

# Tompkins County Strategic Tourism Planning Board

Wednesday, October 16, 2019; 3:00pm – 4:30 pm

**Tompkins County Chamber of Commerce/CVB, 904 East Shore Drive, Ithaca, NY**

<b>AGENDA</b>	<b>Start</b>
1. STPB Meeting Minutes	3:00
• ACTION – Approve September Meeting Minutes	
2. Privilege of the Floor	
• Limit of 3 minutes per person for members of the public to address the board	
3. Chair’s Report – Kelli Cartmill	3:05
• Recognition of Sue Stafford’s 11 years of service on STPB	
4. Staff Report & Q3 Room Tax Report – Nick Helmholdt	3:15
5. CVB Monthly Report – Peggy Coleman	3:20
6. Strategic Tourism Plan Steering Committee Update – Nick Helmholdt	3:30
• ACTION – approve release of draft plan for public comment	
7. Presentation: Special Events in the City of Ithaca – Dan Cogan	4:00
8. Member Announcements	4:25
9. Adjournment	4:30

## **Agenda Packet**

1. September 2019 Draft STPB Meeting Minutes
2. Q3 2019 Room Tax Report
3. DRAFT – *Strategic Tourism Plan 2021-2027*



MISSION: The Strategic Tourism Planning Board is charged by the Tompkins County Legislature with providing oversight and strategic direction for tourism initiatives that *promote economic development* and *enhance the quality of life* in Tompkins County.

## Tompkins County Strategic Tourism Planning Board (STPB) Draft Meeting Minutes

1 **Date:** September 25, 2019  
 2 **Time:** 3:00-5:00pm  
 3 **Location:** Tompkins Co. CVB/Chamber of Commerce, 904 E. Shore Drive, Ithaca NY  
 4

5 **Attendees:**

Name	✓	Representation
Brett Bossard	P	Arts-Culture
Kelli Cartmill	P	Lodging
Laura Winter Falk	P	At-Large
Josh Friedman	P	Arts-Culture
Ken Jupiter	P	At-Large
Connie Kan	E	At-Large
Katie Kutz	P	At-Large
Doug Levine	E	Arts-Culture
Rick Manning	P	At-Large
Mike Mellor	P	At-Large
Cara Nichols	P	Ithaca College
Todd Parlato	P	At-Large
Barbara Romano	P	Cornell University
Monika Roth	P	Agriculture
Deb Mohlenhoff	E	TC3
Baruch Whitehead	E	Arts-Culture
Scott Wiggins	E	At-Large
Andy Zepp	P	Recreation
<i>Martha Armstrong</i>	<i>E</i>	<i>TCAD, Non-Voting</i>
<i>Peggy Coleman</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>Chamber, Non-Voting 7</i>

Name	✓	Representation
<i>Gary Ferguson</i>	<i>E</i>	<i>DIA, Non-Voting</i>
<i>Anna Kelles</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>TC Legislature, Non-Voting</i>
<i>John Spence</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>CAP, Non-Voting</i>
<i>Jennifer Tavares</i>	<i>A</i>	<i>Chamber, Non-Voting</i>
<i>Matthew Yarrow</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>Transportation, Non-Voting</i>
<i>Ethan Ash</i>	<i>A</i>	<i>Associate Member</i>
<i>Jim Brophy</i>	<i>A</i>	<i>Associate Member</i>
<i>Erica Frenay</i>	<i>E</i>	<i>Associate Member</i>
<i>Henry Granison</i>	<i>E</i>	<i>Associate Member</i>
<i>Theresa Hollister-Ball</i>	<i>E</i>	<i>Associate Member</i>
<i>Carol Kammen</i>	<i>E</i>	<i>Associate Member</i>
<i>Michael Miller</i>	<i>A</i>	<i>Associate Member</i>
<i>Jon Reis</i>	<i>E</i>	<i>Associate Member</i>
<i>Wylie Schwartz</i>	<i>E</i>	<i>Associate Member</i>
<i>Nick Helmholdt</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>Staff</i>
<i>Kristin McCarthy</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>Staff</i>

8 **Guests:** Elizabeth Classen Ambrose, G. Lincoln Morse, Nick Lambrou, Costa Lambrou, Ronda Roaring, Joey  
 9 Steinhagen

10  
 11 **Opening Remarks/Changes to the Agenda** – Chair Kelli Cartmill welcomed everyone to the meeting. Draft  
 12 August minutes were distributed on paper, and their approval was added to the agenda.

13  
 14 **Privilege of the Floor** – Joey Steinhagen, founder and director of Running to Places Theatre Company,  
 15 shared news of the development of the youth troupe’s new home in the Shops at Ithaca Mall and invited  
 16 members to contact him and his staff for a tour of the facilities.

17  
 18 **Action: Approval of July and August 2019 STPB Meeting Minutes** – Brett Bossard moved approval of the  
 19 July and August meeting minutes. Katie Kutz seconded. Motion carried.

20  
 21 **Chair’s Report – Kelli Cartmill**

22 Kelli shared a brief board recruitment update: two at-large and one arts-culture seats need to be filled.  
 23 Candidates must reside in Tompkins County.

24  
 25 **Staff Report – Nick Helmholdt**

26 Arts and Culture Organizational Development Grant cycle will run October 1 through the 31. A workshop  
 27 for perspective applicants is scheduled for October 8.

## **Tompkins County Strategic Tourism Planning Board (STPB) Draft Meeting Minutes**

29 **CVB Monthly Report – Peggy Coleman**

30

31 Peggy shared highlights from the report, including spotlight events for Finger Lakes Cider Week and  
32 updated stats for programs like Visitor A2D Journey. JLL just sent her a revised draft of Visitor Profile Study,  
33 which she is reviewing.

34

35 **Community Celebrations Fall 2019 Grant Panel Update – Brett Bossard**

36

37 The committee received nine Community Celebrations grant applications, six of which it recommended for  
38 funding. Two were not recommended for grants, and Nick reached out to applicants with constructive  
39 feedback from the committee. A third applicant was encouraged to reapply in the Spring 2020 grant cycle.

40

41 **Action:** Brett Bossard made a motion to recommend funding of the Fall 2019 slate of Community  
42 Celebrations Grant awards. Ken Jupiter seconded. Motion carried.

43

44 **Presentation: City Harbor public access – City Harbor Waterfront Development Team**

45 Elizabeth Classen Ambrose, G. Lincoln Morse, and Nick and Costa Lambrou, along with other members of  
46 their team, spoke to the STPB about the City Harbor project. In particular, their presentation and the  
47 subsequent Q&A discussion with board members focused on public access to the waterfront and features  
48 of the project of interest to the tourism sector. The City Harbor team was grateful for the extensive  
49 feedback and encouraged board members to reach out post-meeting via email with further thoughts or  
50 comments.

51

52 **Strategic Tourism Plan Steering Committee Update – Nick Helmholdt**

53

54 Committee is integrating contents of Visitor Profile Study into draft plan, which will be ready for review by  
55 entire STPB shortly. Next steps will involve finalizing content. The committee is working to produce a draft  
56 plan ready for public comment by the end of the year.

57

58 **Member Announcements**

59

60 Board members shared news of events and other announcements of interest to the group. Ronda Roaring  
61 spoke briefly about the Lab of Ornithology's Migration Day.

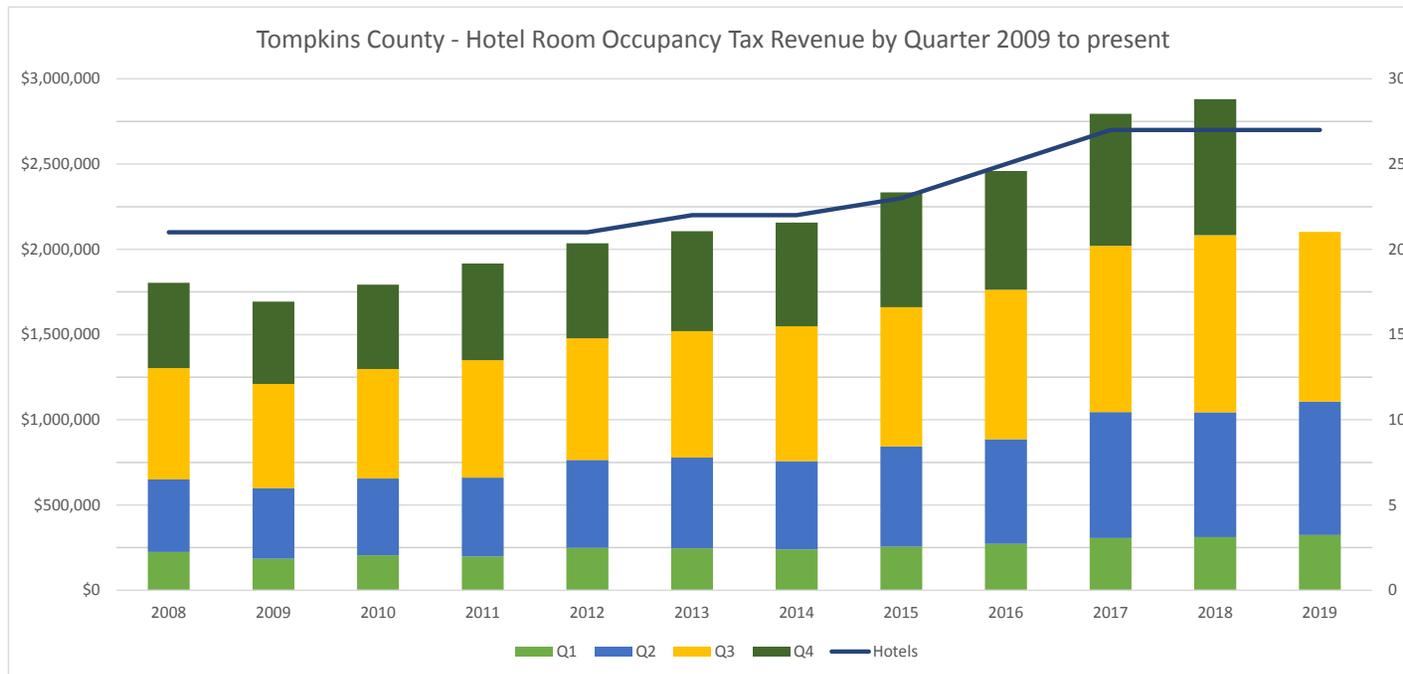
62

63 Chair Kelli Cartmill adjourned the meeting at 4:40 pm.

**Tompkins County - Hotel Room Occupancy Tax Revenue - 2008 to present**

Totals by quarter & year

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Q1	224,245	185,733	205,629	198,559	249,508	246,795	239,394	255,511	272,677	306,561	311,725	324,584
Q2	425,802	411,982	450,117	462,564	515,379	530,995	518,257	588,301	613,413	739,499	732,497	782,432
Q3	652,904	613,173	642,496	688,976	712,305	742,300	791,531	816,604	876,679	973,901	1,039,520	995,164
Q4	500,553	482,818	493,815	566,231	558,170	586,547	607,263	673,415	696,084	774,477	796,894	
Add'l Rev.*	(8,616)	(22,625)	(7,917)	5,102	45,069	42,079	107,084	34,425	19,043	18,806	43,945	49,345
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,794,887</b>	<b>1,671,082</b>	<b>1,784,140</b>	<b>1,921,431</b>	<b>2,080,430</b>	<b>2,148,716</b>	<b>2,263,529</b>	<b>2,368,257</b>	<b>2,477,896</b>	<b>2,813,243</b>	<b>2,924,581</b>	<b>2,151,525</b>
<b>Budgeted</b>	<b>1,773,138</b>	<b>1,552,161</b>	<b>1,700,000</b>	<b>1,859,659</b>	<b>2,036,716</b>	<b>2,152,700</b>	<b>2,260,335</b>	<b>2,373,352</b>	<b>2,495,315</b>	<b>2,635,870</b>	<b>2,754,484</b>	<b>2,935,000</b>
<b>Actual - Budgeted</b>	<b>21,749</b>	<b>118,921</b>	<b>84,140</b>	<b>61,772</b>	<b>43,714</b>	<b>(3,984)</b>	<b>3,194</b>	<b>(5,095)</b>	<b>(17,419)</b>	<b>177,373</b>	<b>170,097</b>	
<b>Room Tax Growth</b>	<b>3.3%</b>	<b>-6.9%</b>	<b>6.8%</b>	<b>7.7%</b>	<b>8.3%</b>	<b>3.3%</b>	<b>5.3%</b>	<b>4.6%</b>	<b>4.6%</b>	<b>13.5%</b>	<b>4.0%</b>	
<b>Hotels</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>27</b>



## Tompkins County - Hotel Room Occupancy Tax Revenue - 2008 to present

### Quarter over Quarter Change (i.e. Q2 2017 vs Q2 2016)

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Q1	17.9%	-17.2%	10.7%	-3.4%	25.7%	-1.1%	-3.0%	6.7%	6.7%	12.4%	1.7%	4.1%
Q2	9.4%	-3.2%	9.3%	2.8%	11.4%	3.0%	-2.4%	13.5%	4.3%	20.6%	-0.9%	6.8%
Q3	7.0%	-6.1%	4.8%	7.2%	3.4%	4.2%	6.6%	3.2%	7.4%	11.1%	6.7%	-4.3%
Q4	-1.2%	-3.5%	2.3%	14.7%	-1.4%	5.1%	3.5%	10.9%	3.4%	11.3%	2.9%	

### Quarterly Tax Revenues as a Share of Annual Tax Revenue

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Q1	12.5%	11.1%	11.5%	10.3%	12.0%	11.5%	10.6%	10.8%	11.0%	10.9%	10.7%	
Q2	23.7%	24.7%	25.2%	24.1%	24.8%	24.7%	22.9%	24.8%	24.8%	26.3%	25.0%	
Q3	36.4%	36.7%	36.0%	35.9%	34.2%	34.5%	35.0%	34.5%	35.4%	34.6%	35.5%	
Q4	27.9%	28.9%	27.7%	29.5%	26.8%	27.3%	26.8%	28.4%	28.1%	27.5%	27.2%	

### Tax Paid by Establishments with 10 Rooms or Fewer (aka 3% tax on B&Bs)

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Q1	7,575	7,698	8,379	9,425	9,110	10,844	12,983	16,591	17,824	39,904	44,754	56,081
Q2	15,137	14,021	15,736	18,504	17,983	19,950	23,174	27,841	33,410	78,444	89,909	115,691
Q3	30,418	28,216	33,994	31,872	32,989	40,366	44,363	58,906	85,806	96,937	113,307	116,544
Q4	18,958	19,982	19,688	21,359	22,468	22,632	28,282	35,956	51,483	57,450	64,920	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>72,089</b>	<b>69,918</b>	<b>77,797</b>	<b>81,160</b>	<b>82,551</b>	<b>93,792</b>	<b>108,802</b>	<b>139,294</b>	<b>188,524</b>	<b>272,735</b>	<b>312,890</b>	<b>288,316</b>
Year over Year Change	5.0%	-3.0%	11.3%	4.3%	1.7%	13.6%	16.0%	28.0%	35.3%	44.7%	14.7%	

### Tax Paid by Establishments with 11 Rooms or More (aka 5% tax on Hotels & Motels)

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Q1	216,669	178,035	197,249	189,136	240,397	235,951	226,431	238,922	254,852	266,657	266,971	268,503
Q2	410,664	397,960	434,379	444,058	497,394	511,048	495,084	560,460	580,003	661,055	642,589	666,741
Q3	622,487	584,958	608,502	657,104	679,314	701,932	747,151	757,697	791,252	876,964	926,213	878,621
Q4	481,595	462,837	474,127	544,871	535,704	563,917	578,873	637,460	645,011	717,027	731,975	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,731,415</b>	<b>1,623,790</b>	<b>1,714,258</b>	<b>1,835,169</b>	<b>1,952,809</b>	<b>2,012,848</b>	<b>2,047,539</b>	<b>2,194,538</b>	<b>2,271,118</b>	<b>2,521,702</b>	<b>2,567,747</b>	<b>1,813,865</b>
Year over Year Change	6.4%	-6.2%	5.6%	7.1%	6.4%	3.1%	1.7%	7.2%	3.5%	11.0%	1.8%	

### Share of Exempt Sales (Exempt Sales / Gross Sales)

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Q1	21.8%	21.7%	19.8%	21.2%	22.1%	21.9%	24.1%	22.5%	22.5%	19.2%	20.2%	21.4%
Q2	15.1%	14.6%	14.5%	15.0%	14.3%	15.4%	13.9%	13.0%	14.4%	12.6%	14.4%	13.5%
Q3	11.1%	11.3%	11.7%	10.5%	10.5%	10.8%	10.8%	10.0%	10.5%	6.7%	11.8%	12.3%
Q4	13.4%	11.7%	12.0%	11.7%	13.3%	14.3%	12.8%	12.3%	12.6%	13.7%	14.5%	
<b>Total</b>	<b>14.1%</b>	<b>13.4%</b>	<b>13.5%</b>	<b>13.2%</b>	<b>13.8%</b>	<b>14.3%</b>	<b>13.8%</b>	<b>13.0%</b>	<b>13.5%</b>	<b>11.7%</b>	<b>14.2%</b>	
Year over Year Change	4.6%	-4.8%	0.1%	-2.1%	4.7%	4.0%	-4.1%	-5.9%	4.5%	-13.2%	20.8%	

#### Historic Tax Rates for Hotels & Motels

3% - until May 1, 2002  
 4% - until December 1, 2002  
 4 ½ % - until June 1, 2003  
 5% - June 1, 2003 and beyond

#### Quarter Periods

Q1: Dec Jan Feb  
 Q2: Mar Apr May  
 Q3: Jun Jul Aug  
 Q4: Sep Oct Nov

#### Taxes Due

Mar 20  
 Jun 20  
 Sep 20  
 Dec 20

#### Reported to STPB

Apr  
 Jul  
 Oct  
 Jan

#### Footnotes

\*Additional Revenue = Tax collected outside of current quarter.  
 Voluntary Collection Agreement w/ AirBnb - effective July 1, 2016  
 More Details on Hotel Room Occupancy Taxes are available online:  
<http://www.tompkinscountyny.gov/finance/roomtax>

**TOMPKINS COUNTY**  
**DRAFT STRATEGIC TOURISM PLAN**  
**2021-2027**

# Tompkins County – Strategic Tourism Plan | Third Edition: 2021-2027

1. Acknowledgments
2. Introduction
3. Sustaining the Value of the Local Tourism Sector
4. Tompkins County Tourism Program
  - a. Hotel Room Occupancy Tax
  - b. Current Programs
  - c. Expenditures by Program
5. Achievements: 2011-2019
6. What We Value Most
7. Setting the Baseline
  - a. This Place We Love
  - b. Visitor Profile
  - c. Objectives
  - d. Performance Indicators
  - e. Competition
  - f. Strategic Opportunities & Limitations
8. Goals
  - a. Overall Goals
  - b. Focus Areas
    - i. Priority
      1. Diversity & Inclusion
      2. Higher Education
      3. Marketing & Sales
      4. Outdoor Recreation
      5. Transportation & Connectivity
      6. Waterfront
    - ii. Foundation
      1. Agriculinary
      2. Arts & Cultural Heritage
      3. Downtown Ithaca
      4. Festivals
      5. Planning & Evaluation
    - iii. Emerging
      1. Sports
    - iv. Destination Services
      1. Beautification & Placemaking
      2. Conferences & Groups
      3. Visitor Experience
  - c. Actions & Measures
9. Tompkins County Tourism Partners
10. Glossary

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## Appendix

- Hotel Room Occupancy Tax Law
- STPB Policies
- Visitor Profile Study Results
- Community Survey Results

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Strategic Tourism Planning Board thanks all the individuals who have invested their time and ideas to prepare this plan. Without your assistance in researching, compiling, writing, analyzing, designing, and editing, this document would not be possible.

We also thank the dozens of individuals who contributed to this plan through our stakeholder meetings, community surveys, and comments.

### *Members of the Strategic Tourism Plan Steering Committee*

- Kelli Cartmill
- Brett Bossard
- Peggy Coleman
- Gary Ferguson
- Ken Jupiter
- Anne Kellerman
- Monika Roth
- Scott Wiggins

### *Staff*

Tompkins County Department of Planning & Sustainability

- Nick Helmholdt, Principal Planner / Tourism Program Director
- Katie Borgella, Commissioner of Planning & Sustainability
- Kristin McCarthy, Administrative Assistant

### *Photography Credits*

>>> TBD <<<

## INTRODUCTION

The Tompkins County Strategic Tourism Plan establishes our community’s goals regarding tourism. This document lays out our mutual values and aspirations for the development of tourism over the next six years.

The preparation of this plan was guided by the Tompkins County Strategic Tourism Planning Board (STPB). This board advises Tompkins County on matters of tourism policy and on the allocation of the hotel room occupancy tax.

This plan intends to guide future decisions and investments relating to tourism in our county. The goals and critical actions described in this plan were the result of many months of work by dedicated members of the STPB and other stakeholders in the tourism sector.

Constant effort is required to establish and maintain a destination’s appeal for visitors. Tompkins County is fortunate since it is home to institutions, landmarks, and natural features that attract a global audience.

Tourism presents a real opportunity for Tompkins County in terms of economic development and the enhancement of our residents’ quality of life. Visitor spending supports local jobs and offsets household tax burdens for county residents. Over the past two decades, the Tourism Program has made lasting and meaningful investments in organizations and facilities that help make Tompkins County a great place to live, work, and visit.

This plan looks ahead to the future of travel and tourism in our region. Several emerging issues are currently affecting travel behaviors, such as the growth of short-term rentals, prevalence of smartphones, and increasing demand for locally sourced foods and beverages.

This plan also looks outward toward the visitors who decide to travel to Tompkins County. The recently completed Visitor Profile Study (page **XX**) helped the STPB gain knowledge about the motivation for travel to our county and the sorts of activities visitors choose. This data has been critically important for the development of goals.

Finally, this plan was prepared with the help of people who live and work in Tompkins County. A community survey conducted in late 2018 and early 2019 gathered feedback from 309 individuals (page **XX**) regarding their ideas for tourism development. A facilitated “focus search process” stakeholder meeting with 21 representatives of local nonprofit organizations was held in April 2019 to determine how our community can advance tourism.

Once this plan is adopted by the Tompkins County Legislature, the following actions are proposed:

- Review and revise the policies of the STPB
- Update grant guidelines and related documents

## SUSTAINING THE VALUE OF THE LOCAL TOURISM SECTOR

For the past 20 years, the Tompkins County Tourism Program has supported a wide variety of community-led initiatives that enhance our local quality of life. These investments have been possible due to growing local revenues generated by the hotel room occupancy tax.

The room tax is paid by visitors who stay in hotels, motels, and bed and breakfasts in Tompkins County. The purpose of the room tax is defined in local law as follows:

“The revenue derived from the tax ... shall be allocated to enhance the general economy of Tompkins county, its cities, towns, and villages, through promotion of tourist activities, conventions, trade shows, special events, and other directly related and supporting activities.” (County L.L. No. 4-1989 Hotel Room Occupancy Tax §150-20: Disposition of revenues. <https://ecode360.com/8412617>)

The STPB is charged with the task of advising the County Legislature on the allocation of these funds. As such, the board has sought projects and investments that attract visitors and increase travel demand to our community. The intent is to create a virtuous cycle where growing visitation drives sustainable and resilient economic growth that supports the Tourism Program’s various initiatives.

Tompkins County is fortunate to have institutions, events, and natural features that consistently attract visitors. However, revenue from the room tax is never guaranteed. Economic conditions, fuel prices, weather, and other unpredictable external factors all influence travel decisions.

Through the development of this plan, we have learned more about the importance of tourism to our local economy. Only **XX%** of restaurants and **XX%** of specialty retail stores in downtown Ithaca would be viable without visitors from outside a **XX-mile** radius (DIA). Revenue from visitors is also essential to supporting many of our local cultural institutions. Spending by visitors supports **XXXX** local jobs (Tourism Economics, 2018).

Success as a tourism destination requires constant vigilance to ensure that we maintain and increase our appeal to new visitors. Since its establishment, the STPB has supported a wide array of tourism projects and investments intended to build travel demand where capacity exists in our local market.

It is the intent of this plan to describe strategies that will allow Tompkins County to sustain the value of its local tourism sector for years to come.

## TOMPKINS COUNTY TOURISM PROGRAM

### *Hotel Room Occupancy Tax*

Tompkins County established a hotel room occupancy tax (room tax) in 1986 (appendix **XX**). All Tourism Program activities conducted by the county are supported by this revenue source.

By law, room tax revenues are dedicated to local tourism development.

“The revenue derived from the tax, after deducting the amount provided for administering such tax, as so authorized by this article, shall be allocated to enhance the general economy of Tompkins County, its cities, towns and villages, through promotion of tourist activities, conventions trade shows, special events and other directly related and supporting activities.” (Source: Tompkins County Hotel Room Occupancy Tax Law, Chapter 150, Article II, §150-20 Disposition of Revenues.)

Prior to 2001 nearly all revenues from the room tax were allocated to destination marketing. In 2001 the County Legislature approved an increase in the room tax from 3% to 5%.\* Since this time, the Tourism Program has allocated revenue from this tax as follows:

- 60% for Marketing (representing the historic 3% tax revenue)
- 40% for Product Development (representing the additional 2% tax revenue)

[insert pie chart & flowchart for funding]

Over the past decade, online platforms for short-term rentals have gained in popularity for travelers. In 2016, Tompkins County became the first county in New York State to establish a tax collection agreement with Airbnb. Airbnb reports that 27 other counties in New York have established voluntary collection agreements<sup>†</sup>. Since this time, some municipalities in Tompkins County have considered or adopted regulations on short-term rentals.

### *Strategic Tourism Planning Board*

In 1998 the Tompkins County Legislature reconfigured the Advisory Board on Tourism Development into the STPB. This board is charged with advising the County Legislature on tourism development, evaluation of the activities of recipients of room tax funds, development of tourism policy, and advising the county on the allocation of room tax funds (STPB bylaws, article 2, section 1).

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\* Bed and breakfasts with 10 rooms or fewer were exempted from the increased tax. The room tax for these properties remains at 3%.

<sup>†</sup> <https://www.airbnb.com/help/article/2319/occupancy-tax-collection-and-remittance-by-airbnb-in-new-york>

The STPB is composed of 18 voting members and seven non-voting representatives. The board typically holds 10 meetings per year. STPB currently has four standing committees, five grant review committees, and six other active committees.

Since 2005 Tompkins County has maintained a Strategic Tourism Plan to provide guidance to the Tourism Program and inform decisions regarding the allocation of room tax revenue. This plan was updated in 2013. Since this time five additional tourism topical plans have been prepared:

- Wayfinding and Interpretive Signage Plan – 2014
- Heritage Tourism Implementation Plan – 2015
- Beautification, Signage, and Public Art Strategic Plan – 2016
- Agriculinary Tourism Implementation Plan – 2016
- Outdoor Recreation Implementation Plan – 2018

These documents are available online at <http://tompkinscountyny.gov/tourism/plan>.

### *Current Programs*

Tompkins County currently funds the following initiatives from the hotel room occupancy tax:

### Marketing

- Convention and Visitors Bureau (CVB)
  - Provides destination marketing services. The Ithaca/Tompkins County CVB is our official Tourism Promotion Agency (TPA) and is authorized to access state resources from I♥NY. The CVB has three primary functional units:
    - Marketing & Public Relations
    - Visitor Experience
    - Group Sales
- Market the Arts
  - Promotes visual artists and writers collectively to visitors
- Tourism Marketing & Advertising Grants
  - Promote events and projects likely to attract visitors in a manner consistent with CVB strategy

### Product Development

- Arts & Cultural Organizational Development Grants
  - Enhance our brand as a cultural destination by supporting major arts and cultural assets
- Beautification, Signage & Public Art

- Improves the visual beauty of communities with outdoor plantings and attractive signage to direct travelers to key destinations
- Community Arts Partnership – General Operating Support
  - Strengthens the visibility and viability of the county’s arts community
- Community Celebrations Grants
  - Support local events that convey our unique culture and history
- County Historian
  - Provides historical connections to today’s tourism events and projects
- Hospitality Workforce Development
  - Builds awareness and encourages interest in hospitality and tourism career pathways.
- Public Art Grants
  - Support the creation of public art and encourages additional funding from local, private foundations
- Tompkins Festivals Program
  - Provides event organizers with tools to make events successful, create positive visitor experiences, and establish significant attractions
- Tourism Capital Grants
  - Support the creation and expansion of major visitor attractions
- Tourism Project Grants
  - Support events and projects likely to attract overnight visitors or accomplish actions defined in the Strategic Tourism Plan

Other / Flexible

- Strategic Tourism Implementation Grants
  - Support projects that substantially advance critical actions identified in the 2020 Strategic Tourism Plan or other tourism implementation plans
- Tompkins County Area Development (TCAD)
  - Supports the operation of TCAD as defined in a five-year agreement
- County 10% Tax Administration Fee
  - Per the local law, the county allocates 10% of room tax collections for tax administration purposes.

*Expenditures by Program*

	Total Funding 2013-2019	Years Funded	Annual Average
<b>Marketing</b>			
Convention & Visitors Bureau	\$7,161,389	7	\$1,023,056
New Tourism Initiative Grants	\$463,980	6	\$77,330
Tourism Marketing & Advertising Grants	\$354,453	7	\$50,636
Discovery Trail	\$241,775	7	\$34,539
Market the Arts	\$73,850	7	\$10,550
Tompkins Tourism Partner Award	\$6,000	4	\$1,500
<b>Product Development</b>			
Tourism Capital Grants	\$1,504,763	7	\$214,966
Arts & Cultural Organizational Development Grants	\$1,488,956	7	\$212,708
Beautification	\$970,217	7	\$138,602
Tourism Project Grants	\$626,240	7	\$89,463
Community Arts Partnership - General Operating Support	\$279,078	7	\$39,868
Community Celebration Grants	\$236,973	7	\$33,853
Hospitality Workforce Development	\$216,600	7	\$30,943
Festivals	\$180,434	7	\$25,776
Ticket Center Ithaca	\$46,099	1	\$46,099
County Historian	\$48,750	7	\$6,964
Public Art Grants	\$24,302	3	\$8,101
<b>Other / Flexible</b>			
County 10% Tax Administration Fee	\$1,759,290	7	\$251,327
Tompkins County Area Development - General Operating Support	\$927,808	7	\$132,544
Strategic Tourism Implementation Grants	\$627,396	5	\$125,479
Strategic Planning & Staffing	\$650,374	7	\$92,911

History of Grant Awards 2013-2019

Grant programs have represented a key way the Tourism Program has operated. Over the past seven years, the Tompkins County Tourism Program issued 604 grant awards across seven different grant programs. Grants were issued to more than 100 different organizations.

Tompkins County – Strategic Tourism Plan DRAFT  
Third Edition: 2021-2027

<b>Grant Program</b>	<b>Average Grant Award</b>	<b>Average Number of Awards per Year</b>	<b>Total Grants Issued 2013-2019</b>
Arts & Cultural Organizational Development	\$22,970	9	61
Tourism Capital	\$18,314	11	77
Tourism Project	\$8,240	11	76
New Tourism Initiative	\$7,606	9	61
Tourism Marketing & Advertising	\$2,836	18	125
Community Celebration	\$1,254	27	189
Strategic Tourism Implementation	\$41,826	2	15

## ACHIEVEMENTS 2011-2019

- Completed topical Tourism Implementation Plans
  - Beautification, Signage and Public Art Plan
  - Agriculinary Tourism Implementation Plan
  - Heritage Tourism Implementation Plan
  - Outdoor Recreation Tourism Implementation Plan
  - Wayfinding and Interpretive Signage Plan
- Supported annual Beautification program plantings at over 30 sites
- Assisted **XX** event organizers through the Tompkins Festivals program
- Installed eight works of public art with the Community Arts Partnership
- Launched Visitor Arrival to Destination (A2D) training program for hospitality workforce
- Trained **XX** people through Hospitality Star and 118 people through Visitor A2D training programs
- Established an Agriculinary Tourism Coordinator position at CVB
- Supported renovation or construction of three new Visitors Centers operated by the CVB
- Launched or revamped websites
  - [www.ithacatrails.org](http://www.ithacatrails.org)
  - [www.gofingerlakes.org](http://www.gofingerlakes.org)
  - [www.ithacaevents.com](http://www.ithacaevents.com)
- Supported marquee events such as:
  - Downtown Ithaca Ice Festival / Winter Festival
  - Finger Lakes International Dragon Boat Festival
  - Ithaca Underground: Big Day In & Naked Noise
  - Spring Writes Literary Festival
  - Summer Shakespeare Festival
  - Wizarding Weekend
  - ... and many more!
- Supported new tour offerings through Discover Cayuga Lake (lake cruise) and the Ithaca Youth Bureau (bicycle)
- Supported the revitalization of Stewart Park and the establishment of the Cayuga Waterfront Trail
- Supported new exhibits at Sciencenter, Museum of the Earth and Cayuga Nature Center
- Supported signage & site improvements to the Ithaca Children's Garden
- Supported new performance spaces at Community School of Music and Arts, Running to Places Theatre Company
- Supported visitor enhancements at natural sites such as Ithaca Falls and Lick Brook
- Supported facilities improvements at the State Theatre and Ithaca Farmers Market
- Supported the construction of the Tompkins Center for History & Culture

Tompkins County and Ithaca are regularly recognized in national media for excellence. Among our most recent and notable accolades are:

- Ithaca named one of the "Top 10 American Cities for Family-Friendly Travel" by Forbes.com
- Ithaca named the prettiest town in New York by Architectural Digest
- Ithaca named one of the “Top 50 Most Underrated Cities to Visit in the US” by Thrillist.com
- Ithaca awarded the title of one of the “US Top Emerging Nature Destinations” at the Luxury Travel Guide Awards
- Ithaca recognized for being #2 on “The Best Small College Towns” by USA Today
- Robert H. Treman State Park selected as the “Best Swimming Spot in New York State” by the Weather Channel
- Ithaca named as the 10th “Best New York Art Spots that Aren’t in NYC” by Huffington Post
- Ithaca designated as the “#1 Best College Town” in the 2013-2014 AIER College Destinations Index
- Ithaca Farmers Market selected as one of “8 Must-Visit Farmers Markets Around the US” by Zagat.com
- Ithaca mentioned in Travel and Leisure’s list of “America’s Most Romantic Towns”
- Ithaca named the “#1 Smartest City in America” by VentureBeat Online
- Ithaca named the “#1 Best College Town in America” by Business Insider

<https://www.visitithaca.com/awards-mentions> (This list will be revised with current information following public comment period)

## VALUES

The Tompkins County Tourism Program adheres to a set of core values to guide our decisions.

All goals and critical actions described in this plan flow from the following eight values:

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

## SETTING THE BASELINE

### *This Place We Love*

Tompkins County offers a unique blend of rural and urban settings, spectacular natural features, and world-class academic institutions. At its center, the city of Ithaca sits at the southern tip of Cayuga Lake and serves as the county’s commercial and cultural hub.

Higher education is at the core of our county’s economy, as more than 23,000 students come to study at Cornell University and Ithaca College annually. Nearly one-fifth of all jobs in the county are related to education. In addition, manufacturing and high-tech sectors contribute substantially to the strong local economy.

Tompkins County offers a wide range of artistic and cultural experiences that appeal to residents and visitors alike. Our collection of theatres, museums, and heritage resources have defined our reputation as a cultural destination in the region.

Commercial wine production in the Finger Lakes began over 150 years ago. Since then the region has earned world-wide recognition for producing high-quality wines. In 1981, four Cayuga Lake wineries formed the first official wine trail in New York. Today, more than 460 acres of wine grapes are grown along Cayuga Lake.

Our community prides itself on fostering diversity and inclusion. Tompkins County seeks to honor the inherent value of every visitor’s unique story, perspective, and experience. We welcome visitors regardless of their race, color, ethnicity, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, or socio-economic status.

Many people fall in love with our area for its natural wonders. Recreational options are plentiful on Cayuga Lake, at the county’s four state parks, and at dozens of gorges and waterfalls. It is easy to see why “Ithaca is Gorges.”

### *Visitor Profile*

In 2018, the Ithaca/Tompkins County CVB engaged consulting firm JLL to conduct a study of visitors to Tompkins County. There were two components to the study:

- 1) Online survey of recent visitors and people planning to travel to the county
- 2) In-person surveys of visitors at major attractions in the county

The last Visitor Profile Study was conducted in 2009 (Chmura Economics & Analytics). The table below compares the findings from the two studies.

Tompkins County – Strategic Tourism Plan DRAFT  
Third Edition: 2021-2027

Comparison of Highlights	2019 Overall Results	2009 Overall Results
Repeat Visitation	76% repeat	69%
Overnight Percentage	78% staying overnight	63%
Spending	\$366 per party per day	\$331
Travel Party Size	3.3 people	3.0
Nights Spent	2-3 nights	2.4
Mode of Transportation	21% air	10%
Stays in Hotel/Motels/Inns	60%	50%
Same day Travel Planning	2%	15%
Primary Reason for Travel	Outdoor Leisure Activities	Gorges & State Parks*
Visitor Satisfaction	80% will return	81%

The study yielded several noteworthy findings (full results of this study are in appendix **XX** to this report).

