

Analysis

Clinton County Destination Master Plan

September 2010

Egret Communications

The Big Picture

The Clinton County hospitality industry is serving a mixture of business travelers; Canadians coming across the border to shop, fly or boat; and leisure travelers. Surprisingly, tourism represents the smallest portion of this mixture.

There is every reason to believe that Clinton County can grow both numbers and revenues from all of these patron groups. And, Clinton County has strong opportunities to make substantial gains in the roll leisure travel plays in the local economy.

Most importantly for the people who reside in Clinton County, economic growth can be achieved in ways that both underwrite local quality of life – and help the region build a more sustainable local population and lifestyle.

In the course of reconfiguring the reasons to engage in leisure travel to Clinton County – the region has a unique opportunity to reposition itself in the eyes of the traveling public and local residents.

There is a lot of hard work ahead – and it will take the public and private sectors working in partnership to effectively seize the opportunities on the table – but the potential rewards are substantial for business, government, and residents.

Patrons

There is an in-depth look at Clinton County's hospitality patrons in the Destination Assessment. Looking forward into the future, we can make some good observations relative to how each of those patron groups can change in both numbers and spending – and then look at how the destination can change the mix of these groups (using both product development/evolution and marketing) to accomplish both economic and social objectives.

First a look at each group:

Canadian Shoppers

As pointed out in the assessment, these people come with a mission and their length of travel and routes are a direct reflection of their mission. It's also important to restate that Clinton County has the shopping product profile to draw lower income shoppers than both Burlington and Albany. Finally, this flow of visitors is dependent upon the relationship of the Canadian and US dollars – and changes in that relationship can slow, stop, or even reverse the flow of shoppers.

Clinton County has the basic infrastructure to support this group of patrons. This infrastructure could be improved with signage in both French and English and speed limits in both miles and kilometers per hour. It would also be helpful to invest in the education of the Clinton County population in terms of the value of these visitors – and the choices locals have because these visitors are coming. These visitors are important to the Clinton County economy and lifestyle – and need to feel welcomed!

If more shops were to open carrying higher value merchandise, it is probable that, over time, Clinton County could attract more higher income shoppers. That would influence dining and lodging patterns associated with shopping.

Canadians with boats moored at Lake Champlain marinas

Lake Champlain is, quite simply, the best opportunity for Montreal residents to enjoy quality sailing and power boating. The existing marinas have developed solid relationships with patrons. That flow of business looks to be steady so long as the Canadian economy holds, and is probably not greatly influenced by a reversal in the relationship of US and Canadian dollars.

At the same time, Clinton County is not competing well when boaters are looking for interesting places to come ashore to dine, shop, or explore. Burlington, with its array of French speaking restaurants and higher end shopping opportunities, is capturing the spending of people coming ashore.

Clinton County has opportunities in the development of Plattsburgh's downtown, Saranac River, Bridge Street and City Dock zone to embrace the waterfront – and the wallets of these visitors. The revitalization plan for Rouses Point, if carried forward, will go a great distance toward making that area attractive for shore time.

Marinas need to make a better effort to have front line staff who can converse in French as well as English.

Canadians Flying out of the Plattsburgh Airport

Plattsburgh's airport was built on the strength of demand from the Canadian side of the border, using that demand to leverage opportunities and benefits for North Country residents and businesses. It will be expanded because that demand was bigger than realized – and because it continues to grow. For those same reasons, more carriers will embrace the airport and more flights will be added to more destinations.

Some of those travelers find it convenient to sleep in Plattsburgh in association with flying. As the number of flight opportunities increases, more travelers will be coming, and there will be more spinoff income in the form of lodging and dining.

This airport project grew much faster than Plattsburgh was expecting – and the services (think business opportunities) for these travelers are not yet in place. There needs to be business investment in dining and minor retail adjacent to the airport and within the terminal. Plattsburgh has famous makers of pastries and pies from local apples and those need to be easily available to every traveler passing through the airport.

