TOMPKINS CHAMBER

visit ITHACA

2020 Annual Report



Image by Laurent Truong (@laurent_truong)

Our Core Strengths

What began as a very productive and strategically successful year for both the Chamber and CVB took a very dramatic turn in early 2020. Our organization was among the first to recognize the depth and breadth of the Cornoavirus pandemic disruption to our local businesses, organizations, and governments – and we responded accordingly with critical communications, recovery resources, strategic advocacy, and continuing to connect our stakeholders.

Your Chamber and CVB supported thousands of businesses in the county with information and resources, through NY Pause and into NY Forward; we collaborated with economic development providers to identify and source PPE, attract new funding resources, implement consumer marketing and messaging campaigns, and to develop strategies to support our shared recovery. We hosted dozens of webinars on topics that were most relevant to our stakeholders and had a dedicated team member providing assistance by phone, email, and virtual meetings to help partners navigate the crisis.

Through all of this, the Chamber and CVB managed our own crises, and have passed the first quarter of 2021 in a stronger position than we entered 2020. We put our building on the market in September, and it is now under contract – we will spend a good deal of time in 2021 determining the ideal location for our next phase. We are cautiously optimistic about the future, and as always, are judicious with the resources and investments granted to us by our members and key funding partners.

Our membership remains strong, engaged, invested, and resilient. We were in awe of you and all you gave to your staff, your businesses, and this community throughout 2020. Thank you for your trust in us, and for allowing us to support you through the most difficult year imaginable. Together, we are so much stronger.



Jennifer Tavares President & CEO



Peggy Coleman VP, Tourism

Mission

To foster sustainable economic growth through service to our members, strategic advocacy, workforce development, destination marketing, and quality of life investments.

Vision

We are an inclusive community, where people thrive, businesses start and grow, non-profits effectively serve, and visitors experience our "gorges" place.

Covid-19 Response

There are so many ways that the Chamber & CVB stepped up to respond and serve our community during the COVID-19 crisis – it's difficult to recount them all. Below we've summarized our key initiatives and efforts, which were accomplished with the support of our Board, Staff, and our collaborations with numerous economic development partner organizations:

- Website resources on Day 1
- PPE and other supply sourcing
- Raised funds to support mask-making volunteers with lunches from area businesses
- Surveyed business owners to understand Covid impacts and needs for funding/workforce support
- Helped envision responsive funding resources and make funding allocation decisions, such as the Emergency Relief Loan Fund and Small Business Resiliency Fund
- Served on Economic Recovery Cabinet
- Met weekly with Economic Development Resource Providers
- Served on County Reopening and Staying Open Committees
- Offered 19 webinars specifically related to COVID-19 response and resources
- Shared email communications with critical information on NY Pause, NY Forward, reopening guidelines, funding, and vaccine resources weekly or twice weekly
- Dedicated staff resources to response, but also ensured universal understanding of resources/ support for stakeholders from our team
- Served on Southern Tier Vaccine Task Force
- Consumer and business marketing for mask wearing, being safe together, and supporting local businesses
- Retooled but continued to offer substantial member benefits, accomplish our work program, and more

This list was just a sampling of everything we accomplished to respond to the COVID-19 crisis, with your support and involvement. We will continue our critical work and seek to attract new resources to our community in the coming months. The Chamber is so grateful to all of our members and partners.



"The Chamber & Visit Ithaca have been rock solid through all of this, and we have benefited mightily. Thanks so much!" – ***Ashley Cake, Owner, The Watershed & The Downstairs***



"The Chamber team responded quickly to the crisis by providing the members and entire community with resources and together, kept the community informed." – ***Larry Abolaji, CFCU Credit Union***



"Times like this really show the value of the Tompkins chamber over the other ones of which E!FLX are members. Major kudos and thanks to you and the entire Chamber team." ***-Laura Winter Falk,*** **Experience the Finger Lakes**

Member of the Week Program

We think YOU'RE GORGES

TOMPKINS CHAMBER | Member of the Week

Brought to you by: VISIONS FEDERAL CREDIT UNION

In partnership with: WHCU LOCAL

Throughout 2020, we recognized and celebrated our members with the Member of the Week Program, sponsored by Visions Federal Credit Union. It was especially meaningful that the Chamber could leverage this program to recognize businesses and organizations that went out of their way to support our community during such difficult times.

