Engage national/state leaders aligned with target industries to identify new opportunities and partnerships beyond a regional relationship
- Develop investment attraction and incentive strategies for targeted industry segment growth
- Establish a long-term business case for attracting more year-round residents
- Develop promotional materials, relocation information, and support networks to attract more full-time residents across all age groups

Phase 3

- Continue to expand economic development capital, resources, networks and personnel
- Publish year-end reporting on economic and community development progress
- Maintain long-term focus on continued and diversified industry development and talent attraction

Increase Long-Term Resident Housing Diversity

When a community loses a significant percentage of full-time workforce living within its borders, it becomes less of a "community." Every resident interviewed for this Plan believes that a strong sense of community with a vibrant social fabric, which includes people of all ages, contributes to overall quality of life. Equally important, a significant percentage of full-time residents living within the community is critical for the success of local businesses throughout the year. And, a variety of home ownership options at approachable price points helps ensure that more families and professionals believe they can remain in the community.

By far, the lack of housing diversity for full-time residents in Lake Placid and North Elba was the most discussed challenge among the community during the development of this Plan. Housing diversity impacts almost every other issue in the area, including: economic diversity; new talent and investment attraction; domestic/foreign labor shortages, business closures; average resident age and school populations; professional development opportunities for the local workforce at all income levels; a tax base that covers the increasing cost of public services and amenities year-over-year; and the increasing frustration, distrust and outright acrimony among full- and part-time resident populations.

The lack of housing diversity in Lake Placid and North Elba has been a subject of debate for decades. The imbalances between available long-term rental inventory, full-time resident home ownership, and short-term rental housing has been highlighted in countless public and private sector planning documents. Furthermore, Covid-19 accelerated local housing and labor challenges with the increased influx of both remote workers and outside investment in vacation home purchases.



By far, the lack of housing diversity for full-time residents in Lake Placid and North Elba was the most discussed challenge among the community during the development of this Plan.

Numerous new full-time resident housing developments in the early 2020s, including some with deed restrictions, are giving a broader base of local residents greater access to long-term rental and home ownership opportunities. However, while the new housing stock will alleviate some of the housing pressure by the mid-2020s, it is imperative for investment in housing diversity to be a key priority in perpetuity for both the Town and Village.

A National Dilemma

The lack of housing diversity is the #1 challenge in many mountain, beach, and other small tourism-centric communities across North America. Lake Placid and North Elba are in no way alone grappling with these challenges.

One of the most common scenarios in response to decreasing housing availability is the rise of nearby sister communities where housing prices are more approachable. Workforce is then required to commute via personal vehicle or public transportation. This has proven to be most successful in destinations with high capacity highways linking the communities.

This is not an ideal situation in Lake Placid and North Elba, based on narrow road infrastructure connecting municipalities such as Saranac Lake, Keene, Wilmington, Jay, and others. Area business owners diverge in their opinions about the long-term benefits of a regional network of commuting workforce. Although, most do see how that is an increasing and potentially inevitable option for more local full-time employees and remote workers.

The communities that have had the most success with maintaining higher levels of full-time resident housing inventory are those that anticipate the challenges as early as possible. Kicking the can down the road for future administrations to improve housing diversity is not an effective strategy.

Generally, the most successful strategy is developing an institutionalized housing organization with the authority and legal mandate to manage investments in housing solely for permanent residents. Best practices for governance and operations are well-established, but the process requires a high degree of alignment among local leaders.

Many other communities have developed housing plans that encompass a diverse mix of solutions, such as: inclusionary housing ordinances; re-zoning; housing subsidies; commercial building conversions; and new housing models such as "tiny houses" and communal workforce campuses. The acuteness of the challenges is requiring a new sense of urgency and more innovative approaches than ever before.

KEY TAKEAWAY

Increasing housing diversity — regarding both long-term rentals and home ownership opportunities for a range of income levels — provides a stronger foundation for successfully implementing most strategies in this Destination Management Plan.