- Traveler Profile

- Repeat visitors – Over three-quarters (76%) of respondents reported that they had visited the area previously.
- Trip length – Over three-quarters (78%) of respondents stayed overnight. Most overnight visitors stayed for two to three nights. Very few visitors had trips lasting more than four nights.
- Travel party type – The average travel party size was just over three people with adults accounting for roughly two-thirds of the group (3.3 total, 2.4 adults). Most respondents stated they were traveling either as a family (with kids) or couple.
- Travel planning
  - Travel planning resources – Most respondents used either information from college/university websites or knowledge from a previous visit to the area to make their travel plans. Local or regional destination websites (i.e. VisitIthaca.com) were the third most used travel planning resource.
  - Travel decision timing – Most respondents began making travel plans between one and two months in advance. Very few visitors made travel plans a week or less in advance.
- Traveler origin and transportation
  - Driving – Most visitors arrive in Tompkins County by automobile. Three-fifths (60%) of respondents reported driving between three and six hours.
  - Flying – Nearly one-fifth (21%) of respondents traveled by air, with the majority arriving at Ithaca Tompkins Regional Airport.
  - Top home states – New York, Pennsylvania, California, and New Jersey
- Spending

- While overall spending increased from 2009, when adjusted for inflation, this trend reverses.
- Retail spending was notably lower than in comparable destinations.
- Demographics
  - Age – Most respondents were between 40-70 years in age.
  - Sexual orientation – 20% of respondents identified as LGBTQIA+. (This compares to approximately 4.5% of the adult population in New York State per a 2017 Gallup survey.)
- Travel Purpose
  - Leisure (38%) including the following reasons:
    - Sightseeing
    - Outdoor oriented experiences
    - Just to get away
  - College (32%) including the following reasons:
    - Visiting a student
    - College tours
    - On-campus events
    - Campus sightseeing tour (not related to college enrollment)
  - Business (16%)
  - Visiting Family and Friends (14%)
- Activities
  - The top responses included:
    - Dining at unique restaurants
    - Visiting gorges and waterfalls
    - Hiking on local trails
    - On-campus activities
    - Strolling through the Ithaca Commons
  - Additional notable responses included:
    - Visiting area wineries
    - Visiting state or local parks
    - Visiting locations on the Discovery Trail
    - Exploring Ithaca Farmers Market
    - Touring museums or galleries
    - Boating or other water-based excursions on Cayuga Lake

[ add map of 6-hour drive radius ]

### *Objectives*

The Tompkins County Tourism Program seeks to achieve the following objectives by 2027:

- Annual Overnight Visitors: 900,000

- Annual Visitor Spending: \$300 million
- Annual Household Tax Benefit: \$950

*Performance Indicators*

The following performance indicators will assist the STPB and Tompkins County Tourism Program understand the health of the tourism sector.

<b>Source</b>	<b>Indicator(s)</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Notes</b>
STR (Smith Travel Research)	Hotel industry statistics: . Occupancy . Avg. daily rate . Supply & demand	Monthly	Private market data
All The Rooms - Analytics	Short-term rental statistics: . Occupancy . Average daily rate . Supply & demand	Monthly	Private market data for top short term rental platforms
Tourism Economics	Economic impact . Visitor spending . Local tax benefits	Annual	Provides comparison statistics to other counties in New York State.
Tompkins County Finance Department	Room tax collections	Quarterly	Quarters are shifted one month from calendar (Q1 is Dec, Jan, Feb)
Cornell University & Ithaca College	Admissions & Enrollment	Annual	Leading indicator of travel demand
Tompkins County Area Development	Local economic statistics: . Employment . Gross product . Compensation	Every 3-5 years	Private economic data (i.e. IMPLAN)
NYS Dept. of Labor	Detailed local statistics: . Employment . Wages	Quarterly	Quarterly census of employment and wages
Cornell Program on Applied Demographics	County Statistics . Population . Labor market	Annual	
Consulting Firm (TBD)	Visitor Profile	Once every 5 years	See “Policy & Evaluation Focus Area” (page <b>XX</b> )

## *Competition*

### Regional Comparison

Ithaca and Tompkins County hold competitive advantages compared to our neighboring communities in several categories. Our destination offers a high value for visitors with a bounty of affordable attractions.

*Hotels & Restaurants* – Tompkins County has over 2,100 hotel rooms and 500 restaurants<sup>1</sup>, many of which are in the City of Ithaca. The variety of accommodation and dining options available in our community allows our area to serve as a hub for travelers exploring the Finger Lakes region.

*Higher Education* – Our county has a large concentration of post-secondary students due to the presence of Cornell University and Ithaca College. These institutions provide programming for students, researchers, and the public. In addition, these institutions routinely attract on-campus meetings, parents, athletic events, artistic performances, and prospective students. The presence of higher education institutions makes Ithaca a viable destination for private regional bus operators and commercial airlines. Furthermore, Cornell and Ithaca College support the following facilities that support tourism in our area:

- Cornell Botanical Gardens
- Cornell Lab of Ornithology
- H.F. Johnson Museum of Art
- Ithaca College Athletics & Events Center / Natatorium

*Outdoor Recreation* – Many destinations in the Finger Lakes region offer waterfalls, lake activities, and pristine natural areas. Tompkins County has distinguished itself through the continued development of a local trail network that connects major outdoor recreation sites to other parts of the community.

*Theatres, Museums & Cultural Attractions* – It is unusual for a place the size of Tompkins County to offer such a variety of cultural experiences for visitors. The cultural attractions in our community compete with establishments in larger metropolitan areas. In addition to our multiple local theatres, museums, and an independent cinema, our local institutions of higher education routinely offer high caliber performances that are open to the public.

*Agritourism & Vineyards* – While many destinations in the Finger Lakes boast a variety of vineyards, Tompkins County has unique offerings in this category. The Ithaca Farmers Market stands out as an anchor attraction which connects local farmers with consumers. Local resources including the Cornell’s College of Agriculture & Life Science and Botanical Gardens attract gardeners and other agricultural professionals.

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<sup>1</sup> Source: TC Dept of Health. Figure includes all food service establishments including food trucks & caterers.

*Downtown Ithaca* – The Ithaca Commons is a truly unique destination unmatched by neighboring cities in our region. The Commons serves as an anchor of our community’s identity and as a host for cultural events. This recently renovated pedestrian street has the capability to host festivals and connect visitors with local merchants.

*Festivals & Major Events* – Any given weekend in upstate New York one can find many events – especially during the summer and fall. Tompkins County hosts several popular festivals and major events including Grassroots Festival of Music & Dance (July), Apple Harvest Festival (September), and Ithaca Festival (June) to name a few. To maintain and grow our events, it is essential that our county’s events offer unique experiences and are promoted to new audiences.

### Comparable Destinations

Travelers have many choices – the first of which is deciding where to go. Several comparison destinations were identified for their similar attributes to Tompkins County. These destinations feature major educational institutions and comparable core urban areas. Research into these destinations revealed the following observations:

- Some destinations incorporate brand elements from local institutions of higher education into their destination marketing. For instance, Destination Ann Arbor (the DMO for Ann Arbor, Michigan) incorporates the school colors for the University of Michigan into its website and printed material.
- Some destinations had established grant programs for tourism generating events and marketing campaigns. For instance, the Central Pennsylvania CVB grants funds to organizations in Centre County for projects that support significant economic impacts and strengthen the perception of the county.
- Some municipalities use hotel room tax funds to support convention centers. For instance, Saratoga County, NY allocates a portion of room tax revenue to support the Saratoga Springs City Center.
- Many municipalities had established some procedure to collect room taxes from short term rentals (i.e. Airbnb and VRBO). For instance, the City of Berkeley, California, requires short term rental operators to pay a \$220 application fee and a monthly enforcement fee of 2% of taxable receipts in addition to a 12% transient occupancy tax. The city allows online registration and payment of fees for short term rentals.

### *Strategic Opportunities & Limitations*

#### Current Local Considerations

- *Seasonality & Academic Calendars* – Visitation to Tompkins County is strongly influenced by season and academic calendars. There is capacity within the existing lodging establishments to increase overnight visitation from November to April. Even during peak season, local hotels often have spare capacity from Sunday to Thursday. This

capacity represents an opportunity to expand tourism to Tompkins County without building additional hotel rooms.

- *Conference Center* – The proposal to redevelop the Green Street Garage currently includes a conference center component. Recent feasibility studies indicate that a downtown conference center could provide economic benefits to the county but that such an operation would require a subsidy to operate.
- *Wayfinding Signage* – In 2014 the Tompkins County Chamber of Commerce completed a Wayfinding & Interpretive Signage Plan for the county. While funds have been set aside to advance this project, it has not yet been implemented. In addition, the expanded network of recreational trails throughout the County may require additional signage not considered in the 2014 plan.
- *Transportation* – One of the most common frustrations for travelers to Tompkins County is the lack of convenient transportation options (page XX). However, without substantial changes to federal and state transportation infrastructure policy, the highway and railroad service are unlikely to change any time soon. The City of Ithaca recently began a parking study to examine the availability and pricing of public structured and on-street vehicle parking. Work is currently underway to expand terminal facilities at the Ithaca Tompkins Regional Airport and additional airline service is anticipated. Limited options for motor coach and intercity bus parking has resulted in adverse impacts on tourism to Tompkins County.
- *Tompkins Center for History & Culture* – In 2019, Tompkins County opened the Center for History & Culture (TCHC) on the Ithaca Commons. This space includes the downtown visitors center, CAP Art Space gallery, and exhibit space for The History Center. TCHC has the potential to serve as a hub for regional tour operations and a visitor destination. Currently, the TCHC is run by a governance council where representatives of partner organizations share in decision making for the operation and marketing of the facility.
- *Resource Allocation* – The Tourism Program relies on funding from the room tax to support a variety of programs (page XX). The STPB often faces difficult choices when preparing annual budgets as there are many compelling requests for funding.
- *Short Trip Length* – Overnight visitors to Tompkins County typically stay two to three days even though they have often planned their trips months in advance. It may be possible to encourage these visitors to extend their trips by one or more nights.

### Emerging Trends & Challenges

While it is impossible to predict the future, there are several emerging trends and issues that may have substantial effects on tourism in Tompkins County and beyond.

- Higher Education Enrollment
  - o Most travel to Tompkins County is related to activity at Cornell University and Ithaca College (page XX). Demographic shifts and changes to the perceived value

of higher education will affect enrollment. In addition, potential legislation affecting college tuition and student loan debt could substantially impact demand for higher education. Changes to demand for higher education have the potential to fundamentally impact demand for travel to our county. Monitoring trends relating to higher education at the national, regional and local level will provide an important indicator for the local tourism economy.

- Short Term Rental (STR) Platforms
  - o Currently, the vast majority of STR listings in Tompkins County are on Airbnb which has an established voluntary collection agreement for room tax (page XX). However, the market for STR listings is highly competitive and several other platforms may gain market share in coming years. Depending on changes in the market, the County may consider additional voluntary collection agreements with other platforms or other means of ensuring compliance with the room tax law.
  - o Municipal regulation of STRs may impact the supply of rooms in coming years. Currently only one municipality has regulated STRs (Village of Cayuga Heights).
  - o Anecdotal evidence suggests that the growth of STR room inventory locally has reduced business to established bed and breakfast businesses in Tompkins County.
- Visitor Readiness & Tourism Training
  - o Staff in many businesses and occupations encounter visitors who pose questions about our destination. As new businesses open and new people begin careers, the need for visitor readiness and tourism training will increase. The Tompkins County Workforce NY office has partnered with the CVB and DIA to establish the Visitor Arrival to Destination training program. This program will need to be promoted to area employers and its content will need to be reviewed periodically to ensure accuracy. As training methods evolve, new tourism training programs may be appropriate.
- Chinese & Asian Outbound Travelers
  - o With economic gains over recent decades, the number of Chinese and Asian outbound travelers has increased. Travelers from China find few signs or instructions in their language and employees are often unfamiliar with cultural expectations of foreign travelers. It will be important to ensure hospitality staff can engage with Chinese and Asian travelers successfully.
- Cannabis Legalization
  - o In 2019, New York State Legislature considered the legalization of cannabis for adult recreational use. While this effort was unsuccessful, proponents of legalization are likely to continue their efforts. There are several potential impacts of cannabis legalization relevant to Tompkins County:

- There may be potential to integrate cannabis cultivation with existing agritourism assets in our region such as vineyards. Our region may benefit from efforts to demonstrate successful small-scale farming techniques.
  - Expanded agricultural research on cannabis at Cornell University may attract new audiences to our County. As other states consider legalization of cannabis, the demand for research will grow.
  - It will be important for local officials to be educated on the potential economic and community issues surrounding cannabis legalization. While a future state law may define rules for licensing establishments for private consumption and consumption of cannabis in public spaces, it is likely that local officials will also have some control over these issues.
- Micro-Mobility & Ride Hailing
    - The range of transportation options in Tompkins County has expanded substantially in recent years as services offered by Lime (pedal bikes, e-bikes, & e-scooters), Uber & Lyft (ride hailing apps) have become available. While these services may improve transportation options to some locations, visitors are not always aware of their availability and costs. It will be important to integrate new transportation options into visitor-facing resources and tourism training courses. Areas with constrained parking may benefit the most by shifting visitor trips away from private automobiles.
  - Climate Change & Extreme Weather
    - Climate change and related weather events could have adverse consequences on many elements of Tompkins County, including tourism. Prolonged drought, flooding, and extreme temperatures all present unique challenges relating to tourism. Environmental changes could threaten the appeal of major attractors for visitors to Tompkins County. The addition of indoor venues for events and gatherings and communicating climate-related conditions to visitors will be increasingly important
  - Harmful Algal Blooms (HAB) / Cayuga Lake Health
    - HABs on Cayuga Lake threaten human health, aquatic ecosystems, and the viability of lake activities enjoyed by residents & visitors. Efforts at the state and local level are underway to prevent HABs and communicate risks. However, visitors to our county may be unaware of this phenomenon and may be upset by their inability to enjoy swimming or boating on the lake. The relatively small number of public beach access areas to Cayuga Lake in Tompkins County increases the impact of HABs related beach closures on our local tourism economy.
  - Decline of Traditional Retail
    - Over the past several years many traditional retail stores have lost business and closed due to emerging national trends. The growth of e-commerce, shifting

consumer habits, and over-development of chain stores are among some of the major factors causing a prolonged decline of retail sales. Ithaca and Tompkins County are not immune to these trends and many retailers in our area have struggled to stay open. Historically, shopping had been a top activity for visitors to our area.

- Mobile Payments / Cashless Economy
  - o While cash is still used for many transactions, new payment technologies allow consumers to rely more heavily on debit cards, credit cards, and mobile devices. Not all service workers, entertainers, and retailers have the capability to accept non-cash payments for tips and purchases. Without the appropriate tools, these individuals and businesses may miss opportunities to make sales and earn income.
- Search Engine Algorithms
  - o Many visitors use online search engines (such as Google) for travel planning. The algorithms which determine the placement of search results often change without warning - this can affect the placement of official tourism information in search results and the way potential travelers retrieve online information. It is not safe to assume that official travel information from the CVB or other sources will be presented clearly to prospective visitors. It also presents a challenge to track how information about our destination is shared with internet users.
- Event Safety and Security Costs / Requirements
  - o State policies are driving increasing requirements for security at events. The costs of increased security may threaten the viability of some large community events. County level action may be necessary to consider all alternatives relating to these changing requirements.
- Living Wage
  - o Local and state legislation to define or require a living wage could have meaningful impacts on the tourism sector. As defined by the 2019 Living Wage Study conducted by Alternatives Federal Credit Union a living wage is \$14.28 per hour for employers who provide health insurance. If a living wage were required by local or state law, employers in the hospitality sector may face difficult short-term choices regarding hours and personnel. Increasing operational costs for lodging establishments and restaurants may result in higher prices for customers.
- Virtual / Augmented Reality
  - o Technological advancements continue to improve virtual and augmented reality capability. These emerging media may allow for some unique opportunities to promote our destination and enhance visitor experiences. In addition, improved virtual reality may provide a way to enhance accessibility to locations that cannot accommodate people with mobility impairments. Widespread use of augmented reality technology at destinations in Tompkins County may require enhancements to wireless networks – especially for non-urban locations.

- Aerial Drones
  - o As prices drop and technology improves small, remote-controlled aircraft have grown in popularity recently. While aerial drones can capture photos and videos from unique perspectives at outdoor events, natural features, and other locations their use may be perceived as a nuisance by visitors. Rules and norms regarding their operation remain unclear. Communicating and enforcing site-specific rules regarding aerial drones may become a growing issue for tourism destinations.

## GOALS

The following chapter identifies specific goals and actions for the Tompkins County Tourism Program to accomplish.

Goals in this document are classified into focus areas – these topical categories provide context on our local tourism development strategy.

Actions are the specific activities that the STPB, Tourism Program, or other partner organization can perform to advance the goals.

### *Overall Goals*

The following goals broadly support tourism development and promotion. These goals cross over multiple focus areas.

1. Increase average overnight trip length by one night
2. Increase average visitor spending by 5% annually in established downtowns and villages
3. Offer indoor and outdoor visitor programming 360 days per year
4. Increase visual and physical access to Cayuga Lake through collaborative efforts with municipal and private stakeholders
5. Increase the share of new visitors to 30%
6. Provide accurate information to decision makers on legislation and policies that affect tourism
7. Continuously refine communication techniques and media to grow awareness of our destination and its assets
8. Foster collaboration among tourism partners to achieve common goals

*Focus Areas*

This plan identifies 15 focus areas for tourism development in Tompkins County. Each is classified into one of four categories: (listed alphabetically)

- Priority: primary tourism motivations and issues facing our destination
  - o Diversity & Inclusion
  - o Higher Education
  - o Marketing & Sales
  - o Outdoor Recreation
  - o Transportation & Connectivity
  - o Waterfront
- Foundation: persistent and strong influences on the tourism sector
  - o Agriculinary
  - o Arts & Cultural Heritage
  - o Downtown Ithaca
  - o Festivals
  - o Planning & Evaluation
- Emerging: long-range opportunity to increase travel demand
  - o Sports
- Destination Services: efforts to grow our local tourism economy
  - o Beautification & Placemaking
  - o Conferences & Groups
  - o Visitor Experience

## Priority

### **Diversity & Inclusion**

Ithaca and Tompkins County have a reputation for welcoming people of all backgrounds. The city of Ithaca has affirmed its status as a Sanctuary City, and Tompkins County has adopted an official Diversity Statement. Our community has earned recognition as a place that is accepting and open to all people.

Data about our visitors and residents confirm the diversity within our community. The Visitor Profile Study (appendix **XX**) revealed that 20% of respondents identified as LGBTQIA+. (This compares to approximately 4.5% of the adult population in New York State per a 2017 Gallup survey.) Census data show that Tompkins County's racial and ethnic diversity compares closely to larger communities and ranks 11<sup>th</sup> among counties in upstate New York (2017, Simpson Diversity Index).

Moving forward, it will be important to ensure that Tompkins County intentionally includes all people and welcomes diverse audiences. We will strive to ensure that people of all races, colors, sexual orientations, gender identities, religions, ages, nationalities, and abilities feel welcome when visiting Tompkins County. Visitors to our community want to feel accepted and see themselves represented in our media.

We recognize that long-term effort will be required to ensure that our destination is inclusive to all people. We believe that supporting diverse visitor groups will enhance local appreciation for the value of diversity in our community and region.

### Goals

- Maintain and enhance our destination's appeal to LGBTQIA+ audiences
- Actively promote our destination to diverse audiences
- Establish cultural awareness training opportunities for tourism sector

## Higher Education

Education is the primary economic engine of Tompkins County. Our three key academic institutions -- Cornell University, Ithaca College, and Tompkins Cortland Community College (TC3) -- have a combined student enrollment exceeding 29,000 in the county. Higher education was associated with many primary motivations for travel in the Visitor Profile Study (appendix **XX**). The study identified 10 specific reasons associated with higher education tourism: visiting students, college tours, and on-campus activities were the top three.

The county's high proportion of college students directly affects our tourism market. Annual events such as orientations, move-in days, parents' weekends, reunions, and commencements attract large numbers of visitors to Tompkins County. The demand from these events regularly approaches or exceeds the county's lodging room supply.

Our county's higher education institutions offer bountiful options for visitors throughout the year. Cornell University is often cited among the most picturesque campuses in the nation. In addition to the gorges and waterfalls, the university includes unique visitor attractors such as the Cornell Botanical Gardens, Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art and the Lab of Ornithology. The institutions also offer performance spaces such as Ithaca College's Ford Hall, which was renovated in 2014 and seats over 600. Collegiate athletic events attract participants and spectators for a variety of competitions. Finally, the institutions attract a substantial amount of business travelers for research, meetings, and campus-related activities.

Looking ahead, several emerging trends relating to higher education should be considered as they will impact local tourism issues. Generational and demographic trends have profound effects on higher education. The decline in the high school student population in upstate New York has caused college recruitment officials to expand their reach to find prospective students. While many families prioritize college visits, there is a growing trend of waiting until a student is admitted before planning a college visit – as such the timing of college visits has shifted from summer to the winter and spring.

Every new class of incoming students presents a remarkable opportunity from the tourism perspective. These students (and their families) are bound to make many future trips to Tompkins County for decades to come.

### Goals

- Strengthen the partnership between higher education institutions and the Tompkins County Tourism Program
- Provide all campus visitors with accurate information about local events, establishments, and community resources.
- Enhance local transportation connections between campuses and downtown Ithaca for visitors

## Marketing & Sales

Destination marketing is essential to increasing awareness of Ithaca and Tompkins County as a vibrant and exciting place to visit year-round. Marketing and advertising are core functions of the CVB.

The CVB markets our county through the VisitIthaca.com website, an annual travel guide publication, social media, and advertisements in a variety of media (online, radio, print, etc.). The CVB works directly with travel writers and bloggers to showcase attractions in our county to new audiences. The CVB leverages the local investment in destination marketing with state matching funds from I♥NY.

The Visitor Profile Study findings have major significance for destination marketing efforts. The study revealed that many people make travel plans using information from college websites and knowledge from previous visits to Ithaca (appendix XX). The study showed that most travel is planned between one and six months in advance. In addition, the study indicated a growing share of repeat visitation (76% compared to 69% in 2009). The study also provided detailed information about our county's most typical travel party types (families and couples). In the coming years, it will be increasingly important to develop communication strategies that can reach these visitors.

One current limitation to our destination sales efforts is the lack of a community conference center. While large meetings can be hosted at on-campus venues, these spaces are in high demand for campus-related events. Prior studies on the feasibility of a conference center in Tompkins County have confirmed the viability of this concept. The addition of a conference center would allow our community to attract new tourism business during off-peak periods.

### Goals

- Build a conference center to host events beyond the capacity of our current meeting spaces
- Increase engagement with online destination marketing efforts and distribution of travel guides
- Maintain working partnerships with higher education institutions on destination marketing efforts
- Provide support to local tourism partners through marketing and advertising.
- Increase media impressions and social media engagement

## Outdoor Recreation

Gorges and waterfalls define the landscape of Tompkins County and attract the attention of travelers. Our county offers a wealth of outdoor recreational opportunities from hiking and biking on local trails to paddling and windsurfing on Cayuga Lake. The Visitor Profile Study identified visits to gorges and hiking as two of the top seven most popular visitor activities (appendix **XX**).

Tompkins County contains three state parks, 240 miles of recreational trails, four local parks along Cayuga Lake, and over 19,000 acres of state forest land. Several local organizations help people engage with the environment, such as the Cayuga Nature Center and Ithaca Children's Garden. Our county's unique outdoor environment is tightly integrated into our history and culture.

Yet, opportunities remain for our county to improve its appeal as an outdoor-focused destination. Critical links need to be filled in our trail network, and public lake access sites are in high demand. Several goals and actions were identified in the recently completed *Outdoor Recreation Tourism Implementation Plan*. Looking ahead, many questions remain about the maintenance and stewardship of local outdoor recreational resources.

### Goals

- Maintain and enhance our status as a destination for outdoor recreation.
- Complete the goals and actions in the *Outdoor Recreation Tourism Implementation Plan*

## **Transportation & Connectivity**

Navigating between various destinations is an integral part of any trip, and visitors to Tompkins County have many options to consider. The Visitor Profile Study revealed that most of our visitors drive here and many visitors who fly in choose to rent a car upon arrival (appendix **XX**). It also showed that many of our visitors have experience navigating our county's streets either as tourists or residents. This presents some unique circumstances for considering improvements to visitor transportation.

The Visitor Profile Study confirmed that some visitors believe that Tompkins County is not easy to get to. While Ithaca has several inter-city bus lines (Short Line, OurBus, and the Cornell Campus to Campus service) connecting to New York City and other metro areas, we aren't served by an interstate highway or passenger train service. Improvements to regional and statewide transportation networks are beyond the scope of this six-year plan and generally beyond the funding capacity of the Tourism Program.

Tompkins County offers a wide range of transportation services and infrastructure available to visitors, commuters, and residents. In addition to TCAT bus service, Gadabout, taxis, and Ithaca CarShare, several new transportation options have recently emerged such as bike sharing (Lime) and app-based ride hailing (Uber & Lyft). The city of Ithaca offers public structured and on-street parking in downtown, and Collegetown and is currently studying its overall parking strategy.

Looking ahead, the Tourism Program has the capability to leverage local investments to improve transportation for visitors to our county. Improvements to our community's wayfinding signage will be important to help new and repeat visitors of all abilities navigate without using a smartphone. Enhanced transit links between core visitor destinations will help to relieve parking demands in downtown Ithaca and on college campuses.

### **Goals**

- Implement wayfinding signage countywide recommended in the 2014 Wayfinding and Interpretive Signage Plan
- Refine visitor communication regarding transportation options and parking
- Leverage local investments in infrastructure to improve visitor transportation options

## **Waterfront**

Cayuga Lake is a signature landscape feature that contributes to the overall attractiveness and uniqueness of our county as a tourism destination. The lake is the backdrop for the Ithaca Farmers Market and Stewart Park – two top attractions in our area. Many waterfront destinations in Ithaca are connected by the Cayuga Waterfront Trail.

Yet, the waterfront remains an underdeveloped tourism asset. Nearly four-fifths (80%) of respondents to the Visitor Profile Study reported that they did not participate in any lake activity. Recent developments and plans have started to generate excitement about the potential of the waterfront.

While some tourist destinations are located on or near Cayuga Lake or its inlet, there is relatively little private development in the vicinity. There is potential with the right type of development to provide enhanced waterfront access and experiences that would bring increased vitality and excitement to the overall package of opportunities for visitors to explore.

### **Goal**

- Improve public access for all types of waterfront experiences, including walking, gathering places, cafes/sitting areas, boating, running, biking, and pedestrian connections.

## Foundation

### **Agriculinary**

Tompkins County contains a mix of urban and rural places. Agriculinary tourism represents an opportunity for visitors to experience the best of our area’s agricultural and culinary offerings. Development of agriculinary tourism provides people with a chance to experience working landscapes and learn about our community through its land and food. The growth of agriculinary tourism increases opportunity for farmers, producers, and restaurants to sell locally sourced foods to new customers.

Our county has several key agriculinary tourism assets, including the Ithaca Farmers Market, Cayuga Lake Wine Trail, and the Farm to Fork brand. Following on the 2016 Agriculinary Tourism Implementation Plan, the Ithaca/Tompkins County CVB created a new position focused on the promotion of agriculinary tourism and a microgrant program for agriculinary destinations. Our county is home to a concentration of craft cider producers – a sector that we expect to grow in coming years.

Looking ahead, we want to expand the availability of locally produced foods and beverages and increase visitor opportunities to engage with our local agricultural community. Efforts from a wide range of private partners will be needed to ensure that Tompkins County maintains its reputation as a destination that offers high-quality, locally sourced foods and beverages.

### Goals

- Increase visibility and sales of locally produced food and beverage for visitors
- Enhance our reputation as a destination for agriculinary tourism
- Build capacity for emerging agriculinary tourism districts and attractions through ongoing trainings, workshops, and networking events
- Integrate established agriculinary tourism attractions with outdoor recreation opportunities
- Increase traffic on Visit Ithaca - Farm to Fork website
- Connect the Ithaca Farmers Market to emerging waterfront development
- Seek media coverage and other opportunities to further position Ithaca/ Tompkins County as a top agriculinary tourism destination with a focus on assets such as the area’s burgeoning craft cider industry, quality of craft cider, and scientific research being led by Cornell

## Arts & Cultural Heritage

Artistic and cultural attractions are a key element of many visitors' experiences in Tompkins County. Indeed, many of our community's largest cultural institutions rely on visitors to support a variety of performances, exhibits, and other artistic programming. A full calendar of cultural events allows us to offer unique and inspiring visitor experiences year-round.

In 2019 Tompkins County was recognized as the #6 medium-size metropolitan area for arts vibrancy by the National Center for Arts Research (SMU DataArts, 2019). We are home to a wide variety of theatres, museums, and creative institutions. Our community's cultural offerings attract diverse audiences for live performances, exhibitions, and other events. As a cultural destination, we have been far more successful than most communities of our size.

Over the past five years, Tompkins County has made substantial progress toward advancing heritage tourism. The recently established Tompkins Center for History & Culture is the cornerstone of heritage tourism in our community. Looking ahead, visitors appear to be interested in the development of a college or university related museum in Tompkins County (appendix **XX**).

Tompkins County seeks to maintain and grow its reputation as a destination for cultural tourism. Our cultural institutions offer compelling reasons for travelers to discover new experiences and extend the length of their trip. However, these institutions rely on human talent, inspired marketing, and accessible physical venues to engage our visitors.

### Goals

- Increase ticket sales and attendance at cultural attractions in Tompkins County
- Position cultural events and attractions to extend trip length
- Maintain our status as a cultural destination in upstate New York
- Increase marketing of arts and cultural heritage tourism assets
- Focus sales efforts on group tours that incorporate cultural heritage tourism assets

## **Downtown Ithaca**

The shops, restaurants, offices, and services clustered around the Ithaca Commons comprise the primary commercial hub of our community. In addition to its local significance, the Commons is a primary destination for tourists: over one-third of visitors reported visiting the Ithaca Commons during their last trip (appendix **XX**). In 2015, 40 years after its creation, the Commons was re-built with new features that improved its value as public infrastructure. In addition to new residential and commercial development downtown, two new hotels have recently opened near the Commons.

The Downtown Ithaca Alliance is the area's business improvement district and as such provides supplemental services to preserve and develop the district. The Ithaca Commons is a one-of-a-kind venue for large-scale outdoor events such as Apple Harvest Festival. The presence of four hotels with a combined total of 575 rooms makes downtown Ithaca the core of our area's visitor market and a destination easily accessible to many tourists.

Yet, downtown Ithaca faces distinct challenges regarding tourism. Foot traffic downtown suffers due to the effects of academic calendars and seasonal slumps in visitor traffic. Data from the Visitor Profile Study suggests that tourist retail spending has decreased, and that store owners may need to find new and creative ways to engage with shoppers. Additional opportunities exist to establish a wayfinding program, enhance local transportation options, and upgrade parking facilities.

### **Goals**

- Establish a downtown Ithaca community conference center
- Establish downtown Ithaca as the county's primary hub for group tours
- Strengthen the performance of retail in downtown Ithaca
- Increase the availability of family-centered entertainment options in downtown Ithaca
- Evaluate options to improve downtown transportation connections to benefit visitors, downtown employees, and residents

## **Festivals**

Major events attract visitors, generate publicity, and create community excitement. Festivals help us present all aspects of our community and express our local cultures. Festivals can also provide economic benefits to vendors, food establishments, and hotels.

DIA operates the Tompkins Festivals program, which supports event organizers throughout the county. This program consults with organizers of large events, offers workshops for event organizers, and operates an equipment rental program. The Tourism Program has supported dozens of events and festivals through various grants.

The demands placed on event organizers change frequently. For instance, recent concerns about safety have led to increased security mandates for some organizers. In order to ensure that Tompkins County can offer a robust calendar of events and festivals, ongoing education of event organizers is needed.

### **Goals**

- Support event organizers with accurate educational materials and equipment rental
- Increase visitor attendance at festivals
- Support the development of festivals that have the potential to extend trip length

## **Planning & Evaluation**

Planning and evaluation is the foundation on which the Tompkins County Tourism Program is built and sustained.

Evaluation is ongoing work that tests aspects of the program for performance and continued relevance. Evaluation forms the basis from which we make improvements to the program whether through suggested discussions with a partner or by changing portions of the program. This may happen through tweaks, substantial changes, or even elimination of program elements.

Planning is ongoing as well. It responds to changes in the market landscape and in making predictive decisions about the direction of the program. In planning we support the health of our tourism industry as well as our community's assets for the betterment of the lives of our citizens as we work to align the two.

The STPB Planning & Evaluation (P&E) Committee does the formative work around the parts of the long-range plan, bringing them to implementation. Its recommendations are brought to the STPB for consideration as issues arise.

Goals:

- Update the Visitor Profile Study every five years
- Provide consistent reporting guidance for partner organizations and grant recipients
- Annually identify local and state issues where education and advocacy may be appropriate based on the goals of this plan
- Periodically review how to balance support for legacy partners and new partners
- Review the STPB bylaws every three years

## Emerging

### **Sports**

Sports tourism holds the potential to attract new audiences of athletes and spectators to Tompkins County. Except for college sporting events, this tourism market has been largely overlooked. Tompkins County has the fundamental elements necessary to host additional individual and team sporting events throughout the year.

Currently, Cornell University and Ithaca College host a wide variety of college athletic events on their campuses. Our scenic state and local parks offer unique venues for outdoor events, such as the Cayuga Lake Triathlon. However, many regional youth and adult athletic events secure facilities outside Tompkins County.

In order to unlock this potential, key investments are needed to enhance the quality and availability of playing fields. Improvements to local playing fields will benefit local residents as well as visitors. In addition, deeper partnerships between local event organizers and campus athletic departments will be necessary to increase the public benefits of the collegiate facilities in Tompkins County.

### Goals

- Strengthen partnership with colleges to host sporting events on campuses
- Attract new annual sporting events to Tompkins County

## Destination Services

### **Beautification & Placemaking**

Investments in the appearance and functionality of public spaces are vital to ensure that these locations attract visitors and residents. The aesthetic visual quality of our county’s public spaces has a major influence on visitor experience and resident satisfaction. The presence of benches, lighting, public art, wastebaskets, and bollards can transform public spaces and lead to community-wide benefits.

The Tompkins County Tourism Program has supported a countywide Beautification program through a collaborative effort between the Cornell Cooperative Extension of Tompkins County, DIA, and the Tompkins County Chamber of Commerce. This program has leveraged the efforts and enthusiasm of dozens of volunteers and sponsors since its establishment in 2002. The 2016 Beautification, Signage, and Public Art Strategic Plan defined goals and actions for this program. The plan also defined locations for plantings in the city of Ithaca and throughout the county. Recently, CAP identified the “Tompkins Giant” as the theme for a series of public art installations imagined for the area.

Looking ahead, it will be important to ensure that beautification and placemaking efforts supported through the Tourism Program align with destinations of interest to visitors. The long-term viability of this program depends on the strength of the partnerships that support its ongoing work.

New approaches may be necessary to enhance public spaces in different settings. (For instance, large planter boxes installed on the Ithaca Commons may not fit on narrower sidewalks in other neighborhoods.) In some situations, it may be appropriate to use low-cost, temporary measures to test the viability of enhancements to public spaces. This approach is sometimes called “tactical placemaking,” and it has the potential to enhance our visitor experience.

### Goals

- Maintain attractive plantings and well-maintained public spaces at key visitor destinations, including the Ithaca Commons, Collegetown, and the Waterfront
- Build upon municipal partnerships to support beautification and placemaking efforts through financial and in-kind assistance to ensure long-term program sustainability
- Increase volunteer and sponsor engagement with the Beautification program
- Commission high-quality public art consistent with the Tompkins Giant theme in locations with high visibility to visitors
- Establish a process to support tactical placemaking efforts that have potential to enhance visitor experiences

## **Conferences & Groups**

As Tompkins County's supply of accommodation options has expanded in recent years, the addition of new conferences and group tour bookings will be vital to ensure the stability of the hospitality sector. Visitors associated with conferences and groups often travel during off-peak days and seasons and bring business to hotels, restaurants, attractions, and retailers.

While our county currently lacks a conference center, we offer unique spaces for meeting planners, including locations on the campuses of Cornell University and Ithaca College. Efforts to explore the viability of a new community conference center in downtown Ithaca are underway. A conference center would allow our community to host events that currently conflict with academic schedules or don't fit into our current meeting space inventory.

The ongoing expansion of the Ithaca Tompkins Regional Airport will likely result in the establishment of new direct airline routes – and potentially lead to opportunities to attract new business meetings to our county. Enhanced partnerships between the CVB and our higher education institutions hold the potential to attract new conferences to our county. Continued engagement with tour operators will improve the desirability of Ithaca and Tompkins County as a destination for organized groups.

### **Goals**

- Increase conference and group tour business during mid-week and off-peak season
- Enhance the visibility of our destination to group tour operators

## **Visitor Experience**

Sometimes, travel can be a confusing, frustrating, and stressful experience. Travelers often need access to accurate information, essential services, and personalized assistance to enjoy their journeys.

The CVB operates three visitor centers in the county. In addition, CVB staff answer visitor questions over the phone and via online chat. Through a partnership with the Tompkins County Workforce Development Board, the CVB offers Visitor Journey Arrival to Destination (A2D) ambassador training. This program supports tourism training for front-line hospitality staff and other community members who wish to engage more effectively with visitors.

The Visitor Profile Study indicated that our visitors are remarkably satisfied with their trips to Tompkins County (appendix **XX**). However, it will be important to stay up to date with consumer technology, understand visitor preferences, and respond to new inquiries to maintain this level of satisfaction.

