



ADVANTAGE ADIRONDACKS

*Advancing Economic Opportunities
Across the Adirondack Park*

NOVEMBER 2014

A Project of the Adirondack Partnership
www.adirondackstrategies.com

The Adirondack Partnership thanks the following project advisors:

Advisors

- Peter Aust, Adirondack Regional Chamber of Commerce
- Steve Bagetis, Supervisor, Ohio, Herkimer County
- Carol Calabrese, Essex County Industrial Development Agency
- Garry Douglas, Adirondack North Country Chamber of Commerce
- William Farber, Chair, Hamilton County Board of Supervisors
- Kim Finnigan, Center For Economic Growth
- Kate Fish, Adirondack North Country Association (ANCA)
- Mark Hall, Supervisor, Town of Fine
- Carol Hart, Adirondack Association of Towns and Villages; Fulton County
- Alan Hipps, Adirondack Community Housing Trust
- James McKenna, Regional Office of Sustainable Tourism (ROOST)
- Sue Montgomery Corey, Minerva, Essex County
- Rob Riley, Northern Forest Center
- Nick Rose, Central Adirondack Partnership for the 21st Century (CAP-21)
- Zoë Smith, Wildlife Conservation Society
- Brian Wells, Supervisor, Town of Indian Lake
- Evelyn Wood, Supervisor, Thurman, Warren County
- Leslie Irwin, Chamber Alliance of the Mohawk Valley

State Program Managers

- Andrew Labruzzo, New York State Department of State Office of Planning and Development
- Dylan Walrath, New York State Department of Environmental Conservation

River Street Planning & Development Consulting Team

- Margaret Irwin and Monica Ryan, River Street Planning & Development
- Adele Connors, Adworkshop
- Jason Drebitko, ConsultEcon
- Bruce Hoch, DCG Corplan
- Melissa McManus, Economic Development Consultant
- Jackie Hakes, MJ Engineering
- Jeffrey Ciabatti, Toole Design Group

General Project Management

- Emily Kilburn and Caroline Hotaling, Adirondack Community Housing Trust

www.adirondackstrategies.com

Cover photo credit: Hamilton County Department of Economic Development



Monica Ryan

Adirondack's High Peaks view.

This work product was prepared for the New York State Department of State and the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation under Title 11 of the Environmental Protection Fund (EPF) and the EPF-funded Adirondack Park Community Smart Growth Program.



The Department of State (DOS) works with communities in the Adirondack Park through the Local Waterfront Revitalization Program to promote community revitalization, enhanced recreational opportunities, and resource protection through community-based plans and projects. DOS provides technical assistance and funding through the New York State Environmental Protection Fund for plans and projects that promote sustainable economic development, revitalize waterfronts, hamlets and downtowns, enhance public access to waterways and state lands, and protect and improve water quality and important habitats. DOS programs are designed to encourage long-term partnerships between waterfront communities and DOS in order to advance projects through planning, design and implementation.

The Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) Adirondack Park Community Smart Growth Program supports planning projects that foster sustainable development, environmental protection and community livability. This can include visioning and long term plans to project-specific strategic planning. This program is funded through the Environmental Protection Fund (EPF) which includes funding dedicated to supporting smart growth in New York State via a series of competitive grants to municipalities and not-for-profit partner organizations. DEC is responsible for distributing a limited portion of these funds toward smart growth within the Adirondack and Catskill Parks. The program offers grant funding for counties, towns and villages that need financial or technical assistance to plan successfully for the future.



Lake Placid Regional Office of Sustainable Tourism

I OVERVIEW 1

- The Big Picture.....1
- The New Economy 1
- Measuring Success 2
- A Best Odds Approach.....3
- Economic Development Strategy Partners 3
- Strategy Development Approach 4
- 100 Plans and Strategies 4
- Business Opportunity Analysis 5
- Community Engagement 5
- Priority Project Implementation..... 5
- Implementation Approach 6

II REGIONAL TRENDS AND PLANS..... 9

- Regional Trends 9
- Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, & Threats 10
- Demographics 11
- General Business 11
- Tourism 12
- Agriculture 12
- Infrastructure 13
- Housing 14
- Regional Planning and Investment: Regional Economic Development Councils 14
- Local, Sub-Regional, and Park-wide Planning 15

III BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES 19

- Employment Profile..... 19
- Industry Cluster Evaluation..... 19
- Business Opportunities 20

IV ECONOMIC STRATEGIES AND MEASURES 29

- Strategy Framework 29
- Implementation Process 30
- GOAL ONE:** Inspire a culture of entrepreneurship with a globally competitive workforce and diverse business base 30
- GOAL TWO:** Promote a sustainable and connected rural life with quality infrastructure and community amenities 40
- GOAL THREE:** Reinvent traditional industry across the working landscape in forest products, natural resources, and agriculture 49
- GOAL FOUR:** Advance the Park as a World Class Destination ... 54



Monica Ryan

This economic development strategy seeks to move the Park forward into a new economy that puts a premium on the quality of local places.

I OVERVIEW

The Big Picture

ADVANTAGE Adirondacks responds to a call from many groups across the Park for an economic development strategy to identify a specific set of programs and incentives that view “environmental and economic sustainability as mutually dependent and reinforcing.” This strategy would enhance hamlets and communities, reduce dependence on State support and public sector employment, and create an increasingly self-sustaining Adirondack Park. It seeks to stabilize and then revitalize, moving the Park forward into a new economy that puts a premium on the quality of local places and creating better jobs with family sustaining wages. Collaboration is the “silver bullet” in this new framework, and programs like Common Ground establish the Park as a recognized model of success. The principles on which this strategy is based (innovation, place, scale, talent) and the new measures of success (business starts, wage growth, capital investment) build on the Park’s assets and four key goals:

— *Inspire a culture of entrepreneurship with a globally competitive workforce and diverse business base;*

— *Promote a sustainable and connected rural life with quality infrastructure and community amenities;*

— *Reinvent traditional industry across working landscapes in forest products, natural resources, and agriculture; and*

— *Advance the Park as a world class destination.*

The New Economy

The Adirondack Park is a unique and majestic place. Like other rural communities across America, the Park is reinventing itself in the face of global economic transitions - creating new opportunities to compensate for changing markets and demographics including a decline in year round population and young workforce. Whether it’s called “entrepreneurial” or “sustainable,” the new economy is good news for the Adirondack Park because it relies less on land development and large labor pools to create prosperity. Instead it represents convergence - combining access to land, capital and knowledge with skills like partnering and teamwork across a regional framework to solve problems, grow markets and attract investment. It reflects the move from a model measured by the sheer number of jobs created and products marketed, to one where corporate, community and individual wealth, wage growth and product value is key, and access to a well prepared labor force is essential. The new economy requires a new mindset where:

- ***Innovation is critical.*** Opportunities like the Innovation Hot Spot proposed by the North Country REDC being led by Clarkson University and including the Trudeau Institute in Saranac Lake will encourage and reward entrepreneurial thinking and innovative ideas. Traditional industries in natural resources, forest products, and agriculture are already on a path to commercialize and produce new and more valuable products.
- ***“Place” matters more than “location.”*** Urban vs. rural attributes are less relevant, but corporate image remains important. Place-based amenities like the Park’s scenic beauty, environmental



Adirondack Mountain Productions

Place-based amenities like the Park's scenic beauty, environmental quality, and access to a healthy lifestyle appeal to companies who value sustainability.

quality and access to a healthy lifestyle appeal to companies who value sustainability and to the millennial workforce, but the lack of Park-wide telecommunications, revitalized hamlets and high quality workforce housing are noticeable shortfalls.

- ***Bigger is not necessarily better.*** New economy companies focus more on the value of growth rather than the scale. This allows them to operate from many smaller places across the country and around the world. Expansion is often by consolidation or merger of companies rather than by start-up. Telework is the norm, and talented people choose to live wherever they wish as long as they can connect.
- ***Talent drives business decisions.*** The ability to attract and retain talent is critical. Continued emphasis on strategic partnerships

with the region's higher educational institutions, capturing a "brain gain" by retaining young families and local college graduates, focusing on worker training and retraining while stimulating a lifelong entrepreneurial culture are bottom line requirements.

Measuring Success

Measuring success in this place-based approach to economic development is different. Traditional metrics related to the creation of "work," like the availability and productivity of land, buildings and infrastructure, new business starts and jobs created/retained are still important. New measures are growing more relevant:

- Wealth and value generation measures like wage and payroll growth;
- Increased business revenues;

- Health and wellness statistics;
- Alternate energy consumption;
- Educational attainment;
- Real estate values for year round properties;
- Level of private capital investment and leverage;
- Availability of cultural and recreational assets; and
- Increasing school enrollment.

A Best Odds Approach

This strategy evaluates a large base of past planning and studies, provides new research, reflects community input and outlines a set of recommendations that promote assets and leverage untapped resources. It builds on forward momentum, replicates successful models, and offers new ideas for a sustainable economy. It identifies best odds business opportunities and acknowledges a proud Park tradition: that unusual ideas and unexpected achievements will spring forward due to the sheer determination and will of Adirondack residents. In a Park of 6 million acres and 130,000 people where the majority of communities have populations under 2,000 – the bold conviction and persistence of dedicated people and creative communities can have big impacts – moving the needle toward wealth and prosperity.

Economic Development Strategy Partners

In 2010 the Adirondack Partnership was formed to advance initiatives outlined by Adirondack Futures and Common Ground Alliance. The Adirondack Partnership has grown into a leading membership organization of economic and community development groups, financial institutions, nonprofits, higher education partners, regional industries, public officials, industry advocates and resident stakeholders. It creates a forum to address complex Adirondack issues



Adirondack Community Housing Trust

This strategy identifies best odds business opportunities within the Adirondack Park.

and further define and advance innovative, strategic and sustainable projects. The Partnership envisioned this process to articulate a strategy for the Adirondack Park that could be communicated and consistently integrated into the three Regional Economic Development Council (REDC) plans to increase awareness of the Park's needs and advance multi-REDC projects and initiatives.

The Strategy is funded by a \$123,000 grant from the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation's Adirondack Community Smart Growth Program. A second component, the identification and implementation of priority projects, is funded by a \$250,000 grant from the New York State Department of State's Local Waterfront Revitalization Program. Both programs are part of New York State's Environmental Protection Fund. Hamilton County has administered the contract with administrative assistance from the Adirondack

Melissa Hart, Common Ground Alliance



2014 Adirondack Common Ground Alliance (CGA) Forum participants.

Melissa Hart, Common Ground Alliance



The economic development strategy reflects the input of dozens of CGA participants.

Community Housing Trust. A Project Advisory Committee was created to oversee the project and provide regular input on the strategy development. To assist in this planning effort, Hamilton County engaged a team led by River Street Planning & Development to evaluate current plans, identify business sector opportunities, provide program recommendations and suggest investment priorities. This report demonstrates that Adirondack Park communities are different, having their own unique opportunities and challenges. It provides an adaptable framework for reasonable and balanced economic growth that can be accomplished through collaboration of residents, businesses, agencies, advocates and organizations.

Strategy Development Approach

The process seeks to answer the question all places ask: what are our strategic assets and how do we deploy them most efficiently to leverage work and wealth for our communities? It identifies resources and proposes incentives that entrepreneurs and private sector investors can use to accelerate successful business opportunities Park-wide. The team evaluated the Park's assets, opportunities and challenges related to its development history, present economy and future position. The process included both quantitative resources (asset evaluation, review of existing reports, data and trends, cluster analysis and original research) and qualitative inputs (interviews, site visits, conference presentations, a series of six regional workshops, and a two day Implementation Conference).

100 Plans and Strategies

This strategy builds on the more than 100 Adirondack community related studies, planning efforts and implementation projects including local and regional waterfront strategies, regional plans, smart growth programs, recreation plans, local comprehensive plans,

agriculture protection plans and hazard mitigation plans. The data collected and analyzed for these efforts as well as the policies, projects and programs they recommended and implemented were reviewed and many ideas are carried forward. This strategy considered a recent update to the Adirondack Park Regional Assessment, which confirmed the demographic challenges of declining population (particularly younger families) and rapid aging of the year-round resident base. It reflects the input of dozens of participants in the 2014 Common Ground Alliance meeting. A list of all material reviewed is available at the project website (www.adirondackstrategies.com).

Business Opportunity Analysis

A traditional industry sector cluster analysis was performed by team member DCG Corplan to understand the existing composition of businesses within the Park and around its edges and to identify critical industries that must be maintained for economic stability and new opportunities for growth. In addition, ConsultEcon conducted research as well as developed a business model to activate reinvestment in lodging properties outside of the traditional hubs of Lake George, Lake Placid and Saranac Lake. Toole Design Group conducted research on trail-based tourism opportunities that underpins recommendations for an Adirondack Trail Towns program.

Community Engagement

River Street Planning & Development conducted direct interviews with stakeholders, presentations and feedback sessions at conferences such as Adirondack Park Local Government Day, Adirondack Association of Towns and Villages, the annual Common Ground Alliance forum, the Northern Forest Center Board Workshop and Adirondack Partnership meetings. A website was created by Adworkshop/Imphorm for public access to materials and a forum for public input (www.adirondackstrategies.com). The Project Advisory Committee

and the project's State funding partners from NYS DEC and NYS DOS met as needed to review all materials and discuss emerging ideas. Six sub-regional workshops were held around the Park (in Mayfield, Old Forge, Chestertown, Tupper Lake, Long Lake and Wilmington) to identify and discuss recommendations. At each session community attendees considered the following:

- Looking out five years, what is your description of a successful economy in the Park?
- What are the best odds strategies to encourage residents/young people to remain/return, and second home residents to stay longer or relocate their businesses?
- Recognizing real opportunities – a State administration with genuine concern, extraordinary recreational assets, and strong educational institutions – are they being deployed as effectively as possible?
- Can you serve markets beyond the Park's traditional boundaries? Which markets?
- Can you attract/retain globally competitive talent who can be connected to the world? How?
- Can you attract the 80 million millennial visitors and geotourists soon to flood the tourism market?

Priority Project Implementation

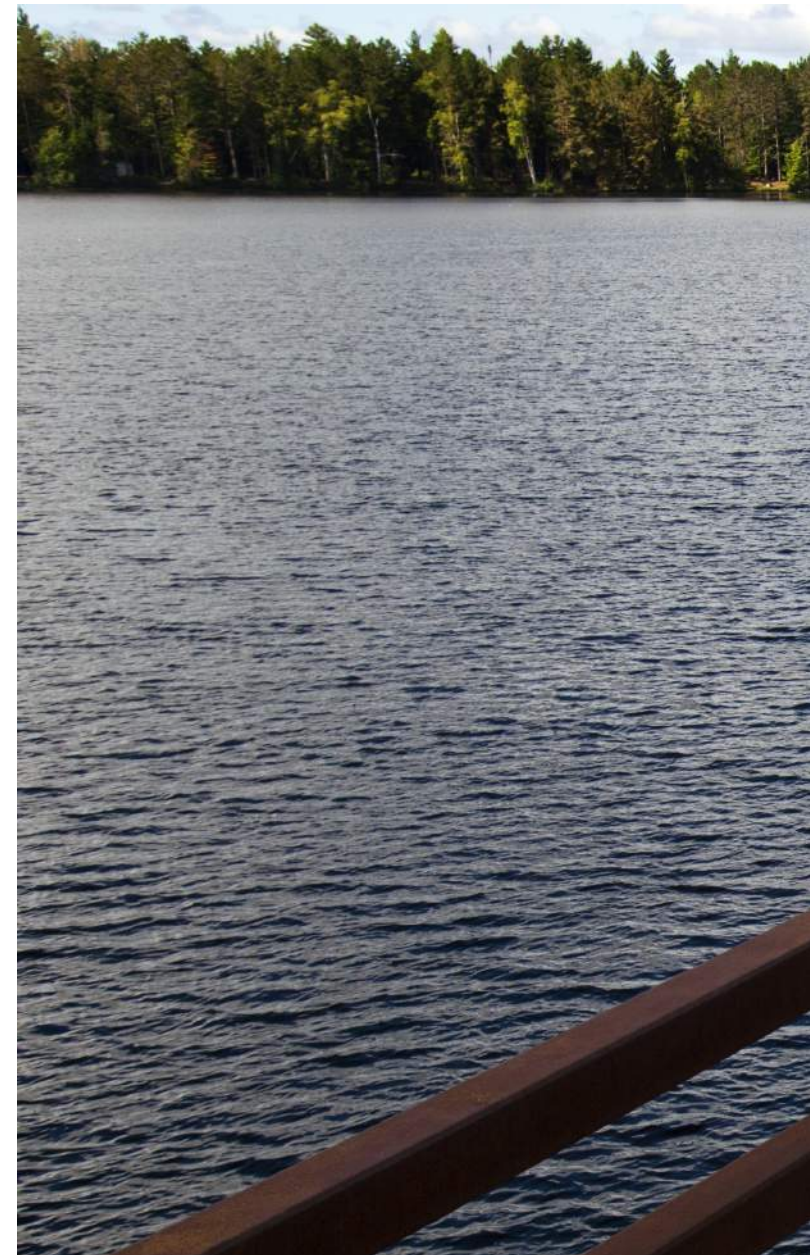
As the strategy was being prepared, resources from New York State Department of State Office of Planning and Development were used to advance priority projects, conduct additional research to help advance important components of the strategy, and support project management and administration of both the DOS and DEC grants.