STRATEGIES

#2/ Increase Long-term Resident Housing Diversity

a) **Establish a housing authority or dedicated plan with initiatives to develop sustainable, long-term, full-time resident housing**

An official body and strategy for securing and stewarding long-term investments in housing stock is required for the broadest spectrum of income levels possible. Long-range outcomes include more year-round residents and families across all age groups, especially younger generations, living and working within Lake Placid and North Elba.

b) **Balance short-term rental demand and the critical need for long-term rental and home ownership opportunities**

A long-term regulatory framework with land use policy allocating housing stock for short-term rentals and year-round residents is needed. Such a framework will identify funding for enforcing compliance. For permanent residents, there will be housing capacity allocated for both long-term rentals and ownership, including market rate and deed restricted dwellings.

c) **Develop and maintain a central database for workforce housing support**

Employers, home owners and workforce should have access to a continually updated portal and one-stop shop showing available housing rental options to accommodate workforce needs. Listings in the database can be customized for different income levels, size requirements, etc., and there should be educational support for first-time landlords.

d) **Expand public transportation and access to neighboring communities**

Consistent and reliable year-round public transportation will alleviate some housing pressure in Lake Placid and North Elba. This will become a higher priority if the above strategies fail to materialize to the degree necessary, especially if the level of relocations and remote workers continue to increase significantly through to 2030.

IMPLEMENTATION

#2/ Increase Long-term Resident Housing Diversity

Phase 1

- Convene public and private organizations to define a purpose and shared goals for diversifying housing using available long-term scenario modeling
- Explore various best practices related to deed restriction housing nationwide
- Use existing software tools to inventory short-term rentals by category throughout the Town and Village
- Develop a central database and website for property owners to post housing opportunities
- Communicate clear short-term rental regulations and licensing details to the community, and explain the funding in place to enforce compliance
- Explore options to increase building height limits in specific areas to increase density
- Develop scenario models for increasing public transportation systems to better serve commuters year-round

Phase 2

- Establish an official housing organization that works in collaboration with the proposed economic development organization recommended in Objective #1
- Establish sustainable funding to support the development of housing for priority/need segments of the community
- Convert existing residential and commercial building stock to permanent workforce housing as need is determined for full-time residents

Phase 3

- Identify state and federal partners to invest in long-term strategies to increase public transportation to outlying areas where there is greater housing capacity
- Advocate at the state and federal levels to increase available funding for housing infrastructure projects
- Explore investment opportunities in new, sustainable and alternative housing models such as "tiny houses" and communal workforce campus models

Address Environmental Sustainability Regionally

If more and more people continue to visit and relocate in Lake Placid, North Elba and other communities in Adirondack Park, what will their impact be on the natural environment in 10 years? This is a critical question because there are growing concerns about the health of the forests and watershed. Many public and private organizations are doing excellent work to collect data, build community networks, and help mitigate ongoing threats. However, the tourism industry is not aware of all of those efforts, or how the environment is evolving, to the degree it should be. Without that knowledge at a regional level, it's difficult to be a responsible steward of one of America's greatest natural assets.

Residents are generally quick to applaud ongoing efforts to address water quality, invasive species, salt runoff, septic concerns, fertilizer and pesticide use, etc. Their suggestion for this Plan is to bring environment leaders together to share data more regularly with local governments, the tourism sector, and the community. The strategy here is simply to connect the dots between existing organizations and educational institutions involved in sustainability to better share their collective research so the community is better informed and can act appropriately.

How dramatically the environment will evolve in the next decade is unknown. However, resident and visitor sentiment about the health of the planet will scale exponentially in that time, and it benefits the community to be in front of that. Some of the comments from environmental, educational and outdoor recreation leaders during the community engagement process included:

- "The ecosystem is not okay and we need people to know that. At the same time, we as conservationists need to communicate and share data better among ourselves."
- "Sustainable tourism equals economic sustainability. We need to understand carrying capacities because they're not infinite."
- "We need consistent environmental stewardship messaging across the community, and tourism can help lead that. The industry did a great job with messaging during Covid."
- "You don't talk about pieces of the watershed in one village; you talk about the whole ecosystem. The health of Lake Placid depends on the health of all the water in the Park. You can't protect a 6-million acre park in a vacuum."



Sustainable tourism equals economic sustainability. We need to understand carrying capacities because they're not infinite.

More Data. Less Cars.

More towns and cities around the world are increasingly collaborating with organizations that specialize in measuring the impacts of tourism on the local environment and community. Establishing benchmarks and carrying capacities are important to gauge how those impacts are evolving year-over-year, and how well sustainability initiatives are performing.

Presently, there are local sustainability initiatives and certifications, such as LEED for Cities and Communities, and Climate Smart Communities. Those should be augmented with data and insights collected specifically from organizations measuring and anticipating the long-term environmental impacts of visitor volumes throughout the Park.