### **Goals**

- Maintain or increase visitor satisfaction
- Maintain or increase total visitor engagement at visitors centers and online
- Increase the number of Visitor Journey A2D participants

## *Actions & Measures*

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### Diversity & Inclusion

#### Actions

- Ensure that photography and video used for destination marketing represent our community’s diversity
- Support local events that celebrate our diversity through marketing and promotion
- Identify and develop cultural awareness training programs for community ambassadors and hospitality workforce
- Recruit STPB board members from diverse backgrounds
- Identify accessibility barriers at major visitor attractions and support measures to improve accessibility
- Support events and attractions that engage diverse local populations
- Gather appropriate information about visitor diversity in future Visitor Profile Studies

#### Measures

- Diversity of responses in Visitor Profile Study
- Visitor agreement with the following statements about our destination in profile study:
  - o “Offers a welcoming environment for visitors”
  - o “Appeals to many different audience groups”
- Participation in tourism-oriented cultural awareness training

### Higher Education

#### Actions

- Integrate campus event calendars with CVB & IthacaEvents.com
- Hold quarterly meetings between Cornell University, Ithaca College, TC3, and the CVB to maintain long-range event coordination
- Encourage and incentivize event organizers to align event timing with academic calendars
- Assess current transportation options between campuses and downtown Ithaca and identify potential intervention points that would improve connectivity
- Identify unique large-scale events that can be hosted on-campus when classes are not in session (such as Science Olympiad)
- Annually review campus tours and student orientation programming to ensure current information about local tourism assets is accurate
- Identify off-campus community assets that are linked to higher education institutions to incorporate into tour itineraries

- Engage Cornell University, Ithaca College, and TC3 employees with tourism training opportunities such as Visitor Journey A2D
- Connect local hospitality staff with on-campus opportunities to learn from faculty and guest lecturers

#### Measures

- On-campus events listed on IthacaEvents.com
- Visitor attendance at on-campus attractors
- Performance of transit service between downtown Ithaca and campuses
- College related travel purposes reported in Visitor Profile Study
- Visitor reported participation in on-campus activities in Visitor Profile Study

#### Marketing & Sales

##### Actions

- Promote Tompkins County as an accessible destination for outdoor recreation
- Promote Ithaca and Tompkins County as a destination that is easy to get to by various modes of transportation
- Promote Tompkins County to targeted and niche audiences such as LGBTQIA+ and agriculinary tourists
- Focus and refine marketing and advertising efforts for higher education-focused visitors.
- Build and maintain a library of attractive imagery and video of Tompkins County's tourism assets
- Offer annual marketing workshops and educational resources to local tourism partners.
- Develop cooperative advertising opportunities to help local tourism partners reach out-of-county audiences
- Develop a marketing strategy focused on connecting with repeat visitors
- Identify and engage markets for potential new visitors, including new niche travel segments

##### Measures

- Annual VisitIthaca.com website traffic, social media engagement, and media impressions
- Percent of travel guides distributed outside of Tompkins County
- Percent of visitors using CVB resources for travel planning as reported in Visitor Profile Study
- Visitor agreement with the following statements about our destination in Visitor Profile Study:
  - o “Makes it easy to get information about things to do”
  - o “Appeals to many different audience groups”

## Outdoor Recreation

### Actions

- Leverage local and regional funding sources to address maintenance needs of recreational trails and other outdoor recreational assets
- Engage an external consultant to assess the potential value of the county's outdoor recreational assets (e.g. parks, trails, established events) relative to national trends for future tourism development
- Identify and engage out of region group tour operators who can offer destination biking, hiking, paddling, or other extended outdoor recreation trips in Tompkins County
- Update and implement the Priority Trails Strategy to reflect potential new trail segments and actions for land and water trails
- Assess the marketing needs for outdoor recreation tourism and develop a coordinated marketing plan

### Measures

- Miles of connected, multi-use trails within Tompkins County
- Established public access points to Cayuga Lake for swimming and/or boating
- Percent of visitors participating in outdoor recreation activities as reported in profile study.
- Attendance at state and local parks

## Transportation & Connectivity

### Actions

- Explore and support efforts to establish a downtown Ithaca intermodal transit center
- Evaluate ways to enhance visitor experience at key transportation terminals, including the airport, intercity bus depot, and downtown parking garages
- Research how mobility as a service options may align with visitor transportation needs
- Evaluate the creation of a fully accessible shuttle service between Cornell University and downtown Ithaca and other destinations
- Create a transportation communication strategy for visitors
- Coordinate with TCAT and partner municipalities to establish remote parking for downtown workers to improve availability of parking for visitors
- Connect existing multi-use trails to improve access to the urban area

### Measures

- Performance of transit service between downtown Ithaca and campuses
- Visitor agreement with the following statements about our destination in profile study:
  - o “Makes it easy to navigate to the different attractions”

- “Is easy to get to”

### Waterfront

#### Actions

- Review existing local waterfront plans and identify active development projects
- Invite development proposal teams to present draft plans to STPB members for consideration of issues that affect visitors
- Assess waterfront sites appropriate for open space, enhanced public access to Cayuga Lake, trail connections, and other amenities valued by visitors to Tompkins County
- Evaluate opportunities to create and expand year-round tourism destinations along the waterfront

#### Measures

- Established public access points to Cayuga Lake for swimming and/or boating
- Visitors reporting participation in any lake activity in profile study
- Visitor spending on outdoor experiences in profile study

### Agriculinary

#### Actions

- Establish branding guidelines for “Farm to Fork” partner farms and restaurants
- Explore the expansion of agriculinary microgrants to support the agritourism sector
- Identify and engage out of region group tour operators who can offer destination culinary tours in Tompkins County
- Evaluate the potential for the development of new niche agriculinary tourism themes (such as establishing a fiber trail)
- Collaborate with partners to develop packages that integrate local chefs, farms, and rural lodging
- Explore improvements to the Ithaca Farmers Market to expand lake access and attract customers throughout the year

#### Measures

- Visitors reporting participation in the following in the Visitor Profile Study:
  - Visiting area wineries
  - Exploring the Farmer’s Market
  - Visiting a local farm or orchard
- Visitor spending on dining and craft beverages in the Visitor Profile Study
- Participation in local agriculinary conferences, workshops, and networking events

### Arts & Cultural Heritage

## Actions

- Identify and leverage collaborative marketing opportunities for cultural organizations
- Provide digital marketing assistance to local cultural organizations
- Capture and distribute media reflecting the range of cultural offerings available in Tompkins County on the CVB website, the annual visitor guide, and other destination promotional material
- Evaluate the feasibility of proposals that integrate natural areas and outdoor performance (i.e. waterfront performance venue)
- Develop a set of standard metrics for all local cultural organizations, including those affiliated with our higher education institutions, to report to the community on an annual basis (consider using Cultural Data Profile system)
- Perform a regional assessment of competitive venues and cultural attractions
- Perform an assessment of IthacaEvents.com ability to promote and distribute event information to target audiences
- Develop a clear communication channel for all local cultural events (including those affiliated with our higher education institutions)
- Provide current information to hospitality staff and local ambassadors on local artistic & cultural programming
- Support cultural programming and marketing geared toward LGBTQIA+ audiences
- Seek out public relations opportunities to highlight arts and cultural assets in Ithaca
- Develop visitor packages that combine local food and beverage offerings with artistic and cultural experiences
- Evaluate the feasibility of establishing permanent museum exhibits focused on Cornell University and Ithaca College at the Tompkins Center for History & Culture
- Engage the County Historian to develop heritage tourism assets available for incorporation into exhibits and tours
- Identify group tour operators willing to include local arts and cultural heritage tourism attractions

## Measures

- Cultural events listed on IthacaEvents.com
- Ticket sales, total attendance, and out of county visitors to established cultural tourism attractions supported by the Tourism Program
- Visitors reporting participation in the following activities in the Visitor Profile Study
  - o Visiting locations on the Discovery Trail
  - o Touring a museum or gallery
  - o Touring a historic site or landmark
  - o Seeing a live performance or concert at a local theatre
- Visitor spending on museums, attractions, and other entertainment in the Visitor Profile Study

- Visitor agreement with the following statements about our destination in the Visitor Profile Study:
  - o “Offers compelling arts, history, and cultural enrichment”
  - o “Appeals to many different audience groups”

### Downtown Ithaca

#### Actions

- Perform a downtown retail market study
- Explore policies and programs that encourage retail-focused events and unique or experiential retail
- Encourage the addition of banners and flags throughout downtown
- Develop a year-round calendar of tours focused on heritage, food, and culture
- Support City of Ithaca efforts to enhance the visitor experience at downtown parking garages
- Establish consistent wayfinding for pedestrians and motorists throughout downtown Ithaca
- Engage downtown businesses and employees with tourism training opportunities such as Visitor Journey A2D.

#### Measures

- Increased foot traffic as measured by pedestrian counters on the Commons
- Visitors reporting a walk on the Ithaca Commons in Visitor Profile Study
- Visitor spending on dining and retail in Visitor Profile Study

### Festivals

#### Actions

- Annually evaluate the need to add or replace rental items in the Tompkins Festivals equipment rental program
- Annually review local regulatory issues affecting event organizers
- Provide annual workshops and educational materials for event organizers

#### Measures

- Visitors reporting that they attended a special event or festival in Visitor Profile Study
- Total attendance and out of county visitors at major annual events supported by the Tourism Program
- Utilization of equipment rental by event organizers
- Participation in Tompkins Festivals workshops for event organizers

### Planning & Evaluation

Actions:

- Establish a line item in the Tourism Program budget to ensure regular funding is available to perform updated market evaluations
- Consider appropriate demographic questions to include in future Visitor Profile Studies, especially regarding diversity
- Determine annual priorities for evaluation at the first P&E Committee meeting of each year
- Review proposed local, state, and federal legislation, policies, and programs affecting tourism annually before July; where appropriate, the P&E Committee will recommend board action for advocacy
- Engage the STPB in education and advocacy efforts focused on local and state government as deemed necessary by the P&E Committee
- Develop a policy to balance the needs of legacy partners and new partners and offer guidance for organizations seeking Tourism Program support
- Establish and define key indicators to be included consistently in grant reports to STPB
- Establish and distribute guidance on measuring event attendance for partner organizations
- Provide a progress report on goals in the Strategic Tourism Plan to the STPB every two years

Measures

- Progress toward overall goals (page **XX**)

Sports

Actions

- Identify and engage sporting event organizers interested in hosting events in Tompkins County
- Evaluate the feasibility and costs of upgrading municipal sports fields to be capable of hosting large events

Measures

- Visitors reporting attendance at a sporting event in Visitor Profile Study

Beautification & Placemaking

Actions

- Annually review the planters and public spaces maintained by partner organizations and prioritize locations relevant to visitor experience and established development nodes
- Review and update the Beautification, Signage, and Public Art Strategic Plan.

- Review and document beautification practices in comparable cities and counties to identify best practices
- Engage municipal partners considering modifications to public spaces to ensure that tourism-supportive features are incorporated
- Identify locations where tactical placemaking efforts could enhance visitor experience and engage municipalities regarding implementation
- Support the establishment and maintenance of public art in locations with heavy visitor traffic
- Promote public art installations in Tompkins County
- Support beautification improvements in rural communities

#### Measures

- Number of plantings maintained by the Beautification program
- Visitor agreement with the following statements about our destination in Visitor Profile Study:
  - o “Has a clean, unspoiled environment”
- Public art installations supported by the Tourism Program

#### Conferences & Groups

##### Actions

- Leverage airport connections to grow niche meeting and retreat business
- Build the association market (state, regional and national)
- Host an industry conference to gain exposure to domestic tour companies
- Grow international visitation to Tompkins County
- Leverage regional partners to create fresh tour product to increase overnight trips
- Identify and engage niche group travel opportunities

##### Measures

- Meeting, conference, and athletic event leads sent and booked
- Group tour and leisure leads sent and booked
- Total booked economic impact attributed to CVB meetings and group sales efforts

#### Visitor Experience

##### Actions

- Research and deploy integrated communication systems to share up-to-date information with visitors and front-line tourism staff (i.e. SMS or push notifications)
- Evaluate ways to enhance visitor experience at key transportation terminals, including the airport, intercity bus depot, and downtown parking garages

- Refine and expand tourism training programming offered through Visitor Journey A2D
- Research personal concierge service technology systems
- Continue to engage with visitors outside of visitor center facilities

#### Measures

- Visitor likelihood to return as reported in Visitor Profile Study
- Visitor recommendation of our destination for a vacation or getaway as reported in Visitor Profile Study
- Visitor agreement with the following statements about our destination in Visitor Profile Study:
  - o “Offers a welcoming environment for visitors”
  - o “Makes it easy to get information about things to do”
- Participation in A2D training
- CVB visitor touchpoints at visitor centers, off-site events, online chat, and other methods

## TOMPKINS COUNTY TOURISM PARTNERS

(listed alphabetically)

### *Core Tourism Program Partners*

- Community Arts Partnership
- Cornell Cooperative Extension of Tompkins County
- Downtown Ithaca Alliance
- Tompkins County Area Development
- Tompkins County Chamber of Commerce – Ithaca/Tompkins County Convention & Visitors Bureau
- Tompkins County Historian
- Tompkins County Workforce Development Board

### *Higher Education Partners*

- Cornell University
- Ithaca College
- Tompkins Cortland Community College

### *Local, Regional & State Partners*

- Cayuga Lake Scenic Byway
- Cayuga Lake Wine Trail
- City of Ithaca
- Discovery Trail
- Finger Lakes Beer Trail
- Finger Lakes Land Trust
- Finger Lakes Regional Tourism Council
- Finger Lakes Tourism Alliance
- Hotels, Motels, Inns & B&Bs
- Ithaca Farmers Market
- Ithaca Tompkins Regional Airport
- I♥NY (Empire State Development)
- Local Restaurants
- Local Retailers
- Local Transportation Providers
- NYS Parks, Recreation & Historic Preservation
- Past Tourism Program Grant Recipients
- Regional Media Outlets (TV, print, radio, online, etc.)

- Regional Tourism Promotion Agencies
- Tour Operators
- Tompkins Center for History & Culture
- Tompkins County Area Transit
- Tompkins County Parks & Trails Network
- Towns & Villages in Tompkins County

## GLOSSARY

- Action
  - Specific activities which will advance one or more goals
  - See page **XX**
- Convention & Visitors Bureau (CVB)
  - AKA “Visit Ithaca”
  - The Ithaca/Tompkins County CVB is a division of the Tompkins County Chamber of Commerce. It is the official Tourism Promotion Agency for Tompkins County. The CVB has three primary departments: marketing, group sales, and visitor experience.
- Core Tourism Program Partners
  - Entities that participate in the annual room tax budget development. These organizations receive annual funding to assist the Tourism Program. Each entity prepares an annual work plan and budget request for review by the STPB Budget Committee.
  - See page **XX**
- Focus Areas
  - Thematic categories for goals and actions
  - See page **XX**
- Goal
  - Results and outcomes sought by the Tourism Program. All goals in this plan are aligned with one or more values. Most goals are organized by focus area.
  - See page **XX**
- Housing & Economic Development (HED) Committee
  - The HED Committee reports to the Tompkins County Legislature. The STPB reports to the HED Committee, which makes recommendations to the Legislature. Committee assignments are subject to change at the discretion of the Legislature.
- I♥NY
  - AKA “Empire State Development”
  - Official New York State Destination Marketing Organization
- Hotel Room Occupancy Tax
  - AKA “Room Tax,” “Bed Tax,” “Lodging Tax” etc.
  - A tax paid by visitors to Tompkins County who stay in hotels, motels, and bed and breakfast establishments. The tax rate is 5% of the daily rate for all lodging properties with 11 or more rooms and 3% of the daily rate for all smaller lodging properties. The law describes specific exemptions for permanent residents and tax-exempt guests. Tompkins County first levied a hotel tax in 1986. The tax rate was increased in 1989 and 2001. The tax is remitted quarterly.
  - See appendix **XX** / County L.L. No. 4-1989 - <https://ecode360.com/8412617>

- Strategic Tourism Planning Board (STPB)
  - Advisory board to the Tompkins County Legislature on all matters relating to tourism. The STPB is the formal advisory board charged by the Tompkins County Legislature with providing oversight and strategic direction for tourism initiatives that promote economic development and enhance the quality of life for residents in Tompkins County. The STPB was established in 1998.
- Tompkins Center for History & Culture
  - Established in 2019, this facility serves as the home to The History Center in Tompkins County, Community Arts Partnership, the CVB’s downtown visitor center, and several other nonprofit organizations.
- Tompkins County Tourism Program
  - The official name of the overall program funded by the hotel room occupancy tax.
- Tourism Marketing
  - Activities that entice visitors to travel to Tompkins County. Marketing activities include identification of potential visitors, market research, advertising campaigns, public relations, social media campaigns, group sales, conference and meeting sales, and visitor center operations.
  - The STPB has established a budget policy that allocates 60% of the available hotel room occupancy tax to marketing annually (See page XX.)
- Tourism Product Development
  - Activities that enhance the attractions, amenities, services, venues, events, and other features that bring visitors to our community. Product development activities can include feasibility studies of potential improvements, grants to support festivals, capital improvements, and general operating support for local organizations.
  - The STPB has established a policy that allocates 40% of the available hotel room occupancy tax toward product development annually (See page XX)
- Tourism Promotion Agency (TPA)
  - AKA “Destination Marketing Organization”
  - County-designated organization eligible for matching funds from I♥NY
- Value
  - Highest-level description of the STPB and Tourism Program’s mission
  - See page XX
- Visitor
  - AKA Tourist
  - A person whose home is located at least 50 miles from Tompkins County
- Visitor Journey Arrival to Departure (A2D)
  - A tourism training program for front-line hospitality staff and community members operated by the CVB and the Workforce Development Board. The A2D training program launched in 2018 and replaced the Hospitality Star program.

- Visitor Profile Study
  - Research conducted in 2018 and 2019 to provide insight related to overnight visitors to our county. The study was performed by JLL on behalf of the CVB and the Tourism Program using online and in-person intercept surveys. The results of the study serve as a foundational element for the Strategic Tourism Plan. The previous study was completed in 2009.
  - See appendix **XX** and page **XX**
- Voluntary Collection Agreement
  - An agreement between Tompkins County and Airbnb, Inc. for the collection of hotel room occupancy taxes. In July 2016, Tompkins County became the first county in New York State to enter into such an agreement.

*Tompkins County, NY  
Friday, May 31, 2019*

## Chapter 150. Taxation

### Article II. Hotel Room Occupancy Tax

[Adopted by the Board of Supervisors (now County Legislature) of Tompkins County 8-15-1989 by L.L. No. 4-1989]

#### § 150-6. Title.

This article shall be known as the "Tompkins County Hotel Room Occupancy Tax Law."

#### § 150-7. Intent.

The intent of this article shall be to enhance the general economy of Tompkins County, its cities, towns and villages through promotion of tourist activities, conventions, trade shows, special events and other directly related and supporting activities.

#### § 150-8. Text.

[Amended 5-7-1991 by L.L. No. 1-1991]

- A. Definitions.
- B. Imposition of tax.
- C. Transitional provisions.
- D. Exemptions.
- E. Territorial limitations.
- F. Registration.
- G. Administration and collection.
- H. Records to be kept.
- I. Returns.
- J. Payment of tax.
- K. Determination of tax.
- L. Disposition of revenues.

- M. Refunds, revisions or credits.
- N. Remedies exclusive.
- O. Proceedings to recover tax.
- P. General power of County Administrator.
- Q. Administration of oaths and compelling testimony.
- R. Reference to tax.
- S. Penalties and interest.
- T. Returns to be secret.
- U. Notices and limitations of time.

## § 150-9. Definitions.

As used in this article, the following terms shall have the meanings indicated:

### **COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR**

The budget officer for the County of Tompkins.

### **HOTEL**

A facility or portion thereof that is used for the lodging of paying guests. The term "hotel" includes, but is not limited to, an apartment hotel, a motel, guest house, or facility known as a "bed-and-breakfast" tourist facility, whether or not meals are served.

[Amended 1-19-2016 by L.L. No. 1-2016]

### **OCCUPANCY**

The use or possession, or the right to the use or possession of any room in a hotel.

### **OCCUPANT**

A person who, for a consideration, uses, possesses, or has the right to use or possess any room in a hotel under any lease, concession, permit, right of access, license to use or other agreement, or otherwise.

### **OPERATOR**

Any person operating a hotel in Tompkins County, including but not limited to the owner or proprietor of such premises, lessee, sublessee, mortgagee in possession, licensee, or any other person otherwise operating such hotel.

### **PERMANENT RESIDENT**

Any occupant of any room or rooms in a hotel for at least 30 consecutive days shall be considered a permanent resident with regard to the period of such occupancy.

### **PERSON**

An individual, partnership, society, association, joint-stock company, corporation, estate, receiver, trustee, assignee, referee and any other person acting in a fiduciary or representative capacity, whether appointed by a court or otherwise, and any combination of the foregoing.

### **RENT**

The consideration received for occupancy valued in money, whether received in money or otherwise.

**RETURN**

Any return filed or required to be filed as herein provided.

**ROOM**

Any room or rooms of any kind in any part or portion of a hotel, which is available for or let out for any purpose other than a place of assembly.

**§ 150-10. Imposition of tax.**

[Amended 5-7-1991 by L.L. No. 1-1991; 12-5-2001 by L.L. No. 7-2001; 6-4-2002 by L.L. No. 2-2002]  
On or after the fifth day of September 1989, there is hereby imposed and there shall be paid a tax of 3% of a room or rooms in a hotel in this County of the rent for every occupancy, except that the tax shall not be imposed upon a permanent resident of the hotel, nor where the rent is not more than at the rate of \$4 per day. On or after the first day of May 2002, there is hereby imposed and there shall be paid a tax of 4% of the rent for every occupancy of a room or rooms in a hotel in this County, except that the tax shall not be imposed upon a permanent resident of the hotel, nor where the rent is not more than at the rate of \$4 per day. On or after the first day of December 2002, there is hereby imposed and there shall be paid a tax of 4.5%, except that the tax shall not be imposed upon a permanent resident of the hotel, nor where the rent is not more than at the rate of \$4 per day. On or after the first day of June 2003, there is hereby imposed and there shall be paid a tax of 5%, except that the tax shall not be imposed upon a permanent resident of the hotel, nor where the rent is not more than at the rate of \$4 per day.

**§ 150-11. Transitional provisions.**

The tax imposed by this article shall be paid upon any occupancy on and after the fifth day of September 1989, although such occupancy is pursuant to a prior contract, lease, or other arrangement. Where rent is paid or payable on a weekly, monthly, or other term, the rent shall be subject to the tax imposed by this article to the extent that it covers any period on and after the fifth day of September 1989.

**§ 150-12. Exemptions.**

[Amended 5-7-1991 by L.L. No. 1-1991]

- A. This article shall not authorize the imposition of such tax upon any transactions by or with any of the following in accordance with § 1230 of the Tax Law:
- (1) The State of New York or any of its agencies, instrumentalities, public corporations (including a public corporation created pursuant to agreement or compact with another state or Canada), improvement districts or political subdivisions of the state; and
  - (2) The United States of America or any of its agencies and instrumentalities, insofar as it is immune from taxation.
- B. This article shall not authorize the imposition of such tax upon any transactions by any of the following in accordance with § 1230 of the Tax Law:
- (1) Any corporation, association, trust, community chest, fund or foundation organized and operated exclusively for religious, charitable or educational purposes, or for the prevention of cruelty to children or animals, and no part of the net earnings of which inures to the benefit of any private shareholder or individual and no substantial part of the activities of which is carrying on propaganda, or otherwise attempting to influence legislation; provided,

however, that nothing in this subdivision shall include an organization operated for the primary purpose of carrying on a trade or business for profit, whether or not all of its profits are payable to one or more organizations described in this subdivision.

- C. The hotel operator shall submit such written proof as may be required to show that the use or occupancy falls within the aforescribed exempt categories. In the absence of such documentation, the tax must be collected by the operator.
- D. Bed-and-breakfast inns shall be exempt from the tax in this article to the extent such tax exceeds 3%. A bed-and-breakfast inn is defined as an owner-operated and -managed structure or structures of no more than 10 guest rooms for paying guests lodged on an overnight basis. Such establishments may serve breakfast, the cost of which is included as part of the room-rate paid for overnight lodging.  
[Added 12-5-2001 by L.L. No. 6-2001; amended 4-16-2002 by L.L. No. 1-2002]

## § 150-13. Territorial limitations.

The tax imposed by this article shall apply only to occupancies within the territorial limits of the County of Tompkins.

## § 150-14. Registration.

Within three days after commencing hotel business in Tompkins County, every operator shall file with the County Administrator's Office a certificate of registration in a form prescribed by the County Administrator. Within five days after such registration, the County Administrator shall issue without charge to each operator a certificate of authority empowering such operator to collect the tax from the occupant and duplicate thereof for each additional hotel of such operator. Each certificate or duplicate shall state the hotel to which it is applicable. Such certificates of authority shall be prominently displayed by the operator in a manner that it may be seen and come to the notice of all occupants and persons seeking occupancy in the hotel to which it applies. Such certificates shall be nonassignable and nontransferable, and shall be surrendered immediately to the County Administrator upon the cessation of business at the hotel named or upon its sale or transfer.

## § 150-15. Administration and collection.

- A. The tax imposed by this article shall be administered and collected by the Tompkins County Administrator, or other fiscal officers of the County as the Administrator may designate by such means and in such manner as are other taxes which are now administered and collected by such officers in accordance with the County Charter and Code, or as otherwise provided by this article.
- B. The tax to be collected shall be stated and charged separately from the rent and shown separately on any record thereof at the time when the occupancy is arranged or contracted or contracted and charged for, and upon every evidence of occupancy or any bill, statement or charge made for said occupancy issued or delivered by the operator. The tax shall be paid by the occupant to the operator as trustee for and on account of the County, and the operator shall be liable for the tax and collection of same. The operator and any officer of any corporate operator shall be personally liable for the tax collected or required to be collected under this article. The operator shall have the same right in respect to collecting the tax from the occupant, or in respect to nonpayment of the tax by the occupant, as if the tax were a part of the rent for the occupancy payable at the time such tax shall become due and owing, including all rights of eviction, dispossession, repossession and enforcement of an innkeeper's lien that the innkeeper may have in the event of nonpayment of rent by the occupant; provided, however, that the

County Administrator or other designated fiscal officer(s), employees or agents shall be joined as a party in any action or proceeding brought by the operator to collect or enforce collection of the tax.

- C. The County Administrator may, wherever deemed necessary for the proper enforcement of this article, provide by regulation that the occupant shall file returns and pay directly to the County Administrator the tax herein imposed, at such times as returns are required to be filed and payment made by the operator.
- D. The tax imposed by this article shall be paid upon any occupancy on and after September 5, 1989, although such occupancy is had pursuant to a contract, lease, or other arrangement made prior to such date. Where rent is paid, charged, billed or falls due on either a weekly, monthly or other term basis, the rent so paid, charged, billed or falling due shall be subject to the tax herein imposed to the extent that it covers any portion of the period on and after September 5, 1989. Where any tax has been paid hereunder upon any rent which has been ascertained to be worthless, the County Administrator may, by regulation, provide for the credit and/or refund of the amount of such tax upon application therefor as provided in § **150-21** of this article.
- E. For the purpose of the proper administration of this article, and to prevent evasion of the tax hereby imposed, it shall be presumed that all rents are subject to tax until the contrary is established. The burden of proving that a rent for occupancy is not taxable hereunder shall be upon the operator, except that, where by regulation pursuant to Subsection **C** of this section, an occupant is required to file returns and pay directly to the County Administrator the tax herein imposed, the burden of proving that a rent for occupancy is not taxable shall be upon the occupant. Where an occupant claims exemption from the tax under the provisions of § **150-12** of this article, the rent shall be deemed taxable hereunder unless the operator shall receive from the occupant claiming such exemption a certificate duly executed by an exempt corporation or association certifying that the occupant is its agent, representative, or employee, together with a certificate executed by the occupant that the occupancy is paid or to be paid by such exempt corporation or association, and is necessary or required in the course of or in connection with the occupant's duties as a representative of such corporation or association. Where deemed necessary by the operator, the operator may further require that any occupant claiming exemption from the tax furnish a copy of a certificate issued by the County Administrator certifying that the corporation or association therein named is exempt from the tax under § **150-12** of this article.

## § 150-16. Records to be kept.

[Amended 5-7-1991 by L.L. No. 1-1991]

Every operator shall keep records of every occupancy, of all rent paid, charged, or due, and of the tax payable thereon, in such form as the County Administrator may require by regulation. Such records shall be available for inspection and examination at any time upon demand by the County Administrator or his duly authorized employee or agent, and shall be preserved for a period of five years, except that the County Administrator may consent to their destruction within that period or may require that they be kept longer.

## § 150-17. Returns.

- A. Every operator shall file with the County Administrator a return of occupancy, of rents, and of taxes payable thereon for the periods ending February 28, May 31, August 31, and November 30 of each year, on and after September 5, 1989. Such returns shall be filed within 20 days from the expiration of the period covered thereby. The County Administrator may permit or require returns to be made by other periods and upon such dates as may be specified. If the County Administrator deems it necessary in order to ensure the payment of the tax imposed by this

article, returns may be required for shorter periods than those prescribed pursuant to the foregoing provisions of this section and upon such dates as may be specified.

- B. The form of returns shall be prescribed by the County Administrator and shall contain such information as may be deemed necessary for the proper administration of this article. The County Administrator may require amended returns to be filed within 20 days after notice and to contain the information specified in the notice.
- C. If a return required by this article is not filed, or a return when filed is incorrect or insufficient on its face, the County Administrator shall take the necessary steps to enforce the filing of such a return or of a corrected return.

## § 150-18. Payment of tax.

At the time of filing a return of occupancy and of rents, each operator shall pay to the County Administrator the taxes imposed by this article upon rents required to be included in such return, as well as all other moneys collected by the operator acting or purporting to act under the provisions of this article. Where the County Administrator deems it necessary to protect revenues to be obtained under this article, any operator required to collect the tax imposed by this article may be required to file a bond, issued by a surety company authorized to transact business in this state and approved by the Superintendent of Insurance of this state as to solvency and responsibility, in such amount as the County Administrator may fix to secure the payment of any tax and/or penalties and interest due or which may become due from such operator. In the event that the County Administrator determines that an operator is to file such a bond, notice to the operator shall be given to that effect, specifying the amount of the bond required. The operator shall file the bond within five days after the giving of notice unless within those five days the operator requests, in writing, a hearing before the County Administrator, at which the necessity, propriety, and amount of the bond shall be determined by the County Administrator. This determination shall be final and shall be complied with within 15 days after the giving of notice thereof. In lieu of a bond, securities approved by the County Administrator or cash in the amount prescribed may be deposited into the custody of the County Administrator, who may at any time, without notice to the depository, apply them to any tax and/or interest or penalties due, and for that purpose the securities may be sold at public or private sale without notice to the depositor thereof.

## § 150-19. Determination of tax.

If a return required by this article is not filed, or if a return when filed is incorrect or insufficient, the amount of tax due shall be determined by the County Administrator from obtainable information. If necessary, the tax may be estimated on the basis of external indices, such as number of rooms, location, scale of rents, comparable rents, type of accommodations and service, number of employees and/or other factors. Notice of such determination shall be given to the person liable for the collection and/or payment of the tax. Such determination shall finally and irrevocably fix the tax unless the person against whom it is assessed, within 30 days after giving notice of such determination, applies to the County Administrator for a hearing, or unless the County Administrator redetermines the same. After such a hearing, the County Administrator shall give notice of the determination to the person against whom the tax is assessed. The determination of the County Administrator shall be reviewable for error, illegality, unconstitutionality, or any other reason whatsoever by proceeding under Article 78 of the Civil Practice Law and Rules if application thereof is made to the Supreme Court within 30 days after the filing of the notice of such determination. A proceeding under Article 78 of the Civil Practice Law and Rules shall not be instituted unless the amount of any tax sought to be reviewed with penalties and interest thereon, if any, is first deposited with the County Administrator and an undertaking is filed with the County Administrator, issued by a surety company authorized to transact business in this state, approved by the Superintendent of Insurance of this state as to solvency and responsibility, in an amount approved by a Supreme Court

Justice, to the effect that if the proceeding is dismissed or the tax confirmed, the petitioner will pay all charges and costs which may accrue in the prosecution of the proceeding, or, at the option of the applicant, such undertaking filed with the County Administrator may be in a sum sufficient to cover the taxes, penalties and interest thereon stated in such determination plus the costs and charges which may accrue against it in the prosecution of the proceeding. In that event, the applicant will not be required to deposit such taxes, penalties and interest as a condition precedent to the application.

## § 150-20. Disposition of revenues.

All revenues resulting from the imposition of the tax under this article shall be paid into the treasury of the County, credited to and deposited in the general fund of the County, thereafter to be allocated for tourism and convention development; except, however, that the County is hereby authorized to retain up to a maximum of 10% of such revenue to defer the necessary expenses of the County in administering the tax. The revenue derived from the tax, after deducting the amount provided for administering such tax, as so authorized by this article, shall be allocated to enhance the general economy of Tompkins County, its cities, towns and villages, through promotion of tourist activities, conventions trade shows, special events and other directly related and supporting activities.

## § 150-21. Refunds, revisions or credits.

- A. In the manner provided in this section, the County Administrator shall refund or credit, without interest, any tax, penalty or interest erroneously, illegally or unconstitutionally collected or paid if application to the County Administrator for such refund is made within one year from the payment thereof. Whenever a refund is made by the County Administrator, the reason therefor shall be stated in writing. Such application may be made by the occupant, operator, or other persons who has actually paid the tax. Such application may also be made by an operator who has collected and paid over such tax to the County Administrator, provided that the application is made within one year of the payment by the occupant to the operator. However, no actual refund of moneys shall be made to such operator until it is first established to the satisfaction of the County Administrator under such regulations as the County Administrator by authority of the County Legislature may prescribe, that the operator has repaid to the occupant the amount for which the application for refund is made. In lieu of any refund required to be made, the County Administrator may allow credit therefor on payments due from the applicant.
- B. An application for a refund or credit made as herein provided shall be deemed an application for a revision of any tax, penalty or interest complained of, and the County Administrator may receive evidence with respect thereto. After making determination, the County Administrator shall give notice thereof to the applicant, who shall be entitled to review said determination by a proceeding pursuant to Article 78 of the Civil Practice Law and Rules, provided that the proceeding is instituted within 30 days after the giving of the notice of determination, and provided that a final determination of tax due was not previously made. Such a proceeding shall not be instituted unless an undertaking is filed with the County Administrator in an amount and with sureties approved by a Justice of the Supreme Court to the effect that if such proceedings are dismissed or the tax confirmed, the petitioner will pay all costs and charges that may accrue in the prosecution of said proceeding.
- C. A person shall not be entitled under this section to a revision, refund, or credit of a tax, interest, or penalty that had been determined to be due pursuant to the provisions of this § **150-21** where said person has had a hearing or an opportunity for a hearing as provided in this section, or who has failed to avail himself of the remedies provided therein. No refund or credit of a tax, interest, or penalty paid after a determination by the County Administrator pursuant to § **150-19** of this article shall be paid unless it is found that the determination was erroneous, illegal, unconstitutional or otherwise improper by the County Administrator after a hearing or of his own motion, or in a proceeding under Article 78 of the Civil Practice Law and Rules pursuant to the

provisions of said section. In that event, refund or credit without interest shall be made of the tax, interest or penalty found to have been overpaid.

## § 150-22. Remedies exclusive.

The remedies provided by §§ **150-19** and **150-21** of this article shall be exclusive remedies available to any person for the review of tax liability imposed by this article. No determination, proposed determination of tax nor determination on any application for refund shall be enjoined or reviewed except as hereinafter provided, by an action for declaratory judgment, an action for money had and received, or by any action or proceeding other than a proceeding in the nature of a certiorari proceeding under Article 78 of the Civil Practice Law and Rules. A taxpayer may, however, proceed by declaratory judgment if he/she institutes suit within 30 days after a deficiency assessment is made and pays the amount of the deficiency assessment to the County Administrator prior to the institution of such suit and posts a bond for costs as provided in § **150-19** of this article.

## § 150-23. Proceedings to recover tax.

- A. Whenever any operator, any officer of a corporate operator, any occupant, or other person fails to collect and pay over any tax and/or penalty or interest as imposed by this article, the County Attorney shall, at the request of the County Administrator, bring or cause to be brought an action to enforce the payment of the same on behalf of the County in any court of the State of New York or of any other state or of the United States. If, however, the County Administrator believes that any such operator, officer, occupant, or other person is about to cease business, leave the state, or remove or dissipate the assets out of which the tax or penalties might be satisfied, and that any such tax or penalty will not be paid when due, such tax or penalty may be declared to be immediately due and payable, and the County Administrator may issue a warrant immediately.
- B. As an additional or alternate remedy, the County Administrator may issue a warrant, directed to the Sheriff, commanding the Sheriff to levy upon and sell the real and personal property of the operator, officer of a corporate operator, or other person liable for the tax, which may be found within the County for the payment of the amount thereof, with any penalties and interest, and the cost of executing the warrant, and to return such warrant to the County Administrator and to pay to the County Administrator the money collected by virtue thereof within 60 days after the receipt of said warrant. Within five days after the receipt of the warrant, the Sheriff shall file a copy of same with the County Clerk. Thereupon the Clerk shall enter in the judgment docket the name of the person stated in the warrant, the amount of the tax, penalties, and interest for which the warrant is issued, and the date when such copy is filed. Thereupon the amount of such warrant so docketed shall become a lien upon the interest in real and personal property of the person against whom the warrant is issued. The Sheriff shall then proceed upon the warrant in the same manner and with like effect as that provided by law in respect to executions issued against property upon judgments of the court of record. For services in executing the warrant, the Sheriff shall be entitled to the same fees, which may be collected in the same manner. In the discretion of the County Administrator, a warrant of like terms, force, and effect may be issued and directed to any officer or employee of the County Administrator. In the execution thereof, such officer or employee shall have all the powers conferred by law upon sheriffs, but shall be entitled to no fee or compensation in excess of the actual expenses paid in the performance of such duty. If a warrant is returned not fully satisfied, the County Administrator may, from time to time, issue new warrants and shall also have the same remedies to enforce the amount due thereunder as if the County has recovered judgment therefor and execution thereon has been returned unsatisfied.
- C. Whenever an operator makes a sale, transfer, or assignment of any part or the whole of the hotel or lease, license, or other agreement or right to possess or operate such hotel or the

equipment, furnishings, fixtures, supplies or stock of merchandise, or the said premises or lease, license or other agreement or right to possess or operate such hotel and equipment, furnishings, fixtures, supplies and stock of merchandise pertaining to the conduct or operation of said hotel, other than in the ordinary and regular prosecution of business, the purchaser, transferee or assignee shall, at least 10 days before taking possession of the subject of said sale, transfer or assignment, or before making payment, notify the County Administrator by registered mail of the proposed sale and the price, terms and conditions thereof, whether or not the seller, transferor or assignor has represented to or informed the purchaser, transferee, or assignee that it owes any tax pursuant to this article, whether or not the purchaser, transferee, or assignee has knowledge that such taxes are owing, and whether any such taxes are in fact owing.