Outreach to organizations and communities resulted in a number of candidate projects being identified. To date three projects have been selected and are underway including:

- Identification of best practices related to the collaborations between cultural institutions and hotels, evaluation of trends and opportunities that support further investigation into a potential Adirondack Museum and hotel collaboration to expand the tourism impact across the Park and in Blue Mountain Lake.
- Advancement of key projects identified by the communities in the Upper Hudson Recreation Hub (Minerva, Indian Lake, North Hudson, Long Lake and Newcomb) creating linkages between the communities, evaluating lodging options, and assisting with development of an integrated equestrian trail system and amenities.
- Evaluation of needs and best practices in alternative wastewater treatment systems to support hamlet revitalization by developing a replicable model in the Town of Wilmington.

Implementation Approach

The Adirondack Partnership and the Adirondack Association of Towns and Villages will host an Implementation Conference in December 2014. Participants will include municipal and organization leaders, state and federal agencies, business leaders and advocacy organizations, among others. The workshop will engage stakeholders, identify sponsors, necessary resources and capacities, and establish timeframes, priorities and milestones. This approach builds on successful grassroots efforts in the Park including Adirondack Futures and Common Ground, and ensures Park-wide ownership of the goals, strategies and actions. In addition to the conference, the development of a cross-Regional Economic Development Council Standing Adirondack Committee is essential to increased coordination of State investment Park-wide.





Provided by Doug Haney

Cycle Adirondacks is a new annual event projected to bring 600 cyclists to the Park.



Adirondack Mountain Productions

The Adirondack Park's greatest asset remains its unrivaled majestic beauty and rich natural and environmental resources.

REGIONAL TRENDS AND PLANS

Regional Trends

The Adirondack Park is a big and beautiful place, but its scale can be daunting. It is the largest Park and the largest National Historic Landmark in America. Covering approximately 6 million acres, it's larger than the National Parks of Yellowstone, Yosemite, Grand Canyon, Glacier, and Great Smoky Mountains combined. It includes 3,000 lakes and over 30,000 miles of rivers and streams. With 2,300 miles of trails on public lands and many more on private holdings, the Park's trail system is the largest in the nation. Denoted on State maps by a "Blue Line" that reflects the State's Forest Preserve in the North Country and the Catskill Mountains, today's Adirondack Park crosses twelve State counties, 102 towns and villages, 119 school districts, and 132 zip codes. The population is generally considered to be just over 130,000. Over 60% of its land or almost 3.4 million acres is protected by some form of resource protection – with over 2.4 million acres in State-owned, "forever wild" Forest Preserve and 800,000 acres conserved by various conservation easements. Policy for the Park is administered by the Adirondack Park Agency and defined in The Adirondack Park State Land Master Plan, State Land Map, and the Adirondack Park Land Use and Development Plan. The management of the State Lands is carried out by New York State Department of Environmental Conservation.

The Adirondack Park's greatest asset remains, as it has been for decades, its unrivaled majestic beauty and rich natural and environmental resources that have produced a strong outdoor recreation tourism economy and natural products industry. Continued investment in tourism and forest products remain the "low hanging fruit" for the Park, but staying this course alone is not an option.



Monica Ryan

Small farms are expanding in the Adirondack Park.

Losses in traditional industry continue, and long-standing businesses like paper companies are diminishing. Growth in clean technology is expanding as are small farms, and renewable energy such as wood and grass biofuel production and use is on the rise. Traditional rural residents in some of the Park's towns and villages are migrating to suburban and urban areas; but young knowledge workers and millennial's are on a path to simplicity and small town living. Visitors, particularly geotourists, gravitate to the rustic charm and forever wild recreational opportunities; but expect to rely on their cell phones, connect globally and retire at the end of the day to modern amenities.

Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats

Understanding the conditions in the Park is essential to developing a successful strategy. The following strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats were identified by participants in regional workshops and the Project Advisory Committee.

| STRENGTHS | WEAKNESSES | OPPORTUNITIES | THREATS |
|--|---|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recreational opportunities and amenities • Protected environment • Successful REDC funding • Large/growing visitor base • Higher Ed partnerships • Remaining base of natural resources • Unique “brand” • Small business growth • Rich base of arts, cultural and heritage organizations • New venture capital and crowd funding • High use of renewable energy • Naturally occurring retirement community • Foothold in bio-tech • Pre-identified APA classified industrial sites • Knowledge and skill base among retirees and seasonal homeowners • Growing support for development of local land use plans and land use tools | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of/sporadic cellular and broadband • Insufficient cross-REDC collaboration • Dependence on public sector employment • Transportation access • Limited workforce • Lack of housing choice • Scale and travel distances • Perceived land use constraints and regulatory complexity • Inconsistency of local zoning and planning with State land management regulations • Lack of sewer and water infrastructure for growth • Lack of year round tourism options • Increasing Forest Preserve fragmentation • Lack of agricultural production/processing • Recreation and amenities not available consistently Park-wide | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existing hamlet centers • Growing interest in health and wellness • Untapped recreation and cultural assets • Millennial generation green product and tourism interests • Strong nonprofit sector • State government awareness/support • Growing local food movement • Expanding demand for bio fuels • Existing lodging in excellent locations for upgrade • Move to complex planning • Large and diverse Fort Drum residential and visitor population • New uses for historic mining materials | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding programs not rural scaled • Workforce shortage • Aging population • Loss of young families • Enrollment decline • Overall loss of year-round population • Energy costs • Business taxes • School budget crises • Climate change • Invasive species • Perception as not business-friendly • Declining levels of community attachment • Regulatory hurdles to utility modernization • Uneven investment Park-wide |



The North Country, including the Park, is seeing an increase in small businesses.

Demographics

The Adirondack Park faces many of the typical challenges faced by rural communities in New York and the nation. Its unique challenges of size, small population base and complex framework of private and public landownership and governance directly affect delivery of services residents need, the ability to compete for new business and visitors and the availability of modern infrastructure. Demographic trends in rural America of overall population loss (especially in the 0-29 age groups), rapidly aging population, dropping school enrollments and higher than average unemployment are prevalent in the Park. At the community level these trends make it more difficult to retain local schools, provide emergency services with a smaller pool of volunteers, and deliver support services, including health care, where the needs of an aging population increase, but fewer overall “customers” exist.

At the business level smaller workforce limits the ability to attract new companies, leverage community investment, and deliver economic development support programs and workforce training. Yet some communities like Jay, Keene, Lewis, Willsboro and Wilmington are growing, with new investment by year-round and seasonal residents - examining what they are doing right is an opportunity.

General Business

As the North Country REDC reported in its 2013 Strategy, the North Country, including most of the Park but also some larger populations outside the Park, is experiencing gains in the early part of this decade (2010-2012) including 2% to 7% increases in numbers of small businesses, number of small business employees and their average wage. Visitor spending, tourism jobs and tourism related taxes have increased 6% to 8%. Canadian trains, loaded rail containers, passenger vehicles and number of passengers have all increased from 7% to 23%. Partnerships with high education institutions and public school systems are leading to more research and development, start-up business, incubator facilities and workforce training. On the other hand, the closing or downsizing of paper companies – traditionally some of the largest employers in the Park - and shrinking public sector employment in school districts, local and State government and correctional facilities is leading to higher unemployment and losses in skilled workers who move for new jobs. For those who would like to stay and find work, retaining talent requires expanded access to workforce training through educational institutions or county-level programs.



Adirondack Regional Tourism Council

Farming is making a resurgence in the Park and is crucial to the local economy.

Tourism

Tourism has long been a dominant part of the Adirondack Park economy and continues to present the greatest opportunity for local economic revitalization. Though recreation tourism is higher in the warmer months (with visitors enjoying hiking, camping, hunting, fishing, paddling and boating), a portion of the Park thrives more on winter recreation (snowmobile country and the locations with large skiing facilities). Few locations have a sustainable level of year round activity which means many businesses close for six months. More year round visitors will stimulate new small businesses and allow existing businesses to remain open longer, enhancing the quality of life for full time residents. More focus on arts, cultural, heritage, foodie and other forms of non-sports tourism, not dependent on the weather, could activate more year round activity. More attention to upgrading and modernizing smaller lodging scaled to the community will stimulate investment across the Park and attract younger visitors.

Agriculture

Farming is making a resurgence in the Park with more than 6,000 farms in the Adirondack North Country region. ANCA reports that “contributing to the \$4 billion in annual agriculture product sales Statewide, farming is crucial to the local economy.” Working in collaboration, Adirondack North Country Association (ANCA), Cornell Cooperative Extension, Paul Smith’s Adirondack Center for Working Landscapes and others help farmers to promote farming and forestry, increase food processing in the region, increase the use of grass biomass, and upgrade and maintain farming infrastructure to improve energy efficiency and reduce operating costs. Farmers need access to distribution, processing and production facilities to add value to local goods. Regulation, inspection, procurement policies and even funding at the State as well as Federal levels need to be scaled to the small farm environment.

Infrastructure

Providing adequate infrastructure is challenging given the Park's scale, geography and small population. The return on investment for utility providers is marginal, and communities lack the tax base to pay for system construction, upgrades and maintenance. Investments in broadband have dramatically increased the number of communities that have, or will have, high speed connectivity - which is critical to sustainable businesses and places. The extension to "last mile" communities remains challenging. Cellular service coverage has also seen great gains but is still inadequate raising safety concerns for aging motorists, frustration for visitors relying on their phones for information, and is a "must have" for the daily life of the millennial generation. There has been an increase in percentage of grid-tied energy from renewable sources, and as of 2010, approximately 94% of the grid-tied electricity commercially produced in the North Country came from renewable energy resources - but policy changes like allowing net-metering, longer repayment terms for investment, and pricing for small hydroelectric production are unresolved. From 2010-12, the North Country experienced a near doubling of biomass energy but these numbers are still relatively small. Aging transportation infrastructure must be made more resilient, affordable community water and wastewater options must be piloted, and communities and agencies should explore alternative means of providing modern public infrastructure. Threats to critical quality of life amenities such as health care and education make it hard for the Park to compete with their suburban and urban counterparts. Meeting these infrastructure challenges to the extent possible is required for the Adirondacks to compete globally for visitors as well as regionally for young families and entrepreneurs.



Mark Hall

Inadequate telecommunications networks in the Park creates barriers.



Mark Hall

The Park has seen an increase in grid-tied energy from renewable sources.



Monica Ryan

Quality affordable housing is essential for retaining younger generations.

Housing

The lack of quality affordable and moderate priced housing has economic impacts for attracting and retaining younger generations. Recent studies have shown that there is a significant shortage of market rate and affordable rental housing for year-round renters because many units are only rented out during the summer and fall as tourism accommodations. Property owners are able to charge premium prices for weekly rentals and can make sufficient rents during the summer to keep properties vacant the remainder of the year and save wear and tear on their properties. This issue may be exacerbated by shortages of available land for building new affordable units or single family dwellings on small lots where sewer and water infrastructure is often required and higher density land uses are permitted. In an economy reliant on tourism for the short-term, affordable housing becomes a critical issue for workforce availability and, as a result, for business retention and attraction. The growing senior population may help to address this trend as older residents downsize and release housing suitable for younger families. As the millennial population seeks a simpler life, existing smaller housing should be a desirable alternative to new construction.

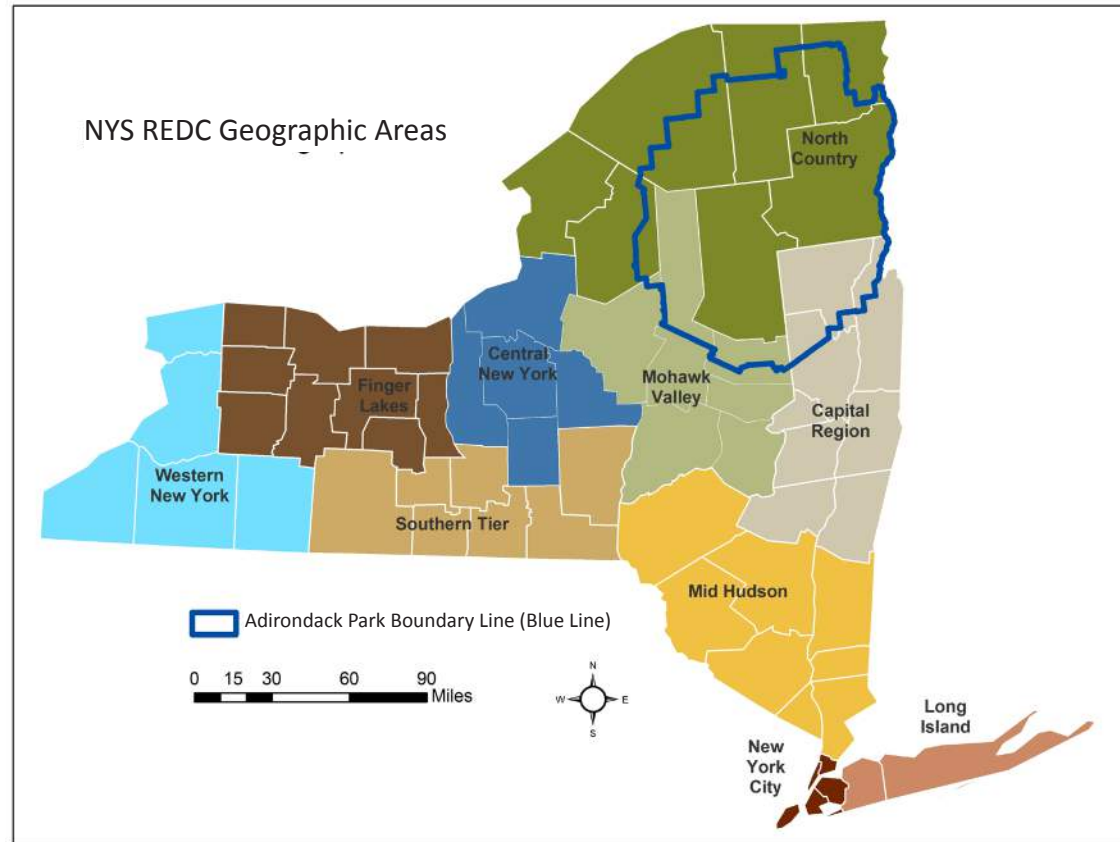
Regional Planning and Investment: Regional Economic Development Councils

New York State created ten Regional Councils in 2011 to develop long-term strategic plans for economic growth in their regions. Each Council is comprised of local experts and stakeholders from business, academia, local government, and non-governmental organizations. Regional Economic Development Councils (REDCs) prepared their first plans in 2011 and update them annually – recommending priority projects for funding through dozens of New York State funding programs. The Adirondack Park is represented by three New York State REDCs, which have become an integral partner in concentrating

and focusing public economic investment. The North Country REDC represents most of the Adirondacks including Essex, Hamilton, Clinton, Franklin, St. Lawrence and Lewis Counties. The Mohawk Valley REDC represents small portions of Fulton, Oneida and Herkimer Counties within the Blue Line and the Capital Region REDC represents Warren, Washington and Saratoga County Adirondack communities. While all three REDCs have some unifying priorities and goals, this geographical division can be a challenge for Park-wide funding allocation for economic development. In recent years the three REDCs have jointly funded some Adirondack initiatives including Cycle Adirondacks, Lakes to Locks Geotourism Marketing Initiative and the Adirondack Park Recreation Web Portal Project, but opportunities to advance a Park-centered strategy should be pursued.