Of interest – in the good old days before tightened security, when Alaska Airlines stopped at Sitka on their multiple city stop flights, almost every passenger got off the plane to buy a piece of the famous pie that was sold there and brought it back on the plane with them. Those who weren't "in the know" were told about it by the locals flying around Alaska.

Plattsburgh only gets a short opportunity at the beginning and end of each trip out from the region – and it needs to position itself to better profit from those opportunities.

As the airport grows, it will be important to continue to market the advantages of flying from Plattsburgh to Montreal to drive more business to support that growth. It will, again, be important to expand signage in French and English and to post speed limits in miles and kilometers per hour.

Business Travelers

These travelers are currently the backbone of hospitality industry income. The current set of lodging is a direct response to the demand created by business travel – as evidenced by the placement of hotels and associated dining. The infrastructure is in place to serve these travelers well.

Unfortunately, there is little that can be done (in terms of marketing or product evolution) to influence this flow of travelers – or their rate of spending. The best way to make these travelers contribute more to the economy is to use other travelers to drive up occupancy and rates for lodging.

Because Clinton County has business travelers as its hospitality backbone, it has the luxury of building the flow of leisure travelers in a quality, focused manner. This is an incredible opportunity that few destinations enjoy.

Traditional Drive Market

Clinton County has, though it is largely unmeasured at this point, a flow of visitors from the region's traditional drive markets. That is evidence by the summer uptick in visitor counts and the fact that the older lakeshore lodging establishments have a summer business. And it is evident in the patronage of campgrounds and small lake lodges in the southwestern and western parts of the county. Some of these visitors have existing cottages for lodging and drive in with groceries from home to support their stays.

Until recently, there was no lodging tax and Clinton County's ability to market to these travelers was quite limited.

Clinton County can become more appealing to these visitors as it adds current and competitive visitor infrastructure (lodging, dining, and experiences) that are located facing lakes, rivers, mountains, or forests.

There will need to be some strong thinking in terms of whether to market by region to this drive market or by interest to travelers that have strong connections to the region's tourism experience strengths.

Motorcoach Travel

Motorcoach travel is a tool that currently serves part of the local tourism industry, but also may be contributing to lower lodging rates. There is not potential for motorcoach travel to become a mainstay of Clinton County hospitality industry's economics, but there may be ways to make it a better contributor, especially off peak months.

Route-based Fly Markets

While the Plattsburgh Airport's construction was based on the demand Canadians flying elsewhere, it is truly a gift to the hospitality industry, if Plattsburgh can succeed in creating a reverse flow of visitors from the other ends of those flights.

There are distinct opportunities – when the Adirondack Coast has great weather and experiences and some of the places at the other ends of those flights do not – to successfully market to those regions. It should be noted that visitors who arrive by plane tend to stay longer and occupy rooms through the week rather than on weekends.

These opportunities will be enhanced by the development of lodging and dining with a view – and the development and refinement of experiences like kayaking and cycling. When history based experiences become interactive, this connection will also grow.

It will take time, cooperative efforts, and resources to develop these markets. But they should open the door, with careful planning, to expanding the main visitor season.

Interest-based Markets

Again, the Plattsburgh Airport, coupled with modern internet marketing and good public relations, opens the door to a flow of visitors based on strong experiences that the Adirondack Coast is capable of developing or playing base camp for.

Plattsburgh has some very strong opportunities to develop and market sets of products and experiences that appeal to very select niche markets. Some of those products are already fairly well developed and others need work. Each of those products has a unique appeal that is capable of drawing visitors from across North America – and some from further away.

The current fishing tournament events easily highlight that the Adirondack Coast could develop a steady flow of fishing-oriented travel. The quality of Lake Champlain as a fishery opens the door to an international market. This will require the availability of rental boats and supporting businesses. Competing regions also have guides that specialize in guiding out of region fishermen and women.