- D. Whenever the seller, transferor, or assignor fails to give notice to the County Administrator as required above, or whenever the County Administrator informs the purchaser, transferee, or assignee that a possible claim for such tax(es) exists, any sums of money, property, choses in action, or other consideration which the purchaser, transferee or assignee is required to transfer over to the seller, transferor, or assignor shall be subject to a first priority right and lien for any such taxes theretofore or thereafter determined to be due from the seller, transferor, or assignor to the County. The purchaser, transferee, or assignee is then forbidden to transfer to the seller, transferor, or assignor any such sums of money, property, or choses in action to the extent of the amount of the County's claim. For failure to comply with the provisions of this subsection, the purchaser, transferee, or assignee, in addition to being subject to the liabilities and remedies imposed under the provisions of Article 6 of the Uniform Commercial Code, shall, as well as the seller, transferor, or assignor, be personally liable for the payment to the County of any such taxes theretofore or thereafter determined to be due to the County from the seller, transferor, or assignor. Such liability may be assessed and enforced in the same manner as the liability for tax under this article.

## § 150-24. General powers of the County Administrator.

In addition to the powers granted in this article, the County Administrator is hereby authorized and empowered to:

- A. Extend for cause shown, the time of filing any return for a period not exceeding 30 days; and for cause shown, to remit penalties but not interest; and to compromise disputed claims in connection with the taxes hereby imposed;
- B. Request information from the Tax Commission of the State of New York or the Treasury Department of the United States relative to any person; and to afford information to such Tax Commission or Treasury Department relative to any person, notwithstanding any other provision of this article;
- C. Delegate functions hereunder to a Deputy County Administrator or any employees of County Administration;
- D. Prescribe methods for confirming the rents for occupancy and to confirm the accuracy of information on the taxable and nontaxable rents;
- E. Require any operator within the County, if it is determined that adequate records are not being maintained, to keep detailed records of the nature and type of hotel maintained; nature and type of service rendered; number of rooms available and occupied; daily leases, occupancy contracts or arrangements; rents received, charged, and accrued; the names and addresses of the occupants; whether or not any occupancy is claimed to be subject to the tax imposed by this article; and to furnish such information at the request of the County Administrator;

- F. Impose as a penalty upon any operator within the County any necessary costs of auditing services generated by discrepancies discovered upon audit, in the records of the operator; and
- G. Make, adopt, and amend such other rules and regulations appropriate to the carrying out of this article and the purposes thereof as may be approved by the Tompkins County Legislature.

## § 150-25. Administration of oaths and compelling testimony.

- A. The County Administrator or employees or agent(s) duly designated and authorized shall have the power to administer oaths and take affidavits in relation to any matter or proceeding in the exercise of their powers and duties under this article. The County Administrator shall have power to subpoena and require the attendance of witnesses and the production of books, papers, and documents to secure information pertinent to the performance of the duties hereunder in the enforcement of this article, and to examine them in relation thereto. The County Administrator shall also have the power to issue commissions for the examination of witnesses who are out of the state, unable to attend, or who are excused from attendance.
- B. A Supreme Court Justice, either in court or in chambers, shall have the power to summarily enforce by proper proceedings the attendance and testimony of witnesses and the production and examination of books, papers, and documents called for by the subpoena of the County Administrator under this article.
- C. Any subpoenaed person who refuses to testify or produce books or records, or who testifies falsely in any material matter pending before the County Administrator under this article shall be guilty of a misdemeanor, punishment for which shall be a fine of not more than \$1,000 or imprisonment for not more than one year, or both such fine and imprisonment.
- D. The officers who serve the summons or subpoena of the County Administrator and witnesses attending in response thereto shall be entitled to the same fees as are allowed to officers and witnesses in civil cases in courts of record, except as herein provided otherwise. Such officers shall be the County Sheriff and duly appointed deputies, or any officers or employees of the County Administrator's office designated to serve such process.

## § 150-26. Reference to tax.

Whenever reference is made to this tax in placards or advertisements or in any other publications, such reference shall be substantially in the following form: "Tax on occupancy of hotel rooms" or "occupancy tax," except that in any bill, receipt, statement, or other evidence or memorandum of occupancy or rent charge issued or employed by the operator, the word "tax" will suffice.

## § 150-27. Penalties and interest.

- A. Any person failing to file a return or to pay over any tax to the County Administrator within the time required by this article shall be subject to a penalty of 10% of the amount of tax due, plus interest at the rate of 1.5% of such tax for each month of delay, except the first month after such return was required to be filed or such tax became due. Such penalties and interest shall be paid and disposed of in the same manner as other revenues from this article.
- B. The following persons shall, in addition to the penalties herein or elsewhere prescribed, be guilty of a misdemeanor, punishment for which shall be a fine of not more than \$1,000 or imprisonment not exceeding one year, or both:
  - (1) Any operator, occupant, or any officer of a corporate operator or occupant failing to file a

return required by this article, or filing or causing to be filed, making or causing to be made, giving or causing to be given any return, certificate, affidavit, representation, information, testimony or statement authorized or required by this article, which is willfully false;

- (2) Any operator or officer of a corporate operator willfully failing to file a bond required to be filed pursuant to § **150-19** of this article, failing to file a registration certificate and such data in connection therewith as the County Administrator may require, failing to display or surrender the certificate of authority as required by this article, or assigning or transferring such certificate of authority;
  - (3) Any operator or officer of a corporate operator willfully failing to charge separately from the rent the tax herein imposed, willfully failing to state such tax separately on any evidence of occupancy and on any bill, statement or receipt of rent issued or employed by the operator, or willfully failing or refusing to collect such tax from the occupant;
  - (4) Any operator or officer of a corporate operator who refers or causes reference to be made to this tax in a form or manner other than that required by this article; and
  - (5) Any operator failing to keep records required by § **150-16** of this article.
- C. Any operator or officer of a corporate operator who fails to file a certificate of registration as provided under this article shall be subject to a penalty of \$50 for each month of delinquency in filing such certificate. Officers of a corporate operator shall be personally liable for the tax collected or required to be collected by such corporation under this article, and subject to the penalties hereinabove imposed.
- D. The certificate of the County Administrator to the effect that a tax has not been paid, that a return, bond, or registration certificate has not been filed, or that information has not been supplied pursuant to the provisions of this article, shall be presumptive evidence thereof.

## § 150-28. Returns to be secret.

[Amended 5-7-1991 by L.L. No. 1-1991]

Except in accordance with the proper judicial order, or as otherwise provided by law, it shall be unlawful for the County Administrator or any officer or employee of the County Administrator's Office to disclose in any manner the rents or other information relating to the business of a taxpayer contained in any return required under this article except to such persons and at such times as necessary to carry out this article. The officers charged with the custody of such returns shall not be required to produce any of them or evidence of anything contained in them in any action or proceeding in any court, except on behalf of the County Administrator in an action or proceeding under the provisions of this article, or on behalf of any party to any action or proceeding under the provisions of this article when the returns or facts shown thereby are directly involved in such action or proceeding. In any of these events, the Court may require the production of and may admit into evidence as much of said returns or the facts shown thereby as are pertinent to the action or proceeding, and no more. Nothing herein shall be construed to prohibit the delivery to the taxpayer or his/her duly authorized representative of a certified copy of any return filed in connection with his/her tax nor to prohibit the publication of statistics classified so as to prevent the identification of particular returns and the items thereof. In addition, nothing herein shall be construed to prohibit the inspection by the County Attorney or other legal representatives of the County of the return of the taxpayer who shall bring action to set aside or review the tax based thereon, or against whom an action or proceeding has been instituted for the collection of a tax or penalty. Returns shall be preserved for five years and thereafter until the County Administrator permits them to be destroyed.

## § 150-29. Notices and limitations of time.

- A. Any notice authorized or required under the provisions of this article may be given by mailing the same to the person for whom it is intended in a postpaid envelope addressed to such person at the address given in the last return filed by him pursuant to the provisions of this article, or in any application made by him. If no return has been filed nor application made, then notice may be given by mailing the same to such address as may be obtainable. Mailing of such notice shall be presumptive evidence of the receipt of same by the person to whom it is addressed. Any period of time which is determined according to the provisions of this article by the giving of notice shall commence to run from the date of mailing of such notice.
- B. The provisions of the Civil Practice Law and Rules or any other law relative to limitations of time for the enforcement of a civil remedy shall not apply to any action or proceeding taken by the County to levy, appraise, assess, determine, or enforce the collection of any tax or penalty provided by this article. However, except in the case of a willfully false or fraudulent return with the intent to evade the tax, no assessment of additional tax shall be made after the expiration of more than three years from the date of filing of a return; provided, however, that where no return has been filed as provided by law, the tax may be assessed and collected at any time.
- C. Where a taxpayer has consented, in writing, before the expiration of the period prescribed herein for the assessment of an additional tax, that such period be extended, the amount of such additional tax due may be determined at any time within the extended period. The period so extended may be further extended by subsequent consents, in writing, made before the expiration of the extended period.

## STPB POLICIES

The STPB is subject to all Tompkins County policies regarding the conduct of advisory boards. These replace the policies identified in the *2020 Tompkins County Strategic Tourism Plan*. (listed alphabetically)

### *60/40 Split*

Continue to invest Hotel Room Occupancy Tax funds in tourism marketing and tourism product development as specified by state enabling legislation and local law. After subtracting the county administrative fee and other expenses, the Tourism Program budget should maintain a ratio of 60% for marketing and 40% for product development.

### *Budget Reserve and Surplus Hotel Room Occupancy Tax*

#### Reserve Funds

- a) Purpose of Reserve Funds: External factors can have adverse effects on local room tax revenues. A wide variety of circumstances could lead to reduced visitation to Tompkins County. Some organizations integral to the local tourism sector rely on room tax funding as a primary source of funding. If room tax revenue declines, the reserve fund is intended to assist organizations of vital importance to sustain the county's tourism sector.
- b) Target Reserves: Five percent of the projected annual Tompkins County hotel room occupancy tax collections should be held in reserve. (For example, if \$3,000,000 in hotel room occupancy tax is projected for a given year then \$150,000 should be held in reserve.)
- c) Use of Reserves: If room taxes decline year over year, the STPB may authorize reserves to be used to sustain essential operations necessary to our local tourism sector.

#### Surplus Funds

- a) Source: Each year the STPB prepares a projection of Tompkins County's hotel room occupancy tax collections. This forecast is based on detailed market data and professional knowledge about the region and industry. From time to time, room tax collections exceed this projection, leading to surplus funds.
- b) Fully Fund Reserves: To maintain an adequate reserve balance, surplus funds should first be applied to achieve the reserve target.
- c) Allocate Remaining Surplus to Existing Programs: To ensure a transparent, equitable process for accessing county room tax funds, any surplus more than the amount needed for reserve should be applied within the existing framework of the Tompkins County Tourism Program.
  - i. Preferred Application / Strategic Tourism Implementation: The STPB is charged with the implementation of the Tompkins County Strategic Tourism Plan. To date

there are several “critical actions” in the plan which are not yet complete. To accomplish these actions, the STPB prefers to allocate all remaining surplus funds to the Strategic Tourism Implementation (STI) grant program. This program funds projects which advance tourism projects in Tompkins County that enhance quality of life and promote economic development. This program uses a rolling grant application which would allow funds to be applied in the same year as the surplus.

- ii. Alternative Application / Marketing & Product Development: The 2020 Strategic Tourism Plan established a policy of splitting funds 60/40 for marketing and product development. When all “critical actions” defined in the current Strategic Tourism Plan are complete or deemed unnecessary or at the discretion of the Strategic Tourism Planning Board, surplus funds may be made available for one-time projects in accord with the 60/40 policy. (For example, if \$100,000 of surplus funds are available, \$60,000 should be allocated to marketing and \$40,000 to product development.) Due to the timing of room tax collections and grant decisions, funds will be available in the following year.

### *Conflict of Interest*

Tompkins County depends on volunteers to serve on its Strategic Tourism Planning Board (STPB). STPB members have varied backgrounds and interests. They are active in the community in their professional and private endeavors. Consequently, situations may arise that create a conflict of interest.

This policy applies to all current members of the STPB and all members of any advisory committee involved in the decision making process. It is expected that all persons subject to this policy will conduct themselves honestly and fairly when dealing with STPB business.

A conflict of interest is defined as an activity or interest of a Board member that may cause bias for or against a particular action being considered by the Board such as a grant request. A conflict of interest will be presumed when the Board member or household member has a formal affiliation or interest in an organization, which could expect funding from a particular decision.

Whenever a Board member identifies that a conflict of interest may exist with a funding request, policy decision, or any voting matter considered by the STPB or one of its Committees, the member will inform the STPB Chair or the Committee Chair of the conflict. The Board member may (or may not) participate in the discussion at the appropriate Chair’s discretion, but will refrain from voting on the specific request.

At the beginning of each calendar year, current STPB members will complete the Annual Conflict of Interest Disclosure Form. The forms will be given to the Chair and kept on file by the Administrative Assistant of the STPB. This information will be made available to all members of the STPB.

### *Diversity Statement*

The STPB will apply the values of diversity, inclusion and equity in conducting all business including the recruitment of board members, program administration, and consideration of funding applications.

We will encourage participation of diverse populations in all of our funded programs without regard but not limited to the following traits: national origin, language, race, color, ethnicity, gender, age, sexual orientation, gender identity or socio-economic status.

We will foster a culture of inclusion that encourages collaboration, flexibility and fairness.

We will consistently work toward greater equity to guarantee fair treatment, access and opportunity.

We will encourage all of our partners to ascribe to these values and work within their organizations to promote them.

### *Seat Definitions*

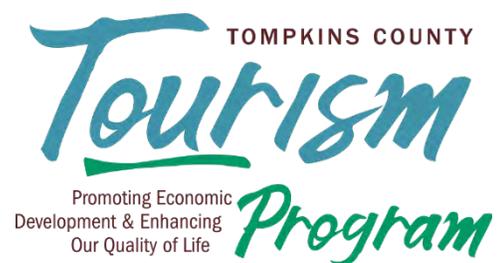
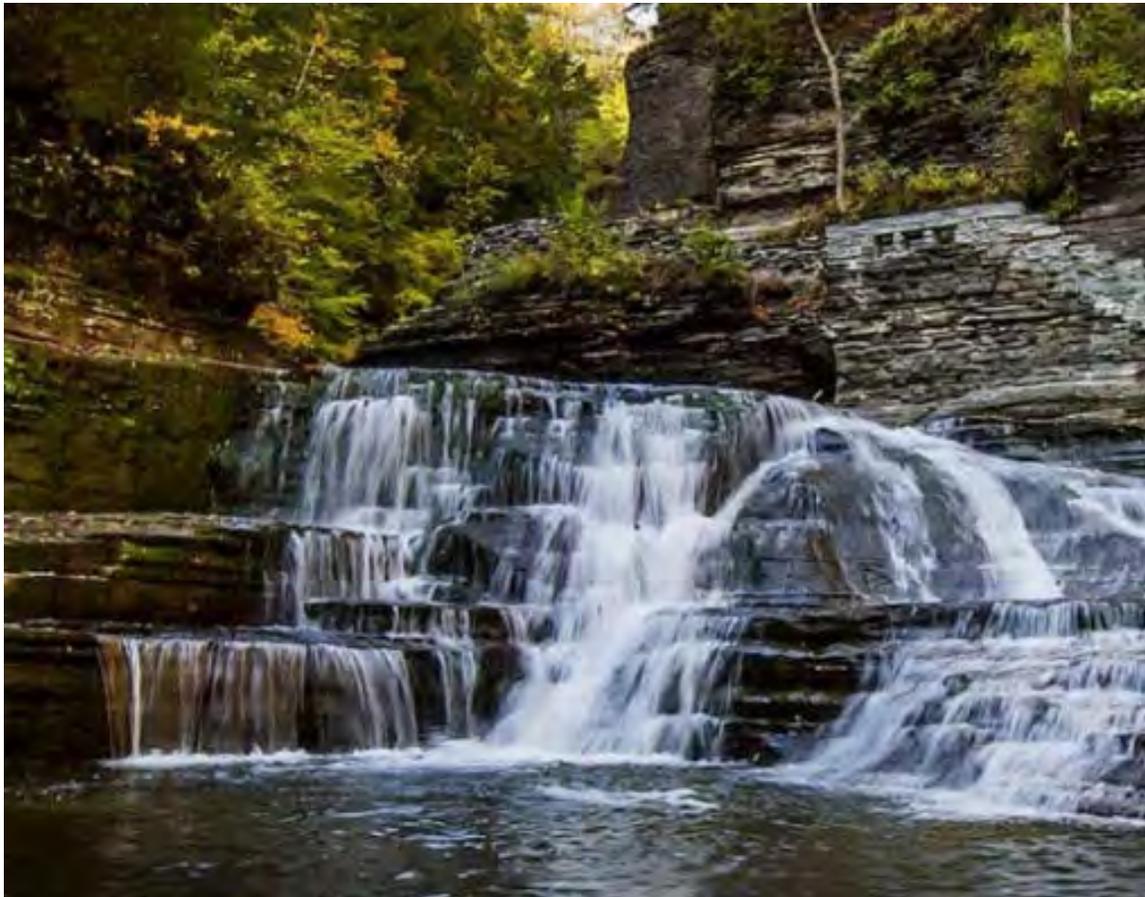
The following definitions are intended to provide guidance in selecting new members and could be used in determining eligibility of STPB applicants to represent a given sector. Someone meeting any one of the suggested criteria could be seen as meeting the eligibility requirement for that seat.

- Lodging: Current owner, operator or employee of a local lodging business including hotel, motel, B&B, short-term rental, campground, etc.
- Recreation: Someone who as a current or former business owner, member or staff member of a recreational organization, event organizer, or representative of a landowner on which recreation occurs (e.g. public or not-for-profit trail owner), is involved in producing programming or otherwise supporting outdoor recreation tourism activity in Tompkins County.
- Agriculture: Someone who as a current or former farmer, producer of food, beverage or agricultural product(s), or member of staff member of an organization involved in local agriculture, is either directly engaged in agriculture in Tompkins County or engaged formally in supporting agriculture in Tompkins County.
- Arts/Culture: Current or former artist, or current or former member, trustee, or staff member of an arts organization. This encompasses visual arts (including architecture, ceramics, design, drawing, painting, photography and sculpture), literary arts, the performing arts (including music, theatre, dance, spoken word and film, among others), and other forms of artistic expression.

- College and University Seats: The three seats representing Cornell, IC, and TC3 will be filled by individuals recommended for appointment directly by their respective institutions and in a position to represent those institutions.
- At-Large: Intentionally a flexible category without specific additional eligibility criteria. At certain times in the past, based on the needs of the board, it has been seen as desirable to recruit new members into these At-Large seats with specific skills (legal, financial, marketing, tourism, government administration, etc.), or other specific sector representation not covered by the other seats (such as retail, restaurant/culinary, other travel and hospitality businesses, meeting and conference, etc.)

# VISITOR PROFILE REPORT

## Ithaca and Tompkins County



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY</b> .....	3
<b>OVERVIEW &amp; METHODOLOGY</b> .....	10
<b>RESULTS &amp; ANALYSIS</b> .....	10
<b>Length of Stay</b> .....	10
<b>Overnight Visitors Type of Accommodations</b> .....	15
<b>Travel Party</b> .....	17
<b>Seasonality</b> .....	21
<b>Travel by Arrival Type</b> .....	22
<b>Travel Within the Destination</b> .....	24
<b>Primary Reason for Travel</b> .....	11
<b>Primary Reason for Trip: Higher Education</b> .....	13
<b>Additional Activities</b> .....	25
<b>Visitor Feedback</b> .....	31
<b>Respondent Demographics</b> .....	36
<b>PRIMARY RESPONDENT</b> .....	40
<b>VISITOR PROFILES</b> .....	40
<b>Families with Kids</b> .....	41
<b>Families with Kids (College as Primary Reason for Travel)</b> .....	42
<b>Couples</b> .....	43
<b>Friends</b> .....	44
<b>CONCLUSIONS</b> .....	45

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## Background

Visit Ithaca and the Tompkins County Tourism Program engaged JLL to conduct an in-depth analysis of the destination's overnight visitors. This visitor profile study was conducted over the course of 18 months, from January 2018 to July 2019, and was comprised of comprehensive primary research.

## Goals & Objectives

The purpose of conducting this Visitor Profile research was to:

- Provide insight related to overnight visitors coming to Ithaca and Tompkins County,
- Augment data gathered during the 2009-2010 Profile of Visitors to Tompkins County, and
- Provide observations on changes in visitor trends.

## Prospective Outcomes

The results compiled from the visitor profile study should allow Ithaca and Tompkins County Tourism Program leaders to:

- Make more informed decisions on destination marketing and product development investment opportunities,
- Guide efforts to increase the destination's competitive position in the marketplace,
- Increase future visitor spending into the community, and
- Inform decisions needed for updating the overall strategic plan for the destination.

## Methodology

JLL created two separate and complementary surveys in order to have the most impactful reach into the visitor community. The first survey was an online survey targeted to previous visitors. The second survey was an onsite intercept survey used to interview visitors while they were in market.

<b>Digital Email Survey</b>	<b>Intercept Interviews</b>
Past visitors with completed trip	Visitors during their trip
Email lists and databases from 2015, 2016 & 2017	Individual encounters at over 30 selected sites
Visit Ithaca inquiries, Hotels, Inns, Discovery Trail partners, retail partners, and other stakeholders	Parks, Universities, Downtown, Discovery Trail sites, Cayuga Waterfront Trail sites, Farmer’s Market, Lodging providers, Events/Entertainment, Airport, and Breweries/Wineries
Surveyed from March-May 2018	Interviewed from July 2018 – July 2019*
1,400 completed surveys	670 completed interviews

The overall response rate from Overnight Visitors in 2019 was 38% higher than the 2009-2010 study.

For the purpose of this report, the results of the two methodologies have been combined into one final profile. With only a few exceptions the results of the two separate surveys yielded similar outcomes.

## Highlighted Results - 2019

- Repeat visitation to Ithaca and Tompkins County is high with 76% having visited on a previous occasion.
- Based on the overall survey results, 78% of the respondents reported staying overnight and 22% identify as day trippers
- Visitors spend approximately \$366 per day while in Ithaca and Tompkins County
- Travel party size has increased to 3.3 people per trip compared to 3.0 people in 2009
- Overnight visitors are staying primarily between 2-3 nights
- Overnight visitors are largely staying in hotels/motels or inns (over 60% of results)
- Same day travel planning showed the most significant shift changing from 15% of respondents in 2009 to 2% in 2019
- Summer led the seasons with over 30% of the visits followed by a nearly even split between Spring and Fall, each at 26%.
- Visitors are primarily traveling as a family with children or as couples
- The primary reason visitors are traveling is to engage in the outdoor leisure activities
- Visitors engage in the unique dining offerings, outdoors, shopping and events when they come to the destination
- Higher education brings visitors into the destination for more than campus activities
- Visitors are highly satisfied with the experience as over 80% of respondents state they will return

# OVERVIEW & METHODOLOGY

## Background

Visit Ithaca engaged JLL to conduct an in-depth analysis of the destination's overnight visitors. This visitor profile study was comprised of comprehensive primary research conducted over the course of 18 months from January 2018 to July 2019. The study sought to update a previous visitor profile study conducted in 2009.

## Goals & Objectives

The purpose of conducting this Visitor Profile research was to provide insight related to overnight visitors coming into to Ithaca and Tompkins County. This Visitor Profile would expand on data gathered during a 2009-2010 study and provide observations on changes to visitor trends. With this new information, Ithaca and Tompkins County tourism leaders will be able to make more informed decisions related to destination marketing and product development investment opportunities. This information will ultimately be used to strengthen the destination's competitive position in the marketplace and drive increased spending into the community. The Visitor Profile results would provide a first step in updating the overall strategic plan for the destination.

## Research Methodology

JLL created two separate and complementary surveys in order to have the most impactful reach into the visitor community. The first survey was an online survey targeted to previous visitors. The second survey was an onsite intercept survey used to interview visitors while they were in market. This methodology was provided to the Ithaca/Tompkins County Client Committee overseeing the consultant's work and direction.

The online survey was distributed to individuals gathered from tourism partner email databases including the Visit Ithaca visitor inquiry database, hotel databases, Discovery Trail partner databases, retail partner databases and other stakeholder and partner businesses' databases. This outreach supported the effort to achieve over 1,400 completed online surveys.

The intercept survey was conducted over a 12-month period to collect data from visitors during all times of year at over 30 locations across the county (the Appendix of this report contains the list of locations). Conducting the intercept survey on-site at locations determined in conjunction with the Ithaca/Tompkins County Convention and Visitors Bureau and its partners, ensured that critical visitor locations were covered. Each location was monitored for its overall performance both in overall visitor encounters and in surveys collected from overnight visitors. Locations were adapted throughout the process to accommodate weather constraints and underperforming locations for overnight visitation. In total, the intercept program secured over 670 completed, in-person visitor surveys. The following table displays both the number of individuals encountered (enc.) and the number of interviews (int.) with overnight travelers conducted.

Location	July – Sept.	Oct. – Dec.	Jan. – Mar.	Apr. – June	Total Int.
Buttermilk Falls State Park (OUTDOORS CATEGORY)	100 enc. 9 int.	160 enc. 11 int.	160 enc. 11 int.	60 enc. 2 int.	33
Taughannock Falls State Park (OUTDOORS)	220 enc. 23 int.	140 enc. 12 int.	100 enc. 7 int.	40 enc. 5 int.	47
Ithaca Falls (OUTDOORS)	120 enc. 9 int.	260 enc. 9 int.	120 enc. 11 int.	100 enc. 6 int.	35
Robert Treman State Park (OUTDOORS)	100 enc. 12 int.	140 enc. 13 int.	120 enc. 6 int.	160 enc. 10 int.	41
Cornell Univ. (COLLEGE)	80 enc. 8 int.	80 enc. 10 int.	40 enc. 4 int.	160 enc. 8 int.	30
Ithaca College (COLLEGE)	100 enc. 9 int.	160 enc. 11 int.	160 enc. 11 int.	60 enc. 2 int.	33
Ithaca Commons (DOWNTOWN)	220 enc. 23 int.	140 enc. 12 int.	100 enc. 7 int.	40 enc. 5 int.	47

Location	July – Sept.	Oct. – Dec.	Jan. – Mar.	Apr. – June	Total Int.
Restaurant Row (DOWNTOWN)	120 enc. 9 int.	260 enc. 9 int.	120 enc. 11 int.	100 enc. 6 int.	35
Sciencenter (DISCOVERY TRAIL)	100 enc. 12 int.	140 enc. 13 int.	120 enc. 6 int.	160 enc. 10 int.	41
Museum of the Earth (DISCOVERY TRAIL)	80 enc. 8 int.	80 enc. 10 int.	40 enc. 4 int.	160 enc. 8 int.	30
Cayuga Nature Center (DISCOVERY TRAIL)	60 enc. 2 int.	60 enc. 1 int.	200 enc. 1 int.	120 enc. 12 int.	16
Tompkins County Public Library (DISCOVERY TRAIL)	80 enc. 1 int.	100 enc. 0 int.	100 enc. 5 int.	180 enc. 14 int.	20
Cornell Lab of Ornithology (DISCOVERY TRAIL)	60 enc. 16 int.	60 enc. 15 int.	N/A	180 enc. 8 int.	39
The History Center (DISCOVERY TRAIL)	60 enc. 2 int.	60 enc. 7 int.	N/A	80 enc. 3 int.	12
Cornell Botanic Gardens (DISCOVERY TRAIL)	100 enc. 20 int.	60 enc. 2 int.	40 enc. 1 int.	60 enc. 7 int.	30
Johnson Museum of Art (DISCOVERY TRAIL)	60 enc. 8 int.	80 enc. 11 int.	100 enc. 7 int.	220 enc. 25 int.	51
Cayuga Waterfront Trail / Cass Park	140 enc. 13 int.	120 enc. 1 int.	200 enc. 1 int.	220 enc. 10 int.	25
Stewart Park	140 enc. 24 int.	80 enc. 0 int.	60 enc. 2 int.	60 enc. 5 int.	31

Location	July – Sept.	Oct. – Dec.	Jan. – Mar.	Apr. – June	Total Int.
Steamboat Landing Farmer’s Market	200 enc. 15 int.	260 enc. 16 int.		60 enc. 0 int.	31
Hotels/Accommodations	120 enc. 7 int.	60 enc. 3 int.	120 enc. 13 int.	440 enc. 35 int.	58
Ithaca Airport	120 enc. 15 int.	160 enc. 13 int.	140 enc. 11 int.	20 enc. 3 int.	42
Beverage	220 enc. 22 int.	140 enc. 15 int.	120 enc. 5 int.	40 enc. 0 int.	42
Performance/Event	220 enc. 12 int.	40 enc. 3 int.	20 enc. 1 int.	20 enc. 0 int.	16

The interviews were spread out over the course of the both the days of the week and months of the year that the facility was open. Times were staggered along those days to provide a comprehensive coverage of each site.

The combined approach delivered nearly 2,100 completed visitor surveys. In comparing the overall results from both the digital and the intercept approaches, nearly every question yielded similar results with a few noted exceptions. For this reason, the primary results were consolidated into a blended compilation that serves as the best glimpse of overall visitor activity. The level of responses achieved with both surveys allows the results to be directly blended without the need for defined weighting to balance for differences in response level. The insights gleaned from the survey results will support Visit Ithaca and the Tompkins County Tourism Program’s destination marketing and product development efforts for future years to come.

# RESULTS & ANALYSIS

## Introduction:

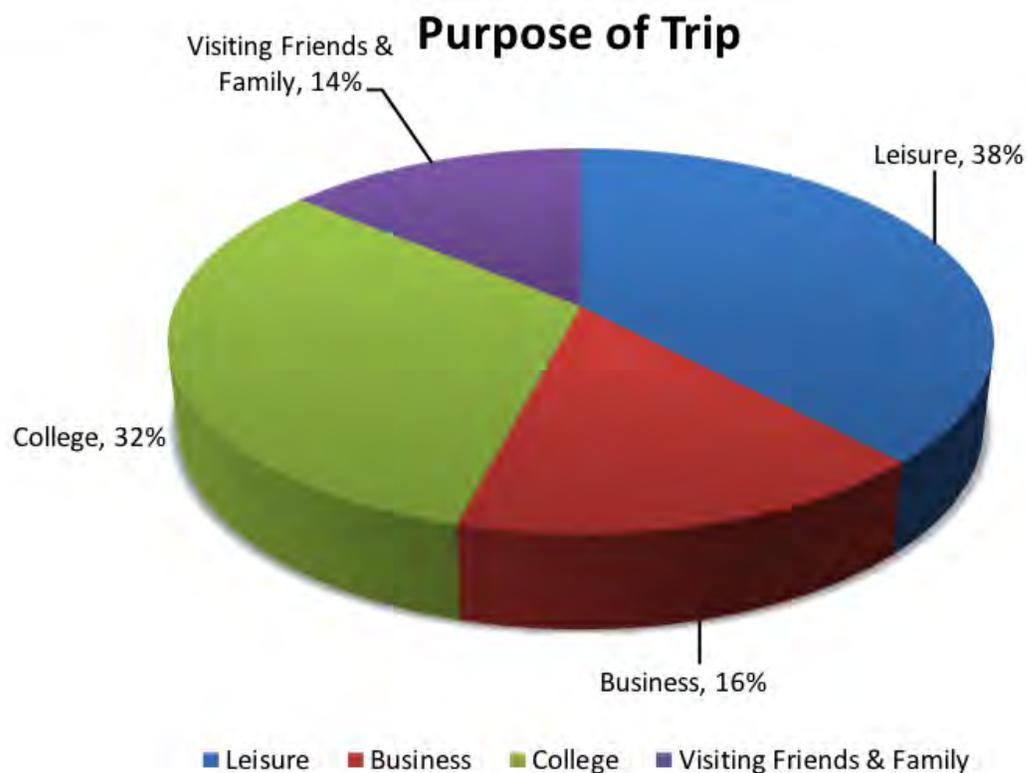
The data gathered through this visitor profile study provides a true glimpse at the travel patterns, activities and demographics of overnight visitors to Ithaca and Tompkins County. Where applicable and relevant, the data is presented to show any striking differences between the visitors interviewed and those taking the digital survey. When appropriate, the 2019 data is directly compared to data from the 2009 study.

In summary form, the visitor profile changed slightly between 2009 and 2019 with a few notable exceptions in mode of transportation and travel planning time.

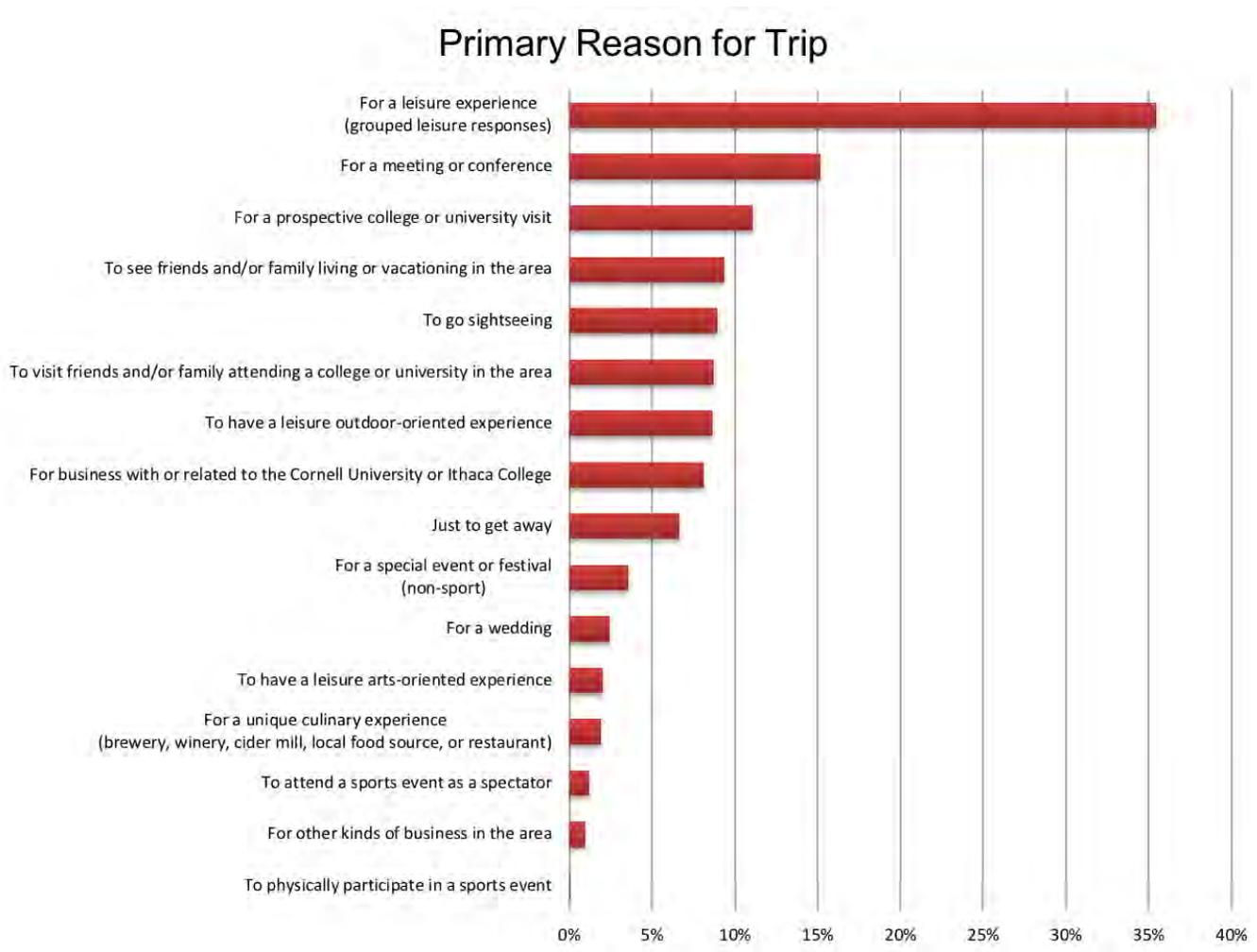
Comparison of Highlights	2019 Overall Results	2009 Overall Results
Repeat Visitation	76% repeat	69%
Overnight Percentage	78% staying overnight	63%
Spending	\$366 per party per day	\$331
Travel Party Size	3.3 people	3.0
Nights Spent	2-3 nights	2.4
Mode of Transportation	21% air	10%
Stays in Hotel/Motels/Inns	60%	50%
Same day Travel Planning	2%	15%
Primary Reason for Travel	Outdoor Leisure Activities	Gorges & State Parks*
Visitor Satisfaction	80% will return	81%

### Primary Reason for Travel

The 2019 visitor profile methodology sought to provide needed detail on the true reasons that prompted the trip to Ithaca and Tompkins County. Those responses were clustered into traditional broader categories that included leisure related reasons (38% of response), college related reasons (32%), business related reasons (15%) and friends/family reasons (14%).



The detail of all respondent choices and responses more thoroughly displays the level of detail available on visitation motivators.



Of the detailed motivators, there are three that show opportunities for direct engagement through leisure-based marketing and outreach, “Sightseeing” (8% of respondents), “Leisure outdoor-oriented experience” (8%) and “Just to get away” (6%). These categories as sub-sets of a general leisure experience provide definite opportunities for focused, strategic pursuit and investment.

The singular role of both visiting friends and/or family living or vacationing in the area and visiting friends and/or family attending a college or university in the area shows the importance of this market segment to overall travel in Ithaca and Tompkins County. Efforts to educate local residents and students on destination experiences and offerings will be an important role within the overall tourism structure, but the connection to paid overnight stays

in the area prompts cautious consideration regarding substantial investments of tourism tax dollars.

**Primary Reason for Trip: Higher Education**

Of the respondents who indicated that their primary purpose for visiting Ithaca and Tompkins County related to higher education (32% of the overall total), more than one third of those visitors (35%) were primarily in the area to visit a student. College tours and on-campus events accounted for 26% and 25% of higher education reasons respectively. Cornell University represented 96% of the survey respondents’ selections for which higher education institution they visited.

**Additionally, 20% of those visiting a higher education institution were touring unrelated to a prospective collegiate commitment.** This a unique attribute of the higher education component in Tompkins County and speaks to the desirability of a non-traditional campus experience.

Meeting or conference participation is notable at 12% given that Ithaca and Tompkins County does not have a dedicated conference center.

Higher Education Participation	
Visiting a student	35%
College tour	26%
On-campus event	25%
Tour (sightseeing on campus not related to a college tour)	20%
Attend a class, course, training or workshop	13%
Meeting or conference	12%
Alumni event	7%
Sports (spectator)	4%
Academic camp	4%
Sports (participatory including camps)	2%
Certification or re-certification of a specific license or designation	0%

## Length of Stay

Based on the overall survey results, 78% of the respondents reported staying overnight and 22% identify as day trippers.