Concurrently, at a local level, Lake Placid and North Elba have an opportunity to capitalize on the surge of electric vehicles and ebikes. Consumer adoption of clean mobility will continue to grow exponentially in the coming decade, and the time to strategize about how to invest in the infrastructure to support that is now. Doing so not only decreases

the environmental impact of tourism. It also enhances the visitor experience, elevates the destination brand, and creates a greater sense of community. Research also shows that getting more people out of cars increases incremental sales in local restaurants and retail shops if there is safe infrastructure in place.

Developing alternative transportation systems is a long-term strategy with significant capital expenditures in road and trail networks.

However, looking 10 years ahead, it's not a leap to visualize how people will continually gravitate towards healthier, cleaner modes of transportation. To guide that transition, more municipalities are striving toward achieving the Bicycle Friendly Community certification, awarded by The League of American Bicyclists. In 2021, a total of 496 communities across all 50 states held various tiers of the certification.

Similarly, there should be an accelerated focus on previous efforts at improving walkability and accessibility for people of all abilities. Major Main Street upgrades in recent years are supporting those efforts greatly, but more can be done to improve wayfinding to increase walkability among both visitors and locals.

KEY TAKEAWAY

Smart strategic planning involves scenario modeling. If the tourism sector is to be a truly responsible partner with the people living in Adirondack Park, it must have the necessary data and forward looking insights about how the environment is evolving.

STRATEGIES

#3/ Address Environmental Sustainability Collaboratively

a) **Collaborate with an independent organization to develop sustainable tourism benchmarks and strategy**

Benchmarks for measuring environmental quality year-over-year is critical for informed conversation and developing processes. This includes capacity limits related to visitor volumes for certain areas during different times of the year. Everyone in the community should have access into how the tourism sector is mitigating environmental impacts.

b) **Leverage local environmental sustainability organizations to help inform tourism strategy and visitor/resident education**

An alliance of sustainability organizations in Adirondack Park will provide the tourism sector in Lake Placid, North Elba and surrounding communities with an overview of work being done to mitigate environmental impacts. That information can also be used to educate visitors and residents about how to be responsible stewards of the environment.

c) **Increase investments in roads, trails and clean mobility to expand options for alternative transportation**

Fewer people in cars means less pollution and congestion. Getting people out of their vehicles also creates a greater sense of place and community. It elevates quality of life for locals; it enhances the destination experience and brand for visitors; and it drives incremental revenue to local restaurants, retail and other small businesses.

d) **Invest in placemaking and wayfinding to increase walkability and improve accessibility**

Expanding and improving the number of locations where people of all abilities can walk to and gather increases the local sense of community and sense of place for everyone. It also drives and diversifies foot traffic to local small businesses. Better physical and digital wayfinding improves awareness for both locals and visitors about where to go.

IMPLEMENTATION

#3/ Address Environmental Sustainability Collaboratively

Phase 1

- Establish a database of all primary public, private and educational leaders in environmental sustainability throughout Adirondack Park to inform long-term tourism strategy
- Inventory available research, data, reports, initiatives, etc., on an ongoing basis to share with industry partners and the community
- Convene appropriate organizations to identify opportunities and gaps related to environmental stewardship from an overall destination perspective and regional brand narrative
- Engage an independent organization that specializes in establishing sustainability benchmarks and strategic processes, which also provides empirical evidence to better inform public conversation and improve resident sentiment

Phase 2

- Develop a long-range plan for connecting road and trail networks to increase adoption of non-vehicle transportation
- Establish sustainable funding to expand, maintain and connect road and trail networks
- Develop a digital portal to educate locals and visitors about local road and trail networks, new developments, and usage guidelines to help improve relationships between motorists and bikers

Phase 3

- Create an annual sustainable tourism industry and consumer conference to develop and highlight strategic initiatives that have a positive impact on the local community, environment and economy

4 Develop a Dedicated Event Management Strategy

Events are a big part of Lake Placid and North Elba's community DNA and international brand. From major sports competitions to a wide range of cultural events, all of them together deliver millions of dollars in economic impact that supports local business owners throughout the year. At the same time, many residents feel that the sheer volume of visitors during specific events and times of year could be managed better. Responsible event management, or lack thereof, is a longstanding conflict in the community. Local residents and business owners have many different opinions about how events should be managed, but there isn't a codified plan to achieve any degree of consensus.