There is also an existing flow of drive-based Adirondack lake and river fishing – that could be expanded to a national/international interest based set of travel through the new airport.

The Adirondack Coast has strong opportunities to develop flows of interest-based air and drive travel focusing on paddle sports, road and mountain biking, climbing, and winter sports. Each of these markets has specific needs that will need to be met – and each can generate a substantial flow of visitors that will contribute to creating a longer stronger season – or to building patronage at a time when the region really needs travelers.

The Adirondack Coast has a huge opportunity related to history travel. The region's history is "infrastructure" that one can't build – one has to inherit it. And the Adirondack Coast has outstanding history. That history has the potential to draw a steady flow of very focused visitors year-round. But, the development of such a flow of visitors will take substantial investment (time and money) to turn history into interactive experience – and to build interpretation that is of a quality that matches the significance of the history the region has to share.

It is important to understand that significant historical events belong to the world – and the "keepers" of those events have a responsibility to share that history in a way that reflects the importance of the events. If the region can develop product and experience that is on a par with the importance of the events held here, and it can communicate with those who are truly interested in history, then it will reap rewards in history-related tourism.

Infrastructure, Products and Experiences

For the purposes of planning a destination, infrastructure will be interpreted more broadly than typical brick and mortar developments. We'll include bigger infrastructure (like Lake Champlain and the Adirondack Park), we'll include history and we'll even include the identity of the region in the minds of prospective travelers.

Additionally, looking at the nature of the experiences Clinton County has to offer, this document will intentionally blur the line between Infrastructure, Products, and Experiences.

Lodging

The current lodging is quite satisfactory for business travelers and Canadians coming to shop. It serves those needing an easy overnight before a morning flight. The room count is about to increase as the Comfort Inn comes back online and may increase again if another property is added at the "lodging/shopping intersection".

Visitors who come to the Adirondack Coast to experience the splendors of the region – or to engage in outdoor recreation that is region specific – will expect current and competitive lodging that is oriented to resources. It doesn't have to be big. It doesn't have to include meeting space. But it should have a view – and the décor should clearly reflect its location on the planet. Over time, there is probably reason to expect that Clinton County could support another 1,000 rooms of this type, spread out over the county and located in ways that celebrate and provide views and access to the lakes, rivers, forests, and mountains of the region.

Dining

There is an adequate selection of dining, mostly situated at the “lodging/shopping intersection” to support business travel and Canadian shoppers.

There is a need for quality and diverse dining opportunities that are oriented to views and convenient to tourism activities, including waterfront locations.

There is also a distinct need for local dining to “celebrate” regional cuisine. Clinton County should be showcasing apples, maple syrup, and fresh water fish in a way that helps visitors feel they “are” somewhere. Someday, perhaps soon, local wines will be available in styles and quantities that they can be featured on local menus.

The region should aim for visitors to clamor for an Adirondack Coast Recipe Book featuring apples, maple syrup, freshwater fish, cider, and local wines. And that book should be created and available for purchase.

Similarly, visitors could be “invited” to purchase a half-day class in apple pie baking. It’s a product that ties to the region – and apples are “in season” when we need to fill rooms.

Visitor Corridors & Areas of Clustered or Concentrated Visitor-Oriented Services

Clinton County is blessed with some beautiful scenic drives, notably along the Ausable and Saranac Rivers and the Champlain Coast.

There are also some routes that visitors are likely to take that don’t present the region well. Visitors feel uncomfortable when routed through unkempt neighborhoods or past derelict lodgings. There needs to be a concerted effort to, without trampling property owner rights, upgrade the appearance of routes that visitors are likely to take.

Visitors are more likely to engage in shopping and dining when visitor-oriented services are concentrated or clustered. The clustering of museums in Plattsburgh is a step in the right direction. There are opportunities (expressed in the Rouses Point planning documents) to create zones of visitor-oriented store fronts in downtown Rouses Point.