The majority of overnight respondents reported staying 2-3 nights.

Just over 24% of the total responses stated one night as the length of stay.

A combined 65% of overnight results between one and three nights helps define Ithaca and Tompkins County's position as a short getaway destination.

Ithaca and Tompkins County maintains some specific market opportunity with extended stays (over 5 nights) as 15% of combined respondents.

Length of Stay			
Intercept		Online	
1 night	23%	1 night	26%
2-3 nights	45%	2-3 nights	35%
		3-4 nights	18%
4-5 nights	11%	4-5 nights	7%
5-6 nights	8%		
6+ nights	10%		
		5-10 nights	10%
		10+ nights	2%

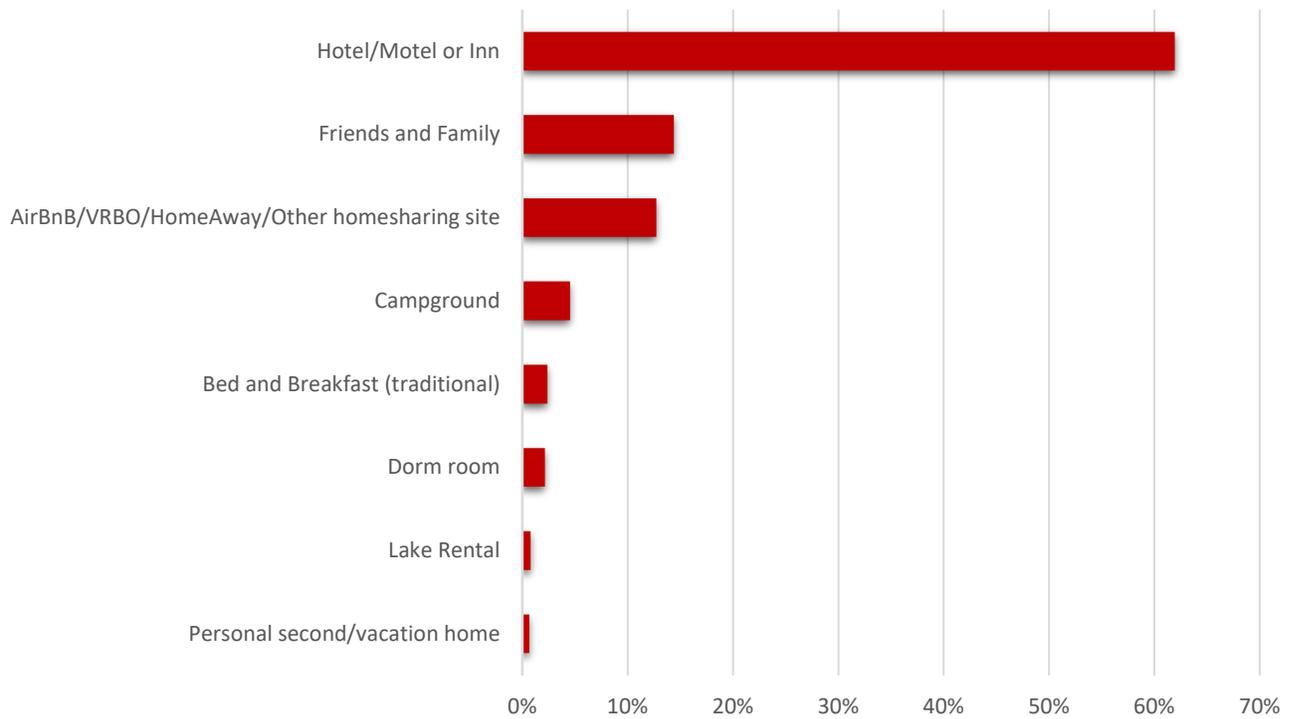
### Overnight Visitors Type of Accommodations

When asked about their accommodations for their overnight stays, 63% of all respondents stayed in a hotel/motel or inn.

Visitors staying with friends and family account for 13% of all visitors.

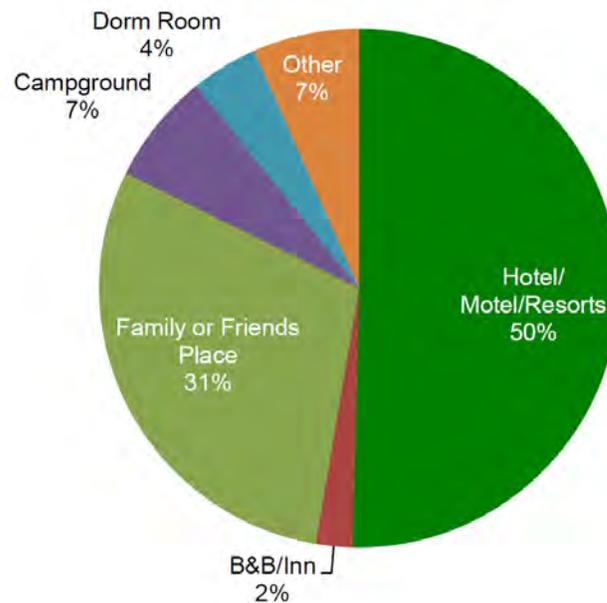
The home sharing platforms of Airbnb/VRBO/HomeAway and other similar services account for another 12% of all visitors staying overnight.

**Overnight Accommodations**  
(all responses)



The 2019 Visitor Profile study results contrast significantly from the results gathered in 2009. Most pronounced in these differences is the emergence of the homesharing/vacation rental market throughout Ithaca and Tompkins County. In 2009, the small incidents of home rentals were included in within an “Other” category that consisted of 7% of overall overnight accommodations responses.

**Figure 2.8: Lodging Arrangements of Tompkins County Visitors (Excluding Day Trippers)**



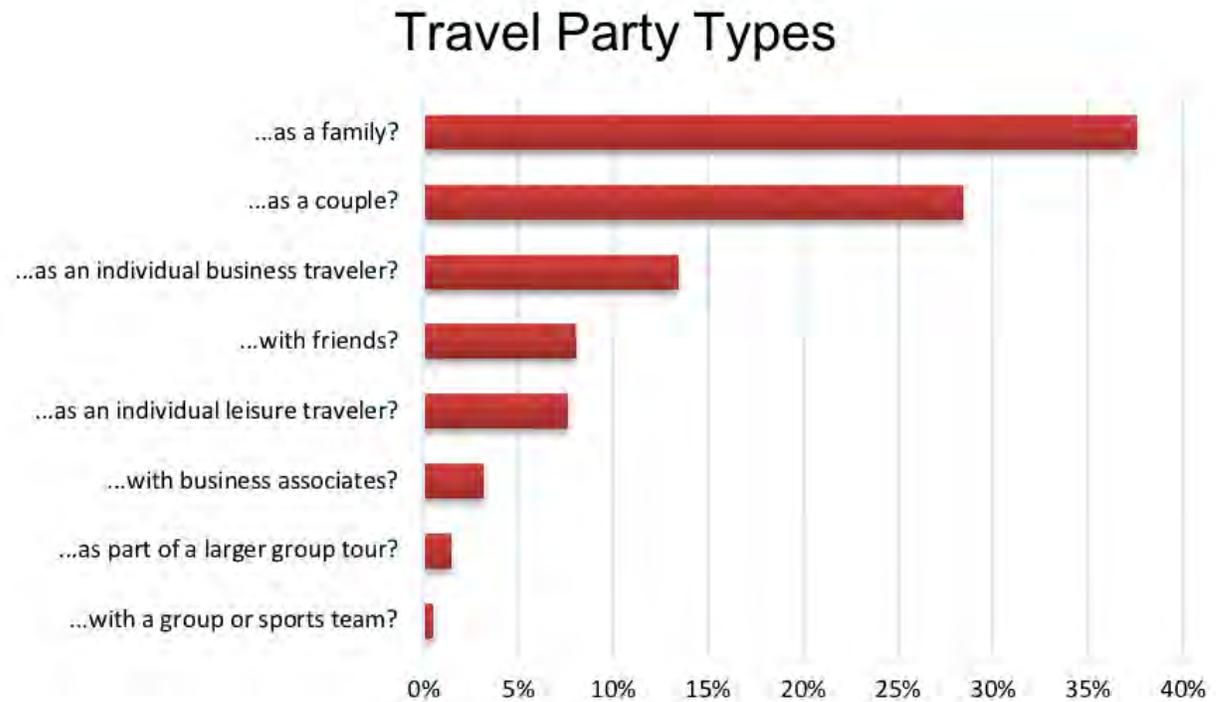
Lodging Arrangements graph from *PROFILE OF VISITORS TO TOMPKINS COUNTY*

When the 2019 results are compared to the 2009 report, homesharing appears to have impacted stays with family and friends in the most significant manner. This segment dropped from 31% of overnight stays in 2009 to approximately 15% in 2019.

Hotel/Motel stays actually increased from 50% to nearly 62% across the two different studies. Presumptions on whether this shift related to increases in hotel supply or demand for the area require additional study. Understanding overall trends and market performance in the area’s accommodations sector fall outside the context of the general visitor profile but can be interpreted through analysis of other secondary research sources.

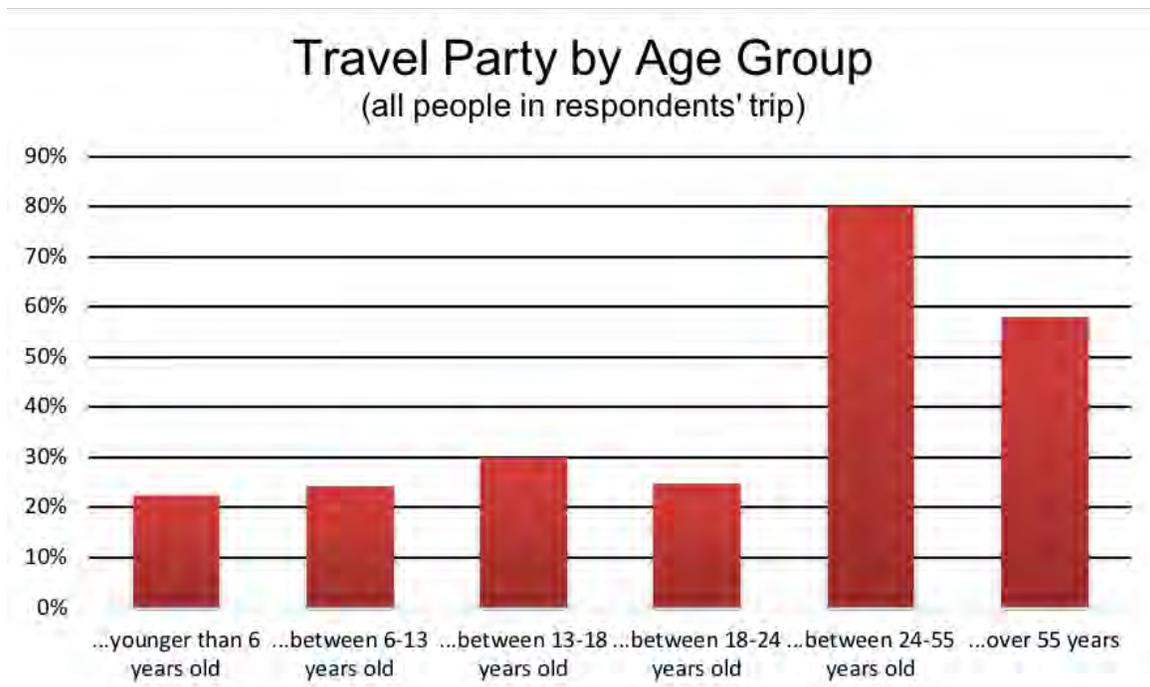
## Travel Party

The most prominent visitor party to Ithaca and Tompkins County were Families traveling with Children at 38% of all responses.



The average travel party size was 3.3 people, slightly larger than the 3.0 people staying overnight garnered from the 2009 Visitor Profile.

Adults accounted for 2.4 people of the travel party with children under 18 accounting for the remainder. Although children between 13-18 years of age represented the largest category of accompanying travelers, the difference between age groupings was largely nominal.



*The section beginning on Page 34 provides comparisons of top Travel Party Types.*

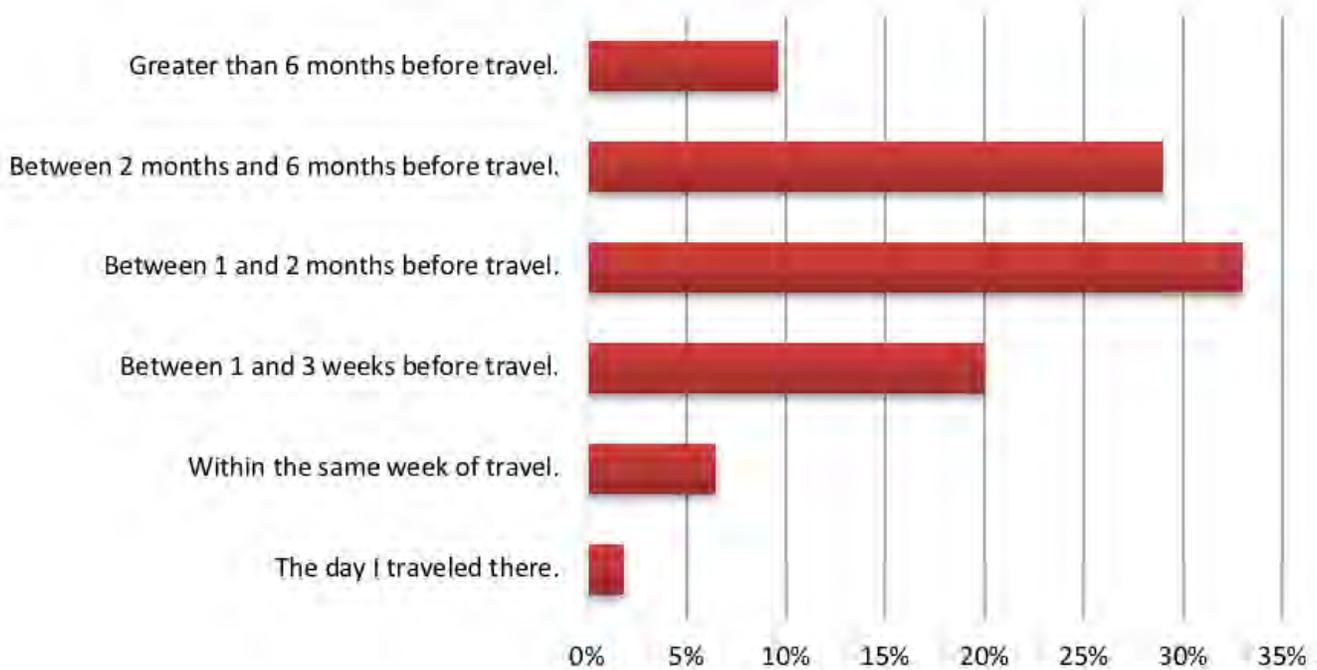
### Travel Planning

The respondents largely planned their trip to Ithaca and Tompkins County between one and two months (33% of responses) prior to their trip. These results match well with the 2009 profile.

The 2019 respondents showed a slight propensity to take more travel planning time than the 2009 results. Those respondents that indicated travel planning of less than one month, not including those deciding upon the day of travel went from 30% in 2009 to 26% in 2019.

Same day travel planning showed the most significant shift changing from 15% to 2%. This could be attributed to the 2019 methodology of reaching a broader audience of actual visitors compared to the 2009 results which focused only on intercept surveys at specific locations within the County.

## Travel Planning Timeframe



Visitors used multiple sources of information to plan their trip.

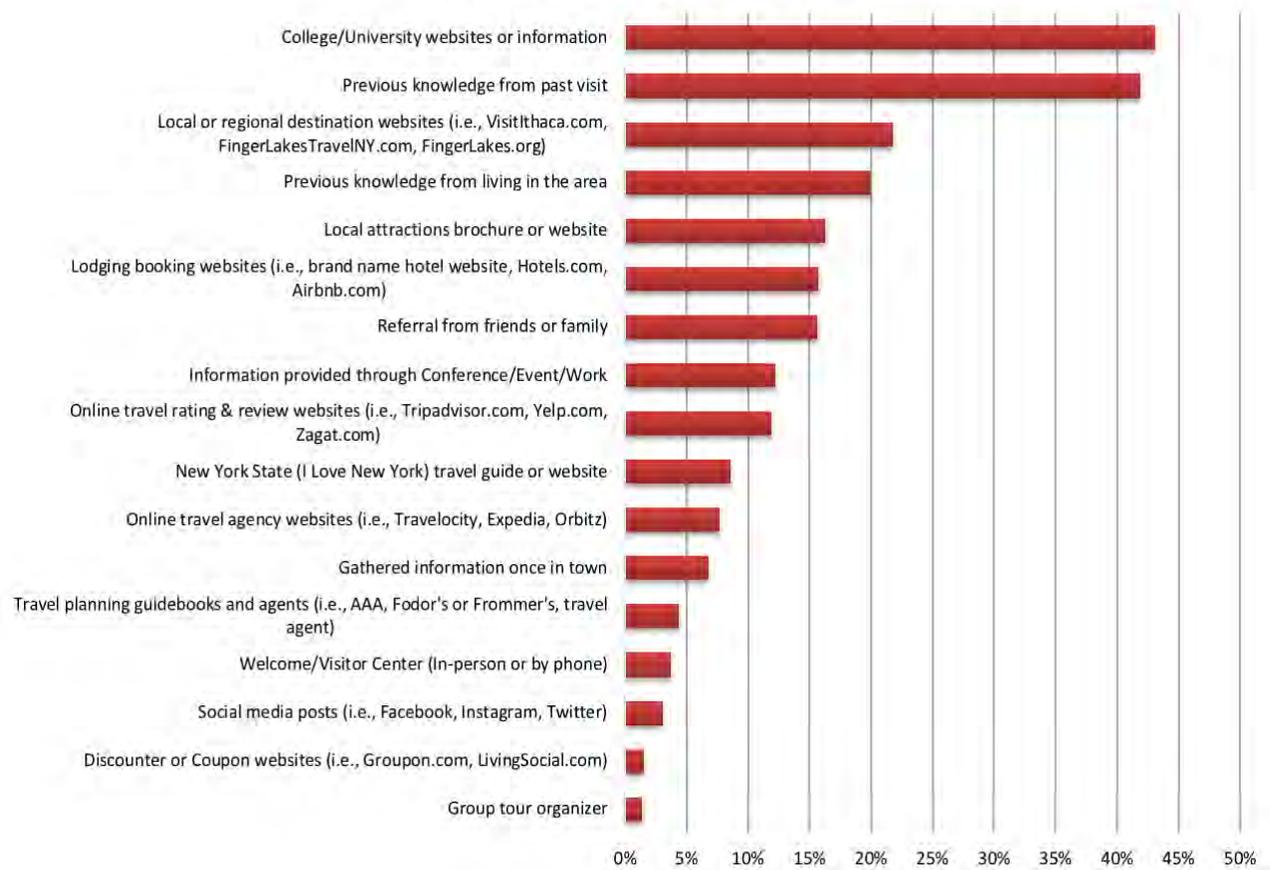
Many visitors are utilizing higher education websites (43%), regardless of whether they are visiting a higher education facility.

Additionally, as 76% of visitors are repeat, many are relying on prior knowledge of the destination with 42% of all visitors selecting that option.

The third most utilized resource is local or regional destination websites (*visitors were shown these options: VisitIthaca.com, FingerLakesTravelNY.com, FingerLakes.org*) with 22% of all visitors using online destination resources.

Internet resources were the most predominant planning tool cited in 2009 along with previous destination experience.

### Travel Planning Resources



## Seasonality

Over 80% of respondents indicated having visited Ithaca and Tompkins County from April to November (Spring, Summer and Fall).

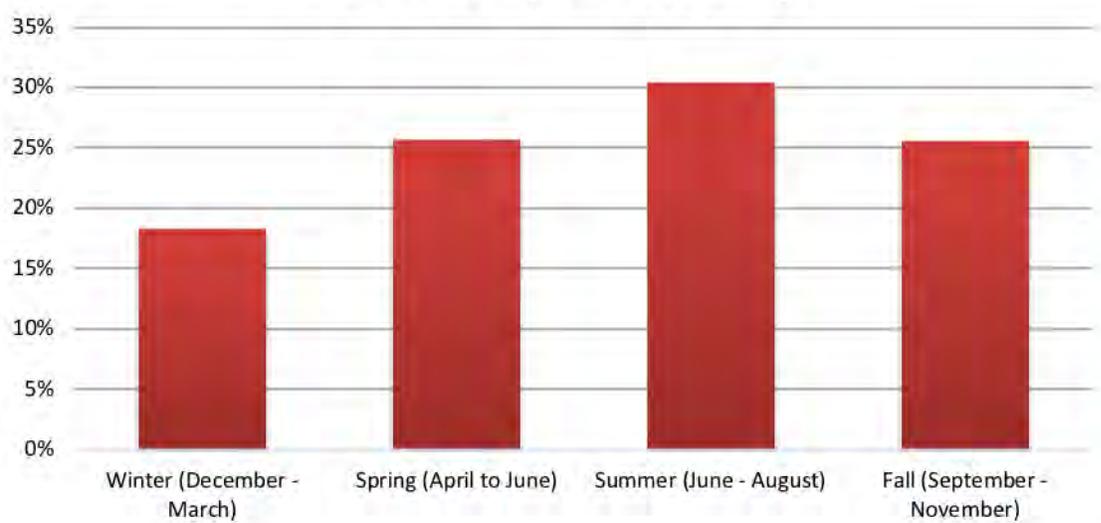
Summer led the seasons with over 30% of the visits followed by a nearly even split between Spring and Fall, each at 26%.

This seasonality marks a significant shift from the 2009 profile where the combined months of July and August captured 30% of the total seasonal visitation volume.

The 2019 results indicate that Tompkins County is becoming a more balanced year-round destination. The peaked bell curve of seasonal visitation shown in the 2009 profile has dramatically flattened within the 2019 study, showing that the 10-year trend has successfully pushed visitation into shoulder periods.

Additional comparisons of seasonality to overnight lodging performance patterns needs to be explored more deeply through secondary data sources and Tompkins County room tax collections trends.

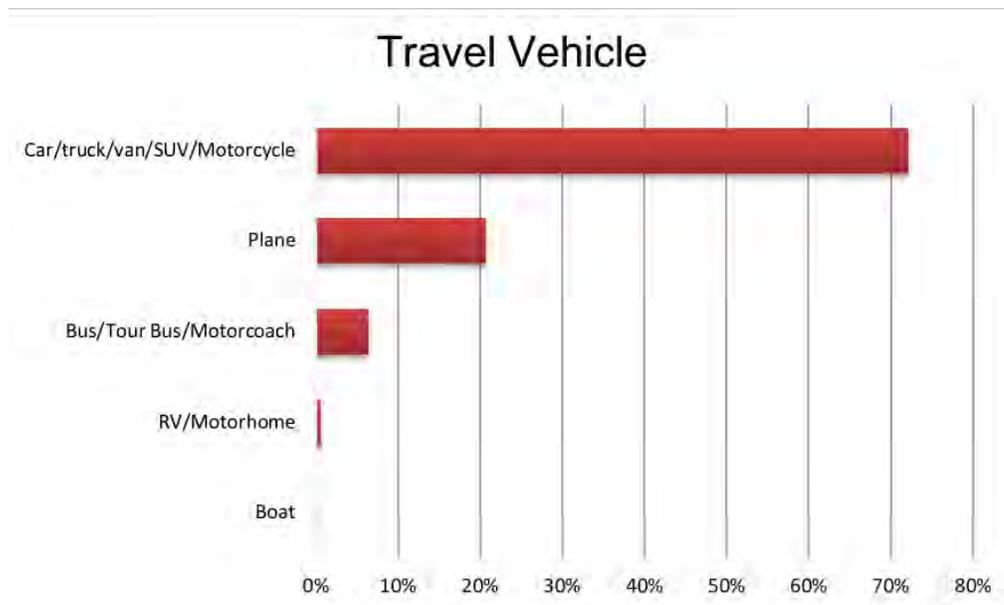
### What time of year did you travel to Ithaca/Tompkins County?



## Travel by Arrival Type

*Included only within the digital survey.*

Respondents were over three times more likely to arrive in Ithaca and Tompkins County by automobile than any other mode of transportation.



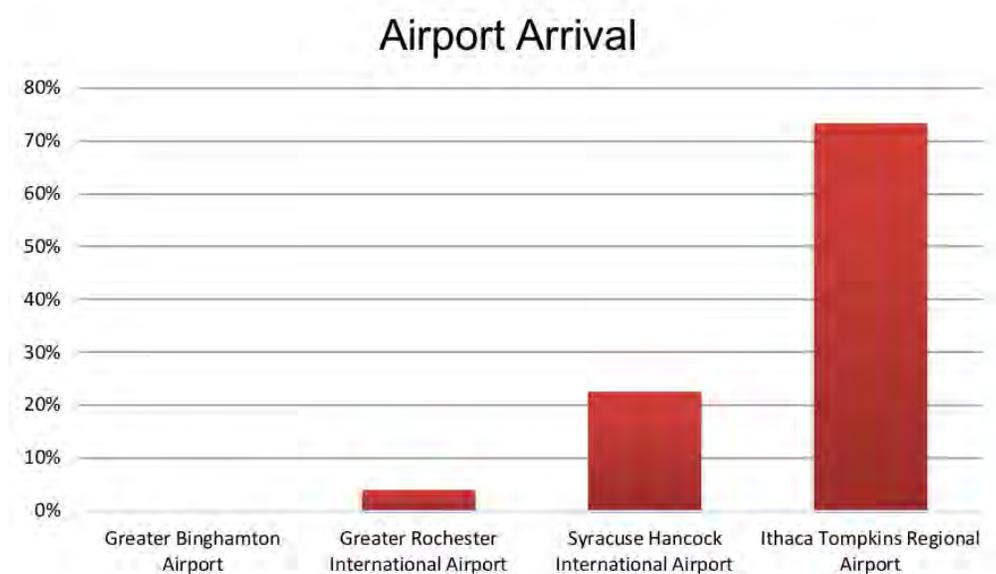
The 72% of respondents that drove to the destination typically (60%) traveled between 3 and 6 hours for their overnight stay.



Air travel to Ithaca and Tompkins County showed significant growth from the 2009 results as those respondents indicating that they flew in grew from 14% to 20%. This change could be reflective of the 2019 methodology to reach more visitors via online database surveying and intercepts on site at the airport.

Visitation tracking of enplanements and deplanements in airports servicing the area should be examined for overall presumptions of true travel patterns.

Of those who arrive by plane (21%), over 73% arrive into Ithaca Tompkins Regional Airport and 23% arrive into Syracuse Hancock International Airport.



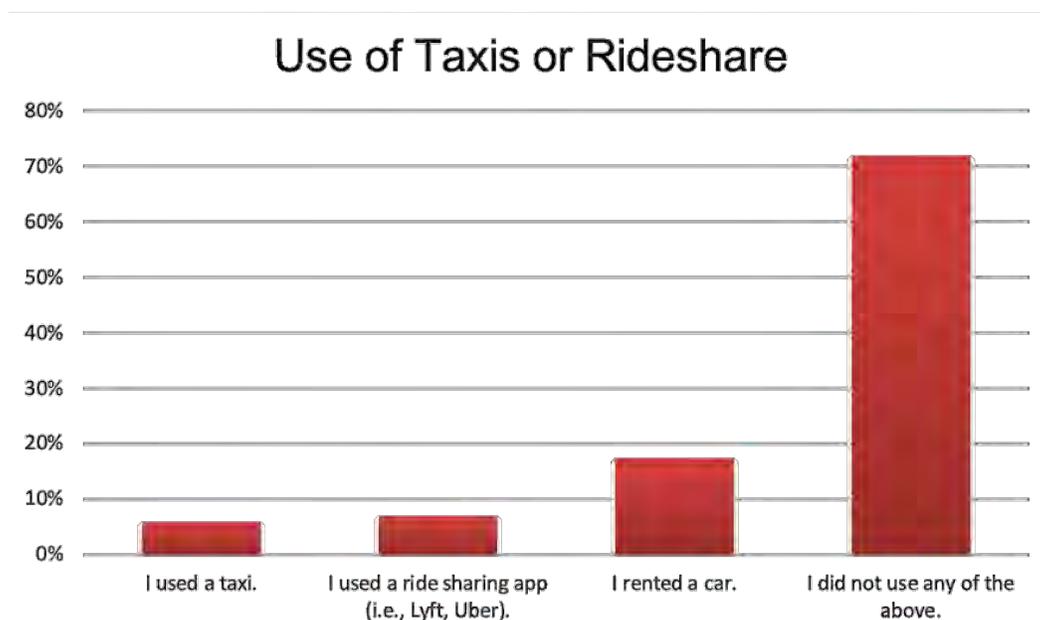
## Travel Within the Destination

*Included only within the digital survey.*

As the majority of visitors are arriving by vehicle, **over 70% of the overall respondents indicate that they do not utilize other transportation** while they are in the destination.

Less than 15% of respondents indicated using either a rideshare app or taxi while traveling within the area.

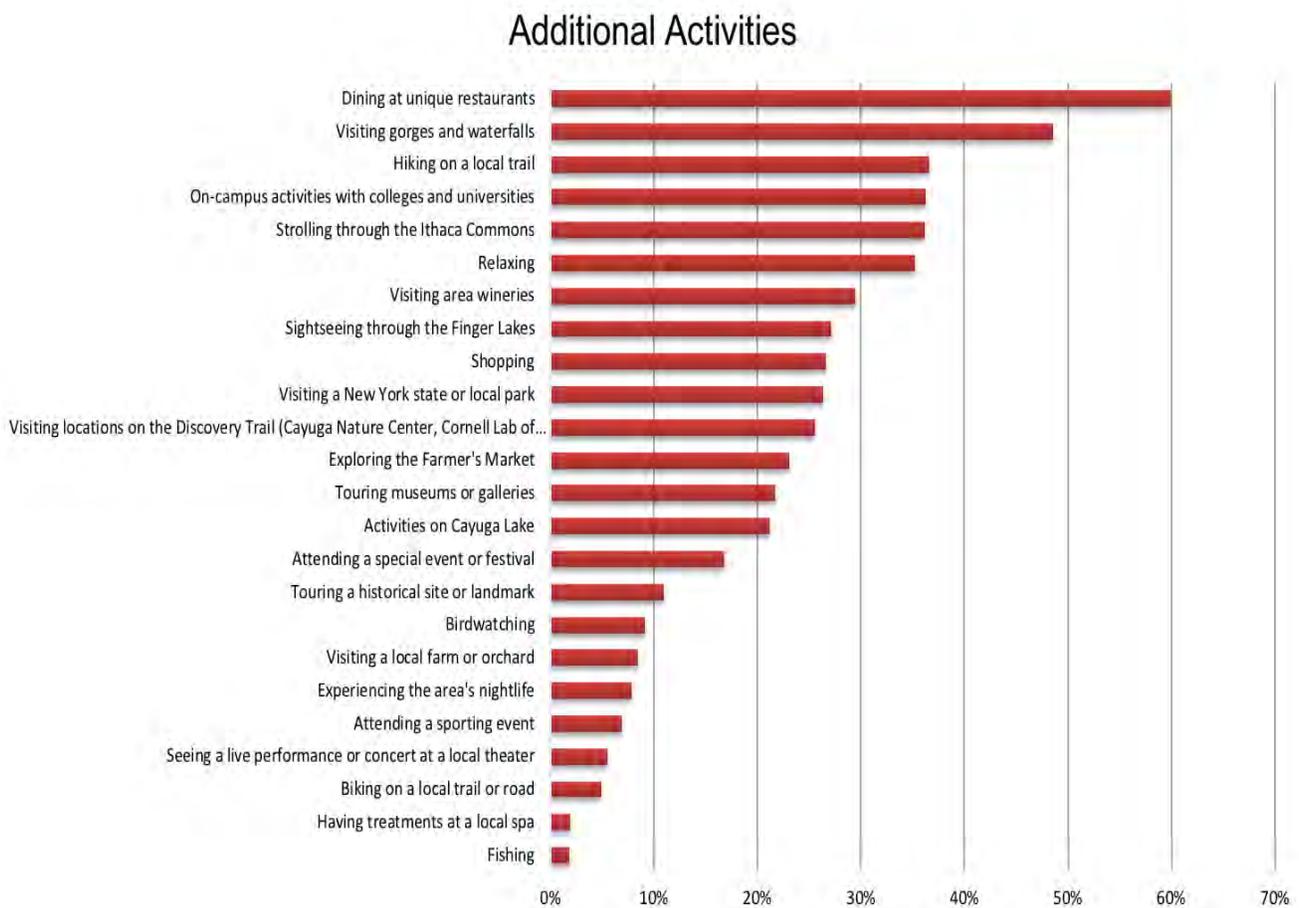
Conclusions on alternative modes of transportation cannot be derived without further surveying on visitor usage. This includes local shuttles, scooters, bikes, walking and public buses.



## Additional Activities

There is a variety of additional activities options available to visitors to Ithaca and Tompkins County. Respondents were prompted to choose several options from a larger menu of things to see and do while in Ithaca and Tompkins County. It should be restated that these activities did not constitute the primary motivator for travel, but rather provided the additional aspects that visitors participated in while on their trip.

Dining at unique restaurants was the leading additional activity with 60% of the respondents selecting that item. These results mirror findings from other destinations, and do not constitute justification for a dedicated pursuit of culinary tourism. The experiential product nature of Ithaca within the Finger Lakes region and its bountiful wineries and agricultural offering supplies a context for culinary activities while visiting the area, but this was not found to be a key motivator.



Nearly 50% of all respondents selected “Visiting gorges and waterfalls” followed by 36% “Hiking on local trails” as the next two most prominent visitor activities.

“On-campus activities with colleges and universities” were also selected by 36% of respondents.

“Strolling through Ithaca Commons” and “Relaxing” fall into this top tier grouping of most selected activities.

Regional sightseeing and shopping options provided a secondary grouping of additional activities as respondents indicated their participation in “Visiting area wineries” (29%), “Sightseeing through the Finger Lakes” (27%), “Shopping” (26%), “Visiting a New York State or local park” (26%), “Visiting locations on the Discovery Trail” (25%), “Exploring the Farmer’s Market” (23%), “Touring museums or galleries” (22%) and “Activities on Cayuga Lake” (21%).

The survey probed respondents on several detailed activity groupings including Park Visitation, Lake Activity Participation, Visitation along the Discovery Trail and awareness of the Cayuga Waterfront Trail.

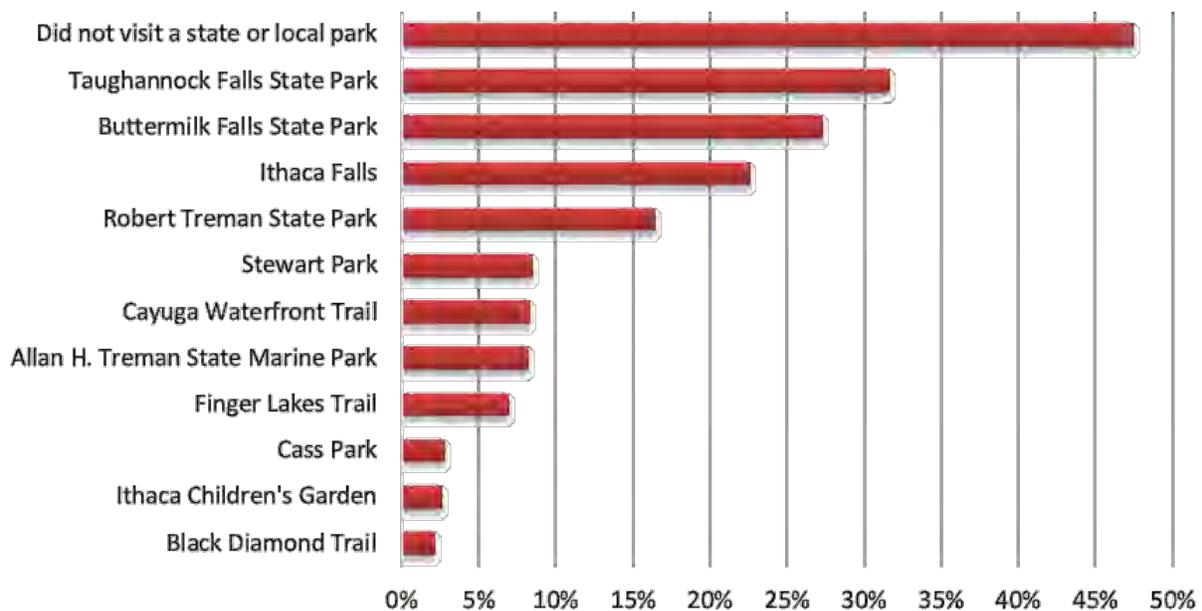
**Additional Activities: Park Visitation**  
*Included only within the digital survey.*

Of all visitors surveyed, over 50% visited parks in the area. Of the 53% that visited parks, 74% of these respondents reported visiting more than one park. Taughannock Falls State Park and Buttermilk Falls State Park had the highest visitation at 32% and 27% respectively.

Ithaca Falls is the third most visited with 23% of visitors surveyed selecting that option.

It is worth noting that the selection (or lack thereof) of Visiting a New York State or Local Park response level does not necessarily correlate to actual park visitation. It was generally concluded that many respondents may not have been aware that they were visiting a specific park while hiking or viewing gorges/waterfalls. This finding perhaps offers partnership opportunities to improve understanding of the care and nurturing of these sites, but deeper understanding should potentially be gathered in advance of programming and investment of resources.