Chamber Strong

+35
New members

100%
Member dues Investment retained

93%
Members retained

$6,000
Raised for member scholarships

350+
Members engaged

Key Indicators and Accomplishments Include:

- **35** members were featured
- **24,000** impressions on social media *(Facebook & Instagram)*
- **2,200** YouTube Views *(Tompkins Chamber)*
- **1000+** TV ads and segments



Winter Farmers Market
In early 2020, the Chamber and others gathered to celebrate the grand opening of the Winter Farmer's Market in its new location at Triphammer Marketplace. Fresh local meats, dairy products, produce, and crafts helped attract consumers to this important part of our community.



Serendipity Backlot
In August 2020, we were proud to join Stephanie Holzbaur and the Serendipity Catering team as they celebrated the opening of The Backlot, a new outdoor restarant behind South Hill Business Campus - one of many examples of resilience and keen planning we witnessed last year.



Odyssey Bookstore Ribbon Cutting
Laura Larson and the team at Odyssey Books opened an incredible bookstore in Ithaca, across from Press Bay Alley on Green Street. This unique store offers a magical experience and a curated inventory of local authors, as well as collections on social justice, travel, and much more.

2020 HIGHLIGHTS

59
Advertisements sold

+697
New email contacts

10,900
Link clicks via email

40,734
Member directory searches

28%
Average open rate Chambergam

Over the course of 2020, we were able to maintain contact and engagment with our members through the usage of weekly/ twice weekly emails, and sharing our events and important NYS updates on our social media channels and website. We promoted member success on our channels from reopenings, ribbon cuttings, anniversaries and special offerings.

We were also able to provide value by selling our eBlasts and our Chambergram Banner Advertisements. Members were able to purchase their advertisements for weeks of their choosing.

Instagram Insights:

78 Instagram Posts

24,044 Impressions

20,764 Reach

1,607 Post likes





#WEARAMASK Video
Produced in collaboration with Downtown Ithaca Alliance, Visit Ithaca, and IAED.

YouTube Visit Ithaca channel:
3,300+ views

Facebook /TompkinsChamber:
1,129 Reach;
178 Reactions/Comment/Shares



Shop Local Campaign
During Fall of 2020, we ran a shop local campaign to give people recommendations for holiday shopping. Members were able to submit deals and offerings and we shared this information during 6 weekly emails and we promoted each business on social media.



Ithaca Promise Campaign
The Ithaca Promise campaign was a collaborative effort to help promote mask wearing as businesses began reopening around Ithaca and Tompkins County. We promoted on our social media channels and reshared from our partners to spread the reminder.

COVID-19 Event Response

The Chamber quickly adjusted to virtual programming and events, developing a weekly webinar series to connect with members, deliver to-the-moment information from experts and decision makers, and providing vital resources to navigate the Pandemic. Other programming included Business After Hours, L.E.A.R.N webinars, Networking at Noon, presentations from the Lt. Governor's office, PPP loan presentations from our regional economist, experts in employment law and more.