Similarly there is a strong need to concentrate and cluster tourism-related businesses on Bridge Street between downtown and the City Dock in Plattsburgh. This clustering would “friendly up” the connection between downtown Plattsburgh and Lake Champlain, opening it to pedestrian traffic and making the entire region more viable in terms of visitor experience.

There are strong reasons to suggest that this area needs an “anchor” development, perhaps something on a scale similar to the ECHO museum in Burlington. This could be situated wonderfully in the zone now occupied by the sewage treatment plant – and would totally rewrite traffic patterns (offshore and onshore) relative to downtown and the City Dock.

There is opportunity, as the region develops a viable interactive history-related tourism economy, to have horse drawn trolleys augmenting the movement of people between downtown, the waterfront, and parking.

Plattsburgh Air Links

The flights set up to take passengers from Plattsburgh to the world are quite capable of bringing visitors from many destinations to the Adirondack Coast.

Careful thinking can lead to marketing maneuvers that bring overheated Floridians to a refreshing fall vacation on the Adirondack Coast. And, there are other regional air markets that can provide a flow of visitors that are carefully courted to strengthen “weak” patronage moments in the regional occupancy calendar.

Those same flights can bring visitors courted by interest. When history demand grows, visitors from France and England can join travelers from across the United States as they arrive at Plattsburgh’s new airport, intent on a weeklong experience that will bring them closer to understanding events that shaped nations. Kayakers from Florida will support one season while kayakers from Chicago support another as marketing focuses both on opportunities to ply the waters of Lake Champlain, local rivers, and high Adirondack lakes. Road cyclists from all over will fly to the Adirondack Coast to challenge themselves to courses promoted by local cycling groups – and to dare themselves to try the uphill run from the Ironman route. Other cyclists, from many places, will time their rides to see Adirondack fall colors.

And the list of reasons to get on a plane to Plattsburgh goes on....

Airline Terminal

Isn’t it wonderful when your projections are dwarfed by reality? The terminal has to grow, because there is more demand (by both travelers and airlines) than it can accommodate. That’s good news – and the better news is that steps are underway to make that happen.

As the terminal grows, there is a distinct need for passengers to be able to buy coffee, light meals, reading material and travel supplies inside the terminal. And it’s a great opportunity to showcase pies, locally roasted coffee, and other local creations – and, in doing so, to keep more of the revenue in Clinton County. It’s all about building a sense of destination.

As the region generates more “inbound” travel, there will be more need for choices in rental cars – and more hotel shuttles from the terminal.

The terminal, as it expands, becomes a huge marketing tool. By carefully and graphically showcasing the best experiences that the Adirondack Coast has to offer both outbound and inbound passengers, the region takes advantage of the time these people spend waiting for flights and baggage!

When one leaves the terminal, one should be able to access dining without having to navigate to downtown Plattsburgh or get onto the Northway. Dining and other related traveler services should be available within sight of the airport entrance.

Retail

One can look at the very selection of available retail as infrastructure. The current selection and position of retail in Plattsburgh reflects a reaction to demand from Canadian shoppers. There is clear opportunity to move into “higher class” merchandise to court shoppers who are currently choosing to visit Burlington or Albany. That move would give local shoppers the opportunity to buy those same goods without leaving the area.

There is an opportunity to have Canadian shoppers who shop online have their purchases shipped to one or more Clinton County businesses (many US businesses simply won’t ship across the border). The trip across the border to pick up this merchandise is likely to result in other retail shopping.

There is a need for visitor-oriented retail. People who are some distance from home have distinct retail needs. There is also the opportunity to send people home with retail items they purchase to remember or celebrate their time in Clinton County. There is further a need for items they would buy for friends and relatives – and thus do some marketing for the region. And, most destinations showcase products, often artwork, that is unique to the region.

Currently, the Adirondack Coast has few places to buy such memorabilia – and is short in the selection of items to sell. There is a dearth of products that say “Adirondack” and even fewer that celebrate history. It’s more of a challenge than it should be for a visitor to have local apples or maple syrup shipped home.