It is time for Lake Placid and North Elba to develop an official and transparent event management strategy. To accomplish that, the formation of a dedicated events council is necessary, comprised of government, industry and community leaders to ensure all voices are represented. An official events strategy will never completely satisfy everyone in the community. However, having that framework in place provides an open forum and clear direction for navigating all of the polarizing opinions to deliver a balanced road map for how the community hosts events.

An events council and overarching event management plan have many purposes:

- Act as a bridge for transparent communication between event developers, local residents, and municipal and state governments
- Define the different types of events and governance models, how they're funded and by which organizations, and their tax exempt status
- Identify capacity limits for visitor volumes and overall scope of events
- Identify priorities relating to environmental sustainability and diversity, equity and inclusion
- Use empirical event data platforms to measure economic and social impacts
- Identify methods to cover added municipal costs for hosting large events
- Educate visiting groups about how they can positively impact the community
- Advocate for Lake Placid and North Elba as a world-class events destination
- Help events and local business owners cross-promote each other to increase visitor spending in the community across all sectors: hospitality, food and beverage, arts and culture, retail, outdoor recreation, etc.
- Advocate for the needs of local organizations that are connected in some way with events

Community Education

It's easy to feel like a hero on Facebook. People like to vent their frustrations and share their opinions on social media, often with the best intentions, on both sides of any argument. However, without enough knowledge about all of the facts, the chatter often creates more divisiveness than consensus.

Educating the community about event strategy begins with solid data. Presently, that data doesn't exist, especially in one place that everyone can access. Therefore, it is critical to have the data tools and a repository of business intelligence to co-develop an event strategy with the community. That is why there also needs to be a broad representation of industry and community leaders to provide clear context and direction around all of the data.

The same thing goes with educating visitors. The majority of event attendees don't aspire to create a negative impact in the community when they visit. Many of them have a strong connection with Lake Placid and North Elba, which is why they return year after year.

That said, there is much more that can be done to educate visitors and increase awareness about the event experience, and how their presence in the community shapes that.

This isn't easy by a long shot. It will take years to develop and then implement a holistic event strategy that satisfies a greater majority of local residents.



Responsible event management, or lack thereof, is a longstanding conflict in the community. Local residents and business owners have many different opinions about how events should be managed, but there isn't a codified plan to achieve any degree of consensus.

KEY TAKEAWAY

Events provide a critical pipeline for economic activity throughout the year, supporting thousands of full-time jobs. However, how events are managed is one of the most divisive themes in the community due to the lack of a transparent event management plan.

STRATEGIES

4/ Develop a Dedicated Event Management Strategy

a) **Create an Event Management Plan with input from community, government and industry**

A strategic process for managing how the community hosts events provides a structured approach for aligning the needs of residents, the tourism industry, event owners and event participants. It is also a way to educate the community about all of the many decisions that are factored into how events are run.

b) **Establish an Events Council to steward an event plan with input from residents**

Any type of event management plan will require an independent governance body with representation from community groups and residents to ensure transparency. The end goal is to improve trust among community members and ensure their voices are being heard and acted upon.

c) **Develop a data platform to measure the economic and community impacts from events**

Better data demonstrates how events contribute to the local economy and tax base, as well as their impact on the community's overall quality of life. That provides an empirical foundation for all conversations about how events are managed, which is necessary to help find middle ground among all sides of the debate.

d) **Expand potential revenue sources from events for municipalities to cover the costs for hosting events**

Added event registration fees and other potential revenue sources can help cover the increasing costs for hosting events that local jurisdictions incur, including traffic and parking, safety and security, waste management, etc. This presents another opportunity for improving the relationship between the event companies, tourism industry and residents.

IMPLEMENTATION

4/ Develop a Dedicated Event Management Strategy

Phase 1

- Convene event organizers, tourism, government and community leaders to discuss the creation of an official Events Council
- Build community support for the development of an Events Council and Event Management Plan by hosting public forums to gather substantial input from residents
- Develop the Event Management Plan and appropriate messaging to share the Plan with industry partners and residents

Phase 2

- Develop a public-facing platform to measure the overall economic and community impacts of events
- Establish a publicly regulated event fee per visitor, for specific types and sizes of events, to raise funds dedicated for the Town and Village to cover the added costs required for hosting events
- Share data relating to event management strategy and cost/benefit analysis with industry partners and residents

Phase 3

- Review and update the Event Management Plan annually
- Continue to educate residents and industry partners about event management strategies and new developments

Align Industry Investments to Benefit Everyone

The Lake Placid 2023 World University Games, when all is said and done, will have stimulated almost \$1.5 billion in new infrastructure investments in the region, directly or indirectly. Optimizing those investments for as many types of locals and visitors as possible is key to diversifying the economy and providing more opportunities for local small businesses and organizations.