COVID-19 Business Impacts Readiness Webinars

- "Ask the Legal Experts" Forum with Law Firm Bousquet Holstein PLLC
- Bankruptcy Considerations for Businesses During COVID-19
- Constructing Strong Messages on Social and Email Platforms
- Contractual Obligations and COVID-19: Force Majeure and Other Excuses for Non-Performance
- Creating a Plan and Developing the Right Mindset
- De-Escalation Techniques for Businesses/Dealing with Noncompliant Patrons
- Digital Media Strategy: A Superhighway To Your Customers and New Opportunities
- Employers' Rights, Responsibilities and Strategies During COVID-19
- Food and Beverage Operations under COVID-19
- Marshalling Financial Resources and Re-Thinking the Economic Model
- New York Forward Loan Program webinar
- Operations and Human Resources: Last Should Be First
- Office Unpause
- Reopening Health and Safety Concerns
- Retail UnPause
- Shared Work Support
- Strategic Business Plan Alignment Post-COVID
- Tax Considerations and Available Assistance during COVID-19 Crisis
- Unemployment Insurance Support

2020 Highlights:

84
Virtual Events and Programs

3,800
Attendees

$165K
Revenue generated by all Events and Programs to support our work

LEARN

LEADERSHIP
EQUITY
ACTION
RESILIENCE
NAVIGATION

POWERED BY TOMPKINS Trust Company · Insurance Agencies · Financial Advisors

LEARN SERIES

Engaging the membership throughout the year is an effort to demonstrate the Chamber's appreciation for their support and involvement in the community. Topics included: Navigating Quickbooks Online, Sexual Harassment and Prevention training, NY State Forward Loan Program, Lt. Governor Hochul 2021 Governor's Budget Presentation, Quality Service to Customers with Disabilities

"Providing quality customer service is very important for businesses and vendors. Particularly, for individuals with disabilities. Having employees who are trained in serving people with disabilities can make a. large factor in customers'decision whether to return to your place of business. Thank you Tompkins County Chamber of Commerce for hosting the LEARN series and providing a platform to provide this workshop to the community."***-Jeff Boles***; **Advocacy Specialist at the Finger Lakes Independence Center.**



Roundtable Groups

In 2020, the Chamber hosted 18 Women in Business, Small Business, and CEO Rountables. These safe spaces for sharing were invaluable to the partic-ipants, and helped everyone navigate the crisis together.



Fab 5 Young Professionals Awards

The Fab5 Young Professional Celebration highlights the achievements and impact of young professionals, under 40, who are excelling and making an impact in Tompkins County. Given to 5 local young professionals who are growing and excelling in their respective fields, who've shown tremendous success and passion through their work within this community.

TOMPKINS CHAMBER
ANNUAL MEETING & CELEBRATION

Annual Meeting & Celebration-
The Chamber partnered with the Hangar Theatre to create a special virtual event in Tompkins County. With over 300 virtual attendees, our Annual Meeting and Celebration recognized:

- Distinguished Business of the Year: HOLT Architects
- Entrepreneur of the Year: Elizabeth Classen Ambrose
- Not-for-Profit of the Year: Child Development Council
- Key Person of the Year: Gary Stewart





Behind the Scenes: 2020 Annual Meeting and Celebration



2020 Economic Summit
The Chamber started off the year with the Annual Economic Summit, co-presented by Ithaca Area Economic Development. We expanded our format, hosting multiple morning breakout session at Cinemapolis, a presentation by NY State Lt. Governor Kathy Hochul, and Keynote presentation by Russell S Weaver, PhD; Economic Geographer.



March 2020 BAH
Our monthly Business After Hours networking events brought together current and prospective members to develop professional relationships in a relaxed environment, as local businesses opened their doors for these sponsored events. Featuring food and drinks, drawings, tours of member businesses and, of course, plenty of networking.



2020 Annual Auction
"M&T Bank has always been a proud sponsor of the annual Chamber Auction, even when it was decided it would held as a virtual event. By helping and advocating for local businesses, the Chamber plays a critical role in our community and helps make Ithaca a great place to live and work."- Kellyann O'Mara M&T Bank

Tompkins Chamber Foundation

63K
New annual pedestrian foot traffic

22K+
Annual room nights for area hotels

9th
Largest facility in upstate New York

60
Estimated new direct and indirect jobs

$160 M
Net new TC spending in 20 years

Ithaca Downtown Conference Center Project

The Tompkins Chamber, CVB, and Chamber Foundation have all been key partners in advancing the Ithaca Downtown Conference Center Project and helped accomplish significant milestones in 2020. This critical project began in 2018 as an economic development project, and has evolved into a crucial shovel-ready economic recovery initiative to support Ithaca and Tompkins County for years to come.