## Area Park Visitation



### Additional Activities: Lake Activity Participation

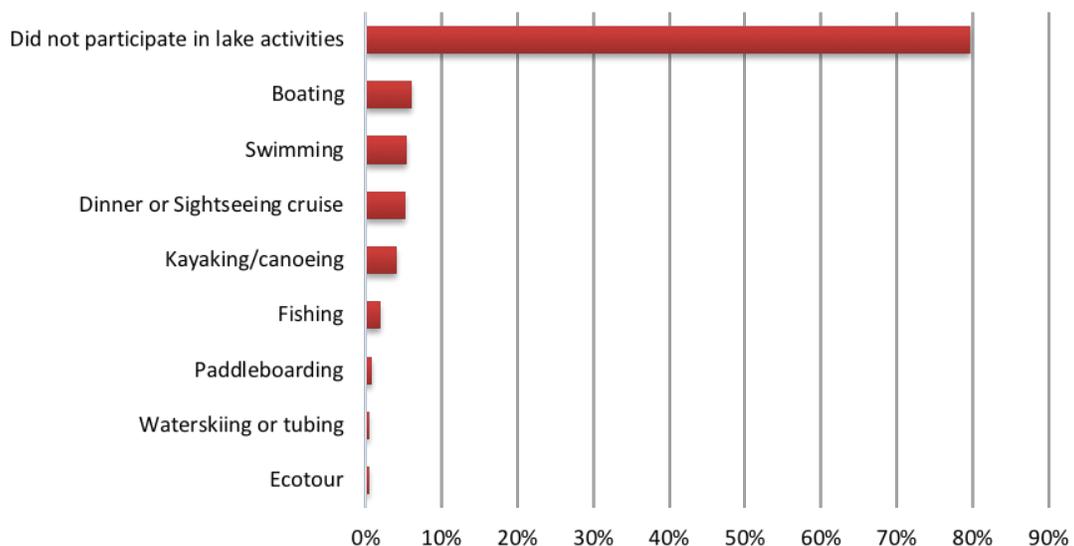
*Included only within the digital survey.*

Just over 20% of all visitors surveyed stated they participated in activities on Cayuga Lake. Of the various Cayuga Lake activities provided within the detailed survey question, respondents indicated a greater level of participation in Boating (6%), swimming (5%), and Dinner or sightseeing cruises (5%). Paddle sports (kayaking, canoeing and paddleboarding) represented a combined 6% of responses. Fishing represented 2% of the lake activity selections.

When respondents provided open-ended comments to this question, many noted that while they did not participate in the activities offered, they simply enjoyed being lakeside.

The moderate level of responses in Lake Activities suggests a modification to the role of Cayuga Lake in marketing material for Ithaca and Tompkins County. The lake serves as a dynamic backdrop to the gorges, universities and unique assets of the area. Emphasis on active recreational pursuits should be balanced against the more dramatic travel motivators that draw travelers to the area.

## Lake Activity Participation



**Additional Activities: Discovery Trail**  
*Included only within the digital survey.*

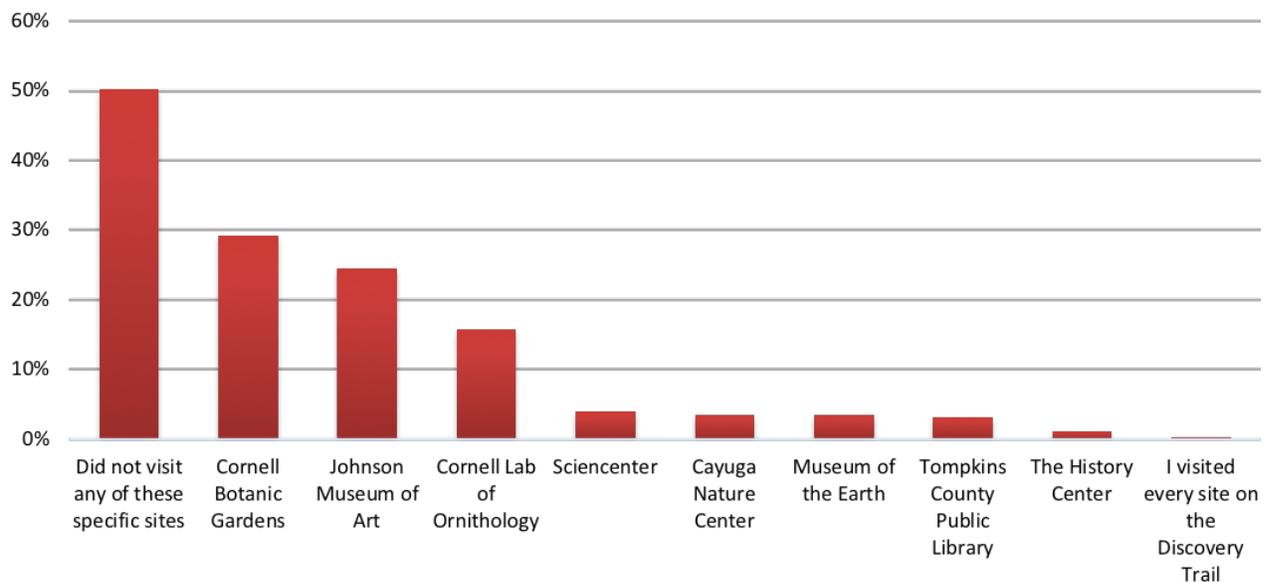
When asked if respondents had heard of the Discovery Trail, 32% stated that they had heard of the Discovery Trail and the attractions within it. Additionally, the intercept portion of the survey collected responses from visitors on-site at all of the Discovery Trail locations.

Of those respondents that went to a Discovery Trail museum or attraction, 83% visited more than one of the sites.

In similar comparison to parks, 50% of all respondents stated they did not visit any of the specific Discovery Trail member sites. The top three sites visited (representing 70% of visitor engagement) are related to Cornell University.

It should be noted that this visitor profile study is not suited to measure or project visitor volume, nor does it serve as a visitor tracking model. The focus on overnight visitors was of primary focus to determine overall visitor profile trends. Certain Discovery Trail museums and attractions are vitally important to the area’s reputation as a distinctive place to visit and a vibrant place to live despite not showing pronounced responses from the overnight visitors surveyed for this profile. These quality of life sites continue to play a role in providing activities for daytrippers or local residents despite not driving overnight visitation.

## Discovery Trail Museums and Attractions

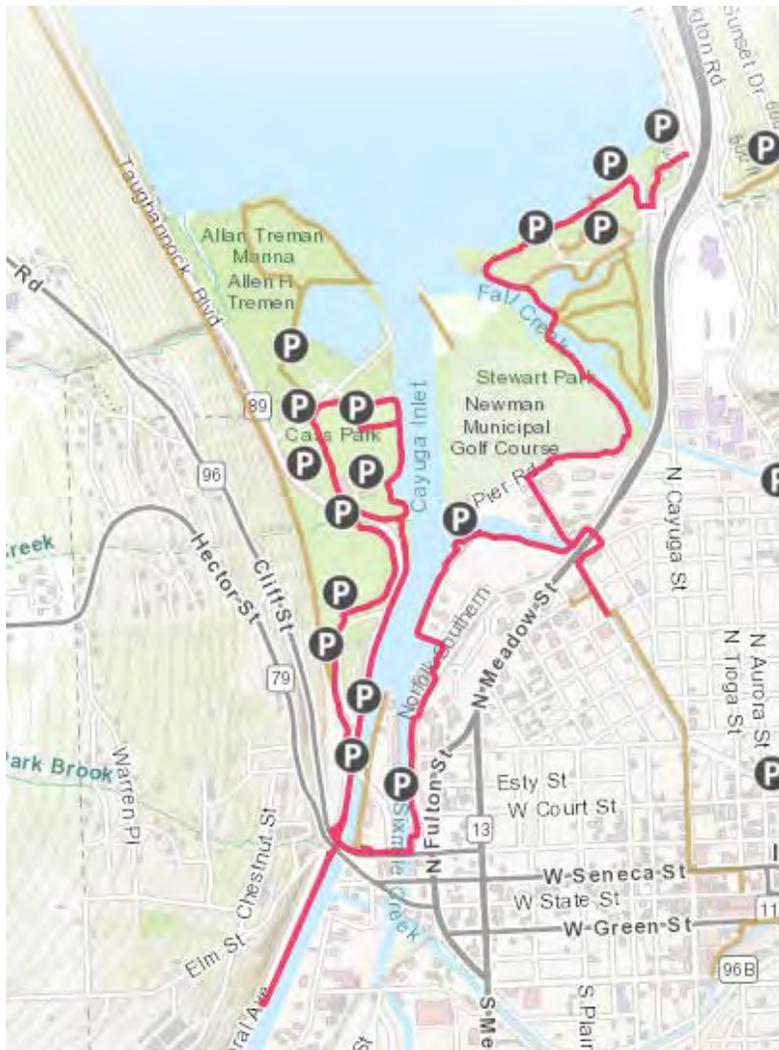


**Additional Activities: Cayuga Waterfront Trail**  
*Included only within the digital survey.*

When asked if respondents had heard of the Cayuga Waterfront Trail, 41% stated that they had heard of the Cayuga Waterfront Trail and the destinations within it.

Although 41% is a relatively high level of awareness for a specific local travel experience, the question arises on whether this awareness is directly connected to name of Cayuga Lake compared to the actual trail sites.

The intercept portion of the survey collected responses from visitors at all of the Cayuga Waterfront Trail locations.



## Visitor Feedback

### Positive Perception

*Included only within the digital survey.*

Respondents expressed a highly positive impression of Ithaca and Tompkins County. When asked how experiences in Ithaca and Tompkins County compare with other places they have visited, Ithaca and Tompkins County received four out of five stars.

These respondents were asked about their likelihood of returning to Ithaca and Tompkins County and **over 91% responded that they would return.**

When asked if they would recommend the destination to friends and family, 68% said they would recommend Ithaca and Tompkins County for a vacation and 85% said they would recommend the destination for a getaway.

When these results are combined with the data on overall length of stay, the importance of shorter length of stay visits becomes more pronounced for Ithaca and Tompkins County. Understanding how to properly message travel related promotions is vital for creating proper connectivity to targeted audiences.

Return & Recommend			
Likelihood to Return (regardless of reason)		Likelihood to Recommend	
Yes	91%	For vacation (5-7 nights)	68%
No	9%	For a getaway (1-3 nights)	85%

### Visitor Feedback: Alignment with Positive Statements

*Included only within the digital survey.*

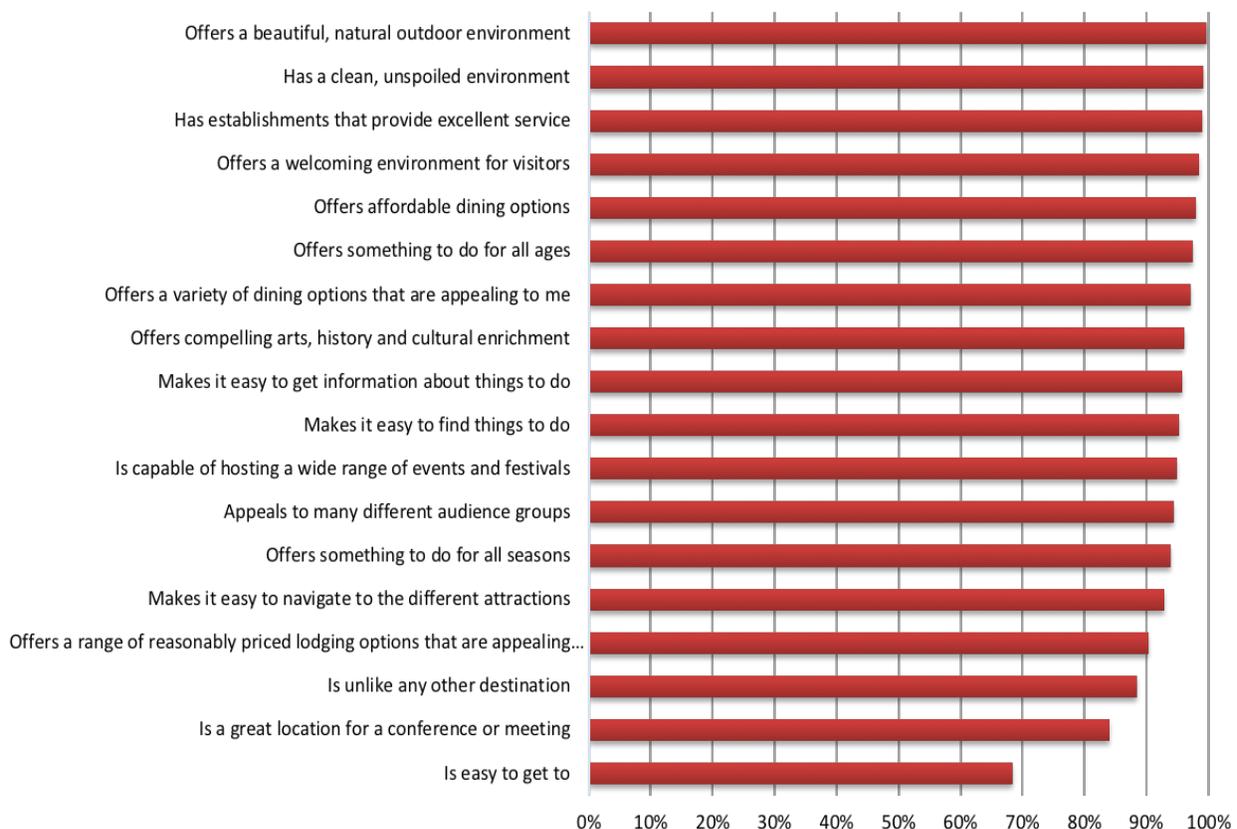
Visitors were asked about how Ithaca and Tompkins County aligns with a variety of destination related attributes and descriptions.

Overall the destination received very high remarks, with all but one statement achieving over 80% feedback that the statements described Ithaca and Tompkins County “somewhat well” or “extremely well”.

The lowest score in this set of statements was “Is easy to get to” with the combined scores achieving a 68% rating.

“Is easy to get to” was not an option provided in the 2009 profile, but “Roads and Traffic” was listed in that study as the top aspect “not enjoyed”.

## Alignment with Statements



### Visitor Feedback: Product Enhancements

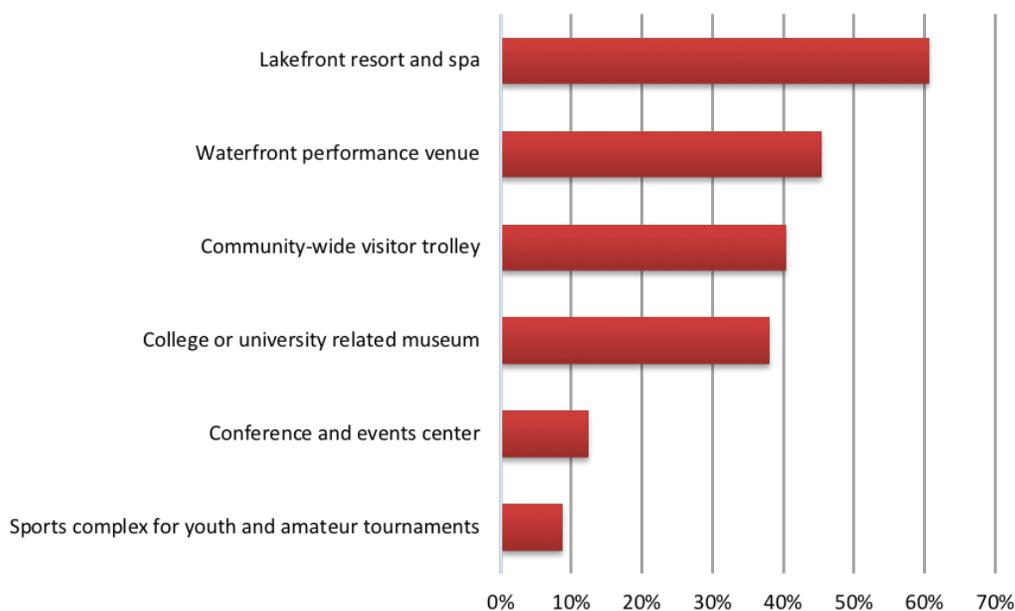
*Included only within the digital survey.*

Visitors were asked about additional items that would enhance the destination. The survey mechanism allowed respondents to select multiple enhancements. When asked what activities or experiences would create appeal if added to the Ithaca and Tompkins County destination product, over 60% selected a lakefront resort and spa.

The other three expressed enhancements selected by the respondents were “Waterfront performance venue” (selected by 44% of respondents), “Community-wide visitor trolley” (40%), “College or university related museum” (39%).

It should be noted that while “Conference and events center” (12%) and “Sports complex for youth and amateur tournaments” (9%) were each selected by a minimal number of respondents, specialized venues typically do not yield a high level of response to questions of needed venues by visitors. As this was not a meeting or sports planner survey, the level of responses on those respective products are not necessarily an indication of product needs. It is notable that conference and events center received the level of mention that it did and should provide a degree of additional study to determine feasibility.

## Product Enhancements

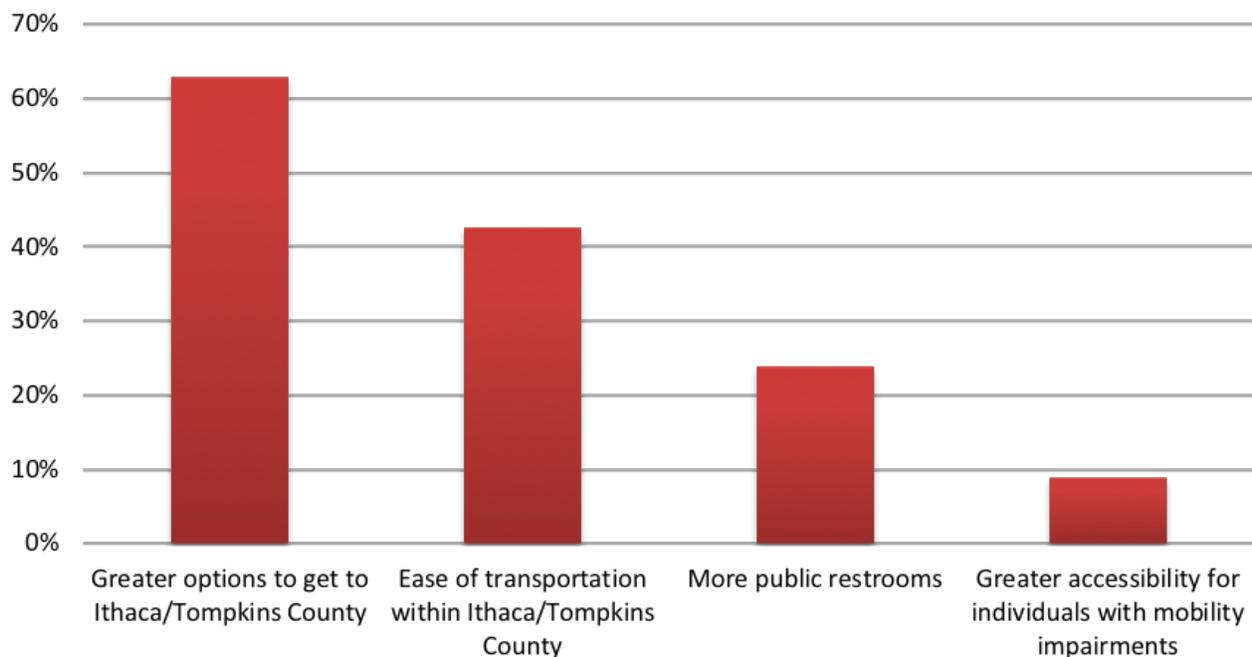


**Visitor Feedback: Service Enhancements**  
*Included only within the digital survey.*

Visitors were asked about additional items that would enhance the destination from a services perspective. Transportation options to and within the destination received the highest level of response. As referenced previously within this profile report, over 70% of respondents arrived by car and less than 15% utilized taxis or rideshare services while in Ithaca and Tompkins County.

Respondents ranked transportation related items as the most important service enhancements needed for Ithaca and Tompkins County. Greater options to get to the destination was selected by over 60% while over 40% selected Ease of transportation within Ithaca and Tompkins County.

### Service Enhancements



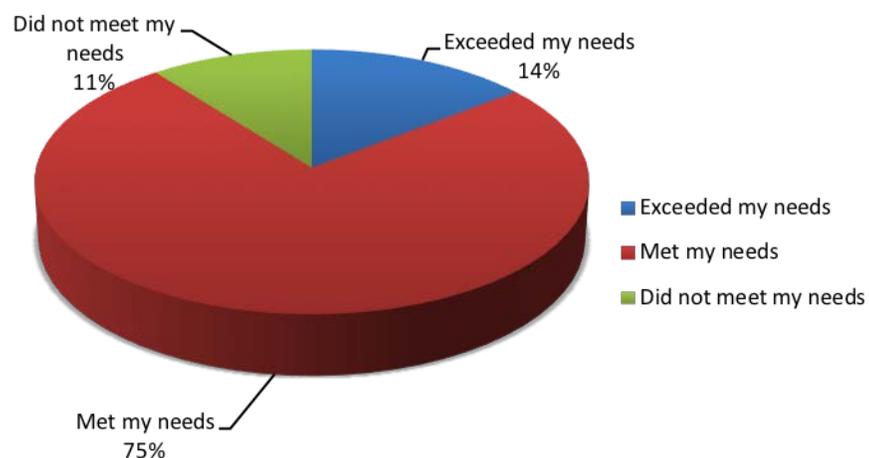
### Visitor Feedback: Directional Signage

*Included only within the intercept survey.*

An important aspect of visitor experience within the destination is the ease of navigating the area through the aid of directional signage. Visitors were asked if the wayfinding and directional signage met their needs while in Ithaca and Tompkins County.

When combined, responses for “Exceeded my needs” and “Met my needs” achieved 89% of the responses. Only 11% selected “did not meet my needs.”

## Did the wayfinding/signage meet your needs during this trip?

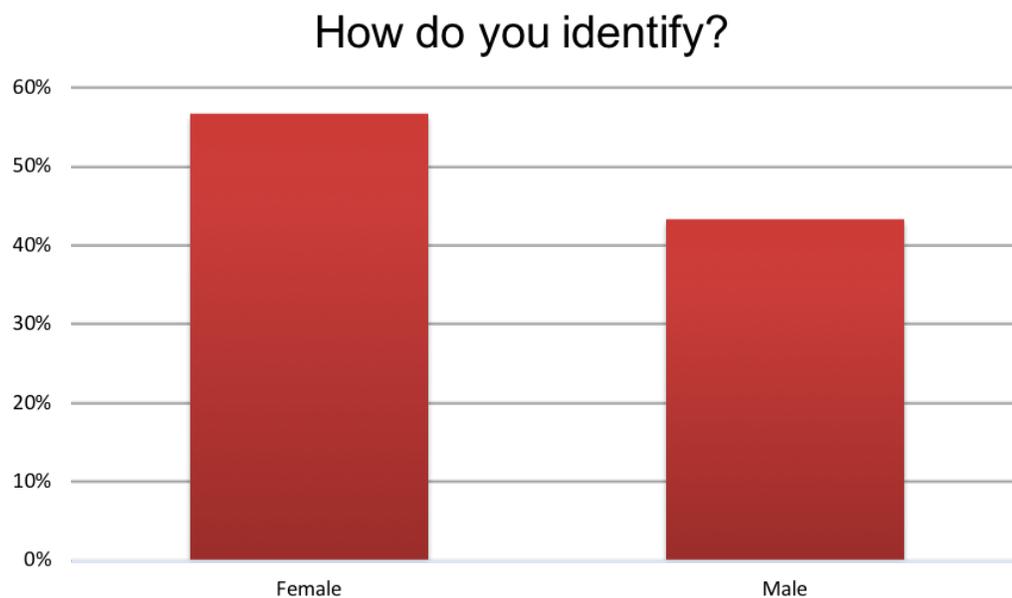
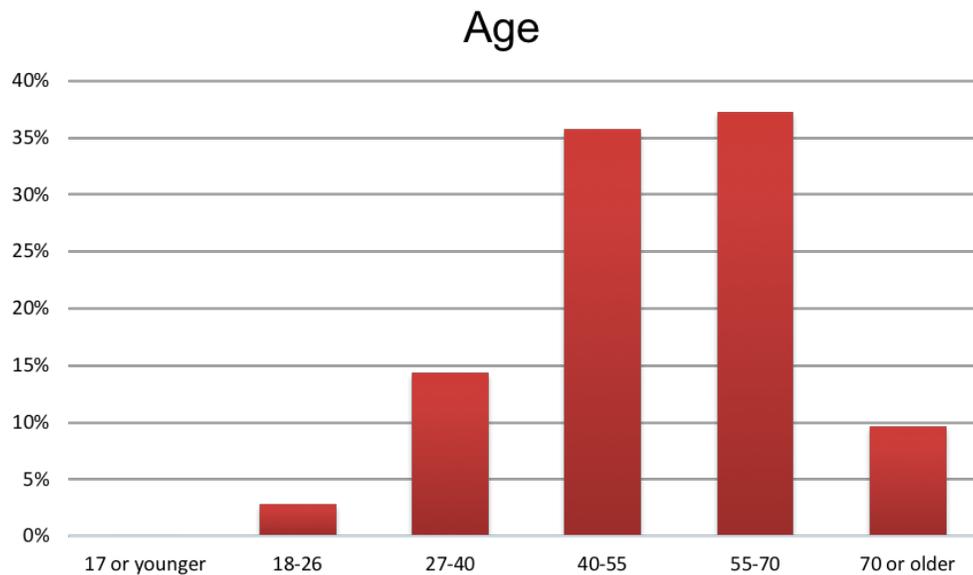


This exceptionally high score from respondents could be indicative of two trends. First, Ithaca and Tompkins County has a high number of repeat visitors (70%+) who are familiar with the destination. The more they visit, the less they feel that they need signage. Second, the prevalence of smart phone usage for directions makes visitors less reliant on destination directional signage.

There is potentially a remaining role for a wayfinding system to help direct visitors, both first timers and repeat, to learn of either new or different options for spending time in Ithaca and Tompkins County. Wayfinding can help with educating visitors that are relying on past knowledge of the area as one of their primary planning tools.

## Respondent Demographics

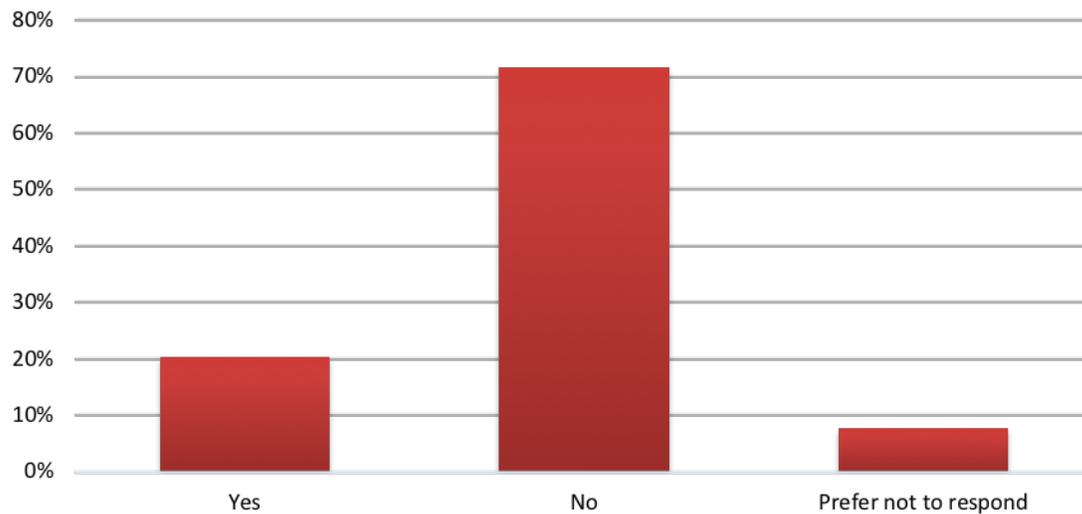
The majority of respondents are between 40-70 years of age with 57% of visitors being female.



Of visitors surveyed, 20% identified with the LGBTQIA+ community while another 8% Preferred to not respond.

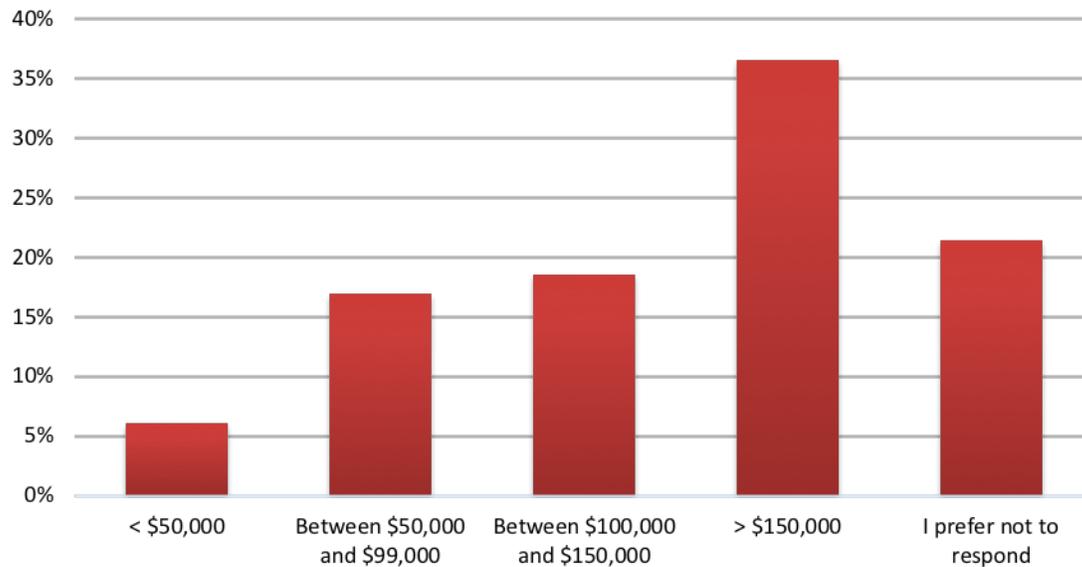
Compared with other destinations, the ratio of LGBTQIA+ connectivity for Ithaca and Tompkins County is a clear differentiator. This visitor group has a propensity to travel. The market focus on this visitor segment shows potential for greater growth in the future.

### Do you identify with the LGBTQIA+ community?

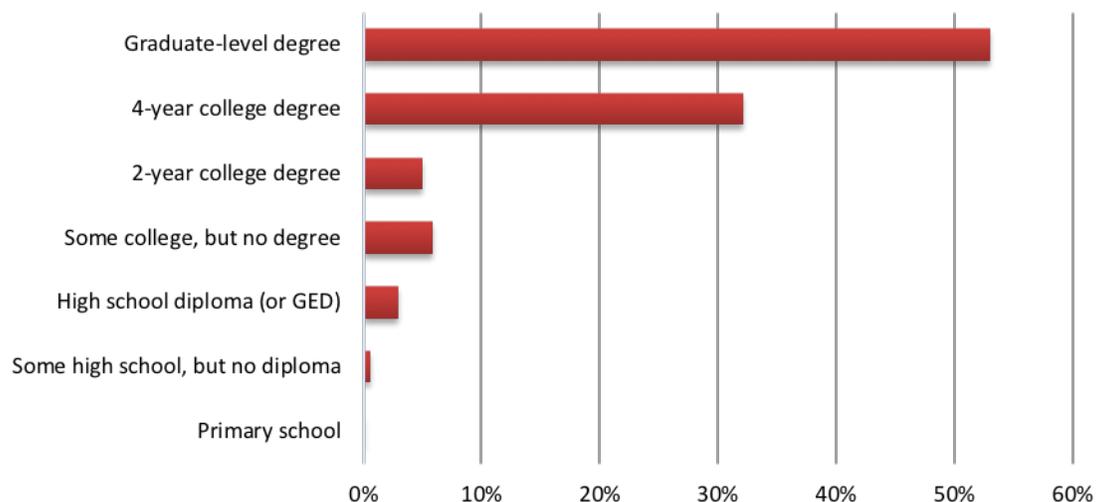


Visitors to Ithaca and Tompkins County are well educated (85% have college degrees), earn an above average household income (50% earn over \$100,000 per year) and are employed (62% working full time).

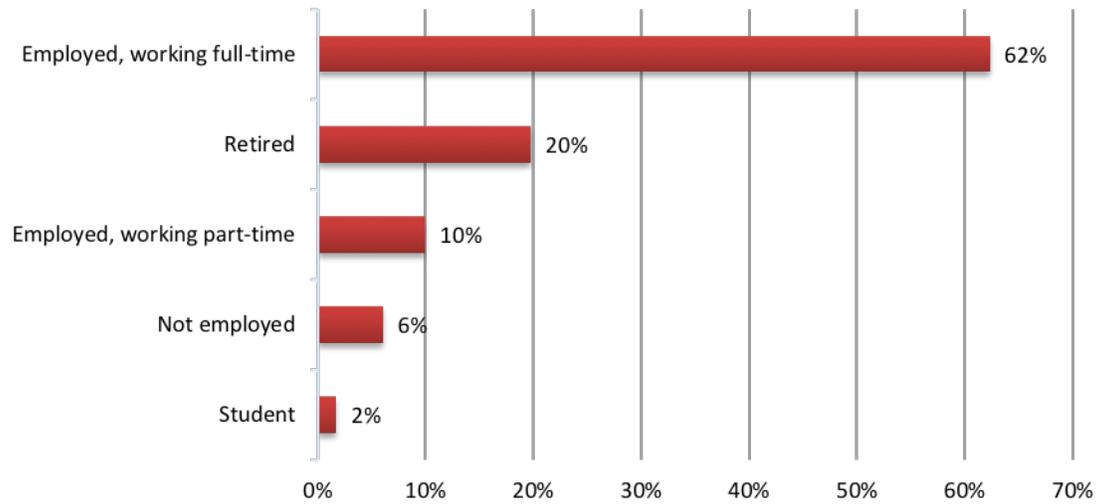
### What is your annual household income?



### What is the highest level of school that you have completed?



## Which of the following categories best describes your employment status?





# **PRIMARY RESPONDENT VISITOR PROFILES**

The following pages contain profiling overviews of the top visitor types for Ithaca and Tompkins County based on responses collected during both survey processes.

## Families with Kids

The leading visitor type was a family with children, with 38% of all visitors responding that is how they traveled. To better understand those visitors traveling as a family into Ithaca and Tompkins County, the survey results were compiled and then analyzed focusing only on this type of visitor and their responses. The following is a profile of families with kids that visited Ithaca and Tompkins County. Families had the highest level of daytrips with only 67% staying overnight compared to other top profiles. However, Families staying in hotels spend the most on lodging and dining. Families spend the most on museums and attractions than any other top visitor profile. Families are more likely to visit in the summer with over 40% coming in that time of year.

- **Overnight stay**
  - 67% stay overnight.
  - 43% stayed for 2-3 nights
  - 20% stayed for one night
  - 15% stayed for 6 or more nights
- **Seasonality**
  - 41% visit in the summer
  - 23% visit in the spring
  - 20% visit in the fall
  - 15% visit in the winter
- **Accommodation Type**
  - 43% stayed in hotel/motels or inns
  - 23% stayed with family and friends
  - 22% stayed in an Airbnb/VRBO/Homeaway or other home share platform
- **Spending (per day)**
  - \$233 – lodging
  - \$121 – dining
  - \$65 – retail
  - \$41 – transportation
  - \$38 – outdoor experiences
  - \$37 – craft beverages
  - \$18 – museums and attractions
  - \$34 – other entertainment
- **Primary Reason for Travel**
  - 24% visited for outdoor leisure and sightseeing
  - 20% visited for a college visit
  - 14% visited for friends and family
- **Satisfaction**
  - 76% - return in the next year
  - 90% - return in the future
  - 70% - recommend for vacation
  - 80% - recommend for getaway
- **Additional Activities**
  - 52% visit the gorges and waterfalls
  - 52% dine at restaurants
  - 39% hike local trails
- **Geographic Location**
  - 32% - New York State
  - 10% - Pennsylvania
  - 10% - New Jersey
  - 8% - California
- **LGBTQIA+ Identification**
  - 20% - yes
  - 69% - no
  - 10% - prefer not to respond

## Families with Kids (College as Primary Reason for Travel)

The leading visitor type was a family with children with 38% of all visitors responding that is how they traveled. Within this visitor segment, 20% selected a higher education institution being the primary reason for travel. To better understand those visitors traveling as a family for higher education reasons in Ithaca and Tompkins County, the survey results were compiled and then analyzed focusing only on this type of visitor and their responses. The following is a profile of a family with kids traveling with the purpose of visiting colleges almost always stay overnight, but they are not staying very long with 42% staying for only one night. This segment spends the most on lodging at hotels, likely needing at least two rooms. **This segment is not experiencing as much of Ithaca and Tompkins County as other segments with the majority of their time in the destination being on campus or at restaurants.** However, they are spending the most on retail – likely connected to university purchases. This segment will visit during all times of year, but with the highest concentration of visits taking place in the spring and winter.

- **Overnight stay**
  - 89% stay overnight
  - 43% stayed for 2-3 nights
  - 42% stayed for 1 night
  - 7% stayed more than 6 nights
- **Accommodation Type**
  - 84% stayed in hotel/motels or inns
  - 7% stayed with family and friends
  - 7% stayed in an Airbnb/VRBO/Homeaway or other home share platform
- **Additional Activities**
  - 67% dine at restaurants
  - 66% on-campus activities
  - 44% visit the gorges and waterfalls
- **Seasonality**
  - 38% visit in the spring
  - 25% visit in the winter
  - 21% visit in the summer
  - 16% visit in the fall
- **Spending (per day)**
  - \$256 – lodging
  - \$140 – dining
  - \$87 – retail
  - \$58 – transportation
  - \$38 – outdoor experiences
  - \$48 – craft beverages
  - \$22 – museums and attractions
  - \$48 – other entertainment
- **Satisfaction**
  - 77% - return in the next year
  - 93% - return in the future
  - 64% - recommend for vacation
  - 72% - recommend for getaway
- **Geographic Location**
  - 29% - New York State
  - 12% - New Jersey
  - 9% - California
  - 8% - Massachusetts
- **LGBTQIA+ Identification**
  - 17% - yes
  - 66% - no
  - 17% - prefer not to respond

## Couples

The next highest visitor type were couples. To better understand those visitors traveling as couples into Ithaca and Tompkins County, the survey results were compiled and then analyzed focusing only on this type of visitor and their responses. Couples primarily stayed in hotels with a majority staying 2-3 nights. Couples are more likely to visit the craft beverage attractions including wineries, but the spend less than families and friends in this space. Couples are visiting primarily in the summer with the next highest season being fall. Couples are predominantly coming from New York State, but have additional geographic opportunities in New Jersey, Pennsylvania and Connecticut. This audience could be a target for market expansion.