Three focus areas were highlighted during the community engagement: 1) Outdoor recreation, wellbeing and sports tourism; 2) arts, culture and heritage; and 3) food and beverage. Developing those travel segments provides a holistic, integrated destination experience that caters to a majority of local and visitor interests, and audiences including leisure, business and events/group. Also, cultural and culinary experiences are proven to effectively engage high-value visitors, and they aren't weather and seasonal dependent. This is invaluable in terms of diversifying the local economy.

The outdoor recreation and sports tourism segment is clearly well developed. However, the same world-class brand recognition among hikers and bikers is not as predominant as some other destinations. Part of that is marketing. There is also opportunity in investing in resident/visitor education and road infrastructure to improve safety, as well as developing a modern content and mapping ecosystem to guide active locals and visitors throughout the region.

Regarding arts, culture and heritage, many residents feel that sports overshadows all other community efforts. "The suggestion that people are not visiting Lake Placid for arts and culture is just plain wrong," was a consistent message from residents. They emphasized there is a significant network of arts and cultural organizations in the region, but there isn't enough collaboration among them to engage visitors and locals. In fact, many residents are not aware of all the cultural options in their own community.

Lastly, with all of the new investments in the hospitality sector, the local food and beverage scene should be leveraged much more so than in the past to provide and promote a more layered brand story for the destination. Food is the last analogue visitor experience, and almost every visitor is a "foodie" who's interested in many types of culinary experiences across all price points.



Cultural and culinary experiences are proven to engage high-value visitors, and they aren't weather and seasonal dependent. This is invaluable in terms of diversifying the local economy.

The High-Value Visitor

The "high-value visitor" label sometimes seems elitist to some people. That's not the intent. Yes, it can mean high-spending visitors, which is positive. Every business focuses on increasing its yield. At the same time, high-value visitors are also those with similar values as the community. They're mindful of their environmental impact and they patronize local small businesses. This target customer can also mean people who visit in shoulder season or mid-week, attend conferences or corporate incentives, or visit for medical and wellness tourism.

High-value visitors are also repeat visitors, who want a strong sense of place and community. They're interested in a variety of outdoor, cultural and culinary experiences — not just one. They also might never step on a trail or get on the water, but they appreciate the natural splendor of Adirondack Park. They want to experience that connection with nature just like locals do. It's important to remember that repeat visitors don't come back because they want to feel like a tourist. They return because they want to feel like they're part of a like-minded community.

Main Street is Critical

The world's most iconic mountain destinations from Aspen to Zermatt, which have evolved over generations, have long ago developed beyond "tourism destinations." They're just outstanding destinations, period. Local leaders focus on enhancing the high quality of life by bringing together all types of people to celebrate the local lifestyle and community values.

The heart of those destinations is always their main streets, which for visitors represent the front door to the community. It can't be overestimated how important and valuable it is to have an amazing main street vibe. For Lake Placid and North Elba, innovative placemaking along Main Street must always be a priority consideration. Almost every visitor will experience, remember and often share their feelings about Lake Placid's compelling Main Street environment. The University Games stimulated infrastructure investments that help enhance the local sense of community. They should continually be nurtured, activated and promoted to showcase the very best of Lake Placid and North Elba.

KEY TAKEAWAY

Diversifying and enhancing the destination for specific visitor segments helps prioritize value over volume by focusing on quality over quantity. Those segments include: Outdoor recreation, wellbeing and sports tourism; arts, culture and heritage; and food and beverage.

STRATEGIES

5/ Align Investments in the Destination to Benefit Everyone

a) **Develop the region to be a recognized world-class leader for outdoor recreation and holistic wellbeing**

Integrating outdoor recreation and holistic wellbeing will elevate the signature destination experience in Lake Placid and North Elba. A growing percentage of travelers are interested in physical, mental and/or emotional wellbeing, whichever way they might define that individually. In effect, develop the region as a place for personal transformation.

b) **Develop platforms to connect and promote organizations in local arts, culture, heritage and the creative economy**

Connecting and sharing all of the people and organizations in arts, culture, music, film, media, design and other creative fields activates a significant and under-represented segment of the community. It gives rise to other voices beyond people in sports; it fuels philanthropy in the community; and it diversifies the meaning of "local community."