Local, Sub-Regional, and Park-wide Planning

This strategy builds on the momentum of the many recent local, sub-regional planning efforts and recommends broader utilization of these “local best practices” and models across the Park. The Adirondack Futures Project and Common Ground Alliance, The North Country Sustainability Plan, and Adirondack Park Recreation Strategy are very influential and their recommendations are integrated and reflected in this strategy. Many other municipal and multi-municipal strategies including the First Wilderness Plan and planning for the Raquette, Saranac and Ausable Rivers communities are also replicable model efforts. The ADK Futures Project (<http://www.adkfutures.org>) kindles conversations with a wide range of



people about how to approach the challenges and opportunities in the Park. A “scenario development approach” was used to imagine six different outcomes for the Park 25 years from now. Each year this approach is revisited at a day long forum called the Common Ground Alliance and new ideas are vetted on how to move forward. After evaluating six scenarios, community support was strongest for two: the “usable Park” and the “sustainable Park.” EndStates were envisioned for both, summarizing the Park’s vision for itself in 2030. From an economic development perspective, in the usable Park the economy and the environment beneficially reinforce each other



Monica Ryan

At the Common Ground Alliance forum, community support was strong for the concepts of “the usable Park” and “the sustainable Park.”

and growth will come by investing in a wide range of amenities and promotion for world class recreational tourism and attracting active retirees to become full-time residents - a trend already materializing. The sustainable Park is a model of sustainable rural life with a low carbon footprint, local renewable energy (especially biomass heat), local food, and widespread broadband. Revitalization of the Park’s communities is the top priority, with emphasis on the arts, education, healthcare and public infrastructure upgrades.

The North Country Regional Sustainability Plan (<http://www.adirondack.org/green/>) provides a long-term sustainability vision and framework for the region. It outlines a vision, goals, and objectives while identifying regional assets and recommending how to build upon them to improve the quality of life for the communities in the Park and the North Country.

The Plan’s goals include:

- Creating the greenest and most self-reliant energy economy in New York State;
- Concentrating investment in vibrant and resilient downtowns; and

- Growing an innovative local economy and attracting the next generation of entrepreneurs, on the foundation of our well-managed natural resources and exceptional quality of life.

The 2013 Adirondack Park Recreation Strategy (<http://www.roostadk.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/RecPlan.pdf>) evaluates the Park’s resources of mountains, lakes and recreation venues and activities. It suggested a number of targeted recommendations and investments to the Park’s resources, which are within a day’s travel time to over 120 million visitors. These recommendations address four opportunity areas, all demonstrated in the emerging Five Towns Recreation Hub in Minerva, Long Lake, North Hudson, Indian Lake and Newcomb, including:

- Ensure access to public lands for a full range of recreation activities for people of all ages and abilities;
- Position communities to attract revenue from recreating visitors;
- Expand and diversify the outdoor recreation industry as a Park-wide priority for economic sustainability; and
- Market the identity of the entire Park to realize the State and local economic benefits of this unique asset.



Lake Placide Regional Office of Sustainable Tourism

The 2013 Adirondack Park Recreation Strategy seeks to “Ensure access to public lands for a full range of recreation activities for people of all ages and abilities.”



Adirondack Mountains Productions

Maintenance support and charging stations for electric/hybrid vehicles, including snowmobiles, represents a growth market in the Adirondacks.

BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES

Economic base analysis of the Park and the surrounding region identifies opportunities for strategic enhancement and growth, with a focus on identifying sectors that could have Park-wide impact or be replicated in more than one location.

Employment Profile

A traditional industry cluster analysis was conducted to evaluate private sector employment trends. It is particularly important for the Park's communities to explore all possible opportunities to grow the private sector job base given instability and projected decline in public sector employment. Declines are also projected in major nonprofit employment, particularly in health care (including hospitals) and in higher education in the region. According to the 2013 Adirondack Nonprofit Network (ANN) Economic Impact Study the number of small businesses and base of employment is growing in the Region, but the Park itself is still reliant on local, State and Federal employment, with over 34% of its jobs in those sectors. The remainder of the Park's workforce is employed by private nonprofits (10%) or self-employed (13%). Only 43% of the Park's workforce is currently employed by private for profit organizations.

Industry Cluster Evaluation

Identifying clusters is a unique challenge due to the Park's sheer size and complexity. The Park boundary crosses or fully contains 12 New York counties and 132 zip code areas. Some of the counties have tens of thousands or more in population, and some are far less populated. A limited network of roadways crosses the Park's interior. The corridor formed by I-87 along the east offers good north-south access, but Lake Champlain limits access into Vermont and the rest of New England.

At its southern end, I-90 provides east-west transit. The St. Lawrence Seaway and Canada form a natural border to the north. There are eight distinct urban market places (metros) that surround the Park and influence it to some degree. The metros include the Glens Falls, Albany-Schenectady-Troy, and Utica-Rome Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSA's) and Plattsburgh, Gloversville, Watertown-Fort-Drum, Ogdensburg-Massena, and Malone Micropolitan Areas (MA's).

The cluster analysis assumes that business sectors successful at the fringes of the Park, including expanding manufacturing, may be able to expand into the Park, but with more limited size and scope. While standard sector codes provide industry definitions based upon specific products or services, in practice, industry sectors often converge and overlap. Tourism, for example is traditionally composed of multiple products and services and clearly remains a dominant opportunity for the Park. Other opportunities related to the early bio tech hub emerging in Saranac Lake have too few employees to emerge from formal analysis, but are clearly an opportunity for the Park and the region.

The industry analysis evaluated New York State Year 2020 industry employment projections and trends for the three Regional Economic Development Council Regions - recognizing the North Country as the key driver, and identifying synergies with the other two markets. Private sector growth industries were identified in the eight neighboring population centers and industries were selected that are common to at least four of them. Industries were then selected based on the location quotient method (LQ), which is derived by comparing the percentage of employment in a sector in the Park with the percentage of employment in the same sector in the State



Northern Forest Center

Unique physical resources are available in the Adirondacks.

of New York. Fifty-seven industry sectors emerged in the Park and surrounding population centers including nearly 9,000 businesses. From these sectors, 27 industries containing 185 business categories were selected and channeled into “clusters” likely to have the “best odds” or most potential for growth Park-wide based upon historic, current and projected potential performance and alignment with the Park’s capacities, resources and unique geography. For more information on the cluster analysis process and outcomes see www.adirondackstrategies.com.

Business Opportunities

The opportunities that emerged from the formal cluster analysis and community input include the following areas.



Northern Forest Center

The Park can combine raw materials with small business innovation.

Sustainable Forest and Natural Products

The forest and natural products development cluster recognizes the unique physical resources available in the Adirondacks. The Park can continue to combine raw materials with small business innovation to produce a diverse range of high quality, value-added wood and other products. This sector includes materials extraction and production of timber, groundwood, stone, sands, clays, and gravels. Businesses that demonstrate environmentally responsible behaviors through conservation and measured scale of operations to ensure compatibility with community character and standards for environmental protection are recommended. Opportunities in the cluster include hardwood veneers and plywood, wood containers and pallets, wood office furniture, wood kitchen cabinets and countertops, as well as sawmill and woodworking machinery. For future business growth, a series of



A series of manufactured products may bolster future business growth.

manufactured products are envisioned arising from the cluster, all with a single objective vision in mind – the sourcing of natural materials directly from the Adirondacks, but with active stewardship toward the natural environment. Research and development for medicinal and bio-pharmacological products derived from roots, barks and gums are another possible opportunity and link to the health and wellness cluster.

Expanding biomass production to meet the thermal energy needs of Park residents, businesses and institutions is a clear opportunity given existing forest resources. These resources would complement the growing grassy biomass industry in the North Country region on agricultural lands. Transitioning heating systems to biofuel in the Park would utilize local, renewable, low grade wood, supporting the industry and generating local jobs in processing and distribution.



Value-added wood products.

Heating with biofuel will also allow local spending previously associated with imported fossil fuels to be retained locally.

Sustainable Construction and Building Products

The sustainable construction and building products cluster focuses on production, rehabilitation, and adaptive reuse of sustainable buildings using locally obtained and/or recycled and energy efficient building products. A recognized difficulty for the construction industry in the Adirondack Park is the long distance that building materials must be transported and the associated cost with their delivery, storage and distribution. The repurposing of scrap and discarded materials into useful and creative resources can be the catalyst for rejuvenating a lagging construction industry throughout the Adirondacks. An opportunity exists for the development of uniquely Adirondack



Lake Placid Regional Office of Sustainable Tourism

The sports outfitters and equipment component can provide experiences such as trial run use and professional instruction at the point of sale location.

architecture, Adirondack cottages or other structures that feature locally sourced natural materials and products. The development and promotion of a model Adirondack “cottage” comprised of locally sourced materials and with green building elements could be utilized as summer cottages, replacement units in cottage lodging options, or modest homes particularly suitable for senior cottage housing. These cottages could be constructed locally and transported like a manufactured home or packaged as a kit for builders. Recent studies show that the next major demographic boom in millennial or Generation Y population (80 million people) strongly support the purchase of green products and services and represent an important new market for local and regional sales.

Recreational Equipment Manufacturing and Retail

The recreational equipment manufacturing and retail cluster promotes the development of industries oriented to sporting and

outdoor recreation equipment and vehicles production and retail. Given that visitors to the Park may require maintenance to equipment brought with them, an active parts business should be encouraged. An innovative approach to recreation vehicles manufacturing that addresses the changing mobility and accessibility needs of the Park’s older year round residents for recreation access is the electric/hybrid sector. Snowmobiles are just one of a number of vehicle types being developed with quieter electric motors, and qualified manufacturing and maintenance support for electric vehicles in the Adirondacks including charging stations represents a growth market.

The outfitters and sports equipment retail component provides a total retail experience based on outdoor recreational activities. With a correlation to the more important recreation hubs throughout the Park, especially trailheads and waterways, the cluster can promote the integration of outfitter-style stores with testing or trial run use of equipment in immediate proximity. Park visitors should be able to

purchase or rent sports equipment and have professional instruction or outdoor simulation at the point of sale location. Professional guide services represent a synergistic add-on to the retail core business and is consistent with emerging “hut to hut” and “inn to inn” programs that can attract more international visitors, providing access and opportunities to link the back country with the front country. Sports equipment and outdoor activity retailers can be encouraged to expand their business footprint to include outside facilities or to join with others who can provide access to practice or instructional areas. Rental of equipment by stores who traditionally offer sales alone may result in a new revenue stream.

Tourism

Long a dominant industry, with an estimated 7-10 million visitors annually, it’s important that the Park continue to maintain, improve and add value to its tourism amenities and infrastructure to take advantage of emerging market opportunities, especially in geo, eco, agriculture, heritage and other specialized tourism sectors and marketing to the enormous pool of future millennial visitors. Although the Park wishes to diversify its economy, tourism is currently the dominant industry, and its investment in local small businesses also improves year round quality of life while appealing to visitors. Efforts at the REDC level to capitalize the Tourism Transformation Fund to support local projects and infrastructure enhancements and develop the Tourism Destination Workbook, which encourages local self-assessment of tourism readiness, among other initiatives demonstrates commitment. Spreading that programming over all three REDCs is an opportunity. Ongoing projects, including some large scale destination and hotel projects, will require support as they build out.



Adirondack Community Housing Trust

Opportunities exist to reinvest in older lodging properties in the Adirondack Park.



Hamilton County, NY Department of Economic Development

Tourists are seeking out novel and authentic accommodations.

The opportunities to reinvest in older lodging properties outside of the established hubs in Lake George, Lake Placid and Saranac Lake including motels and motor lodges, as well as cottage colonies/cabins located in desirable locations especially waterfronts should be addressed as soon as possible. They create opportunities to attract hospitality entrepreneurs who may be priced out of investing in other natural areas on the West Coast or in Canada. Some of these properties may have water access/frontage, grandfathered footprints, and novelty factors. Existing accommodation projects may have more potential for efficient expansion/renovation than new projects as existing hotels/motels may increase their number of units or square footage by 25% without an APA permit. There is an opportunity to utilize this infrastructure to make investments in accommodations where there is also a critical mass of other assets to support destination placemaking, as long as appropriate water and waste water infrastructure can be permitted and delivered. Emphasis should also be placed on hospitality training to increase Park-wide understanding of visitor trends consistent with developing a “user friendly Park.”

There are a number of trends in the hotel and accommodations industry that support an emphasis on geotourists and/or outdoor oriented recreation including:

- **A Focus on Unique Experiences** – Millennials or Generation Y visitors (of the 80 million U.S. residents born between 1980 and 2000) will be moving into a period of more frequent traveling and higher spending in the next 5 to 10 years. This group tends to look for accommodations that are unusual and have individualistic style. This has started to translate into hospitality brands

emphasizing unique experiences, e.g., local and artisan food, local art in their product offerings.

- **Green Building and Social Responsibility** – An emphasis on environmentally and socially responsible building and operating practices has become more commonplace in the accommodations industry and can be an attractor in its own right. Visitors of all ages are more interested in green products and services. Millennial visitors are also focused on health and wellness and are willing to spend more on related products.
- **Authenticity** – Today’s travelers seek out accommodations that are comfortable, novel and authentic - incorporating unique architecture, educational experiences, locally inspired food and materials and other offerings that allow them to interact with the local culture.

Investments targeted directly to the eco-tourism market should also be considered. While capacity exists in the near term for recreation opportunities such as trail network development, active outdoor centers and traditional activities such as fishing and interpretive nature facilities, longer-term industry opportunities are also present. Eco-tourism is one of the faster growing areas within the recreation and tourism industry. Products and services that support the emerging eco-tourism industry could present training, manufacturing and other knowledge-center distinctions for the Park.

Health and Wellness

Opportunities exist to “prescribe the Park” as the health and wellness sector expands and offers significant opportunities for existing businesses and future entrepreneurs. The wellness sector has proved



Eco-tourism is a fast growing area within the recreation and tourism industry.

resilient, partly because more people seek to be healthier and because a variety of technology (such as heart rate monitors,) and phone app's (to track diet) help with motivation. On the one hand, the aging of the baby boomers and aging of the Park's permanent residents support growth. Younger Generation Y (who will represent over 30% of retail and service spending by 2020) are more motivated to live healthy lives and consume green products.