- **Overnight stay**
  - 67% stay overnight.
  - 51% stayed for 2-3 nights
  - 14% stayed for 1 night
  - 18% stayed for 4-5 or more nights
- **Accommodation Type**
  - 55% stayed in hotel/motels or inns
  - 13% stayed with family and friends
  - 15% stayed in an Airbnb/VRBO/Homeaway or other home share platform
- **Primary Reason for Travel**
  - 23% visited for outdoor leisure and sightseeing
  - 12% visited for friends and family
  - 11% just to get away
- **Additional Activities**
  - 65% dine at restaurants
  - 56% visit the gorges and waterfalls
  - 42% hike local trails
  - 41% visit local wineries, breweries and ciderie
  - 38% visit Ithaca Commons
- **Seasonality**
  - 38% visit in the summer
  - 27% visit in the fall
  - 21% visit in the spring
  - 14% visit in the winter
- **Spending (per day)**
  - \$171 – lodging
  - \$131 – dining
  - \$35 – retail
  - \$13 – transportation
  - \$15 – outdoor experiences
  - \$21 – craft beverages
  - \$5 – museums and attractions
  - \$9 – other entertainment
- **Satisfaction**
  - 80% - return in the next year
  - 94% - return in the future
  - 73% - recommend for vacation
  - 82% - recommend for getaway
- **Geographic Location**
  - 39% - New York State
  - 10% - Pennsylvania
  - 8% - New Jersey
  - 6% - Connecticut
- **LGBTQIA+ Identification**
  - 17% - yes
  - 77% - no
  - 6% - prefer not to respond

## Friends

The fourth most prevalent visitor type was groups of friends traveling together with just under 10% of surveyed respondents. To better understand those visitors traveling friends into Ithaca and Tompkins County, the survey results were compiled and then analyzed focusing only on this type of visitor. Friends are more likely to stay in a homeshare property than the other top visitor profiles. This could be attributable to a cost-effective nature of splitting a home, amenities of being able to cook, etc. Friends are also more likely to visit Ithaca Commons than other top visitor profiles and have the second highest spending on retail behind college bound families. Groups of friends are also more likely to travel in the shoulder periods with over 30% visiting in the fall. Groups of friends are predominantly coming from New York State, but have the lowest representation from New Jersey than other top profiles. There is an opportunity to target the New Jersey market for future business expansion.

- **Overnight stay**
  - 75% stay overnight.
  - 56% stayed for 2-3 nights
  - 18% stayed for 1 night
  - 11% stayed more than 6 nights
- **Accommodation Type**
  - 50% stayed in hotel/motels or inns
  - 30% stayed in an Airbnb/VRBO/Homeaway or other home share platform
  - 9% stayed with family and friends
- **Primary Reason for Travel**
  - 23% visited for outdoor leisure and sightseeing
  - 10% visited for friends and family
  - 8% for a special event or festival
- **Additional Activities**
  - 60% dine at restaurants
  - 53% visit the gorges and waterfalls
  - 51% visit Ithaca Commons
  - 51% relax
  - 47% hike a local trail
- **Seasonality**
  - 31% visit in the fall
- 27% visit in the summer
- 27% visit in the spring
- 14% visit in the winter
- **Spending (per day)**
  - \$127 – lodging
  - \$75 – dining
  - \$71 – retail
  - \$46 – transportation
  - \$17 – outdoor experiences
  - \$48 – craft beverages
  - \$8 – museums and attractions
  - \$25 – other entertainment
- **Satisfaction**
  - 84% - return in the next year
  - 100% - return in the future
  - 71% - recommend for vacation
  - 90% - recommend for getaway
- **Geographic Location**
  - 39% - New York State
  - 10% - Pennsylvania
  - 6% - New Jersey
  - 6% - Texas
- **LGBTQIA+ Identification**
  - 24% - yes
  - 76% - no

# CONCLUSIONS

Deep analysis and comparison with both past research results and current market trends provides an opportunity to draw certain strategic conclusions. These conclusions help create a base foundation for ongoing strategic direction. The conclusions are provided below.

The overnight visitor market for Ithaca and Tompkins County is highly dependent upon short-term travel of less than three nights. Efforts can be taken to attempt to grow length of stay, but the market reality of the short length of stay should not be viewed as a market weakness. Knowing that the Ithaca and Tompkins County travel product is blended well for overnight stays between one and three nights can help the destination stay focused on its strengths.

The emergence of homesharing options appears to have had more impact on stays with friends and family than traditional hotels/motels and inns as overnight stays with family and friends dropped from 31% in 2009 to approximately 15% in 2019. Impacts from homesharing stays and the associated affordability of their inventory options has likely impacted overall spending. As the homesharing stock in the destination increased over the last 10 years, that inventory captured visitors who previously would have stayed with friends and family. This capture of spending on accommodations benefits the destination through added tax collections.

The high volume (76% of respondents) of repeat visitors and their associated reliance (42%) on prior knowledge of the destination intensifies the need for educating local residents on visitor-related amenities to help empower them as local ambassadors. Emphasizing new options will be an important task for visitor center staff and frontline hospitality employees. Since these repeat visitors are more difficult to reach with marketing messaging, communicating to them while they are in-market to capture their spending in new and different ways could be an outcome from this effort. Options include strategically placed visitor services, referral training of frontline hospitality employees and wayfinding options.

The 2019 results indicate that Tompkins County is becoming a more balanced year-round destination. Efforts over the last 10 years to push visitation into slow-season and shoulder-season periods have largely shown success, based on the responses to this visitor profile study. Continued focus on developing off-peak business will remain important moving forward.

Of the detailed motivators, there are three that show opportunities for direct engagement through Visit Ithaca marketing and outreach, Sightseeing (8% of respondents), Leisure outdoor-oriented experience (8%) and Just to get away (6%). These categories as sub-sets of a general leisure experience provide definite opportunities for new strategies and tactics to reach visitors and cause new and increased visitation.

Additionally, 20% of those visiting a higher education institution were touring unrelated to a college tour. This a unique attribute of the higher education institutions and speaks to the beauty and intrigue of the campus experience in Tompkins County. This is another potential area of furthered partnership with Visit Ithaca and the higher education institutions to engage in strategy planning to promote new and increased visitation because of these unique attributes.

While respondents were asked to identify products that would enhance the Ithaca and Tompkins County experience, the results are not definitive of what is needed and function more as indicators of areas that should be further vetted. To fully determine the product gaps and potential assets for new investment and development a product demand study could be conducted or this could be a component of a larger Destination Master Planning initiative.

Ithaca and Tompkins County leaves a positive impression on visitors with an overwhelming majority identifying with the positive aspects of the destination. Further, over 90% stated they would return.

These outcomes all provide a strong platform for future planning around marketing investments for Visit Ithaca to further the destination's awareness and capture an increased market share of specific visitor types.

## Appendix

- Online survey – all results (Excel)
- Intercept survey – all results (Excel)
- Top Profiles
  - Online survey – Families with Kids (Excel)
  - Intercept survey – Families with Kids (Excel)
  - Online survey – Couples (Excel)
  - Intercept survey – Couples (Excel)
  - Online Survey – Friends (Excel)
  - Intercept Survey – Friends (Excel)
- Discovery Trail – all results
- Cayuga Waterfront Trail – all results
- Comparison of spending changes from 2009-2010 survey (table)



# Visitor Profile Report

Ithaca and Tompkins County



August 21, 2019



## Overview

### Background

Visit Ithaca and the Tompkins County Tourism Program engaged JLL to conduct an in-depth analysis of the destination's overnight visitors. This visitor profile study was conducted over the course of 18 months, from January 2018 to July 2019, and was comprised of comprehensive primary research.

### Goals & Objectives

The purpose of conducting this Visitor Profile research was to:

- Provide insight related to overnight visitors coming to Ithaca and Tompkins County,
- Augment data gathered during the 2009-2010 Profile of Visitors to Tompkins County, and
- Provide observations on changes in visitor trends.

### Prospective Outcomes

With this new information, Ithaca and Tompkins County Tourism Program leaders will be able to:

- Make more informed decisions on destination marketing and product development investment opportunities,
- Guide efforts to increase the destination's competitive position in the marketplace,
- Increase future visitor spending into the community, and
- Inform decisions needed for updating the overall strategic plan for the destination.



# Methodology

2019 Overnight Visitor Profile – 2,070 total combined responses	
Digital email survey	Intercept Interviews
Past visitors with completed trip	Visitors during trip
Email lists from 2015, 2016 & 2017	Encountered at selected sites
Visit Ithaca inquiries, Hotels, Inns, Discovery Trail partners, retail partners, and other stakeholders	Parks, Universities, Downtown, Discovery Trail sites, Cayuga Waterfront Trail sites, Farmer's Market, Lodging providers, Events/Entertainment, Airport, and Breweries/Wineries
Surveying from March-May 2018	Interviews from July 2018 – July 2019*
1,400 completed surveys	670 completed interviews

2009 Overnight Visitor Profile
Intercept Interviews
Visitors towards end of trip
Encountered at selected sites
Hotel/Lodging, Downtown, Parks, Universities, and Other
Interviews from 12/08 – 11/09
1,503 completed interviews

JLL would like to acknowledge and thank the Visit Ithaca staff and the Ithaca Tompkins County Client Committee for the guidance and connections provided to ensure that critical visitor locations were included.

\*Locations were adapted throughout the process to accommodate weather constraints and underperforming locations for overnight visitation.



Number of individuals encountered  
|  
Number of surveys collected from overnight travelers

Monthly Intercept Activity	July – September	October - December	January - March	April - June	Total
Buttermilk Falls State Park (OUTDOORS)	120   21	60   8	80   8	20   4	41
Taughanrock Falls State Park (OUTDOORS)	80   14	140   16	80   6	100   12	48
Ithaca Falls (OUTDOORS)	100   19	60   7	40   0	60   1	27
Robert Treman State Park (OUTDOORS)	100   14	80   4	40   2	140   7	27
Cornell Univ. (COLLEGE)	120   26	120   3	40   6	140   9	44
Ithaca College (COLLEGE)	100   9	160   11	160   11	60   2	33
Ithaca Commons (DOWNTOWN)	220   23	140   12	100   7	40   5	47
Restaurant Row (DOWNTOWN)	120   9	260   9	120   11	100   6	35
Sciencenter (DISCOVERY TRAIL)	100   12	140   13	120   6	160   10	41
Museum of the Earth (DISCOVERY TRAIL)	80   8	80   10	40   4	160   8	30
Cayuga Nature Center (DISCOVERY TRAIL)	60   2	60   1	200   1	120   12	16
TC Public Library (DISCOVERY TRAIL)	80   1	100   0	100   5	160   14	20
Cornell Lab of Ornithology (DISCOVERY TRAIL)	60   16	60   15	N/A	180   8	39
The History Center (DISCOVERY TRAIL)	60   2	60   7	N/A	80   3	12
Cornell Botanic Gardens (DISCOVERY TRAIL)	100   20	60   2	40   1	60   7	30
Johnson Museum of Art (DISCOVERY TRAIL)	60   8	80   11	100   7	220   25	51
Cayuga Waterfront Trail/Cass Park	140   13	120   1	200   1	220   10	25
Stewart Park	140   24	80   0	60   2	60   5	31
Steamboat Landing Farmer's Market	200   15	260   16		60   0	31
Hotels/Accommodations	120   7	60   3	120   13	440   35	58
Ithaca Airport	120   15	160   13	140   11	20   3	42
Beverage	220   22	140   15	120   5	40   0	42
Performance/Event	220   12	40   3	20   1	20   0	16



## Methodology Comparisons

Comparison	2019 Overall Intercepts	2009 Overall Intercepts
Jan. - March	14%	14%
April - June	24%	24%
July - September	39%	43%
October - December	23%	19%
Hotel/Lodging*	7%	29%
Downtown*	10%	20%
Parks*	18%	17%
University/College*	10%	16%
Other*	13%	18%
Discovery Trail	30%	
Cayuga Waterfront Trail	11%	



\*Using 2009 Aggregate Survey Locations

## Notables

- The overall response rate from Overnight Visitors in 2019 was 38% higher than the 2009-2010 study
- The 2009-2010 study provided an additional 223 resident telephone surveys and 101 student surveys. The relatively low response rate of these two separate audiences prompted weighting of their impact within the final results.
- The 670 responses derived from the intercept interview was sufficiently high enough to not require additional weighting in the interpretation of the results. In comparing the overall results from both the digital and the intercept approaches, nearly every question yielded similar results with a few noted exceptions. For these reasons, the 2019 results were directly consolidated into a blended compilation that serves as the best glimpse of overall visitor activity.
- The insights gleaned from the survey results will support Visit Ithaca and the Tompkins County Tourism Program's destination marketing and product development efforts for future years to come.



## Executive Summary

### Highlight Results - 2019

- Repeat visitation to Ithaca and Tompkins County is high with 76% having visited on a previous occasion.
- Based on the overall survey results, 78% of the respondents reported staying overnight and 22% identify as day trippers
- Visitors spend approximately \$366 per day while in Ithaca and Tompkins County
- Travel party size has increased to 3.3 people per trip
- Overnight visitors are staying primarily between 2-3 nights
- Overnight visitors are largely staying in hotels/motels or inns (over 60% of results)
- Same day travel planning showed the most significant shift changing from 15% of respondents in 2009 to 2% in 2019
- Summer led the seasons with over 30% of the visits followed by a nearly even split between Spring and Fall, each at 26%.
- Visitors are primarily traveling as a family with children or as couples
- The primary reason visitors are traveling is to engage in the outdoor leisure activities
- Visitors engage in the unique dining offerings, outdoors, shopping and events when they come to the destination
- Higher education brings visitors into the destination for more than campus activities
- Visitors are highly satisfied with the experience as over 80% of respondents state they will return



## Executive Summary

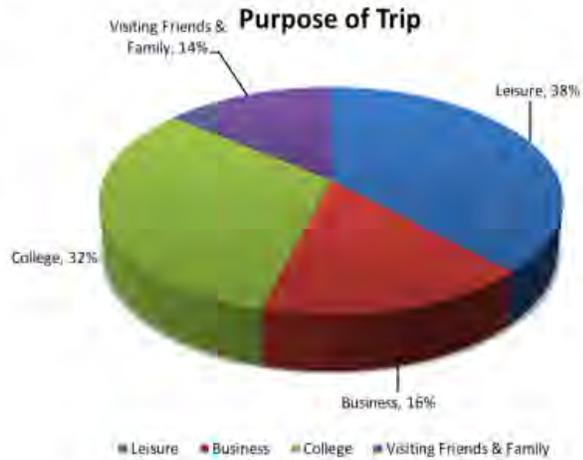
Comparison of Highlights	2019 Overall Results	2009 Overall Results
Repeat Visitation	76% repeat	69%
Overnight Percentage	78% staying overnight	63%
Spending	\$366 per party per day	\$331
Travel Party Size	3.3 people	3.0
Nights Spent	2-3 nights	2.4
Made of Transportation	21% air	10%
Stays in Hotel/Motels/Inns	60%	50%
Same day Travel Planning	2%	15%
Primary Reason for Travel	Outdoor Leisure Activities	Gorges & State Parks*
Visitor Satisfaction	80% will return	81%

\*Rankings did not include university- or college-related travelers



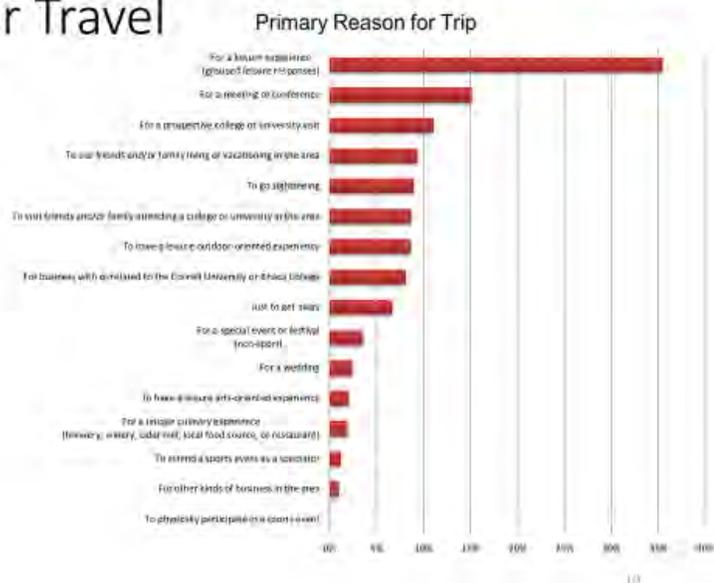
## Primary Reason for Travel

- The 2019 visitor profile methodology sought to provide needed detail on the true reasons that prompted the trip to Ithaca and Tompkins County.
- Those responses were clustered into traditional broader categories that included leisure related reasons (38% of response), college related reasons (32%), business related reasons (15%) and friends/family reasons (14%).



## Primary Reason for Travel

- There are three detailed motivators that offer opportunities for direct engagement with Visit Ithaca marketing and outreach:
  - Sightseeing - 8%
  - Leisure outdoor-oriented experience - 8%
  - Just to get away - 6%
- These categories as sub-sets of a general leisure experience provide definite opportunities for focused, strategic pursuit and resource investment



## Primary Reason for Travel: Higher Education

- 32% of the respondents indicated that their primary purpose for visiting Ithaca and Tompkins County related to higher education
- More than one third of those visitors (35%) were primarily in the area to visit a student.
- College tours and on-campus events accounted for 26% and 25% of higher education reasons respectively.
- Cornell University represented 96% of the survey respondents' selections for which higher education institution they visited.
- Additionally, 20% of those visiting a higher education institution were touring unrelated to a prospective collegiate commitment. *This unique attribute speaks to the desirability of a non-traditional campus experience in Tompkins County.*
- Meeting or conference participation is notable at 12% given that Ithaca and Tompkins County does not have a dedicated conference center.

Higher Education Participation	
Visiting a student	35%
College tour	26%
On-campus event	25%
Tour (sightseeing on campus not related to a college tour)	20%
Attend a class, course, training or workshop	13%
Meeting or conference	12%
Alumni event	7%
Sports (spectator)	4%
Academic camp	4%
Sports (participatory including camps)	2%
Certification of a specific license or designation	0%



## Length of Stay

- The majority of overnight respondents reported staying 2-3 nights.
- Just over 24% of the total responses stated one night as the length of stay.
- A combined 65% of overnights fell between one and three nights to define Ithaca and Tompkins County's position as a short getaway destination.
- Ithaca and Tompkins County maintains some specific market opportunity with extended stays (over 5 nights) as 15% of combined respondents.

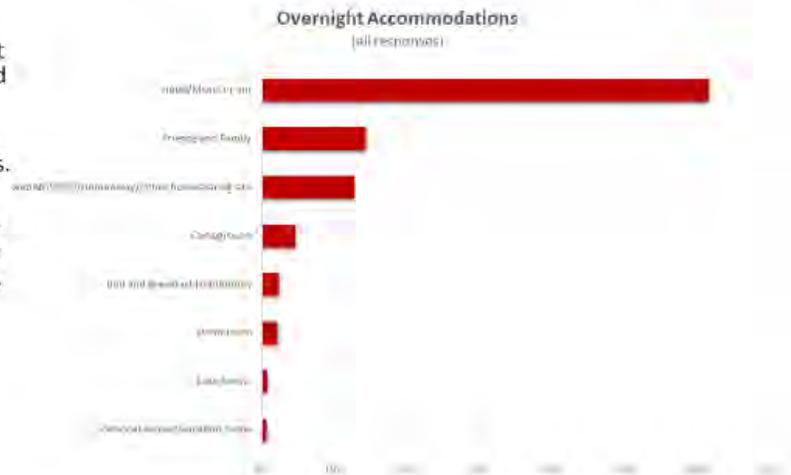
Length of Stay			
Intercept		Online	
1 night	23%	1 night	26%
2-3 nights	45%	2-3 nights	35%
		3-4 nights	18%
4-5 nights	11%	4-5 nights	7%
5-6 nights	8%		
6+ nights	10%		
		9-10 nights	10%
		11+ nights	1%

Based on the overall survey results, 78% of the respondents reported staying overnight and 22% identify as day trippers.



# Overnight Visitors: Types of Accommodations

- When asked about their accommodations for their overnight stays, 63% of all respondents stayed in a hotel/motel or inn.
- Visitors staying with friends and family account for 13% of all visitors.
- The home sharing platforms of Airbnb/VRBO/HomeAway and other similar services account for another 12% of all visitors staying overnight.



# Overnight Accommodations Compared

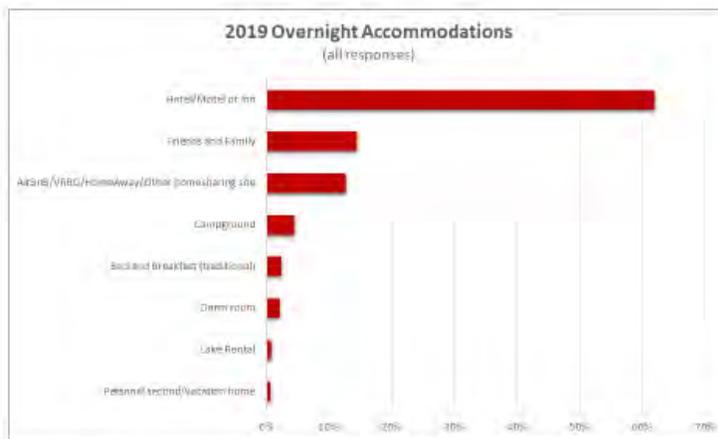
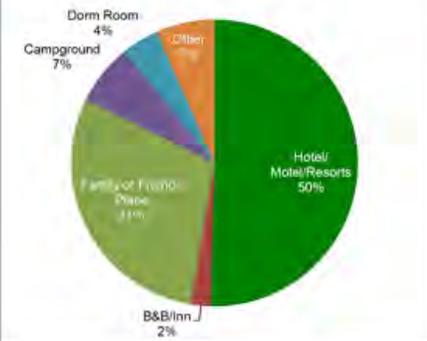


Figure 2.8: Lodging Arrangements of Tompkins County Visitors (Excluding Day Trippers)



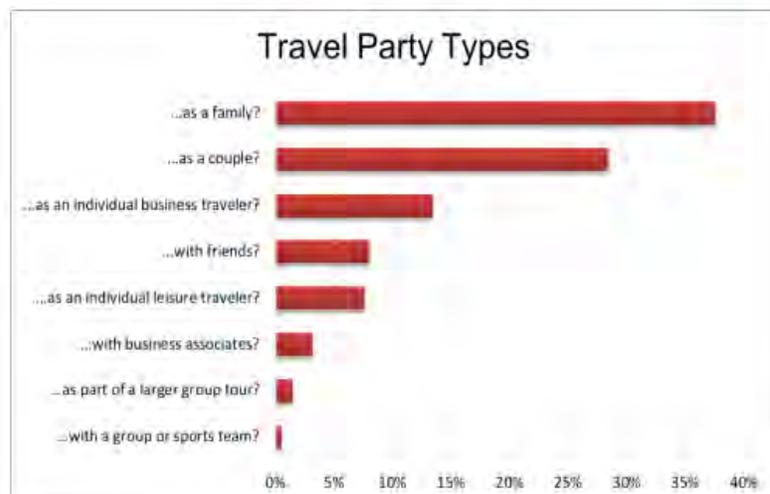
## Overnight Accommodations Notables

- In 2009, the small incidents of home rentals were included in within an "Other" category that consisted of 7% of overall overnight accommodations responses.
- Homesharing appears to have impacted stays with family and friends in the most significant manner. This segment dropped from 31% of overnight stays in 2009 to approximately 15% in 2019.
- Hotel/Motel stays actually increased from 50% to nearly 62% of lodging utilized between 2009 and 2019.



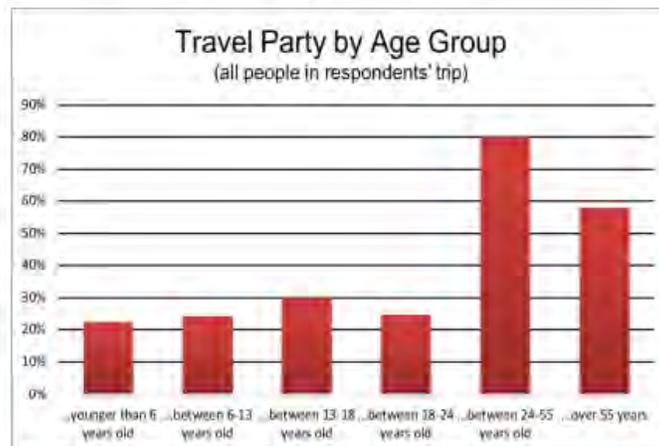
## Travel Party Type

- The most prominent visitor party to Ithaca and Tompkins County were Families traveling with Children at 38% of all responses.



## Travel Party by Age Group

- The average travel party size was 3.3 people, slightly larger than the 3.0 people staying overnight garnered from the 2009 Visitor Profile.
- Adults accounted for 2.4 people of the travel party with children under 18 accounting for the remainder. Although children between 13-18 years of age represented the largest category of accompanying travelers, the difference between age groupings was largely nominal.

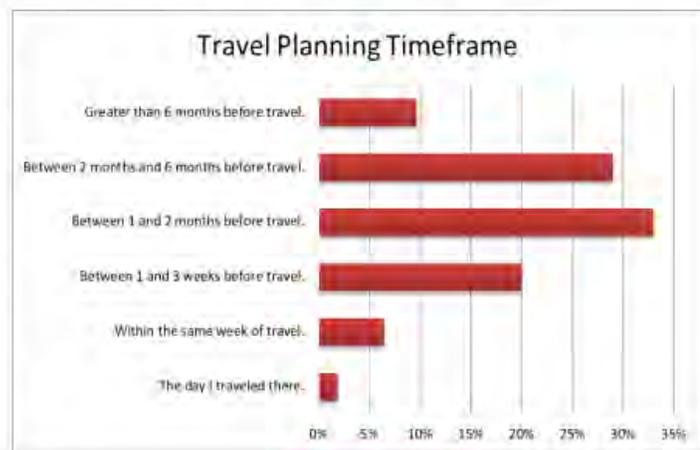


Note: This question sought out to understand the age variables of the travel party, particularly as related to accompanying children.



## Travel Planning Timeframe

- The respondents largely planned their trip to Ithaca and Tompkins County between one and two months (33% of responses) prior to their trip. These results match well with the 2009 profile.
- Those respondents that indicated travel planning of less than one month, not including those deciding upon the day of travel went from 30% in 2009 to 26% in 2019.
- Same day travel planning showed the most significant shift changing from 15% to 2%. This could be attributed to the 2019 methodology of reaching a broader audience of actual visitors compared to the 2009 results which focused only on intercept surveys at specific locations within the County.

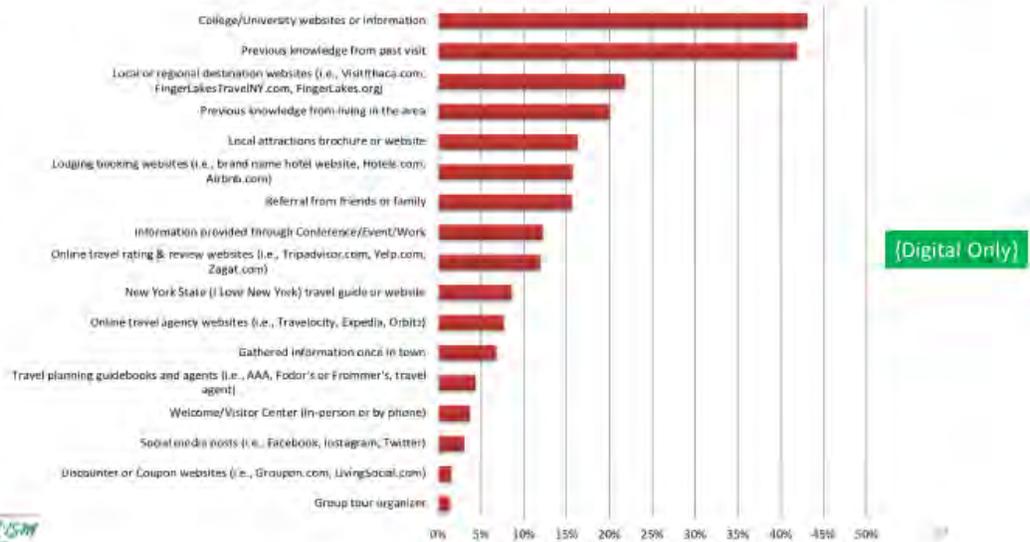


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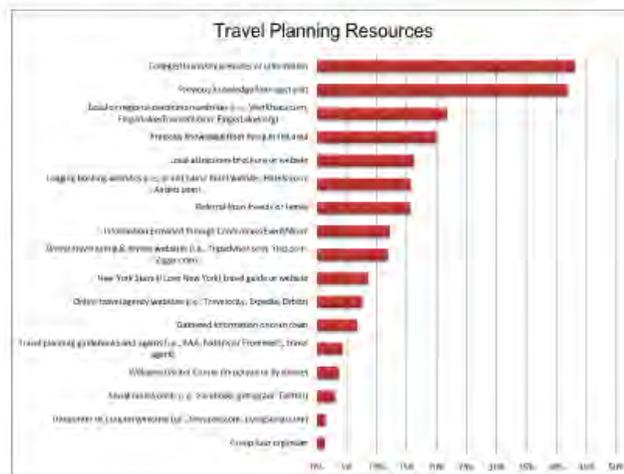
# Travel Planning Resources

Travel Planning Resources



# Travel Planning Resources

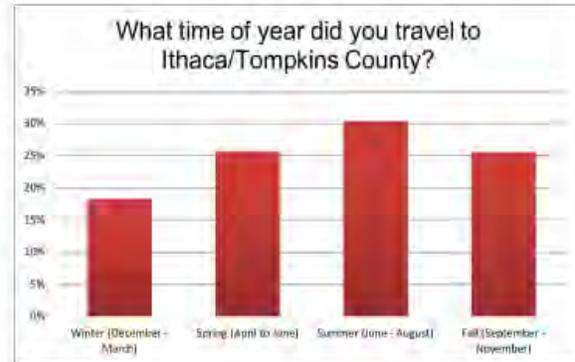
- Visitors used multiple sources of information to plan their trip.
- Many visitors are utilizing higher education websites (43%), regardless of whether they are visiting a higher education facility.
- Additionally, as 76% of visitors are repeat, many are relying on prior knowledge of the destination with 42% of all visitors selecting that option.
- The third most utilized resource is local or regional destination websites (*visitors were shown these options: VisitIthaca.com, FingerLakesTravelNY.com, FingerLakes.org*) with 22% of all visitors using online destination resources.
- The “Internet” was cited in 2009 as the most prominent planning tool. “University resources” only accounted for 3% of the information resources.



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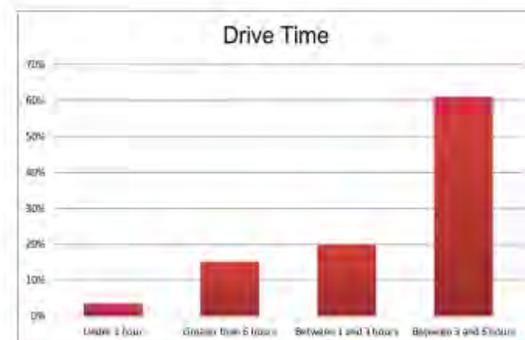
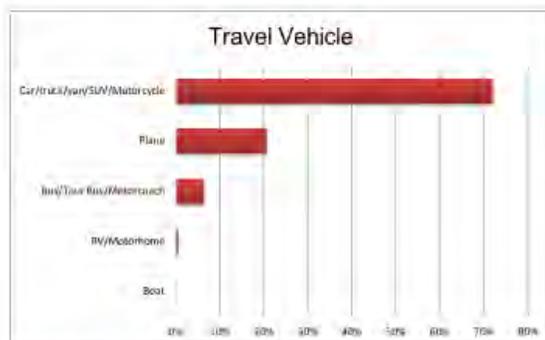
## Seasonality

- Over 80% of respondents indicated having visited Ithaca and Tompkins County from April to November (Spring, Summer and Fall).
- Summer led the seasons with over 30% of the visits followed by a nearly even split between Spring and Fall, each at 26%.
- This seasonality marks a significant shift from the 2009 profile where the combined months of July and August captured 30% of the total seasonal visitation volume.
- The 2019 results indicate that Tompkins County is becoming a more balanced year-round destination. The peaked bell curve of seasonal visitation shown in the 2009 profile has dramatically flattened within the 2019 study, showing that the 10-year trend has successfully pushed visitation into shoulder periods.
- Additional comparisons of seasonality to overnight lodging performance patterns needs to be explored more deeply through secondary data sources and Tompkins County room tax collections trends.



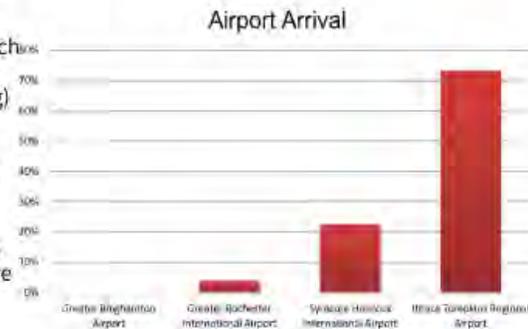
## Travel by Arrival Type

- Respondents were over three times more likely to arrive in Ithaca and Tompkins County by automobile than any other mode of transportation.
- The 72% of respondents that drove to the destination typically (60%) traveled between 3 and 6 hours for their overnight stay.



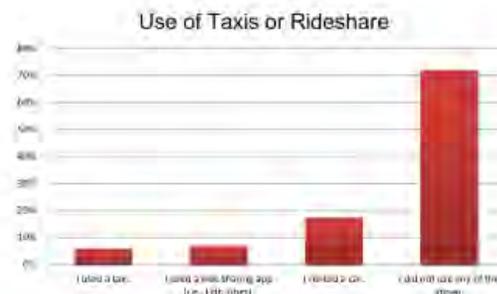
## Travel by Arrival Type

- Air travel to Ithaca and Tompkins County showed significant growth from the 2009 results as those respondents indicating that they flew in grew from 14% to 20%. This change could be reflective of the 2019 methodology to reach more visitors via online database surveying and intercepts on site at the airport. (intercept versus database surveying) but it is notable.
- Visitation tracking of enplanements and deplanements in airports servicing the area should be examined for overall presumptions of true travel patterns.
- Of those respondents who arrive by plane (21%), over 73% arrive into Ithaca Tompkins Regional Airport and 23% arrive into Syracuse Hancock International Airport.

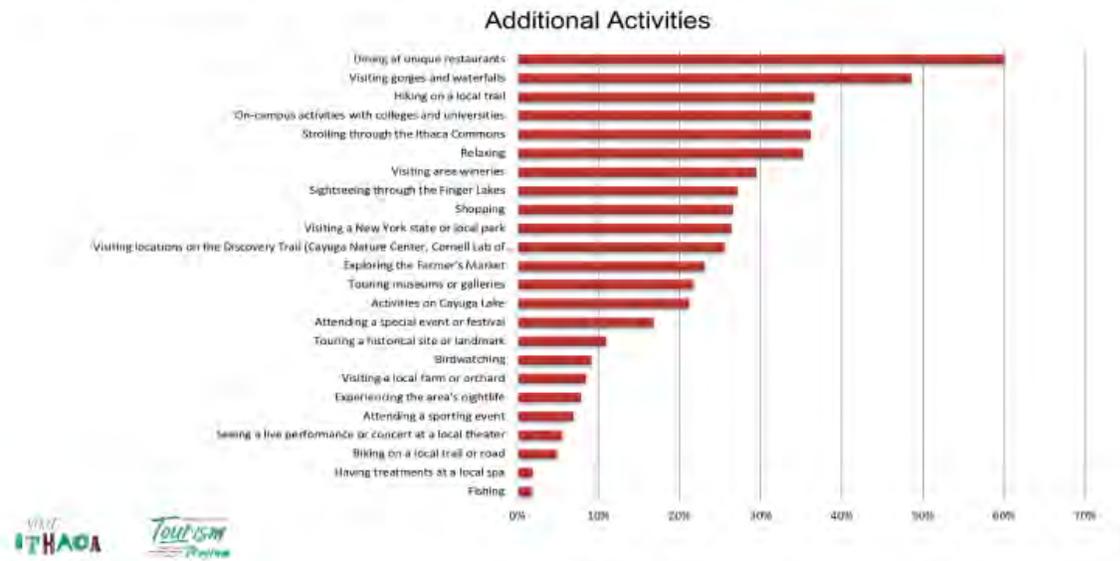


## Travel within the Destination

- As the majority of visitors are arriving by vehicle, **over 70% of the overall respondents indicate that they do not utilize other transportation** while they are in the destination.
- Less than 15% of respondents indicated using either a rideshare app or taxi while traveling within the area.
- Conclusions on alternative modes of transportation cannot be derived without further surveying on visitor usage. This includes local shuttles, scooters, bikes, walking and public buses.