Adirondack Coast

Travel region's are "branded" in the eyes of travelers. This mental image among potential patrons is "infrastructure" that is built with years of marketing.

When, as is the current situation, a destination needs to reposition itself, it has to undo past branding as it blazes a new image in the minds of potential patrons.

The choice of Adirondack Coast, a new term in the travel market, brilliantly accomplishes this. Clinton County will be able to define itself as a destination and "connect" to carefully targeted niche and geographic targets without having to undo a past image. This planning process should result in a clear definition of how the region can "position" itself with patrons, making the process of establishing the Adirondack Coast brand a rather fun and straightforward process.

Lake Champlain

Lake Champlain is, itself, a key part of the infrastructure of the Adirondack Coast tourism economy. The very nature of the Lake attracts the Canadians who moor sailboats and power boats and spend so much time on the lake. The Lake provides great opportunities for kayaking and fishing – and the list goes on.

Maybe even more importantly, Lake Champlain is associated with so much history that ties together the United States, Canada, Great Britain, France and several Native American Nations. Without the events that took place on or associated with Lake Champlain, history would have been written differently. The unique geography associated with Lake Champlain gave rise to the American Industrial Revolution.

Lake Champlain deserves special recognition as a history destination. It may very well deserve the honor of becoming a "UNESCO World Heritage Site". If the Adirondack Coast were to drive an initiative that garnered such a designation for Lake Champlain, that in itself would rewrite the flow of leisure travel to the region.

The region should also take steps to protect the integrity of Lake Champlain. There are threats to the Lake from the introduction of aquatic plants and animals. While much of the lake shore has now been converted to housing, there are still some undeveloped shoreline areas, which add value to the experience of visiting and being on Lake Champlain.

Adirondack Park

The Adirondack Park is an unparalleled area of resource protection in the Eastern United States. Nowhere else in the East is such a large chunk of land protected, and the notion of protecting lands while living amongst them is unique, at least in the United States. As population pressures cause human encroachment on other natural areas in the Northeast the Adirondack Park will, increasingly, stand out as a refuge for travelers.

The Adirondack Park encompasses some areas of “true” wilderness, some very exciting vertical terrain, places where one can paddle beyond hearing of motorized craft, and habitat that supports bears and moose. It also presents some stellar outdoor opportunities at times when other parts of the country (think – other ends of those flights) have weather that sends people indoors.

At the same time, the Adirondacks have the reputation among the drive market as a “tired destination” that has not evolved as tourism has evolved. They are stereotyped by out-of-date motor lodges that are in ill repair and “old style” tourism experiences that tend to be tacky. Legitimate Adirondack art has, all too frequently, given way to foreign knock-offs. This is a zone where much of the best waterfront is now taken up with getaway cabins for people who live in cities outside the region.

As a destination, the Adirondack Coast should support the health and integrity of the Adirondack Park. A healthy Adirondack Park will generate an ever growing constituency – and serves as a key lifestyle benefit for local residents. The Adirondacks, and the experiences visitors can have in them, will, with careful product development and marketing put people on planes to Clinton County for years to come.

History

The history of the region is an important part of the visitor infrastructure. The history that helped shape the boundaries of and relationships among nations is owned by those peoples – and they are natural patrons of tourism designed to celebrate that history. Clearly, there are many in the United Kingdom, Canada, France and the United States who are fascinated with history and who would eagerly spend time exploring a quality interpretation of key events of significance. Just as clearly, the greater Lake Champlain region has not done a good job of building current and competitive historical interpretive experiences – nor has it done a good job of captivating the interest of this powerful niche market.

If the region’s history (conflicts, American Industrial Revolution, and colonial lifestyle) can be brought to life in a manner that is interactive and engaging, there is incredible potential to build and sustain a flow of travelers that will support the development and patronize the region’s hospitality industry.