The Park has the mix of recreation resources including world class institutions (like St. Josephs and the Trudeau Institute) and tourism base to capitalize on those trends. Businesses in this sector range from local health centers, primary and specialty care providers and facilities, physical therapy, nutrition and wellness coaching, therapeutic massage, alternative healing, and personal training. Other opportunities include spa services, natural body and beauty products, retreat centers (both physical and spiritual), addiction and PTSD treatment. Lodging facilities can take advantage of these trends in many ways offering spas with healthy products to body scanners

and exercise machines with built-in heart rate monitors. The growth in medical tourism (traveling specifically for medical services including rehabilitation) harkens back to the Park's historic roots in facilities to treat tuberculosis.

There is also a growing awareness that keeping fit helps with business performance and a growing number of companies support healthy lifestyles, including gym memberships as part of job benefit packages, for example. As emphasis on attracting and retaining talent grows, personal and corporate investments in their health and wellness will increase, as will promoting their location in places with healthy lifestyle amenities like the outdoor recreation assets of the Park. Municipalities can enhance their attractiveness to this business sector by adopting policies and practices that help make residents and visitors healthier including "complete streets" that accommodate all modes of travel (pedestrian, bicycling, automobiles, transit, and freight) as part of hamlet revitalization to enhance opportunities for walking and biking and interconnecting hamlets with multi-use trails.

Monica Ryan



Monica Ryan



Agricultural producers have an expanding presence in the Adirondack Park.

Ecosystem Services and Nature Conservation

The Park's unrivaled public and private lands and demonstrated stewardship contribute significantly to its overall strong quality of place. Though typically government or nonprofit sector employment, the Park will continue to need employees skilled in a variety of conservation fields to help address invasive species, manage plant life and animal populations, and protect water and air quality. Scientists and technicians including conservation scientists, foresters, aquatic biologists, botanists, zoologists and ecologists will continue to have a role in management of the Park's resources. The Park's designation as an International Biosphere Reserve and its ability to serve as a learning laboratory for climate change, positions it to attract more research opportunities and researchers. Other opportunities include fundraising and public relations for conservation organizations and general management, administrative, and technical support. The regional colleges have undergraduate and graduate degree programs in this cluster and it represents a strong opportunity to retain students who receive their higher education in or near the Adirondack Park.

Value Added Agriculture and Food Processing

There is increasing concern about food quality and availability across New York. Growing interest in local food, community supported agriculture, and the farm-to-table restaurant market reinforces the need for continued investment in direct sale and value added agricultural products. The Adirondack Park's agricultural resources have been slowly ramping up production at the small and microbusiness level and the number of farmer's markets, farm stands, vineyards, maple syrup producers and craft beverage producers is expanding every year. Additional focus on overall Adirondack product branding would enhance this base. A new meat processing facility recently opened in Ticonderoga, but there remain unmet needs for

processing, production and distribution facilities in the Adirondacks and Champlain Valley. Just outside the Adirondack Park are growing industries in cheese and Greek yogurt and the Adirondack Coast Wine Trail is expanding. Business support for individual farmers and farm establishments is being coordinated by ANCA, Cornell Cooperative Extension and Paul Smith’s Adirondack Center for Working Landscapes. ANCA is also working with local farms on customized rotational grazing management plans, supporting local farms through tours, and connecting them with funding opportunities. At the municipal level, it is important to ensure that local land use policies conserve farmland and prime agricultural soils where appropriate.

Nonprofit Employment

The nonprofit sector is particularly strong in the Park and the need to meet changing demographics and take advantage of telecommunication improvements are an opportunity. The study of nonprofits in the North Country conducted by SUNY Oswego’s Office of Business and Community analyzed and summarized the impacts of 36 nonprofits including health care organizations, Paul Smith’s

College, cultural institutions, community development organizations and many others have on the Park and the Region. The findings demonstrate that nonprofits are major employers (1,593 full time and part-time jobs in the 36 organizations, \$84 million in salaries and \$6.3 million in payroll taxes), often attracting young professionals, and generate significant wealth in communities due to the critical services, programs, cultural venues and activities they provide that might not otherwise be available. The study estimates that the organizations studied spent over \$214.0 million in programs, services and staff in the North Country region with a total local economic impact of \$422.0 million when an output multiplier is applied. As recommendations that follow are implemented, new opportunities in community based health care, education, workforce training and the operation of arts, cultural and heritage sites will become particularly important. The study examined a small sample of nonprofit organizations. When the impact of other groups such as the Adirondack Community College and the SUNY ESF Ranger School are considered the impact is even greater.



Adirondack Community Housing Trust

Restoration of historic buildings is occurring across the Park.



Monica Ryan

The Adirondack Park economic strategy represents a “value- and place-based” approach.

ECONOMIC STRATEGIES AND MEASURES

Strategy Framework

The strategies and actions are organized by goal and focus on foundations of a sustainable economy which builds on the Adirondack Park's current strengths and recognizes the assets and capacities yet to be tapped. There is strong alignment between the new economy demands with the Park's social, civic, built, and natural resources. Overall the strategy represents a "value-and-place based" approach, directing financial and in-kind resources toward higher-wealth generating activities. These include a quality community development program which supports value added commercialization of traditional industries, sustainable business attraction, new business creation and innovation-driven retention programs. The approach leverages regional planning, education, research and economic development partnerships like those with the Park's three REDCs. It promotes sustainable use of the Park's resources, advancing job creation and social connections, while protecting its environmental character. Advancement of the goals and strategies will:

- Inspire a culture of entrepreneurship with a globally competitive workforce and diverse business base;
- Promote a sustainable and connected rural life with quality infrastructure and community amenities;
- Reinvent traditional industry across the working landscapes in forest products, natural resources and agriculture; and
- Advance the Park as a world class destination.

Performance measures have been included for each goal. If this strategy is comprehensively implemented, the Park can expect to experience these overall outcomes:

- Stabilized population overall and a 10% gain in 30-40 year olds;
- Expanded private business employment to 50% of all jobs;
- Increased average wages for year-round jobs to 25% above the State's minimum wage;
- Increased revenues measured by growing sales and bed tax;
- Invested \$100 million in community-based placemaking and revitalization of 10 hamlets;
- Retained \$6 million per year in the region that was previously spent on imported food and heat;
- Expanded year-round affordable and workforce housing by 200 units;
- Provided creative and/or place-based education to every school district in the Park; and
- Delivered broadband to every community.

Implementation Process

Years of investment in capacity building has built a strong foundation of local and regional organizations with a wealth of knowledge about what has worked (and not worked) to produce social, economic, and financial value. Collaborations between organizations are real and new partnerships are being formed. This report provides useful background to local decision making and ramps up cooperative Park-wide initiatives and identifying champions.

To bring these partners together and build ownership of ADVANTAGE Adirondacks, the Adirondack Partnership will host an Implementation Conference in December, 2014 in association with the Adirondack Association of Towns and Villages (AATV) to bring together potential program sponsors to review the strategy and identify key facilitators and collaborative partnerships. Key participants will include municipal leaders, business owners, Chambers of Commerce, citizen planners, nonprofit organizations, non-governmental advocates, State and federal agencies among others. Outreach for the event will use direct contact and the contact network established by Adirondack Futures and Common Ground and other community planning efforts. The conference will solicit commitments to guide accomplishment of the strategies and actions, identify local capacity enhancements and resources (including funding and technical assistance), address regulatory or other barriers, and set priorities and timeframes for accomplishment. Perhaps the greatest challenge to implementation is the need to expand efforts to build both regional and local capacity to see the project through over the long term. Among the most important tasks for the participants at this conference will be reaching consensus on the measures of success. Establishing benchmarks that can be tracked with readily accessible data builds accountability for implementation and positions the program leaders to mark success.

GOAL ONE: Inspire a culture of entrepreneurship with a globally competitive workforce and diverse business base.

Ensure that Adirondack Park residents have access to family-sustaining year round employment and that businesses have access to world class talent. Take advantage of the Adirondack's self-reliant character and support entrepreneurial and small business innovation in all sectors. Create a regional business climate Park-wide that stimulates private sector investments and job creation through retention, expansion and recruitment.

Introduction

The essential and traditional entrepreneurial spirit at work in the Adirondack Park drives what the North Country REDC calls "the Region's bread and butter" - its small businesses and history of innovation. In order to grow the business base, expand wealth and create jobs, employers need the talent to compete and a "hire local" mentality. To be "people based" as well as "place based," residents must be skilled, innovative and entrepreneurial to keep family sustaining jobs and advance in their careers. While competition between communities is inherent in economic development, opportunities to define and unify the Adirondack brand and take advantage of growth at the fringes of the Park through cross promotion and business marketing helps create a global marketplace for local goods and services.

Although the number of small businesses and base of employment is growing in the North Country Region, the Park itself is still reliant on local, State and Federal employment. Recent (likely continuing) decline in public sector and major non-profit employment (hospitals and higher education) will displace professional workers who may be candidates for entrepreneurship. Fort Drum military servicepersons,



Monica Ryan

The Innovation Hotspot is lead by Clarkson and the Trudeau Institute.

many highly trained, transitioning to civilian employment are another source of future business owners who already share a love of the Adirondacks.

Building that entrepreneurial culture must begin early, and the education system - from elementary school through higher education - must cultivate an entrepreneurial ethic among all it reaches. It's likely that the most successful entrepreneurs will be "homegrown" - people who understand the Park's challenges and regulatory complexities and want to live and work in a place they love. Partnerships with community organizations, youth sports groups and local schools to teach entrepreneurial skills like motivation, self-confidence, careful planning, ability to manage money can be integrated into K-12 curricula and beyond. Programs providing early career awareness counseling, work experiences, adult education classes and the opportunity to

become leaders should be developed. Local efforts must identify current and future workforce needs, increase business awareness of available training, and reinforce partnerships with Chambers of Commerce and other front line business organizations to develop the complete talent chain in the Park's core business sectors. Front line workers need to understand the Park's assets and rich heritage so they can be better ambassadors.

The Innovation Hotspot, lead by Clarkson University with other higher educational institutions including the Trudeau Institute, is a promising development. Park communities seek these jobs, but they require advanced training that many local workers do not currently have. Enhanced training in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) is necessary to kick start the high tech sector. Stimulating the "brain gain" through in-migration of skilled labor is important, but these "knowledge" workers, attracted to the sense of community and environmental character of the Park, are also highly mobile and can easily choose to relocate if they are dissatisfied with local opportunities. This reinforces a clear connection between workforce development, quality of life, telecommunications and public infrastructure.

Though the region surrounding the Park has a number of small business assistance programs there are few resources in the interior Counties and marketing efforts focused on this business base is limited. Park-wide business support, scaled to small communities with continuing access to funding, should be available in each County or provided reliably by organizations serving the entire Park. Retail and tourism related businesses must be included in all efforts. For microbusinesses, small grant programs providing seed capital or gap financing for start-up or expansion are an important option that needs to be accessible Park-wide. In addition to general assistance, the core industries need specialized support including one-on-one mentoring and technical

assistance to accelerate growth. Access to capital for businesses of all sizes, including increased foreign investment is essential. A “lend local” focus among financial institutions, community development agencies, venture capitalists, and private philanthropies is needed to support ventures by talented local people who may be “close to credit worthy.” For others, the wide-reaching initiatives announced recently under Global NY and Taste NY may also help.

The more intense regulatory and permitting environment inside the Park does have impact, mostly creating lack of certainty, slowing of the development review process, and focusing more on density than use, but also complicating provision of water and wastewater. Local land use plans and regulations should express a clear vision for the type of development the community desires and ensure that their local regulations promote those uses while protecting community character and natural resources. Finally, we should promote better dialogue between communities and the APA to resolve any potential issues early in the planning process, better align local land use regulations with APA land use classifications and promote development in hamlets and, when necessary, advance hamlet expansion or use of the moderate-intensity classification. Assistance negotiating the permitting process will help expedite business growth. Certain trends like family businesses closing without generational succession, lack of ability to modernize facilities and lack of high speed internet frustrate efforts to create national or global market places for local goods and services. Program’s like the Adirondack North Country Association’s “Locally Made - Locally Grown Buyer Days” is branding locally produced food, taking advantage of the growing “foodie” movement and is succeeding in helping artisans to expand the market for their Adirondack-made products. The local arts, cultural, and heritage sites and programs are a largely untapped economic driver that can operate year-round.

Performance Measures

Success in meeting this goal can be measured by:

- Jobs created.
- Companies formed.
- Average wage.
- Average wage growth.
- High school graduates retained.
- Increase in high school graduates with STEM experience.
- Local college and graduate school graduates retained.
- Increase in number of workforce training participants.
- Increase in value of local bank deposits.
- Value of small business loans made by local financial institutions.
- New products development/manufactured by existing businesses.
- Value of Start-up NY/Global NY incentives.
- Number of K-12 schools with entrepreneurship program like Junior Achievement.
- Number of leadership program participants.

Strategies and Actions

Strategy 1: Develop a Park-wide Adirondack Small and Microenterprise Business Program. (See insert on page 34)

Action 1: Develop a comprehensive Park-wide program for existing and new small business and microenterprises (5 or fewer employees.) Provide technical assistance, training, business planning, and access to all forms of capital. For training, use both in-person training, (possibly through a circuit rider approach including planner support), a local train the local trainer approach (preparing local economic development staff, community volunteers, business support professionals like attorneys, accountants, marketing professionals) to deliver a standard business curriculum, and online web casts and classes. This curriculum should address the basics of building a business that can be successful in and consistent with the Adirondacks' unique regulatory framework and provide support for regulation review and permitting. See strategies for specialized technical assistance in goals related to forest products, agriculture and tourism that follow. These specialized components could take advantage of the rich network of nonprofit partners through a consortia of organizations including ANCA, AEDC, Cornell Cooperative Extension, ROOST, Adirondack Teleworks, and the Northern Forest Center, among others. Use of an online training component including an entrepreneurship map and training database featuring best practices case studies and links to sector-based industry groups and market data will reduce the cost of training and the level of skill/cost of coordination services in areas with broadband services.

Action 2: Provide direct support and assistance for succession planning to local businesses within their families or by helping to

identify other partners to maintain critical businesses, especially in agriculture and the hospitality industry.

Action 3: Motivate small business mentoring by existing local or regional professionals, second homeowners, the Senior Corps of Retired Executives (SCORE) and economic developers. Encourage Adirondack Park and North Country economic development organizations to recruit retired executives, second homeowners,



Use the Park's existing character to attract new environmentally aware businesses.

and local business leaders who are available to mentor small businesses. Integrate mentoring into small business training as technical assistants to help with business and marketing plan development. Coordinate peer to peer mentoring with other successful New York State companies identified by Empire State Development or other strategic partners.

KEY STRATEGY: Small Business Development and Hamlet Revitalization Incentive Program



Monica Ryan

Hamlets and villages of the Adirondacks are centers of community life and economy.

Community revitalization is usually a partnership between the public and private sector – often initiated and leveraged by public sector investment, local banking partnerships, and community buy-in. This program will provide critical small and microbusiness support for businesses forming, expanding and relocating in the Park’s “main streets” and hamlet centers to stimulate revitalization and investment.

The hamlets and villages of the Adirondacks continue to be the centers of community life and local economy. As year round populations have decreased, so have the number of filled store fronts, hamlet amenities for tourists and investment in capital projects. Reversing the decline of many “main streets” and town centers is critical to the economic future of the Adirondack Park. Small and micro business support and investment services have been identified as a critical and overarching need to stabilize the Adirondack economy across all business sectors.

Program Goal: Provide financial support through a package of incentives to small and microbusinesses relocating or expanding operations to vacant or underutilized properties within or directly adjacent to a hamlet or main street corridor.