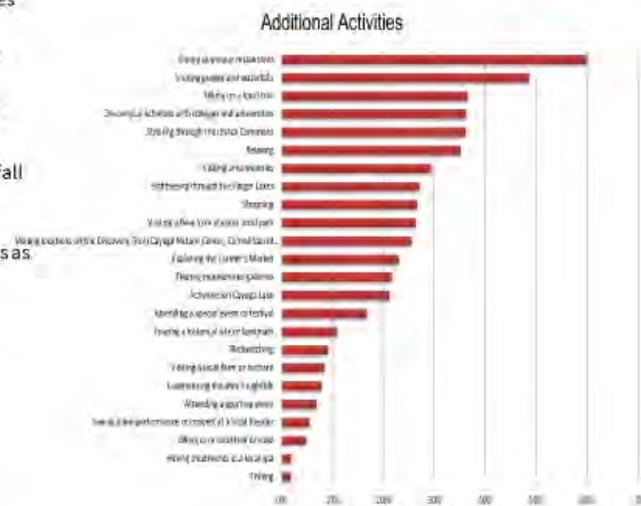


# Additional Activities



# Additional Activities

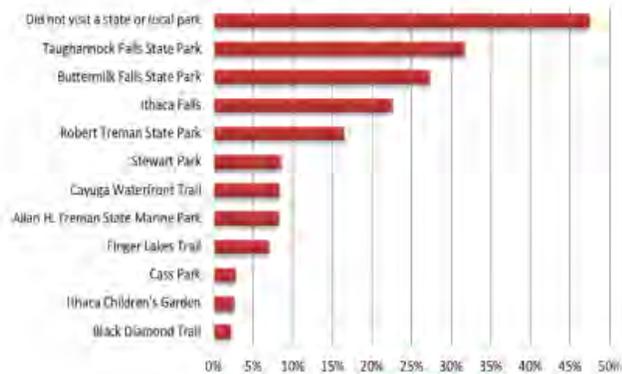
- Nearly 50% of all respondents selected "Visiting gorges and waterfalls".
- 36% selected "Hiking on local trails" as the next most prominent visitor activities.
- "On-campus activities with colleges and universities" were also selected by 36% of respondents.
- "Strolling through Ithaca Commons" and "Relaxing" fall into this top tier grouping of most selected activities.
- Regional sightseeing and shopping related options provided a secondary grouping of additional activities as respondents indicated their participation in:
  - Visiting area wineries - 29%
  - Sightseeing through the Finger Lakes - 27%
  - Shopping - 26%
  - Visiting a New York State or local park - 26%
  - Visiting locations on the Discovery Trail - 25%
  - Exploring the Ithaca Farmer's Market - 23%
  - Touring museums or galleries - 23%
  - Activities on Cayuga Lake - 21%



## Additional Activities: Area Park Visitation

- Of all visitors surveyed, 53% visited parks in the area.
- Of the 53% that visited parks, 74% of these respondents reported visiting more than one park.
- Of the parks visited, Taughannock Falls State Park and Buttermilk Falls State Park had the highest visitation at 32% and 27% respectively.
- Ithaca Falls is the third most visited with 23% of visitors surveyed selecting that option.

Area Park Visitation



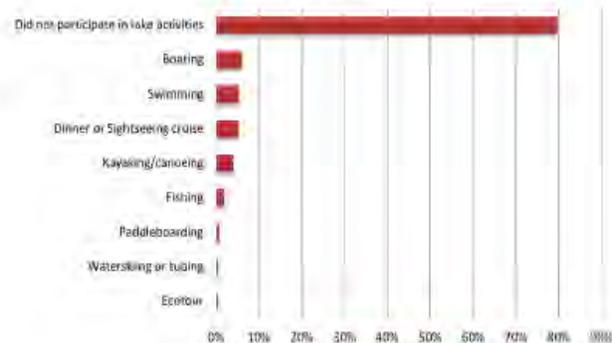
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## Additional Activities: Lake Activities

- Just over 20% of all visitors surveyed stated they participated in activities on Cayuga Lake.
- Of the various Cayuga Lake activities provided within the detailed survey question, respondents indicated a greater level of participation in "Boating" (6%), "Swimming" (5%), and "Dinner or sightseeing cruises" (5%).
- Paddle sports ("kayaking/canoeing" and "paddleboarding") represented a combined 6% of responses. "Fishing" represented 2% of the lake activity selections.
- When respondents provided open-ended comments to this question, many noted that while they did not participate in the activities offered, they simply enjoyed being lakeside.

Lake Activity Participation

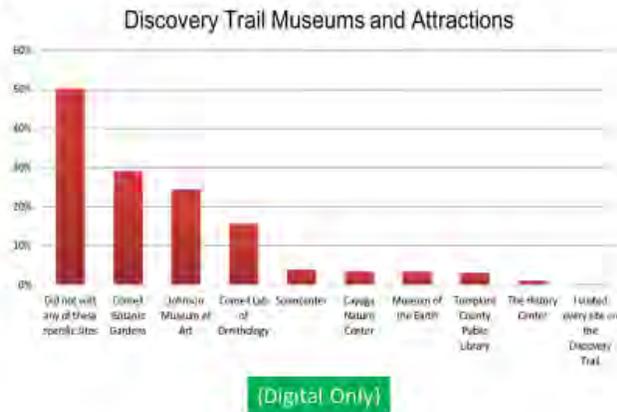


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## Additional Activities: Discovery Trail

- When asked if respondents had heard of the Discovery Trail, 32% stated that they had heard of the Discovery Trail and the attractions within it.
  - Additionally, the intercept portion of the survey collected responses from visitors at all of the Discovery Trail locations.
- Of those respondents that went to a museum or attraction on the Discovery Trail, 83% visited more than one of the sites.
- In similar comparison to parks, 50% of all respondents stated they did not visit any of the specific Discovery Trail member sites.
- The top three visited sites are all Cornell related, representing 70% of the Discovery Trail visitor engagement.



## Additional Activities: Cayuga Waterfront Trail

- When asked if respondents had heard of the Cayuga Waterfront Trail, 41% stated that they had heard of the Cayuga Waterfront Trail and its various destinations.
- Although 41% is a relatively high level of awareness for a specific local travel experience, the question arises on whether this awareness is directly connected to name of Cayuga Lake compared to the actual trail sites.
- More direct research is recommended to understand the overall correlation.
- Additionally, the intercept portion of the survey collected responses from visitors at all of the Cayuga Waterfront Trail locations.



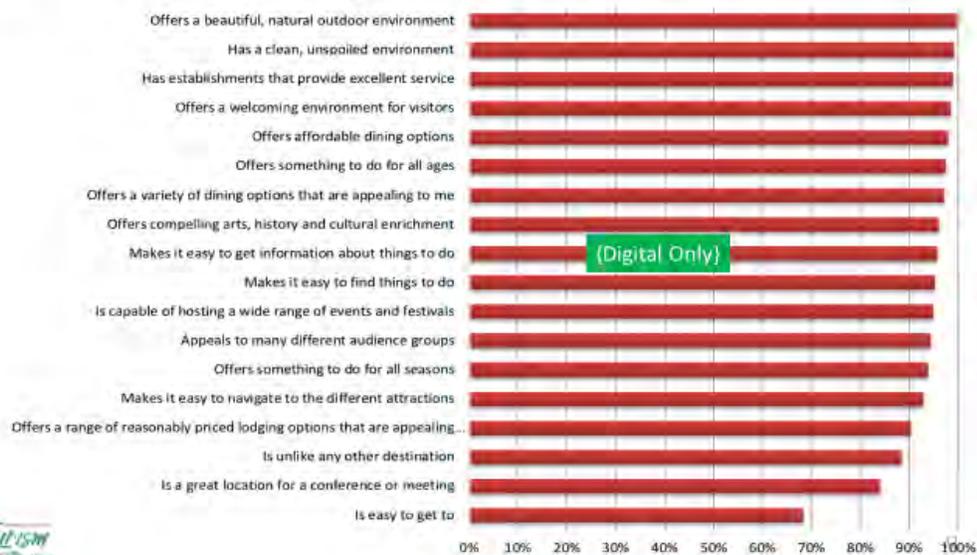
## Positive Perception

- Respondents expressed a highly positive impression of Ithaca and Tompkins County.
  - When asked how experiences in Ithaca and Tompkins County compare with other places they have visited, Ithaca and Tompkins County received four of five stars.
- These respondents were asked about their likelihood of returning to Ithaca and Tompkins County and **over 91% responded that they would return.**
- When asked if they would recommend the destination to friends and family, 68% said they would recommend Ithaca and Tompkins County for a vacation and 85% said they would recommend the destination for a getaway.

Return & Recommend			
Likelihood to Return (regardless of reason)		Likelihood to Recommend	
Yes	91%	For vacation (5-7 nights)	68%
No	9%	For a getaway (1-3 nights)	85%



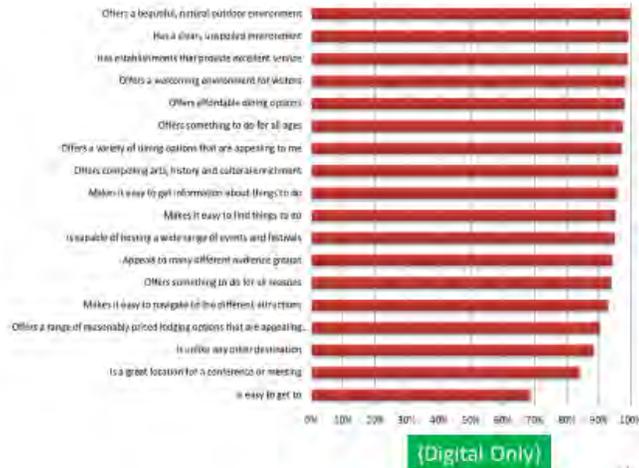
## Visitor Feedback Alignment with Statements



## Visitor Feedback

- Visitors were asked how Ithaca and Tompkins County aligns with a variety of destination related attributes and descriptions.
- Overall the destination received very high ratings, with all but one statement achieving over 80% feedback that the statements described Ithaca and Tompkins County “somewhat well” or “extremely well”.
- The lowest score in this set of statements was “Is easy to get to” with the combined scores achieving a 68% rating.
- “Is easy to get to” was not an option provided in the 2009 profile, but “Roads and Traffic” was the top aspect “not enjoyed”

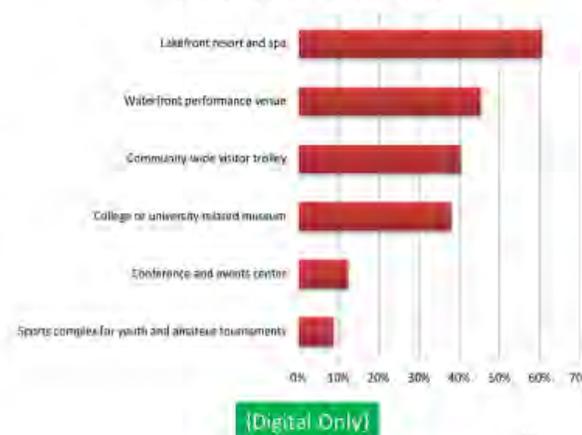
Alignment with Statements



## Visitor Feedback: Product Enhancements

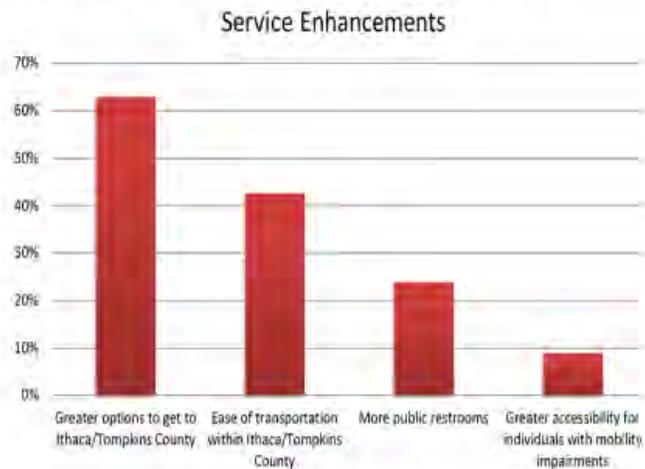
- When asked what activities or experiences would create appeal if added to the Ithaca and Tompkins County destination product, over 60% selected a lakefront resort and spa.
- The other three expressed enhancements selected by the respondents were “Waterfront performance venue” (selected by 44% of respondents), “Community-wide visitor trolley” (40%), “College or university related museum” (39%).
- It should be noted that while “Conference and events center” (12%) and “Sports complex for youth and amateur tournaments” (9%) were selected by a minimal number of respondents. Specialized venues typically do not yield a high level of response to questions of needed venues by visitors. As this was not a meeting or sports planner survey, the level of responses on those respective products is not necessarily an indication of product needs or opportunity.

Product Enhancements



## Visitor Feedback: Service Enhancements

- Transportation options to and within the destination were the top respondent answers to Service Enhancements.
- Respondents ranked transportation related items as the most important service enhancements needed for Ithaca and Tompkins County. “Greater options to get to the destination” was selected by over 60% while over 40% selected “Ease of transportation within Ithaca and Tompkins County”.



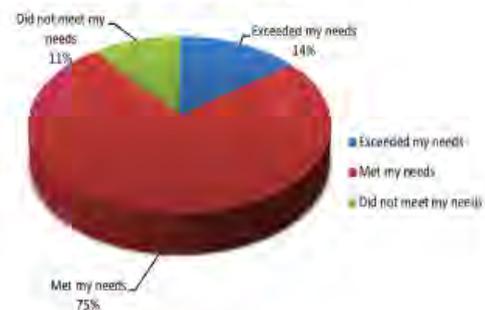
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## Visitor Feedback: Directional Signage

- When combined, responses for “Exceeded my needs” and “Met my needs” achieved 89% of the responses.
- Only 11% selected “did not meet my needs.”
- This exceptionally high score from respondents could be indicative of two trends.
  - Ithaca and Tompkins County has a high number of repeat visitors (70%+) who are familiar with the destination.
    - The more they visit, the less they feel that they need signage.
  - The prevalence of smart phone usage for directions makes visitors less reliant on destination directional signage.

Did the wayfinding/signage meet your needs during this trip?

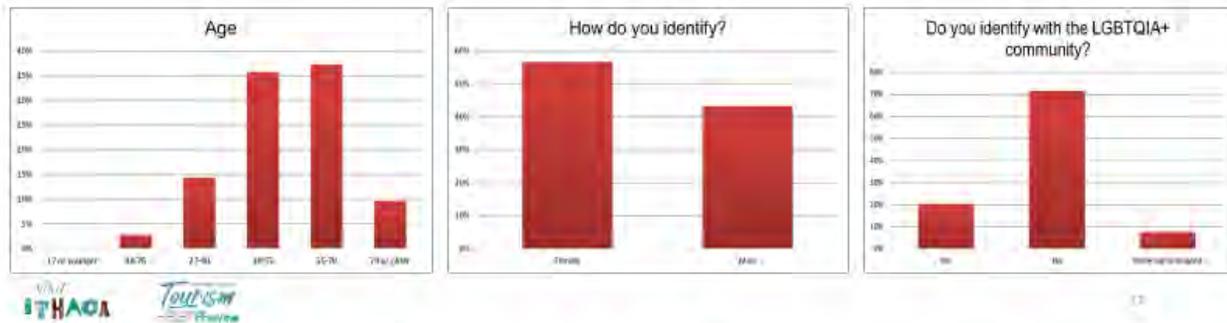


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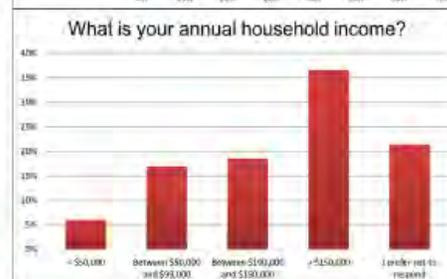
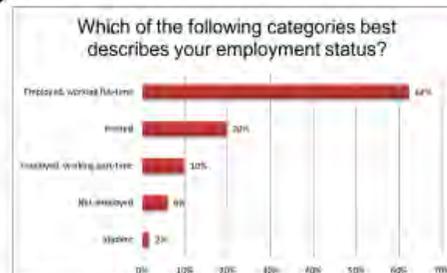
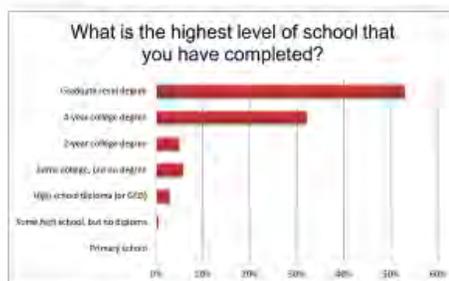
## Respondent Demographics

- The majority of respondents are between 40-70 years of age with 57% of visitors being female.
- Of visitors surveyed, 20% identified with the LGBTQIA+ community while another 8% Preferred to not respond.
  - Compared with other destinations, the ratio of LGBTQIA+ connectivity for Ithaca and Tompkins County is a clear differentiator.
  - This visitor group has a propensity to travel. The market focus on this visitor segment shows potential for greater growth in the future.



## Respondent Demographics

- Visitors to Ithaca and Tompkins County are:
- Well educated - 80% college educated
  - Employed - 62% working full time
  - Earn an above average household income
    - 50% earn over \$100,000



## Visitor Profile: Families with Kids

The leading visitor type was a family with children (38% of all respondents). Families had the highest level of daytrips with only 67% staying overnight compared to other top profiles. However, Families staying in hotels spend the most on lodging and dining. Families spend the most on museums and attractions than any other top visitor profile. Families are more likely to visit in the summer with over 40% coming in that time of year.

- **Overnight stay**
  - 67% overall stay overnight
  - 43% stayed for 2-3 nights
  - 26% stayed for one night
  - 15% stayed for 6 or more nights
- **Accommodation Type**
  - 42% stayed in hotel/motel or inn
  - 23% stayed with family and friends
  - 22% stayed in an Airbnb/VRBO/Homeaway or other home share platform
- **Primary Reason for Travel**
  - 24% visited for outdoor leisure and sightseeing
  - 20% visited for a college visit
  - 14% visited for friends and family
- **Additional Activities**
  - 52% visit the gorges and waterfalls
  - 52% dine at restaurants
  - 39% hike local trails
- **Seasonality**
  - 41% visit in the summer
  - 23% visit in the spring
  - 20% visit in the fall
  - 15% visit in the winter
- **Spending (per day)**
  - \$233 - lodging
  - \$121 - dining
  - \$65 - retail
  - \$43 - transportation
  - \$28 - outdoor experiences
  - \$37 - craft beverages
  - \$18 - museums and attractions
  - \$81 - other entertainment
- **Satisfaction**
  - 70% - return in the next year
  - 90% - return in the future
  - 79% - recommend for vacation
  - 90% - recommend for getaway
- **Geographic Location**
  - 32% - New York State
  - 10% - Pennsylvania
  - 10% - New Jersey
  - 5% - California
- **LGBTQIA+ Identification**
  - 20% - yes
  - 69% - no
  - 10% - prefer not to respond



## Visitor Profile: Families with Kids (college)

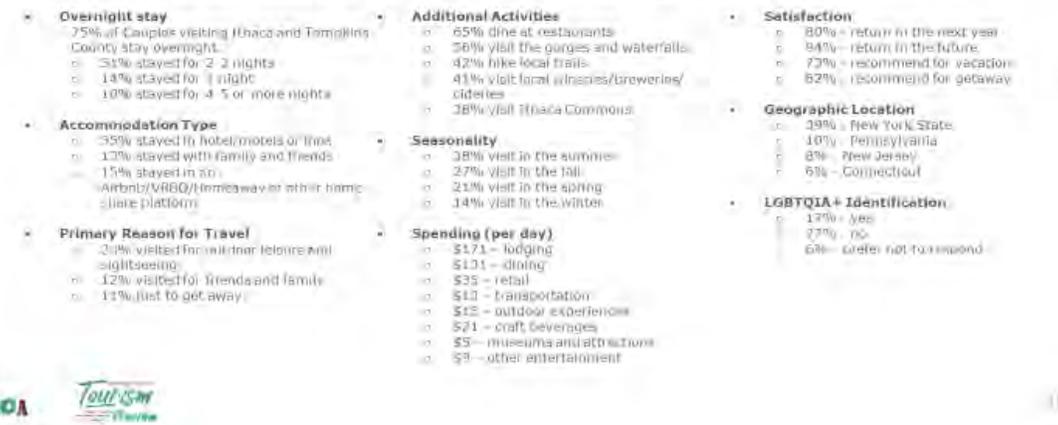
20% of families selected a higher education institution being the primary reason for travel. Families traveling with this purpose almost always stay overnight, but they are not staying very long with 42% staying for only one night. This segment spends the most on lodging at hotels, likely needing at least two rooms. **This segment is not experiencing as much of Ithaca and Tompkins County as other segments** with the majority of their time in the destination being on campus or at restaurants. However, they are spending the most on retail – likely connected to university purchases.

- **Overnight stay**
  - 89% overall stay overnight
  - 43% stayed for 2-3 nights
  - 42% stayed for 1 night
  - 7% stayed more than 6 nights
- **Accommodation Type**
  - 64% stayed in hotel/motel or inn
  - 7% stayed with family and friends
  - 7% stayed in an Airbnb/VRBO/Homeaway or other home share platform
- **Additional Activities**
  - 67% dine at restaurants
  - 56% on-campus activities
  - 44% visit the gorges and waterfalls
- **Seasonality**
  - 38% visit in the spring
  - 25% visit in the winter
  - 21% visit in the summer
  - 16% visit in the fall
- **Spending (per day)**
  - \$256 - lodging
  - \$140 - dining
  - \$87 - retail
  - \$58 - transportation
  - \$38 - outdoor experiences
  - \$48 - craft beverages
  - \$22 - museums and attractions
  - \$48 - other entertainment
- **Satisfaction**
  - 77% - return in the next year
  - 82% - return in the future
  - 63% - recommend for vacation
  - 72% - recommend for getaway
- **Geographic Location**
  - 29% - New York State
  - 12% - New Jersey
  - 9% - California
  - 8% - Massachusetts
- **LGBTQIA+ Identification**
  - 17% - yes
  - 66% - no
  - 17% - prefer not to respond



## Visitor Profile: Couples

The next highest visitor type were couples. Couples primarily stayed in hotels with a majority staying 2-3 nights. Couples are more likely to visit the craft beverage attractions including wineries, but the spend less than families and friends in this space. Couples are visiting primarily in the summer with the next highest season being fall. Couples are predominantly coming from New York State, but have additional geographic opportunities in New Jersey, Pennsylvania and Connecticut. These could be a target market for expansion.



## Visitor Profile: Friends

The fourth most prevalent visitor type was groups of friends traveling together. Friends are more likely to stay in a homeshare property than the other top visitor profiles. This could be because of the cost effective nature of splitting a home, amenities of being able to cook, etc. Friends are also more likely to visit Ithaca Commons than other top visitor profiles and have the second highest spending on retail behind college-bound families. Groups of friends are also more likely to travel in the shoulder periods with over 30% visiting in the fall. Groups of friends are predominantly coming from New York State, but have the lowest representation from New Jersey than other top profiles. This could be a target market for expansion.





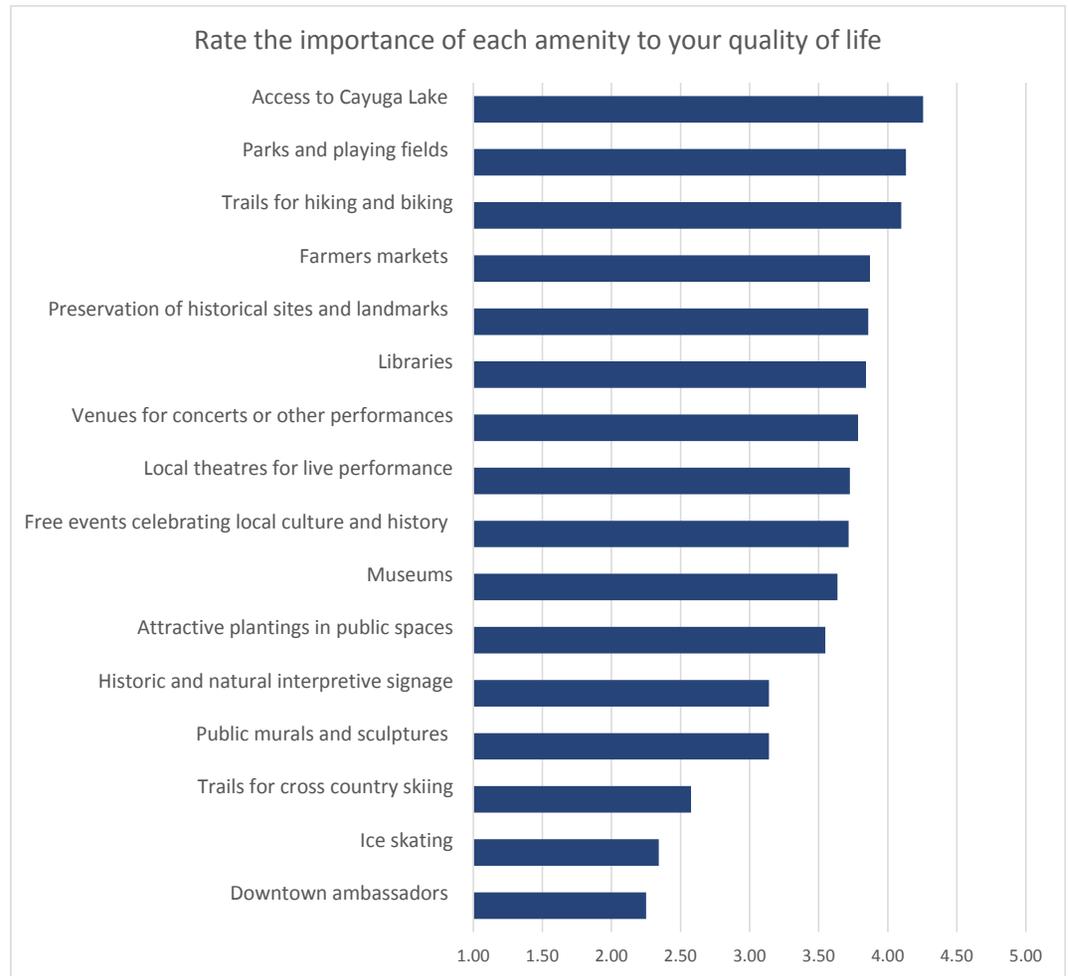
# Thank You

Results and analysis prepared by JLL  
for Visit Ithaca and the Tompkins County Tourism Program

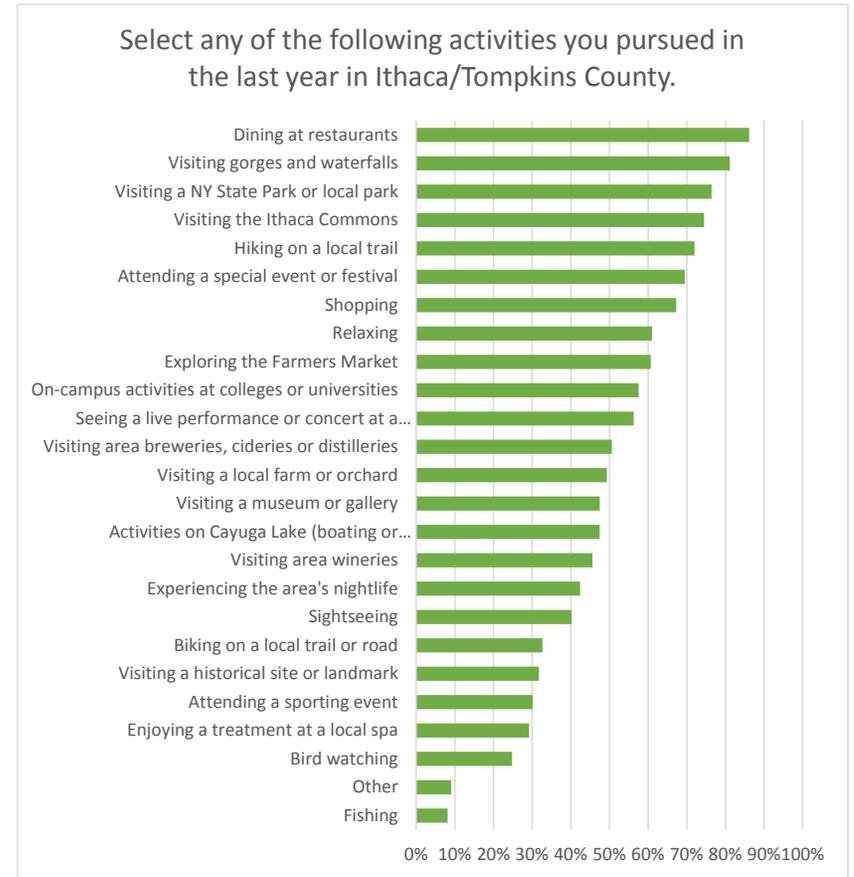


Amenity	Average Score
Downtown ambassadors	2.25
Ice skating	2.34
Trails for cross country skiing	2.58
Public murals and sculptures	3.14
Historic and natural interpretive signage	3.14
Attractive plantings in public spaces	3.55
Museums	3.64
Free events celebrating local culture and history	3.72
Local theatres for live performance	3.73
Venues for concerts or other performances	3.78
Libraries	3.84
Preservation of historical sites and landmarks	3.86
Farmers markets	3.87
Trails for hiking and biking	4.10
Parks and playing fields	4.13
Access to Cayuga Lake	4.26

Coded Text Responses	# of Comments
Transportation	40
Outdoor Tourism	38
Downtown Ithaca	17
Art Culture and Heritage	16
Beautification Signage Public Art	16
Visitor Services	8
Sports Tourism	6
Agricullinary Tourism	5
Edutourism	5
Festivals	4
Marketing and Advertising	4
Groups	3
Niche	3
Town Gown / Higher Ed	1



Activity in the past year	Community Survey	Visitor Profile Survey (round)
Fishing	8%	0%
Other	9%	0%
Bird watching	25%	10%
Enjoying a treatment at a local spa	29%	5%
Attending a sporting event	30%	10%
Visiting a historical site or landmark	32%	15%
Biking on a local trail or road	33%	5%
Sightseeing	40%	30%
Experiencing the area's nightlife	42%	10%
Visiting area wineries	46%	25%
Activities on Cayuga Lake (boating or swimming)	47%	20%
Visiting a museum or gallery	47%	20%
Visiting a local farm or orchard	49%	15%
Visiting area breweries, cideries or distilleries	51%	15%
Seeing a live performance or concert at a local theatre	56%	15%
On-campus activities at colleges or universities	58%	50%
Exploring the Farmers Market	61%	30%
Relaxing	61%	40%
Shopping	67%	35%
Attending a special event or festival	69%	30%
Hiking on a local trail	72%	40%
Visiting the Ithaca Commons	75%	40%
Visiting a NY State Park or local park	76%	30%
Visiting gorges and waterfalls	81%	50%
Dining at restaurants	86%	60%



**TOTAL RESPONSES 309**

<b>AGE</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>ETHNICITY</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>EMPLOYMENT</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>LOCATION</b>	<b>Percent</b>
17 or younger	0.4%	Asian	2.0%	Employed - working full time	60.3%	City of Ithaca	40.9%
18 - 26	14.9%	Black / African American	2.8%	Employed - working part time	7.6%	Town of Ithaca	18.6%
27 - 40	17.6%	Hispanic / Latino	2.8%	Not employed	1.9%	Town of Ulysses	8.0%
40 - 55	28.0%	Native American	0.0%	Retired	16.0%	Town of Newfield	6.3%
55 - 70	33.0%	Pacific Islander	0.4%	Student	9.9%	Town of Dryden	5.5%
71 or older	6.1%	Two or More Ethnicities	1.6%	Other	4.2%	Town of Lansing	4.2%
		White	85.3%			Village of Cayuga Heights	4.2%
		Other	5.2%			Village of Trumansburg	3.4%
						Town of Enfield	3.0%
						Town of Danby	2.5%
						Town of Caroline	2.1%
						Town of Groton	0.4%
						Village of Freeville	0.4%
						Village of Lansing	0.4%

<b>GENDER</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>HOUSEHOLD INCOME</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>TOURISM EMPLOYMENT</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Female	71.7%	Below \$50,000	17.1%	Working in Tourism Sector	16.0%
Male	27.3%	\$50,000 to \$99,999	29.1%	Not Working in Tourism Sector	84.0%
Other Response	1.1%	\$100,000 to \$150,000	16.3%		
		Above \$150,000	17.8%		
		Prefer not to respond	19.8%		

# Results from Stakeholder Meeting with Grant Recipients

Tompkins County | Strategic Tourism Plan

April 22, 2019 | Tompkins County Public Library

The Tompkins County Strategic Tourism Planning Board (STPB) began efforts to update the “2020 Strategic Tourism Plan” in August of 2018. Upon the recommendation of the steering committee leading this effort, a stakeholder meeting was organized for non-profits who had received grants from the Tourism Program. An invitation for this meeting was sent to over sixty organizations.

On April 22 Dan Brown facilitated a “Focus Search Process” exercise for organizations who had received grant funding from the Tourism Program. Twenty-one (21) individuals representing sixteen (16) organizations participated. Each individual was asked a series of six questions. Responses were captured and summarized individually and in small groups. Responses were classified as highly representative (5-6 responses), somewhat representative (3-4 responses) unique (single response). Participants assigned dots to vote for the responses they felt were most important.

The following pages represent the results of the stakeholder meeting. Each page includes the question posed to participants and a ranked list of responses. Each response indicates the number of dot votes and its classification as highly representative (HR), somewhat representative (SR), or unique (U). Underlined responses received the highest number of dot votes.

## **1) What is the most effective thing the Tourism Program does?**

- Grant making (variety in topics & audiences, well managed) (12 - HR)
- Good branding of Ithaca (methods, messaging) (2 - SR)
- Community enrichment (2 - SR)
- Festivals & events (1 - SR)
- Strategic Plan (1 - SR)
- Engagement w/ partners (0 -SR)
- Trainings (0 - SR)
- Not sure what Tourism Program does (0 - U)
- How to get on grant review panel? (0 - U)
- Beautification (0 - U)

## **2) What one thing would you change or add to the County's Tourism Program?**

- Helping smaller organizations publicize for larger area beyond County – financially & w/ expertise (9 - HR)
- Maps / Schedules together of events upcoming (and past) even on STPB website or County (5 - HR)
- Better self-promotion of tourism program to distinguish from DIA, Chamber, etc. (4 - HR)
- Better transportation for tourists (3 - U)
- Coordinate among organizations around County (like Chamber Business After Hours) (2 - HR)
- Strategic importance of (downtown) City of Ithaca vs outlying municipalities – more assistance beyond city (1 - U)
- Encourage current residents to be better ambassadors to help spread info about county (events & places) let locals spread the word (1 - U)
- Better signage for parking – esp. in Ithaca (0 – HR)
- Comprehensive waterfront strategy – mapping parks, restaurants, etc. beyond each specific location (0 – HR)
- Clearer instructions/guidance of what's likely to be funded (0 – SR)
- Better use of data to evaluate performance (0 – U)
- Greater emphasis on wellness for tourism (yoga festival, etc.) (0 – U)
- Activities supported by Tourism Program relate directly to tourism (0 – U)

### **3) What do you think we should do to increase winter & mid-week travel demand to Ithaca & Tompkins County?**

- Packaging: partner w/ other cities & destinations (3 - HR)
- Create Events: build a convention center (3 - HR)
- Create Events: combo indoor & outdoor (3 - HR)
- Packaging: provide incentives, discounts (2 - HR)
- Packaging: work w/ college admission tours (2 - HR)
- Packaging: thematic / collaborative (2 - HR)
- Create Events: educational (2 - HR)
- A list of winter resources (2 - HR)
- Packaging ... (0 – HR)
  - Involve hotels & colleges
  - Group sales
  - Marketing assistance
- Create Events ... (0 – HR)
  - Embrace the cold / slush festival
  - Film
  - Focus on seniors
  - Winter wellness
  - Ice climbing
  - Light in Winter (combine science and arts)
- Winter Recess for a different group (0 – ?)

[packaging total: 9, create events total: 8]

#### **4) What do you think we should do to improve collaboration with Cornell Univ., Ithaca College, & TC3?**

- Identify campus connections to foster collaboration (7 - HR)
- Incentivize campus community members to get off their hills (7 - HR)
- Address transportation challenges (2 - HR)
- Explore possibility of County Tourism internships re: graphic design, marketing, event planning to offer free assistance to nonprofits (2 - U)
- Tourism packets made available to new students, staff etc. (1 - HR)
- Make some of the academic institution's programs event and workshops more accessible to public (1 - SR)
- Integrate academic research / study into events such as at festivals, etc. mixing academic with fun of events (1 - SR)
- Affordable training for hospitality workers / TC3 (1 - U)
- Develop communication strategies to cross-promote local events / assets (0 – HR)

## **5) What can your organization do to present our community as an inclusive, accessible, vibrant & sustainable destination?**

- Co-promotion (collaborative programming & marketing efforts, promotional materials) (6 - HR)
- Help train folks (in our organizations) to better understand and navigate cultural differences (4 - U)
- Offer free or discounted programming (2 - HR)
- Offer unique, multi-cultural experiences, shows, events & entertainment (2 - HR)
- Host community forums to gather feedback (and discuss “hot topics”) (2 - SR)
- Make connections across communities w/in the County (2 - SR)
- People/visitors appreciate places that understand their culture & heritage (1 - HR)
- Tap into expertise of organizations who are skilled at creating inclusive & accessible environments (1 - U)
- Multicultural activities reflecting both local and national trends/aspects (0 – HR)
- Representing our diverse population (both in terms of planning & highlighting numerous narratives) (0 – SR)
- Targeting both out-of-county visitors + our own residents (0 – SR)
- Assessment of how accessible our destinations & events are (0 – SR)
- Generate collective impact experiences that are inclusive of: art, science, culture, entertainment, etc. (0 – U)
- Provide technical assistance for packaging involving hotels, restaurant, travel (0 – U)
- Ask attendees what multicultural activities/events would interest them (0 – U)
- Have roundtables on what does it mean to be inclusive or accessible (0 – U)
- Market recurring events & new events (0 – U)
- Rack card / central location for programming (0 – U)

## **6) What do you think we should do to cultivate events & attractions that leverage our local & regional assets?**

- Provide tools for leveraging more money (8 - HR)
- Create regional connections outside Tompkins County (3 - HR)
- Support local organizations and facilitate collaboration (2 - HR)
- Decide what “unique / characteristic” means (2 - HR)
- Support more “authentic” experiences (2 - SR)
- Determine who we are trying to attract (1 - SR)
- Identify barriers to participation (i.e. transportation) (1 - U)
- Develop more venues for events (1 - U)
- Market more widely outside of region (1 – U)
- Create more buzz among potential visitors (0 – HR)
- Build accessibility beyond downtown Ithaca (i.e. transportation) (0 – HR)
- Identify more funders (0 – SR)
- Emphasize & create large events (0 – SR)
- Fund experts to interpret our local resources / assets (0 – U)
- Bring Ithaca Festival back to lake (0 – U)
- Develop new events that are truly unique / distinctive (0 – U)
- Integrate “town” and “gown” more (0 – U)