c) **Invest in a regional strategy that builds on the collective strengths of the food and beverage ecosystem**

Culinary tourism is the one theme that connects almost all locals and visitors across all socioeconomic segments. Local food and beverage leaders help define the identity of the community, including how the entire supply chain works together to create something unique and special. Expanding culinary experiences also increases visitor spending.

d) **Prioritize Main Street initiatives and invest in multigenerational community venues for local residents**

Main Street and other places where people gather are important for enhancing community spirit and creating a strong sense of place. That defines a community —bringing all people together to celebrate the essence of visiting and living in Lake Placid and North Elba. This includes developing community/cultural centers and event spaces for all ages of people.

IMPLEMENTATION

5/ Align Investments in the Destination to Benefit Everyone

Phase 1

- Identify opportunities to further develop and enhance outdoor recreation infrastructure to improve destination brand competitiveness on a national/global scale
- Inventory arts, culture and creative organizations, and scale support for related events, philanthropy efforts, and digital content related to arts and culture
- Connect members of regional food and beverage growers, vendors, events and local establishments and shops to elevate the foodie experience across the region
- Collaborate with an accessibility organization to improve accessibility for all age groups and abilities
- Develop community-facing content and messaging related to all of the above to educate residents about developments and events
- Implement all of the above through the lens of ensuring they are as accessible and relevant as possible for all age groups, all sociocultural groups, and people of all abilities

Phase 2

- Invest in physical and digital wayfinding to encourage greater foot traffic, visitor spend and community spirit in the Village core
- Ensure physical/digital wayfinding encourages greater visitor dispersal and spending beyond the Village core

Phase 3

- Develop a multi-generational, age-friendly community and performance center for year-round events and programming

Engage All Local and Visitor Audiences

There are many incredible stories about how local residents in Lake Placid and North Elba are contributing to their community. Those stories should be communicated as much as possible to both locals and visitors to continually build community pride, create a stronger sense of community and sense of place, improve overall quality of life, and enhance destination marketing. Therefore, the purpose of this objective is to unite as many people as possible — both residents and visitors — to co-create the future of the community by sharing inspiring stories and general information more effectively and collaboratively.

The local tourism industry is a large network of residents who work for local businesses and organizations that focus on messaging to visitors. A key goal for this Destination Management Plan is to leverage that same network to bring local residents into a more formal community planning process. One way to accomplish that is having a community relations person whose role is to bridge the tourism sector with local community organizations. Such a professional is tasked with understanding the goals and challenges for residents and businesses, and sharing those insights with everyone in the community. They advocate for both resident and industry needs, and they're important contributors for informing public policy and strategic planning in the private sector.

Today, the biggest shift in tourism organization structure across the continent is the dramatic increase in positions for community relations executives and data researchers. Strengthening the ties between the community and local tourism businesses benefits everyone.

First, it helps bring opposing opinions among the community into the open for public debate among a wider constituent of participants, versus in individual siloed groups. That helps build greater consensus among a bigger audience by addressing misperceptions and any lack of data-driven facts. Second, a more constructive relationship between residents and business owners provides a better understanding of how visitors are influencing the day-to-day life of residents. It also expands the industry's networks by bringing more local people together who might potentially develop new business partnerships and enhance the destination experience.



Today, the biggest shift in organizational structures for tourism organizations across the continent is the increase in positions for community relations executives.

Diversity & Inclusion

Tourism is about connecting people, and that means all people. When so many residents emphasized "community" during the development of this Plan, there was consistent sentiment about how that includes everyone, regardless of their personal background and physical abilities.

Globally, tourism organizations and their industry partners are prioritizing diversity, equity and inclusion (just like every other industry) with clear objectives and defined outcomes. That means everyone in Lake Placid and North Elba should have the opportunity to contribute to, and benefit from, all of the economic and social activity that the tourism sector provides.

There are public and private organizations throughout the community that advocate for underrepresented resident segments related to income, race, culture, sexual orientation, age, physical abilities, and others. It is paramount that tourism industry partners recognize and support those organizations to deliver on the promise of what community truly means.

Invest in Digital

A modern tourism website is a critical platform for community and industry engagement. It should be a resource for the community, as well as visitors, with community input to share and promote local developments. A wide cross-section of community input should also inform tourism strategy at every stage of the destination marketing funnel.