Incentives

A package of incentives should be offered to small and microenterprises utilizing traditional programs and new financing opportunities including:

- State and local permitting technical assistance;
- Business Development Training and Technical Assistance through a regional Adirondack program that brings training to all corners of the Park through different formats (e.g., web-based, in-person circuit riders);
- Gap financing in the form of low interest loans through State funding assistance for larger financing assistance requests;
- Traditional financing through financial institutions that are part of a proposed “Lend Local” initiative especially for “close to credit worthy” small businesses in the Adirondacks, that encourages community members and companies to invest in local financial institutions. Typically this program offers a depositor a slightly lower level of interest in exchange for a local bank commitment to offer incentives to small business applicants;
- Grants for smaller projects; and
- Assistance with State Tax abatement programs such as the Real Property Tax Exemption 485-a and 485-b programs; the Historic Buildings Rehabilitation Tax Credit Program and others.

Priority consideration should be given to businesses that occupy a vacant or underutilized building or property in a priority investment area. These areas should either be established by partnering communities or meet an overarching set of criteria such as parcels classified as hamlet by the APA or adjacent to hamlet lands. Demonstration of owner equity should be required for all projects.

Priority Investment Areas and Community Engagement

Community revitalization is a partnership between private and public sector investment. Therefore success will be most likely where there is evidence of community buy-in and investment. Communities may be identified partners in the program, designating an area as a priority investment area where public investment has been made or is anticipated in the form of recent revitalization and destination planning, zoning and other land management updates, potential strategic expansion of hamlet boundaries, infrastructure improvements, development of visitor amenities, sponsorship of revitalization and tourism development programs such as NYS Main Street, façade improvement programs, microenterprise programs and other State and Federal economic development programs.



Rouses Point, NY

Main Street Revitalization: A Public Private Partnership

Public and private investment in streetscapes, tourism and waterfront amenities, building redevelopment and business development over nine years has led to significant revitalization of the Village of Rouses Point's Lake Street and Lake Champlain waterfront. Once a thriving Village with industry and tourism, the Village suffered a severe economic setback with the closing of one of the region's largest employers. The Village has utilized the following public private partnerships to return to one of its traditional economic industries – tourism.

- Public investment in streetscape amenities and waterfront access through multiple DOS LWRP Grants.
- US DOT ARRA grant for rehabilitation of historic and operating train station.
- Business and property owner assistance through NYS Main Street grant for building upgrades.
- NYS Microenterprise Program grant for business development and expansion on Lake Street.

Action 4: Support the Adirondack Teleworks Gateway Project which offers a training curriculum for teleworkers matching a work-ready employee pool with employment opportunities in Clinton, Essex, Franklin and St. Lawrence and Hamilton County. The focus is to develop a trained workforce and offer opportunities for skilled employment. They are currently expanding opportunities for low income, disadvantaged, displaced workers and veterans in the Adirondacks.

Action 5: Use the Park's environmental character to attract new environmentally aware businesses (and business owners) who appreciate the Park's environmental character, standards and strong recreation base. Across the country, communities attract entrepreneurs who fall in love with the place and are prepared to succeed in the Park's regulated environment or address other infrastructure challenges to get product to market. Recreation businesses such as sports equipment manufacturing or production of hybrid small engines may be opportunities. Hybrid engines, for example, reduce noise and emissions from snowmobiles or outboard boat engines and could increase accessibility to more Park resources for aging residents and visitors. These companies, many relocating from more metropolitan markets, will need and expect high speed data services.

Action 6: Ensure that each county has economic development capacity either through designated staff or through strategic partnerships to assist businesses of all sizes, especially micro and small companies.



A "lend local" approach will support small business ventures by local residents.

Strategy 2: Evaluate strategies to "lend local" and maximize access to new or underutilized sources of capital.

Action 1: Work with local financial institutions to develop a "Lend Local" initiative, especially for "close to credit worthy" small businesses, that encourages residents, companies, second homeowners, and the State of New York to invest in local financial institutions. Typically this program offers a depositor a slightly lower level of interest in exchange for a local bank commitment to offer incentives to small business applicants. This strategy could create a more stable source of start-up capital for entrepreneurs and small businesses. Studies of similar programs establish that for every \$10.0 million dollars invested in a local financial institution between 9 and 11 new local jobs can be created. Even the short term capital resources of major nonprofits and public



Monica Ryan

Local financial institutions could offer incentives to small business applicants.

sector employers like higher education institutions, hospitals and municipal/county government are considerable and often invested in national banks without a strong local commitment to economic attainment. Other inducements including gap financing or loan guarantee programs may be necessary for banks to take more risk and should be examined with local banks and credit unions.

Action 2: Identify and increase use of new or non-traditional capital resources including Adirondack Foundation crowd funding, the Point Positive Fund, Start-Up New York, Historic Tax Credits, and New Market Tax Credits. Assist AEDC as a Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI) to address community development projects and targeted small business markets and provide gap financing for other financial institutions engaged in lending-local. Encourage expansion of services to develop a program where

local residents or second homeowners can loan the CDFI funds at a reduced interest rate that can be invested in loans to small businesses. Successful examples include the Common Capital in Massachusetts. See <http://www.common-capital.org/> and the Carrot Project which provides support and financing for small farms and agricultural enterprises. See <http://www.thecarrotproject.org/home>. This approach builds on successful community and Main Street revitalization efforts supported by various State programs.

Action 3: Drive the use of Start-Up NY by developing a Park-wide collaboration network and promote a public awareness of successful Park start-ups that emerge from these partnerships, perhaps including shared use of facilities between multiple higher education institutions to reduce capital costs, operations, and maintenance.

Action 4: Accelerate investment in the Adirondack Park and North Country businesses by expanding use of the Global NY Programs as a one-stop shop offering development funds, a lending program, small business grant fund, banking partnerships, and trade missions. Continue use of the Federal EB-5 Immigrant Investor Program to provide foreign investors with conditional visas that allow them and their families to live and work in the United States. To qualify for the visa, they must invest at least \$1 million in a new or recently created business or \$500,000 for businesses in rural or high-unemployment areas like the Park. Expand the North Country EB-5 Regional Center to expand opportunities into Adirondack Park communities. The Center, in partnership with CanAm Enterprises, currently targets investment opportunities in and around Plattsburgh in healthcare, transportation, aerospace, manufacturing and trade and technology.

Strategy 3: Assess and plan for military, public sector and larger nonprofit sector employment trends and develop outreach to encourage entrepreneurship among displaced workers.

Action 1: Work with North Country communities and higher education institutions to further entrepreneurship and small business training, technical assistance, and access to capital for military personnel at Fort Drum who are transitioning to civilian employment. The U.S. Small Business Administration’s “Operation Boots to Business” includes an intensive “business boot camp” and an eight week online course taught in partnership with Syracuse University. See <http://www.sba.gov/community/blogs/sba-announces-boots-business-reboot>. Through the State’s “Experience Counts” initiative, NY also offers tax credits for businesses that hire veterans and local municipal and sales tax rebates and credits. The State recently adopted an affirmative contracting goal of 6% to support service disabled veteran owned businesses, making entrepreneurship a more attractive path.

Action 2: Assist downsized public sector and major nonprofit educational and healthcare organization employees on a path to entrepreneurship and small business ownership through training, technical assistance, start-up capital and support.

Action 3: Take advantage of the North Country, Mohawk Valley and Capital Region Regional Economic Development Council (REDCs) success in securing State assistance for community projects by supporting minority, women and service disabled veteran business enterprises to start and certify new and existing businesses that can take advantage of affirmative contracting opportunities across the region and State-wide. The Adirondack Economic Development Corporation currently operates a Minority and Women Owned



Hamilton County, NY Department of Economic Development

K-12 curricula can ensure that an entrepreneurial culture begins early.

Business Enterprises (M/WBE) seminar series on these topics that could be replicated Park-wide.

Strategy 4: Stimulate a culture of lifelong learning and entrepreneurial skills.

Action 1: Spark a culture of entrepreneurship by integrating career preparation and entrepreneurial skill curricula into early life activities. School based programs like Junior Achievement, available in a handful of Park communities, can be tailored to local community issues and needs, and offer job shadowing and business mentoring. In Schoharie County students in the Community Entrepreneur Challenge replaced contracts with outside fundraising companies by negotiating agreements with local businesses. When multiple districts participate in shared programs children and youth from across the Park build networks

that bond them to their community and their peers. See http://www.entre-ed.org/_why/why.html.

Action 2: Support expansion of opportunities for free or affordable adult education through community programs at local schools, BOCES and area colleges. In addition to providing personal and workforce development, these programs can reinforce the community's attachment to the schools and mutual support among community members.

Action 3: Advance K-12 academic programs including those in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM), either in classroom or through after school or community programs so that they can plan careers with high technology companies coming to the North County.

Strategy 5: Step up collaborations with higher education institutions to prepare future workers and retain more of the region's college and graduate students already committed to the Park.

Action 1: Expand the efforts of local higher education institutions to educate and train future and current entrepreneurs and employees. Help them to collaborate with businesses in all sectors facing an aging workforce to address challenges of attracting and training the next generation of workers and ensuring that the skills of current workers are up to date. Survey existing companies about employment trends and retirement patterns and facilitate partnerships between industry groups, higher education and workforce development agencies to meet future business needs.

Action 2: Advance efforts to retain students from regional higher educational institutions after graduation. Develop additional

apprenticeship, internship and experiential learning offerings that expose students to local businesses, employers and community members. Support development of college exchange programs to attract high school and college students from across the nation and around the world to experience life in the Adirondacks. Work with higher education career offices to develop a stay local/work local entrepreneurship self-assessment tool. Provide them access to market research on community needs for businesses. Involve college business and economics students to help develop these profiles. Involve local companies in career fairs and post local job openings. Work with career centers to highlight local job opportunities. Involve the community, technical and four-year colleges and graduate programs in Park-wide business recruitment and marketing activities.

Strategy 6: Partner with economic development organizations to sponsor a Leadership Training Institute to support skill building and networking among the region's professionals.

Action 1: Work with the North Country chambers, other merchant organizations, the Adirondack Foundation, the Adirondack Nonprofit Network and other community development organizations to launch Leadership Adirondacks. This program would bring together motivated participants from the public, private and nonprofit sectors to learn about relevant business and social issues in the Adirondack Park and beyond through seminars with some of the Park's and the region's most accomplished leaders. Participants develop leadership abilities, entrepreneurial skills, team building capabilities, and establish a broad support network which increases their value to local businesses and the community.

GOAL TWO: Promote a sustainable and connected rural life with quality infrastructure and community amenities.

Ensure high quality communities and places that are attractive to people and businesses. Develop a model rural physical and telecommunications infrastructure to market products and deliver services globally.

Introduction

The Adirondack Park’s economy depends on having unique community appeal, rich assets and attractive, affordable and livable places. In the global marketplace, quality of place is now a primary site selection decision, trumping “location, location, location” in many sectors. The Park can offer the kind of live-work-play lifestyle that many younger entrepreneurs and workers seek. Research by the Pew Center for Civic Change confirms that many younger knowledge millennial workers are on a “back to basics” path – looking for a hometown with a slower pace where they can walk to the coffee shop and know their neighbor. But they also expect a diverse array of amenities and a high level of social connectedness. Both young families and seniors want parks, recreation, open space and scenic beauty, which are available in abundance. But they also want shops and coffee houses, sidewalks and libraries, excellent schools and safe neighborhoods, which requires reinvestment in Main Streets - making them both vibrant and accessible through careful hamlet design. Easy access to broadband and cellular, high quality community-based health services and excellent local schools are emerging challenges.

If the positive trends can be harnessed, and support for local capacity building can be provided, the Park communities will have resources to retain historic charm and scenic beauty while also investing

in the “place-making” that revitalizes hamlets and makes them accessible, age-friendly places. Branding efforts should promote the Park as a place to visit, but also a place to live and work. Local food and renewable energy - both growing sectors – can help the Park to be healthier, greener and more sustainable. Connecting people and facilitating partnerships between communities, businesses, nonprofits, higher education and volunteer groups that builds that civic capacity have been enhanced through recent planning initiatives including Adirondack Futures and Common Ground Alliance, the North Country Sustainability Plan, and many others supported by private funds as well as programs of New York State Departments of State and Environmental Conservation and through the REDC process. The character of the Adirondack life is an important part of the Park’s “economic brand identity” that may help to attract new residents. At the same time, many lifelong residents are losing ground, concerned that they cannot keep or buy an affordable home or find a living wage job – and their children are noticing, losing attachment to their communities and looking for an exit strategy. Building the capacity of local communities to equitably bridge that divide, while delivering essential community and emergency services is the heart of the Adirondack Park’s economic challenge.

A sustainable economy combines traditional economic development (concern for business development, capital formation and marketing) with community development (concern for transportation, housing, culture, recreation and design) behind an essential strategy of place-making. The availability, cost and ease of developing land, price of energy, access to transportation networks, raw materials and suppliers are still critical to many of the Park’s traditional industries and quality infrastructure can make or break those operations. The region needs a modern transportation system that can move goods,



Mark Hall

Footbridge in Wanakena.

especially into the middle of the Park. Given the large distances to be traveled, the condition of roads and bridges must be of consistently high quality. The physical infrastructure of roads, sidewalks, bridges and culverts must also be resilient, as companies cannot survive long business disruptions following extreme weather. Other modes of transportation are needed including “complete streets” for pedestrians and bicycle routes, loops and inter-community connections. There is still a need for ready-to-develop or ready-to-occupy space for value added operations and light industry, but Main Street storefronts must also be restored and environmental character and ecosystems must be protected. Challenges to reuse and retrofit older commercial buildings, especially lodging properties, must be addressed collaboratively between operators, communities and agencies. While the Park’s land use regulations may deter some companies, many new businesses value design guidelines and zoning that creates a quality place – recognizing that lower front-end costs may not be worth the long term risk that quality will not be maintained. Overall economic trends focusing on smaller value-based

companies instead of larger businesses can be accommodated in some hamlets. All businesses benefit from a modern, reliable, high speed communications infrastructure, but many new companies that are smaller, more decentralized and enable telework, simply will not locate in the heart of the Park until it is available. The push to extend broadband along the middle or “last mile” could not be more important to create new work and wealth, provide healthcare, train workers and maintain social connections.

Performance Measures

Success in meeting this goal can be measured by:

- Miles of broadband and growth in users.
- Continued population growth in some communities/counties.
- Declining rate of population loss in some communities/counties.
- Increase in young families.
- Elementary enrollment increase.
- Increase in volunteer first responders.
- Number/percent of 102 Park communities that invest in hamlet revitalization/value of revitalization projects.
- Number of communities with new land use plans.
- Main Street reinvestment (new Main Street businesses, number of buildings redeveloped, and number of infill buildings constructed).
- Value of spending on local transportation infrastructure.
- Number of alternate water and sewer systems in use.
- New housing units built.
- Number of affordable homes sold to young families.



Monica Ryan

Investing in public space enhancement supports restoration of the Park's hamlets.

Strategies and Actions

Strategy 1: Be happier and inspire community attachment and cohesion to reduce population loss.

Action 1: Be happier. That residents in the Park would “rather fight than win” is part legend, but part truth. Recent inquiries show a decrease in community cohesion or attachment among school children. If young families and children do not feel bonded to the Park, they will move somewhere where they do. Efforts to support young families, help visitors and welcome newcomers will help to stem and reverse population loss. Development of a “civic” curricula for elementary and middle school children that discusses the Adirondacks unique assets would foster greater appreciation and pride.

Action 2: Do everything possible to protect and preserve local schools, especially elementary schools which bond young families to each other and the community. Work to restore programs in art, music, theater and other school based enrichment programs threatened by school budget cuts, through after school activities and community programs. Educate residents without school age children about the importance of young families to overall safety and livability. Enrich school-based programs for community members of all ages. Encourage frequent reunions to bring graduates back to be inspired again by the majesty of the Park.