Over time, the interpretation of the various military engagements on and near Lake Champlain should be interpreted in a center that is the technological and quality equivalent of the Wild Center in Tupper Lake. The nations whose history was shaped by those events deserve no less.

At the same time, there are a number of opportunities to “use” visitor labor (while they pay for lodging and dining) to “build” the basis for a stronger interpretive experience.

Imagine... if visitors paid to help build a full scale replica of one of the historic battleships, generating hundreds of nights of lodging over the course of a winter – and each spring a new battleship was “launched”. The attention that would come from that, the long term relationships it would build between visitor and destination, the new traffic it would drive to events – would all be an order of magnitude more than the current situation.

Imagine... if every evening all winter those visitors who were coming to help build the new boat were entertained with quality storytellers, in period costume, as they dined in local eateries and pubs. Imagine having enough storytellers and stories that those visitors would not see a repeat in a week of evening dining.

Imagine... frequent scheduled guided tours to Valcour and Crab Islands, led by knowledgeable guides and patronized by people who got onto airplanes because the Adirondack Coast is known for quality guided interpretation.

Imagine... a recreated and operational water powered grist mill, where visitors can watch men and women in period dress grinding grains. Imagine the output from that mill packaged and going home with visitors – and on the shelves of retail grocers.

Imagine... crews of paying visitors helping archaeologists excavate historical sites – excavations that can be followed online through blogs and live “cams”. This could create a steady flow of room nights, dining, and public relations.

Imagine... if those who love to re-enact could get paid to “teach” history buffs how to... load and fire a musket, cook in a kettle over a fire, collect and boil down maple syrup the old way, tan hides, build canoes... the list goes on.

This region is noted for events which re-enact important military encounters that shaped history. It’s time that those re-enactments are played out for a larger audience. That means we’ll need to address where visitors will sleep and eat – and where re-enactors will sleep and eat. It may be important to “segment” events so that parts of the events that are important to locals are played out for a local audience and parts that are of world importance are played out for a larger audience. Successful development of these “world important” events should fill rooms at top rates.

The history of this region is significant to a large number of people on the planet – and if that history is made to be approachable and interactive in a quality manner, then history can become a significant component of the destination’s economy. If that happens, there will be solid and sustainable support for those efforts to bring history to life.

Night Life

When you invite visitors to a destination, part of the responsibility is to plan ahead on what they’ll do in the evenings. If you can fill their days with activities, then often times dining and exciting retail can fill much of the evening.

The Adirondack Coast lends itself to great celebrations of music, historical demonstrations, storytelling (related to history), and locally produced theatre performances. There will also be times when the region’s visitors can become spectators for competitions in Lake Placid.

Dinner Cruises

As the Adirondack Coast develops a steady flow of inbound visitors, one way for many of those visitors to “engage” with Lake Champlain could be through dinner cruises. There was a past effort of this kind that failed, but if there was a fresh effort which was coordinated with inbound fly visitor marketing, the odds of success could be substantially higher.

Scenic Train

While Amtrak is apparently not a dependable arrival mechanism, the rail route along the shores of Lake Champlain would lend itself to a scenic train ride. Such a train would not need to make good time – the point would be the scenic trip.

The train could “connect” Rouses Point to Saratoga, inviting a flow of visitors from an area that has quite a few.

If the train were to connect “history” stops, with quality interpretation, then there could literally be a weeklong experience based on using the train to move among lodgings to historical sites.

Waterfront

Any tourism marketer will tell you that tourism has a love affair with water. When you can tease a potential visitor into imagining activities, dining, lodging view, or even the sound of water you have won half the battle in seducing them to visit your destination. Of course, you then have to deliver.