Tourism organizations are also capitalizing on modern data management platforms to empirically understand how locals and visitors are navigating the destination. These platforms aggregate and analyze a multitude of data related to event participation, geolocation, credit card spending, and other data sets to help develop more effective messaging.

There is also clear evidence that public community forums for industry and residents (both online and in-person) are providing greater clarity around long-standing issues in Lake Placid and North Elba. These should continue to grow on a regular basis to align residents and industry around shared goals.

KEY TAKEAWAY

Better data and digital tools are key for improving messaging for targeted visitor segments and residents across all socioeconomic segments. It is also critical that the community is better informed about tourism strategies that enhance local quality of life.

STRATEGIES

6/ Improve Engagement with all Local and Visitor Audiences

a) **Improve diversity and inclusion by supporting organizations that work with underrepresented community segments**

A community is defined by every person in it, and everyone should have an opportunity for personal and professional development. The tourism sector is one of the best platforms for supporting the goals of a diverse range of local entrepreneurs, employees, students and everyone else across all ages, abilities, lifestyles and backgrounds.

b) **Establish senior position(s) for community relations to improve information sharing among residents and industry**

This is one of the most critical strategies in this Destination Management Plan to help align the goals of government, industry and residents. Community relations personnel are responsible for communicating the needs of the public, private and civic sectors in a transparent way to educate all community members.

c) **Enhance the tourism website, expand community content, and invest in new data management tools**

The tourism website is the key tool for helping visitors experience the region, but it must do so in ways customized to their individual goals. The site also needs to share content developed specifically for the local community to help educate residents about ongoing developments and events. New data management tools are critical for optimizing both.

d) **Host community forums to involve residents in destination strategy, and prioritize annual resident sentiment surveys**

Getting local residents together in regularly scheduled public forums, both physical and virtual, builds consensus among the community. They bring everyone's opinions out into the open to be debated and reconciled. Also, an annual resident sentiment survey helps codify all of the issues, and it establishes benchmarks to track the success of community initiatives.

IMPLEMENTATION

6/ Improve Engagement with all Local and Visitor Audiences

Phase 1

- Hire community relations executive(s) to engage with residents and local community organizations, and advocate for the interests of all parties
- Establish regularly scheduled Town/Village forums and other live and digital programming to provide more transparent and effective communication between local industry and residents
- Expand quarterly updates to communicate new developments related to the local visitor economy, and provide data showing overall benefits for residents
- Identify and support local businesses and organizations that are invested in diversity, equity and inclusion, and work with all types of underserved communities
- Enhance content development to promote a more diverse spectrum of local business owners across gender, race, age and lifestyles
- Develop content that targets younger visitors and residents

Phase 2

- Update tourism-specific data management tools to provide empirical business intelligence for engaging target visitor segments
- Update tourism-specific data management tools to provide empirical insights identifying how both visitors and local residents patronize local small businesses and events during different times of the year

Phase 3

- Redesign tourism website and partner sites to align goals and messaging, improve user experience, and deliver more customized information to targeted visitor audiences and local residents
- Redesign tourism website to promote neighboring communities more effectively
- Redesign website to be more mobile friendly
- Educate tourism industry partners about best practices in digital strategy

CASE STUDIES

Many popular small towns across North America are striving to better balance the goals of residents, business owners and visitors. The following case studies show how communities have collaborated to work toward that balance.

Economic Development

Colorado Springs, CO / coloradospringschamberedc.com

The Colorado Springs Chamber & Economic Development Commission is the leading economic development organization in the Pikes Peak region of Colorado. Sports is one of the community's five priority sectors, which includes a number of high-profile national governing bodies for both summer and winter Olympic events. The organization is widely recognized for identifying local companies and organizations in the sports industry cluster to help develop new business relationships with outside organizations in the sports and human performance industry.

Park City, UT / parkcity.org

Park City's Economic Development Department oversees planning and implementation in a diverse range of areas to ensure the City's long-term economic health. That includes management of the two Redevelopment Authorities; planning and execution of capital projects; management of special events, open space and trails; and all real estate and property endeavors. The Economic Department works jointly with the Sustainability and Community Development Departments to align the City's efforts with community organizations and various private sector planning initiatives.

Dover, VT / discoverdover.com

Located near Mount Snow, the Town of Dover operates a full-time Economic Development Department funded by the locally collected 1% option tax. The purpose of the Department is to attract and recruit new business, provide support to existing business, and to be involved at the local, state and federal levels to advocate for business policies.