Strategy 2: Speed up extension of high-speed broadband and cellular coverage Park-wide.

Action 1: Continue aggressive efforts to wire the Park along the main corridors and “the last mile” extension to more rural areas. Give particular emphasis to reaching critical community services



Monica Ryan

The Park could encompass model “Age-Friendly” communities.

like emergency service providers, schools, libraries, health care providers and businesses. This is an essential bottom line requirement to stabilize population, retain and attract young families, encourage teleworking among year-round and second homeowners and grow local companies. Special focus should be on the extension of wireless hot spots at gateway buildings, welcome centers, or informational kiosks. This investment is particularly important (for residents and visitors) in preparation for, during and after extreme weather events to distribute emergency information including safe evacuation routes.

Strategy 3: Energize efforts Park-wide to restore hamlets as the heart of community life and centers for economic activity.

Action 1: Undertake a Park-wide assessment of the condition and utilization of existing hamlets and encourage development of hamlet revitalization plans, where appropriate, to encourage infill development, adaptive reuse, and overall revitalization. Build community capacity to manage revitalization.

Action 2: Invest heavily in placemaking in hamlets Park-wide, especially those along designated Trail Town routes. This investment should include public space enhancement, façade improvement programs, commercial building rehabilitation or adaptive reuse of existing underutilized buildings, small and micro business assistance, streetscaping, and selective demolition and infill of vacant properties. As part of this effort, develop a comprehensive set of Adirondack Hamlet Design Guidelines for new development, rehabilitation, and streetscape improvements based on best practices, existing locally adopted standards, and the Hamlets 3 Strategy, as applicable. Educate business about the return on investment from these improvements.



Lake Placid Regional Office of Sustainable Tourism

Promote access to waterfronts.

Action 3: Plan for the accessibility needs of an aging population and visitor base to public facilities and expanded access for mobility impaired residents and visitors to the Park’s recreational and environmental assets, consistent with smart growth principles. Embrace the Park’s aging population and become model “Age-Friendly” communities.

Strategy 4: Make progress advancing available affordable family and senior housing, especially in the Park’s smaller communities.

Action 1: Expand the supply of affordable rental housing for year-round renters through rehabilitation and properly scaled new construction. Many units are held off the market for part of the year and made available to visitors, making it challenging for young workers to find housing they can afford. Look for opportunities to integrate locally sourced materials, renewable energy sources and technology into these projects.

Action 2: Encourage “Inherit the Adirondacks,” a program to pair older homeowners who wish to age in the community with prequalified local families looking to buy a home. As seniors make the decision to downsize, an incentive package could be developed by housing organizations working with financial institutions to turnover property to young families. A general first time homebuyer incentives using State grants to close the affordability gap should also be developed to help young families and address competition with second homeowners for available property.

Action 3: Enable residents to age in place in their community. As the Adirondack population continues to age this need will increase dramatically in some communities. Efforts to encourage turnover



Monica Ryan

Expand the supply of affordable housing throughout the Park.

in housing necessary for “Inherit the Adirondacks” to succeed and to meet other needs depends on a healthy supply of senior housing at all price points. Carefully planned adaptive reuse of hamlet structures or new construction preserves the intergenerational relationships that bond them to each other and the place they call home. Consider modeling the use of Adirondack Cottages that are built locally and use locally sourced materials.

Action 4: Increase affordable housing opportunities within the Park by allowing an increased density for housing on lands appropriate for development, not presently classified as hamlet in the Adirondack Park Land Use and Development Plan, by increasing the permitted dwelling unit density. This may be particularly important in creating safe housing for communities built adjacent to lakes and streams susceptible to repeated flooding and the realities of climate change.



A regionally integrated health care delivery system would focus on preventative care.

Strategy 5: Expedite development of a state-of-the art rural health care system.

Action 1: Implement the findings of the North County Health Redesign Commission Study which calls for development of a regionally integrated health care delivery system with a strong focus on preventative and primary care (integrating behavioral health), expanding telehealth services, and expanding primary care training programs. While the Commission does not recommend the closure or merger of any specific facilities, including hospitals, they report that decline of the acute care sector is already taking place and can be expected to accelerate. Promote the expansion and creation of services and business that enrich the health and wellness of local residents and visitors as part of the tourism effort to “Prescribe the Adirondacks.” (See goal 4)



Monica Ryan

Strategy 6: Maintain and improve local roads, bridges, stormwater and other facilities to the highest possible standard for a rural region.

Action 1: Invest in local infrastructure, including roads and bridges at the highest possible standard and increase the quality and resiliency of these facilities in today’s changing climate. Distance and scale in the Park will always be a challenge, but if the existing infrastructure is as good as it can possibly be, people who desire the lifestyle will pay the premium to deliver goods and services. Development of a Park-wide fund or dedicated revenue stream, perhaps through a voluntary visitor user fee, could be used to complete infrastructure upgrades.



Adirondack Regional Tourism Council

A modern transportation network is necessary to move goods throughout the Park.

Action 2: Retrofit “complete streets” as part of hamlet placemaking and provide safe and accessible access to travel ways that accommodate multiple modes and give priority to pedestrians and bicyclists. Develop multi modal connections between hamlets. For example, the High Peaks Waterfront Revitalization Plan (2011) provided a framework for achieving a regional vision and goals for managing local resources for hamlets located along the Ausable River and the year-round recreational attractions located in the region.

Action 3: Support NYS DOT efforts to evaluate transportation corridors Statewide and as part of the Unit Management Plan process in the Adirondack Park.

Action 4: Work with New York State to amend Article XIV of the New York State Constitution to allow infrastructure such as utilities lines, cables and pipes for common utilities to be placed under and along roads that pass through the Forest Preserve.

Strategy 7: Expand access to water and wastewater management at the community level, especially in designated hamlets.

Action 1: Evaluate and pilot alternate wastewater treatment systems that are safe for the environment and affordable to the community/municipality. The lack of sewer and water infrastructure in many communities is affecting hamlet revitalization and sustainable hamlet expansion, especially for retrofit of small lodging establishments.



Monica Ryan

"Complete Streets" will accommodate multiple modes of travel.

Strategy 8: Improve local municipal capacity to plan, finance and implement important infrastructure improvements, building on many successful pilot programs.

Action 1: Support a community development circuit rider program to expand community capacity to manage infrastructure projects. The Park's many small communities have identified infrastructure and other community projects that can help to retain residents to age-in-place, attract young families, define livable places and support small businesses. Their lack of staff and financial capacity limits their ability to apply for and administer State and Federally funded projects, especially for expensive and multi-phased infrastructure investments. Access to staff support at a County and regional level is also needed so that communities are not left behind. This initiative would need stable, multi-year funding for multiple staff.



Monica Ryan

Invest in local infrastructure to the highest standard possible for a rural region.

Action 2: Create a bridge financing program for small communities to participate in State and Federal grant and loan programs. The structure of most State and Federal grants requires that municipalities pay for improvements and wait to be reimbursed. This is a major obstacle for the poorest communities with the greatest need since they lack local resources. Working with local financial organizations and foundations to capitalize this bridge financing pool or loan guarantee program should be a priority.

Action 3: Advocate for adjustment of State Education funding formula to reflect rural land uses. The current formula penalizes Park communities by putting high value on waterfront and second home property, despite overall low incomes.

Strategy 9: Recognize and support the role of nonprofit organizations as a significant economic engine.

Action 1: Support the recommendations of the Adirondack North Country Summit and Economic Impact study completed by the Adirondack Nonprofit Network.

Action 2: Recognize the growing role private philanthropy plays in advancing quality of life measures. Support and promote initiatives like the Adirondack Foundation Trust Donor Advised Funds and crowd funding platform, North County Community foundation, and other philanthropic efforts.

Strategy 10: Support and attract first responders Park-wide.

Action 1: Employ all available incentives to encourage volunteer first responders to serve. Communities may offer a number of property tax exemptions, length of service awards programs, and even municipal benefits including life insurance, access to various employee assistance programs, or reimbursement for mileage/fuel. Higher education institutions can offer tuition assistance. Advocate for local training classes to reduce the cost, travel expense and work time lost for first responders to become certified.

Strategy 11: Expand sites for compatible development and redevelop idled, vacant and underused properties in locations Park-wide.

Action 1: Expand the number of appropriate and available sites that are properly permitted for light manufacturing or other small commercial uses.



Mark Hall

Redevelopment of idle, vacant, underused, sites will put them back into productive use.

Action 2: Inventory and assess vacant, underutilized and idled properties (including potential brownfield sites) and pursue all available State and Federal resources to put the sites back into productive use.

GOAL THREE: Reinvent traditional industry across the working landscapes in forest products, natural resources and agriculture.

Accelerate growth in the Adirondack Park’s traditional business base in forest products, natural resource products and agriculture.

Introduction

The Adirondack Park has a rich history in businesses related to forest products, natural resources and farming. Across the Park current land uses reflect a conservation ethic and practice of environmental stewardship. But increases in regulation and deteriorating infrastructure along with expectations for “just in time delivery” are challenges to these and other traditional industries. Research from the Northern Forest Center reports that its multi-State region spends over \$6.0 billion on imported oil, sending \$0.78 cents on the dollar out of the region. The emergence of new wood products including chips and pellets as a source of bio-sustainable thermal energy, and the ongoing development of grass biomass on regional farmland, can reenergize the sectors creating new products, expanding the supply chain and identity for New York’s Forest Preserve. While millions of acres of forested lands remain in the Park, and timber harvesting continues to be an important industry, large wood product manufacturers are generally located outside of the Park boundary, and those small and micro businesses remaining are trying to modernize and position themselves to add value to their products.

Recent conservation easement purchases have kept productive forests working. Strategic partnerships with industry groups have been positive, offering technical assistance and sharing the best practices from work in the other Northeastern Forest States of Vermont, New

Hampshire and Maine. More hands on business-to-business training, and further demonstration of high efficiency automated wood pellet boilers through the Model Neighborhood Development program included in the North Country Sustainability Plan and other efforts are needed. Commercialization of this technology and incentivizing its use for business, institutional and residential use, at the same scale as solar, is a critical public policy advocacy issue for the Park that will be advanced through the recently announced Renewable New York initiative.

The opportunity to develop a “build local” culture – to make and market sustainable products from locally sourced materials is a significant opportunity and the region should embrace a package of marketing commitments, incentives and credits to use locally sourced and sustainable materials and building products as part of an Adirondack “Build Green” initiative. States like Vermont are incentivizing using local materials in contracting for building projects. As the Park continues its placemaking improvements and lodging retrofits, the use of locally sourced materials could take center stage. Greater interest in healthy eating, local food and the “farm to table” movement is creating more awareness of and a local bond to the Park’s farmers. New opportunities to market and brand its products through “Adirondack Harvest” and “Taste NY” are being pursued. Examination of the State Land Master Plan and other planning approaches including sub-regional of “complex planning” being pursued by NYS DEC would allow for evaluation of whether new sustainable uses for natural materials and the better connection of working landscapes and community linkages for commerce and recreation can be created.



Northern Forest Center

Support the wood products manufacturing sector and forest product businesses.



Monica Ryan

The Park's farmers can take advantage of the strong farm-to-table movement.

Performance Measures

Success in meeting this goal can be measured by:

- Reduction of energy dollars leaving the Park to pay for imported fuel sources.
- Sales of high efficiency pulp and pellet equipment.
- Number of homes, businesses, municipalities, and organizations using biomass or photovoltaic energy sources/systems for heating.
- Increase in non-grid tied energy produced.
- Passage of community net-metering legislation.
- Completion of sub-regional plans for all identified complexes.
- Decrease of forest preserve fragmentation due to lack of coordinated planning.
- Number of intergenerational farm successions.
- Number of Adirondack brand businesses and products.
- Development of local food production and processing businesses.
- Number of larger regional institutions buying local food.
- Number of farmers markets and the value of sales at farmers markets.

Strategies and Actions

Strategy 1: Protect the Region's natural environment as a key economic asset.

Action 1: Use local land use planning tools to conserve and promote waterfront areas for public access. Research has shown that safe and resilient public access to waterways as parkland, for active recreation, and as locations for small lodging, is critical to future economic prosperity.

Action 2: As part of proposed circuit rider program to support hamlet revitalization and small business development and expansion, provide planning support to communities interested in updating or developing local land use plans and zoning. This program could also be provided through enhanced County Planning Department staffing, or partnerships with non-governmental organizations.

Action 3: Continue to conserve and protect the Park's most sensitive environmental and Forest Preserve resources and support the stewardship, conservation, and sustainable use of its natural capital. Encourage communities and stakeholders to participate in ongoing evaluation of the State Land Master Plan and other regulations, and to adopt local land use strategies that preserve the integrity of the Park's natural resources. To the greatest extent possible, develop regulations that reflect a park that allows for modern forms of recreation, like mountain biking, for example. Given local trends toward an aging population and expanding baby boomer visitor needs, providing the fullest physical accessibility to the State's resources that is possible will continue to be a central issue.

Action 4: In an effort to promote linkages between State land use management goals and local land use and economic development goals, the NYS DEC has defined a series of sub-regional or complex master planning areas. It is critical that local stakeholders are involved in this planning to ensure coordination with existing and emerging community and multi-municipal plans, maximize inter-connectivity within and beyond the Forest Preserve units through trails, and expand access for modes of recreation that are more accessible to aging residents and visitors, as appropriate.

Action 5: Water and habitat quality is essential to the Park's economy in many communities. Continue assertive efforts to eradicate the more than 50 invasive aquatic and terrestrial species through education, management and access to facilities to clean watercraft and gear.

Strategy 2: Spark a "build local" mentality especially in natural resources, forest products, and sustainable building materials.

Action 1: Establish an Adirondack Green Building Fund/Designation to promote the design, manufacturing and use of sustainable and locally sourced materials and "second-use" of repurposed architectural features and other materials.

Action 2: Consider development of a Made in the Adirondacks Tax Credit/Support Program focused on sustainable building products and the promotion of local agricultural products. This incentive should be streamlined to be accessible to small businesses with limited time and capacity.

Action 3: Incentivize the use of local materials in grant programs that include capital construction including visitor centers, park improvements, main street revitalization and affordable housing, among others.

Action 4: Utilize local natural materials including aggregates and native plants in community hazard mitigation projects to help manage emerging climate change threats and become more resilient.

Strategy 3: Advance commercialization and use of alternate energy sources, especially biofuel and specifically wood pellet/chip boilers for residential and commercial heating sources.

Action 1: Advance the proposal to New York State for tax rebates of \$5,000 or 30% of the cost to homeowner’s purchasing high efficiency automated wood pellet boilers (from manufacturers meeting established standards.) Advocate at the Federal level to companion the recently announced State rebates with Federal tax credits to homeowners, businesses and institutions installing systems that are equivalent to wind and solar installations.

Action 2: Pilot projects such as the Northern Forest Center’s Model Neighborhood Demonstration Project in businesses, institutions and residences to demonstrate the use of wood pellets for thermal energy use.

Action 3: Pursue resources for public and private sources to invest in market demand and development for chips, wood pellets and boiler manufacturing associated with biomass heating projects. Advocate with New York State to dedicate dollars for advanced research into thermal energy practices and products.

Action 4: Build on regional success in solar and small hydroelectric energy production by creating a regional smart grid and advocating New York State approval of legislation to allow community net metering, letting multiple homeowners share the same metering system and output from a single facility that is not physically connected to their property.



Monica Ryan

The Park can create a regional smart grid that builds on success with solar energy.



Monica Ryan

Logging road on easement lands.

Strategy 4: Support small businesses in the wood products manufacturing sector.