The Adirondack Coast has incredible tourism experiences related to water – already in the delivery stage. There are also many ways it falls short at the present time. As the destination moves forward, there is a strong need to bring lodging and dining to the waterfront. There is a real need to tie retail zones in Rouses Point and Plattsburgh to the waterfront. Visitors need to find their way to bike routes, train rides, hiking trails, and interpretive exhibits along the water's edge. There is a unique opportunity here to send visitors on ferries, cementing the relationship of a simple drive or a bike outing to water.

Bicycle Tourism

The rapid growth of local interest in bicycle recreation, the publication of road bike routes, the scheduling of local cycling events, and the development of associations for cycling all contribute to the potential of cycling as a serious tourism economy. Further, commercial support services are almost in place to support visiting cyclists.

There is good reason to suspect that road cyclists can be courted to ride in events and the routes carefully outlined in the new publication. There may also be an opportunity to court athletes to train on local routes and then go “run” the Ironman route.

Just as importantly, there are many reasons to focus on marketing to cyclists who are not out to test themselves, but enjoy cycling as a way to be out amongst beautiful resources. The Adirondack Coast has plenty of routes through such resources, nearby access (Adirondacks and Vermont) to many more routes, businesses to support the cyclists, businesses to provide field meals, and adequate lodging and dining.

Further, there are great trails and facilities to support mountain biking – for pleasure or to test oneself.

It will be important, if the region is to invest in marketing cycling tours, to expand the number of participating cycling businesses. There is always a danger when any tourism initiative is dependent on one particular company, no matter how good it is or how committed the ownership is.

Paddle Sports

The Adirondack Coast is in an excellent position to pursue visitors interested in paddling. From a base along the Adirondack Coast, one can access slow meandering rivers and wetlands along the Champlain shore, Lake Champlain itself, faster waters in the Ausable and Saranac Rivers, paddling routes in Vermont, and the classic high Adirondack lakes paddling routes.

There are waters to support a variety of paddling styles and abilities. There are, between the Adirondack Coast and the Adirondack high country, a variety of companies to sell or rent a wide variety of equipment. Several of these companies will also drop and pick up paddlers. Others provide guided outings. Some provide instruction.

Paddling is a sport that is very specific to region – and this region offers access to some outstanding paddling. Further, paddling is good along the Adirondack Coast when some other “paddling engaged” destinations have poor conditions – which, coupled with the new air routes, can draw visitors for weeklong explorations of this great asset.

Marketing and Public Relations

Recent changes, especially the launching of the lodging tax, the increased use of the internet for planning vacations, and the creation of the airport, have combined to “change the game” for the Adirondack Coast. As a destination, there are now opportunities to successfully launch new tourism products and refine tourism infrastructure – and, most importantly, to invite new visitors to the region.

In many respects, the “best” opportunities for marketing the strengths of the Adirondack Coast and “using” the new flight opportunity may be targeted marketing by interest. This approach will be an efficient, cost effective method for both building the brand and driving short term traffic.

Egret Communications finds that the Adirondack Coast has talented and dedicated individuals in charge of marketing. They have the skills to target and communicate with niche markets, to drive public relations, to coordinate with local businesses and governments, to respond to opportunities. This plan, when completed, along with the strategic tourism planning committee will give the team a sounding board as they build and execute new initiatives.

As the marketing budget grows, it will be important for the marketing team to download some administrative duties to an assistant, so they can concentrate on strategic marketing maneuvers.

The marketing budget (from lodging tax) is modest, but can be stretched with the strong use of public relations. Over time, the addition of new rooms will grow the budget. It would be good to have some additional public funding to support marketing to leisure travelers.

Guiding the Destination

Egret lauds the makeup of the Strategic Tourism Planning Committee and suggests that this committee evolve (with some mechanisms for terms and balance in membership) to serve as a guiding board for the Adirondack Coast. The group (will need a new name) can coordinate relationships between industry, government, and public and also collaborate with the marketing team for the Adirondack Coast.

Further, this group should be tasked with overseeing the implementation of the plan, understanding that individual actions within the plan will have their own timelines and leadership.