Aspen, CO / aspenchamber.org

The Aspen Chamber Resort Association (ACRA) is a 501 c(6) that functions as a hybrid chamber of commerce and destination marketing organization. ACRA is dedicated to supporting the Aspen business community, attracting visitors to the resort, and enhancing the local experience.

Hilton Head, GA / hiltonheadchamber.org; hiltonheadisland.org

The Hilton Head Island Convention & Visitors Bureau and Chamber of Commerce is a hybrid non-profit organization with shared leadership and resources. It is responsible for all destination marketing/management, business attraction/support, and community development.

CASE STUDIES

Housing Diversity

Vail, CO / vailindeed.com

VailInDEED is a deed restriction purchase program that incentivizes homeowners and real estate buyers/sellers to deed restrict their property. The purpose of the program is to help the Town of Vail meet the 2027 Housing Strategic Plan goal of acquiring an additional 1,000 deed restricted units by the year 2027.

Whistler, BC / whistlerhousing.ca

The Whistler Housing Authority is an independent municipally-owned corporation of the Resort Municipality of Whistler. It was created to oversee the development, administration and management of resident restricted housing in Whistler. Embracing the goal of at least 75% of employees housed locally within Whistler, the housing authority maintains and augments its inventory of resident-restricted housing so that both rental and ownership accommodation are available and affordable for local income earners and retirees in perpetuity.

Palm Desert, CA / cityofpalmdesert.org

The Palm Desert Housing Authority operates over 1,100 affordable rental units. The Authority also provides assistance to over 250 homeowners through the Home Buyer Assistance program. Qualifying income levels range from very low (20% of the County median) to moderate (up to 120% of the County median).

Banff, Alberta / banff.ca

The Banff Housing Corporation (BHC) is a non-profit organization whose sole shareholder is the Town of Banff. The BHC operates at arm's length from the Town under a mandate created by the Town of Banff Council. The Board of Directors, who govern the BHC, comprise five or six public members, one senior person from the Town of Banff, and one Town of Banff Council member.

Sustainability Strategy

Breckenridge, CO / sustainablebreck.com

The Town of Breckenridge's SustainableBreck initiative views sustainability as being "the ability of today's community to use and enjoy our natural resources without compromising the ability of future generations to use them." In order to work towards a sustainable future, the Town developed research and hosted public meetings to identify and define what sustainability meant to the community. The SustainableBreck Plan is the culmination of those endeavors. The plan is intended to be a blueprint for how the community can sustain itself in the year 2030 and beyond.

CASE STUDIES

Event Management

Kamloops, BC / kamloopssportscouncil.com

Kamloops presents itself as Canada's "Capital of Tournaments" based on the volume of amateur sports events it hosts every year. The Kamloops Sports Council's strategic event management plan is a good case study for developing initiatives that prioritize community needs and benefits, ensure sustainable funding for covering the public costs of those events, and support the many volunteers necessary to host high-quality event experiences.

Huddle Up Group / huddleupgroup.com

The Huddle Up Group helps sports commissions and tourism organizations develop strategic plans to optimize the benefits of events and lower their impacts in host communities. The organization has collaborated with tourism organizations from Panama City, FL to Eau Claire, WI.

Destination Management & Marketing

Moab, UT / discovermoab.com

Discover Moab helped develop and promote a trail network and online guide for e-bike riders to capitalize on the growth and opportunities in e-mobility. The organization collaborated with Grand County, the City of Moab, and Moab Trail Mix to complete the project.

Jackson Hole, WY / visitjacksonhole.com

Adding a new narrative beyond outdoor recreation, Visit Jackson Hole launched a "Wild Women" campaign to showcase innovative and successful female leaders in the public and private sectors. The initiative highlighted the community's values as a progressive place where all people have opportunities to contribute to the local social fabric.

Florida Keys / keysarts.com

The Florida Keys Council of the Arts is the leading arts and culture organization in the Florida Keys. As the non-profit local arts agency in Monroe County it connects audiences from around the world to artists, galleries, theaters, museums, festivals, dance and music from Key Largo to Key West.

North Carolina / neckofthewoodsnc.com

The Appalachian Regional Commission, Boone/Watauga County Tourism, and Blowing Rock Tourism collaborated to develop the Neck of the Woods Local Flavor Trail. Well-designed for mobile use, the culinary trail engages various types of food lovers, and it disperses visitor spending to more small businesses in more diverse areas.





ROOST