Action 1: Provide direct support to forest product businesses through industry specific business development, technical assistance, seed capital, and workforce training, and identifying collaborations for a “build local” campaign. Video or webcast delivery is a possibility when broadband is more accessible. In the short term, in person, business by business technical assistance may be necessary, possibly through a circuit rider approach.

Action 2: Invest across the entire wood products value chain including low to high grade wood to ensure the long term economics of harvesting. Partner with existing organizations representing the wood products industry in the North Country and New York State to market and distribute forest products. For example, in the mid-1980s a collaborative effort emerged from small sawmills in the Adirondacks through the promotion and design of a kit-home called the Northlander. This generated a lot of attention and sparked interest in building affordable homes and camps with locally-sawn lumber.

Strategy 5: Scale up support for existing farmers and nurture new farmers Park-wide.

Action 1: Support the work of Cornell Cooperative Extension, ANCA’s Locally Grown Initiative and Paul Smiths Adirondack Center for Working Landscapes to provide individualized technical assistance, mentoring and business planning support to agricultural enterprises and help build a local and regional distribution system for Adirondack grown food. This supports access to local foods, improved nutrition and the strong “farm to table” movement.



Monica Ryan

Strategic partnerships are needed to connect local producers with metro markets.

Action 2: Expand the availability of production and processing facilities in the Park. These facilities are particularly important to clean and portion products for larger institutional users like schools, hospitals and correction facilities.

Action 3: Help to forge new strategic partnerships between local producers, especially niche or micro farmers, and second homeowners with connections to metro markets for food suppliers, restaurants or producers.

Action 4: Continue to pursue market-based incentives like certification programs and branding through Adirondack Harvest and integration with Taste NY. Explore opportunities to export Adirondack grown products as part of Global NY.

GOAL FOUR: Advance the Park as a World Class Destination

Advance tourism as a dominant year-round economic driver. Modernize and expand lodging to expand the impact among more communities. Link sports recreation with other amenity trails creating an expanded definition of “Adirondack recreation” that will appeal to a wider audience.

Introduction

While most economic sectors are measured by “return on investment,” the tourism sector is measured, as much or more, by what the Urban Land Institute calls “return on perception” - where all of the little things (politeness, convenience, design, scent and sound) as well as the big things (scenic beauty, environmental quality, standards of development and sense of stewardship) matter a great deal. Trends show that visitation, especially among geotourists and Canadians, is increasing and the Park is reaching new markets, though more urban visitors have yet to discover it in large numbers. Enhanced recreation and amenity tourism is likely the best catalyst to improve local economies and expand access to local goods and services for the foreseeable future. These businesses will ultimately improve life for local residents and attract new residents. Seasonality of tourism remains a challenge in the winter; winter recreation and year round cultural attractions and entertainment are underperforming opportunities.

The Adirondack’s reputation as an outdoor recreation destination is well known, and its lodging, shopping, and entertainment in hub communities like Lake Placid, Lake George, and increasingly in Saranac Lake, are well regarded. The Adirondack Recreation Strategy and the recently launched Adirondack Web Portal have centralized

information about sport recreation opportunities and could integrate other amenities and cultural offerings. Recent evaluation of lodging opportunities outside of the hub areas identified market support for a wider array of offerings and upgrades as well as existing smaller establishments that create new opportunities for existing businesses and hospitality entrepreneurs catering to younger millennial visitors who will begin to flood the market in the next few years. A recent study found that over 80% of trail users take only “day trips.” These visitors represent a large potential market for overnight stays if diverse, accessible and affordable lodging is made available.

Strategic partnerships are possible – recent research points to opportunities for cultural organizations like the Adirondack Museum to partner with niche lodging operators to make Blue Mountain Lake a destination for overnight visitors. The Park’s identity as a premier outdoor recreation destination dwarfs its other amenities, and a new system of Adirondack Trail Towns that builds on many community led initiatives is proposed to link recreation and other thematic trails that promote the Park’s artistic, cultural, entertainment, culinary, natural ecological and other resources. Community led initiatives include the First Wilderness Heritage Corridor Master Plan and Implementation (1999), which outlines an action plan by which local community, recreational, cultural and historic resources can be coordinated to encourage the creation of a fully integrated tourist promotion effort along the Northern Hudson Corridor. Since the original plan development, many projects have been completed to enhance the recreational and heritage tourism experience in that region of the Adirondacks. In addition, the 90 Miler Trail Blueway Strategy (2012) and The Raquette River Blueway Trail Plan (2010) both provide recommendations, projects, and improvements to enhance access and services along each Blueway.

This comprehensive network will connect smaller communities, stretching investment and revenue beyond the established centers, capturing a broader range of visitors, and providing for multi-interest trip planning among families and travel groups of all ages and abilities.

Performance Measures

Success in meeting this goal can be measured by:

- Visitor count.
- Millennial visitor count.
- Trail Towns communities designated.
- Businesses certified as Trail Town partners.
- Number of new tourism businesses in operation for at least 3 years (sustainability).
- Fewer storefront vacancies/higher occupancy rates/adaptive reuse of underutilized vacant buildings.
- Less seasonal fluctuation of business evidenced by more balanced quarterly taxes.
- Increased number of lodging rooms.
- Increase in number of year round residents.
- Tourism-related sales tax and bed tax revenue generated.

Strategies and Actions:

Strategy 1: Energize support, finance and implement an Adirondack Trail Towns Initiative. (See insert on page 56)

Action 1: Develop, refine and implement the Adirondack Trail Towns Initiative strengthening visitor amenities across the Park and addressing entertainment and recreation related to the arts, culture, historic preservation, hamlet revitalization, local food and agriculture and many other interests. Build on other strategies to reinforce the connection between the Park's tourism economy, natural environment and forest and agrarian heritage. This program builds on, creates linkages between, and unifies a number of successful existing community initiatives.

Action 2: At the Park-wide and regional level, identify a lead organization to administer the initiative, convene key organizations and agencies, integrate existing municipal revitalization efforts and plans, develop a business plan, identify themes, identify funding, and further assess market information. At the local level, identify a Trail Towns organizational structure through local level communities and merchant groups, as a point of contact for any regional certification process and tailored marketing strategy to local assets.

Action 3: Create support for Trail Town's network design and support infrastructure including completing a Park-wide inventory, assessing existing and planned trails, and developing a Park-wide map of the trail network (both recreation and amenity trails). The regional lead could also produce design and signage guidelines that can be adapted at local level.

KEY STRATEGY: Adirondack Trail Towns Initiative



The proposed Adirondack Trail Town strategy utilizes a newly emerging asset-based regional economic development structure designed to link visitors to local communities utilizing both physical and thematic trails.

The Trail Town strategy brings together many aspects of this Economic Development Strategy including: regionalism, hamlet revitalization, small business development, tourism infrastructure enhancements (particularly lodging), and capitalizing on existing natural, recreational and cultural assets and efforts.

Based on a concept first developed by the Allegheny Trail Alliance in the early 2000s (see text box) connecting communities to a regional trail known as the Great Allegheny Passage, the trail town concept emerged as a natural strategy to capitalize on the growing interest in recreational tourism through targeted investment in communities adjacent to trails and recreational resources. While “Trail Towns” have thus far followed a specific physical trail, the Adirondack Trail Town concept also invests in thematic trails,

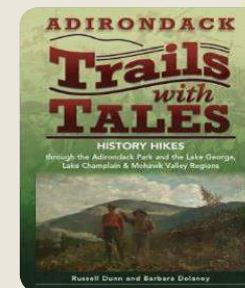
which form trails out of connections between dispersed amenities.

The goal is to build on existing recreational trails such as snowmobile and cycling routes, water trails, and localized hiking trails while overlaying the thematic trails such as arts and culture, heritage, food and drink and lesser known recreation to highlight the interconnectedness and usability of the park wide trails system. For example, The Adirondack Coast Wine Trail, a portion of which is within the Adirondacks, connects six wineries near Cumberland Bay. This “trail” is a recommended route that cyclists can take along quiet roads but is not a traditional, physical trail in itself. Culinary tourism in particular has seen an increase. In 2007, 17% of U.S. leisure travelers participated in culinary or wine related activities while traveling.

By offering a variety of attractions, Adirondack Park communities can introduce new activities to its visitors and encourage longer and recurring visits. “Gateway activities” such as fishing, bicycling, and hiking, often lead to participation in other outdoor activities. By identifying different types of “trails” more

Complements ongoing community and regional efforts, including:

- Local Main Street and Waterfront Revitalization Strategies, Comprehensive Plans, Tourism Development Strategies, Small Business Development Programs.
- Raquette River Corridor Blueway Trail Plan Recreation Map.
- Route 28 Corridor Revitalization Strategy.
- First Wilderness Plan.
- Northern Forest Canoe Trail.
- NYS Scenic Byways.
- NYS Path through History.



A “how-to” guide for Kentucky Trail Towns.

PICK YOUR INTEREST AND YOU'RE ON YOUR WAY



Art & Photography



Wine, Beer, & Spirits



One-of-a-Kind Trail

TRAILS FOR ALL

Heritage, architecture, birding, nature, water, hiking, bicycling, and more...

NATURE/ECO TRAIL

- Scenic Byways
- Geology
- Wildlife
- Ecology
- Environment
- Geotravelers
- Caving
- Birding
- Berries
- Environmental Education

HERITAGE TRAILS

- Adirondack History
- Historic Preservation
- Great Camps
- Folk School
- Mining
- Rail

ART & CULTURE

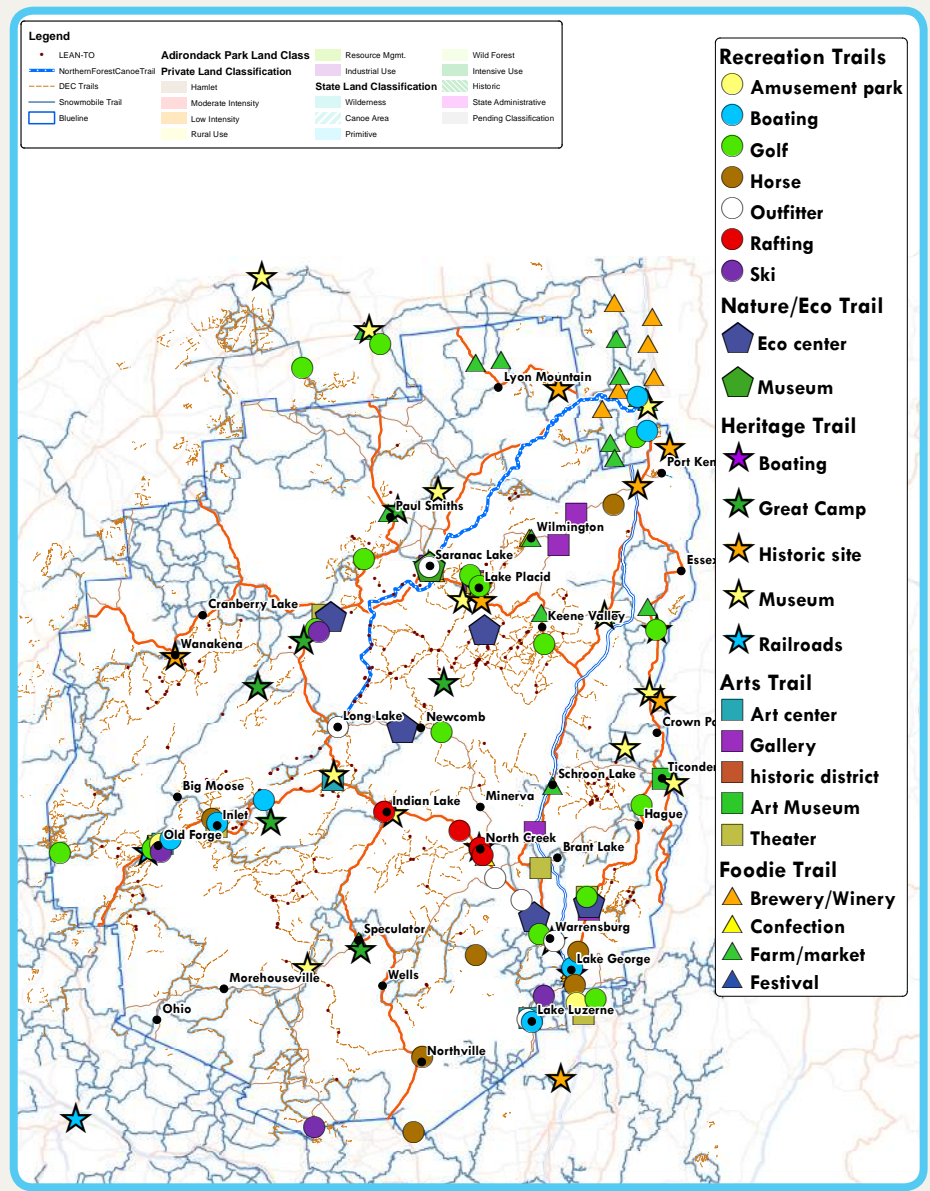
- Photography
- Museums
- Galleries
- Painting
- Musical Performance
- Theater
- Writing
- Movies

FOODIE: TASTE THE ADIRONDACKS

- Restaurants
- Artisan Foods
- Farm Stands/Markets
- Breweries
- Vineyards
- Distillers
- Culinary Education
- Agriculture

RECREATION

- Fire Towers
- Hiking
- Snowmobiling
- Equestrian
- Blue/Canoe/kayak
- Hunting
- Fishing
- Ice Boating
- Cycle the Adirondacks



Sample of layered trails.



A Resource for
Businesses along the
Great Allegheny Passage

Model for Success: Great Allegheny Passage Trail Town Program

First developed into an established program in the early 2000s by the Allegheny Trail Alliance (ATA), with funding from Pennsylvania’s Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, and planning and fundraising help from a private investor, The Progress Fund.

The trail is a 150 mile rail-trail from Pittsburgh, PA to Cumberland, MD, connecting in Cumberland to the C&O Canal Towpath another 184.5 miles to Washington, DC.

Trail communities have experienced success in town redevelopment efforts and investments to businesses catering to trail users.

- Between 2007 and 2012, 49 new businesses opened in towns along the trail.
- 17 businesses expanded their operations.
- A “GAP Trail Town Certified Business Network” was created.

communities will see increased visitation whether as a destination or because they are along a trail “route” and will be able to capitalize on the larger scale marketing and promotion under the Trail Towns umbrella.

Regional Marketing and Cross Promotion

Communities linked by a trail or common recreational resource can work together to encourage visitation to multiple communities within a region. Investment and promotion of complimentary amenities can encourage visitors to expand the geographic scope of their trip. Communities that participate in a Trail Town program or other collaborative marketing strategy make it easy for visitors to plan multi-day trips by offering customized itineraries, easy to access information, and specific amenities and incentives for trail users. This can most easily be done by expanding on the existing Adirondack Web Portal to create a single united web presence that promotes all of the assets and visitor resources available in the Park.



State event establishing Livingston, KY as a Trail Town.

Small Business Support and Hamlet Revitalization

By equipping communities and businesses with tools to maximize the economic potential of the trail or other assets, the Trail Town program helps eligible communities retain, expand, and increase revenues of existing businesses and recruit sustainable new businesses through a four point strategic approach. This approach stems from the nationally recognized Main Street Program and is adapted to the unique nature of the Park and is connected to the considerable depth of human capital that already exists.

The key elements of the Main Street model include:

CAPACITY – A dedicated group to facilitate collective action by Trail Town communities to create a world class tourism destination.

DESIGN – Continue existing efforts to enhance town centers and improve trail infrastructure through streetscape improvements, design guidelines for building and site development.



New Trail Town business on the Great Allegheny Passage.

ECONOMIC RESTRUCTURING AND INVESTMENT

– Identifying a regional financial partnership to develop new investment opportunities.

PROMOTION – Establishing a strong Trail Town identity that communities can utilize in their individual promotion efforts.



New amenities for trail users.

ADK Trail Town Program Opportunities

- Provide a common marketing program that can be utilized by all communities creating efficiencies for reaching a larger audience.
- Provide information about communities and their services during trip planning.
- Provide resources desirable to various types of trail users.
- Provide transportation connections from trails to downtowns or hamlets.
- Strengthen current focus on recreation tourism assets and infrastructure.
- Develop appreciation for the region’s non-recreation assets.

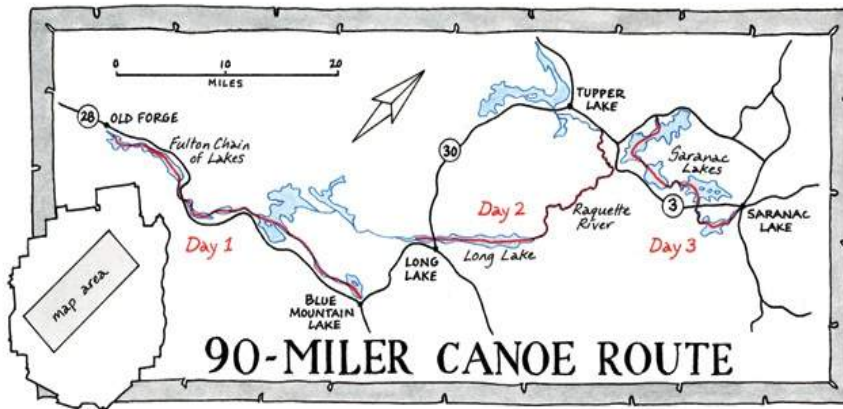
Key Components of a Trail Town Program

PROMOTION

- Establish a unified Trail Town image.
- Market trail towns as a collective group.
- Organize Trail Town events.
- Work with the business community to offer Trail Town promotions.
- Develop strategy to attract and improve lodging infrastructure promoting ADK Trail Towns.
- Provide connections between trails and town centers.
- Offer amenities for trail users (bicycle repair, wireless internet, public restrooms, medical services, restaurants open at times desired by visitors).

ORGANIZATION

- Identify lead organization for managing the Trail Towns program development.
- Include municipal representation.
- Hold regular meetings in dedicated meeting space.
- Include representation from business and nonprofit sectors.
- Maintain strong local volunteer group.
- Focus on financial investment opportunities.



Blueways are small routes that combine recreation and environmental awareness.

Action 4: Develop local community and business Trail Town’s Business Network certification programs and provide technical assistance to local merchants through ongoing small business support initiatives and specialized training programs.

Action 5: Develop regional marketing strategy including graphic branding (logo) and identity, and information and communication materials. Integrate the initiative into sponsored events. Integrate existing branding into this process and ensure consistency with sector based branding including “Taste of New York” for example.

Action 6: Consider development of a Trail Towns Merchant Funded Rewards Card to promote Trail Town’s merchants and services and incentivize local spending.

Strategy 2: Promote and incentivize the reuse, retrofit, and expansion of traditional lodging properties through a multi-pronged approach. (See insert on page 62)

Action 1: Continue to encourage retrofit and reasonable expansion of local lodging properties. Support efforts to increase room size in some motel and cabin offerings outside of high capacity hubs. Ensure that local land use regulations support these uses. These immediately accessible rooms appeal to older residents and families with larger recreation gear, especially mountain bikes.

Action 2: Identify high potential/high need lodging communities that are interested in promoting their assets and invest heavily in place making, especially forging strong linkages to waterways and restored/expanded local lodging properties. Assist communities to complete the North Country REDC Tourism Destination Workbook to commence this self-assessment process.

Action 3: Create and finance an Accommodations Upgrade Grants Program and technical assistance program focused on enhancing the appeal, amenities and services for visitors in existing lodging establishments in smaller communities. Develop illustrative standards for hoteliers to attract target market segments. Work with hoteliers to develop quality measures and recognize top performers. Create targeted financial incentives, especially for hospitality microenterprises, focusing on those establishments that place a premium on offering family sustaining wages.

Action 4: Create a web-based accommodations opportunities information resource to connect potential hospitality entrepreneurs with local owners considering sale.



Monica Ryan

Gas stations in the Park can serve as welcoming, front line ‘tourism ambassadors.’

Action 5: Educate communities and hoteliers about the changing trends and interests of the emerging visitor “bubble” – the Generation Y or millennial visitor. Expand the Park’s marketing into communities of color in targeted metro areas.

Action 6: Support existing hospitality clusters in the tourism hubs of Lake Placid, Lake George and Saranac Lake and the emerging resort in Tupper Lake.

Strategy 3: Implement a tourism ambassador program and make a great first impression.

Action 1: Develop a tourism ambassador program. Work with gateway businesses at each hamlet to be designated as a formal welcome destination. In some communities these are Stewart’s

shops or other convenience/gas stations, in others they may be a restaurant. Provide training to front line ambassadors for the Park at these establishments. Include cashiers, front desk lodging staff, bartenders and restaurant servers, taxi drivers and others who come into contact with visitors early in their stay. Provide training to tourism related businesses and their staff in visitor profiles such as recreational visitor, geotourist, and Canadian visitor to better meet their needs.

Action 2: Help businesses understand the value of “place” to visitors. Through training, events and support, deepen the appreciation for the Park’s character, resources and traditional economic heritage among residents and business owners, especially front line staff. Provide online and in person training about the Park’s traditional industries through programs like Northern Forest Center’s “Ways of the Woods” and integrate this history into Trail Town’s program and other tourism marketing ventures.

Strategy 4: Diversify the types of lodging available Park-wide.

Action 1: Whether it is “hut to hut,” “inn to inn,” or “glamping,” new forms of accommodation should be explored to meet the interests of geotourists. For example, a “hut to hut” system is being proposed that will connect communities in the front country with a back woods experience. The project would inventory, route, and prioritize self-powered multi-use trails (existing or to-be-built) with existing and proposed backcountry huts. Trails will be routed through towns and villages, beginning and ending in hamlets, and ultimately connect the segments in a Park-wide system. Lodging in the backcountry that can be reserved would offer a sleeping arrangement that is not on the ground, and keeps travelers warm, dry, and free from insects would appeal to more users, including

KEY STRATEGY: Enhancing Lodging Opportunities in the Adirondacks

The Adirondacks have been a destination for adventure sport enthusiasts for generations, alongside those interested in more “gentle” outdoor pursuits and touring the Park’s natural and cultural resources. High adventure visitors do not necessarily require luxury lodging when they travel, but do seek out modern accommodations that offer the amenities that support their recreational pursuits, e.g., bike racks, ski storage, and larger rooms to accommodate gear. Those interested in less intensive outdoor pursuits (e.g., families with small children and older visitors) are more likely to seek out “creature comforts” and convenient amenities including bicycle or canoe/kayak rentals onsite, that provide for participation without a long term investment.

This Economic Strategy focuses on improving the quality of accommodations through retrofit of existing small sites and new investment in larger scale establishments outside of present “hub” communities such

as Lake Placid and Lake George. The lack of modern lodging in many small communities across the Park drives visitors to the branded hotels in hub communities, limiting visits to small communities to day trips which offers less opportunity for economic spinoff in smaller Park towns and villages. Offering more decentralized lodging that is interesting to new visitors is a way to better integrate small communities into the tourism landscape.

Geotourism is a growing trend well suited to the Adirondacks. Geotourists visit a place in order to understand or enjoy its character, environment, culture, aesthetics, and heritage and have new experiences. They are interested in nature and ecology, historic preservation, art, music, performance, local food and beverages and getting to know places with the help of local residents. In the Park geotourists seek out unique accommodations and amenities that align with the authentic Adirondack character of that area.

National Lodging Trends

- Continued **growth and investment** in the hotel industry.
- Millennial or Generation Y (currently aged between 18 and 33 years) will bring significantly **higher spending** in the next 5 to 10 years.
- New Hospitality brands focus on **unique experiences** and growing interest in **geotourism**:
 - Visitors look to authentically experience and learn rather than observe;
 - Have strong “buy local” mentality, especially local food;
 - Prefer independent establishments over franchises; and
 - Want accommodations that are comfortable AND novel or authentic.
- **Inn-to-Inn programs** are particularly successful in areas like the Adirondack Park.
- Emerging camping trends: require **amenity upgrades** such as cell service, “glamping,” inn-to-inn programs and “hut-to-hut” back country camping.



Example of an ADK style temporary or mobile cottage.



New shower facilities at Moffitt Beach Campground.

Criteria for ADK Communities with Highest Potential for Retrofit and New Hamlet Scale Lodging:

- Strong sense of place with high scenic beauty, ideally a waterfront setting with pleasant hamlet center;
- Concentrated number of assets/anchors appealing to geotourists/recreation tourists;
- Pleasant “Main Street” and/or concentrated “hamlet center;”
- Existing accommodations in good locations that can be upgraded and expanded;
- Opportunities for economies of scale through operation of several accommodations properties in the same or nearby communities; and
- Synergistic tourism, infrastructure, beautification projects planned, in development or underway.

Regional Strategies for Enhancing Lodging Opportunities

Identify high potential/high need communities and invest in place-making – A critical mass of new investment in a concentrated geographic area is needed to improve its attractiveness for accommodations investment and lower the risk for potential investors. Investments in lodging in any community should occur in tandem with other place-making investments to improve opportunities for overall economic success.

Create an accommodations upgrade grants program focused on enhancing the appeal, amenities and services for recreation tourists and geotourists. Target improvements and upgrades to existing accommodations to provide amenities (secure bike and canoe storage, rentals, repair, information/mapping resources). Catering to specific recreation market users can improve the attractiveness of these accommodations and the branding of the region as a destination for these activities.

Review and update current land management policies to reduce barriers to entry for appropriate accommodations projects (new and expansion) in the Adirondacks. Help communities to prepare local land use strategies that identify high value target properties and provide assistance to those projects using affordable and safe alternate water and wastewater systems.

Create targeted financial incentives to lower barriers to entry for new accommodations projects and improve opportunities for hospitality entrepreneurs, particularly microenterprises, to access working capital. Educate local financial institutions about market opportunities and integrate specialized small business training and support for these entrepreneurs into Park-wide small business training initiatives.

Develop illustrative standards for hoteliers to attract target market segments. Publishing a guide or resource for attracting target market segments would help to improve the core accommodations product that is standard in the Adirondacks, and provide guidance on amenities, services, design, marketing, and websites.

Create a web-based accommodations investment opportunities information resource. The website could include information about available properties and opportunities, technical resources including information about financing mechanisms and incentives, and illustrative “standards” for new accommodations.



Example of one operator owning several properties in one community with diversified lodging options: hotel, inn, and cottages in Maine.





Expand on and diversify the types of lodging available in the Park.

during the winter months, and increase global recognition of the Park. The huts would be designed and built using locally sourced products and green building practices. An “inn to inn” component would help to advance the Trail Towns Initiative and focus on hamlet reinvestment. Higher end “glamping” (glamour camping) or unique options including yurts should also be pursued to diversify the lodging options.

Strategy 5: Create one integrated web application for all Adirondack Park “recreation” including sports and cultural amenity trails.

Action 1: Expand the Adirondack Web Portal to include other forms of “recreation” including all identified art, cultural, age, food, heritage, forest history, preservation and related assets.

Strategy 6: Promote the Park’s identity as a world class sports recreation destination.

Action 1: Implement the recommendations in the 2013 Adirondack Park Recreation Strategy, whose goal is to ensure access to public lands for persons of all ages and abilities, position communities to attract revenue from recreation, diversity tourism offerings, and market the identity of the entire Park. See <http://www.roostadk.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/RecPlan.pdf>. In addition, actively support implementation of the many important recreation projects identified in dozens of other local Adirondack community plans and strategies.

Action 2: Support local effort to deepen offerings in regional fishing (in partnership with organizations like FISHCAP and others), horseback riding and snowmobiling, all of which are proven to have a high immediate economic spinoff effect on local businesses.

Action 3: Explore opportunities to expand biking and mountain biking Park-wide. Continue to expand the Park’s mountain biking reputation by extending and connecting trail systems. Advocate for a national qualifying mountain bike race which brings increased prominence and significant spinoff revenue, as the Lake Placid Ironman does.

Strategy 7: “Prescribe the Park” as a world class destination for all forms of wellness services.

Action 1: Inventory existing wellness professionals and services available in the Park and establish a network for more cross-utilization of services at existing establishments to enhance offerings.



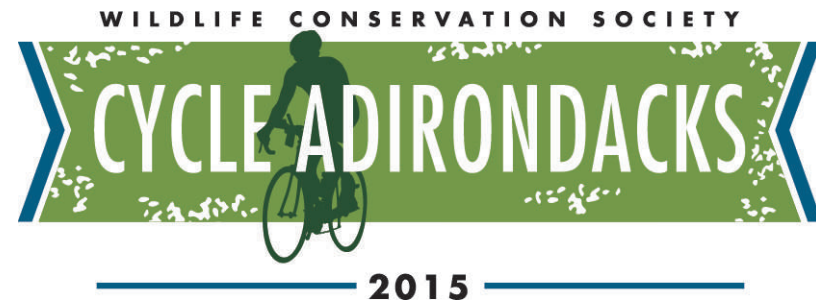
Monica Ryan

Recreational events similar to the Ironman could bring in spinoff revenues to the Park.

Action 2: Market the Park's assets to established health care facilities in New York State and elsewhere to promote or "prescribe" recovery and rehabilitation centers in the Adirondacks.

Action 3: Support expansion of wellness centers, both part of larger lodging establishments and free-standing. These services include spas, sales of natural body and beauty products, spiritual retreat centers, nutrition and wellness counselors and coaches, for example.

Action 4: Support expansion of services and the Park's identity as a location for medical tourism. Providers offering physical rehabilitation, addiction treatment, cancer and survivor care, and PTSD recovery often seek out beautiful and quiet rural locations.



Strategy 8: Continue efforts to unify existing tourism branding and marketing efforts Park-wide.

Action 1: Support ongoing efforts to centralize and unify Park-wide marketing efforts to improve the visitor experience. Address issues related to community/regional branding, cross promotion and packaging.

Action 2: Develop a Park-wide geotourism marketing strategy that educates various tourism and promotion partners to reach the growing segment of millennial visitors.

Strategy 9: Support the upgrade, maintenance and operation of non-lodging tourism facilities and attractions.

Action 1: Continue and expand support and preservation of the Park's various heritage sites, historic resources, museums, educational centers and all other forms of cultural entertainment visitor destinations.



Preservation of historic and cultural sites enhance the Park as a tourism destination.

Strategy 10: Promote and interpret the Adirondack Park “as a park.”

Action 1: Consider development of a structure/system to provide Park Service comparable to the National Park Service including a Park Ranger system that would focus on interpretation of the Park’s resources, wildlife management, public education and management of its day to day use. Stakeholders have identified the lack of face to face personal contact between visitors and Park “experts” as a missing link. This would enable greater person to person interchanges and more active interpretation of the Park’s history, resources, and hamlets. There are also opportunities to create stronger connections between the higher educational institutions involved in educating about the Park’s history and heritage including Paul Smiths, SUNY Environmental Science and Forestry and Union College, perhaps modeled on the “Educational Consortium” that supports the Hudson River Valley Greenway communities.

Action 2: Develop a wide network of hamlet based visitor and welcome centers.

Action 3: Evaluate the feasibility and logistics of establishing an effective user fee structure (either voluntary or mandatory) through physical/virtual toll gates or more universal licensing and fees. The fees would be dedicated to Adirondack community infrastructure costs and community capacity building associated with delivering park services.



Park Service could focus on interpretation of the Park's resources, wildlife management, public education, and day to day management.