Rendering of first floor interior



Tompkins Connect
In 2020, Tompkins Connect – our area Young Professionals service and networking organization – moved under the Tompkins Chamber Foundation as one of our fiscally sponsored projects. The Chamber is a close partner of the Fab5 Young Professionals Awards, and has a strong connection to area employers seeking resources for their workforce.



The Collegetown Small Business Alliance (CSBA) became a fiscally sponsored project of the Tompkins Chamber Foundation in 2020. The key outcome of this new relationship was the installation of a student-designed banner project in Collegetown, a project achieved through the collaboration of the Tompkins Chamber, City of Ithaca, CSBA, and Tompkins County Tourism Program.

Workforce Development & Live in Ithaca

The Live in Ithaca workforce attraction initiative entered 2020 in a strong position with significant accomplishments. While the marketing program paused temporarily in recognition of the impacts of COVID on our unemployment and workforce conditions in Tompkins County, the Chamber Team accomplished the following:

- Welcome Home Wednesdays
- Custom relocation support
- Job and partner organization referrals for dual-partner candidates
- Sharing and promoting businesses with job postings, and leveraging the County's "Workforce Redirect" initiative
- Resuming advertising with Cornell Alumni Magazine's website at year-end

We look forward to a strong 2021!

Live In ITHACA

2020 Accolades/ Highlights

- **Top 30** Best American Cities to Live in After the Pandemic **(Ithaca is #25)** ***- Business Insider***
- Best Places to Live in Northeast After Pandemic **(Ithaca is #2 of 21)** ***- NY Upstate***
- Ithaca named to the "**Top 100** Best Places to Live" list ***-Livability.com***
- **#1 of Top 10** Best College Towns List ***-Livability.com***

Welcome Home Wednesdays

Welcome Home Wednesdays
The Chamber continued offering the Welcome Home Wednesday program, to support those planning to relocate or who have recently relocated in understanding our community resources, people, and organizations more deeply. The Chamber Team also made custom referrals to WHW attendees to potential employers and partner organizations.



(Fall 2020 Cornell Alumni Mag website ad)

TOMPKINS CHAMBER
OJT Grant Program

On the Job Training Program
In 2020, the Tompkins Chamber closed out our last NYS DOL OJT Grant Program, but also began work in earnest on our Healthy Workforce Network OJT Program, with the goal of helping recovery friendly employers and their employees in receiving the training and financial support they need.

Advocacy & Partner Engagement

We shifted our advocacy work in 2020 to respond to the moment, just as we did our other programs and policies. The Chamber & CVB were in regular contact via phone, email, and leveraged our industry associations to communicate stakeholder needs and experiences to our regional, state, and Federal elected officials. Throughout the year, we shared your concerns, proposed solutions, and advocated for funding and business friendly policies.

A few key topic areas included:

- U.S. Census- Advocacy for a full count
- Fair Business Guidelines/Regulations during shutdown
- Restaurant, caterer & event venue funding/recovery
- Tourism Recovery & Improvement Districts
- PPP Funding for 501c6 organizations
- Funding for research & development based university communities
- Local shopping/economic impact, in collaboration with other regional Chambers of Commerce
- Sensible and equitable business reopening policies during NY Pause and NY Forward
- Build by the 4th of July Infrastructure package

Government & Community Affairs Policy Priorities for 2020

- Preparing for COVID-19
- Reopening & Economic Recovery
- Diversity, Equity & Inclusion/ Racial justice
- Childcare & Education
- Energy, Environment & Climate
- Healthcare
- Housing Development
- Infrastructure
- Short Term Rentals
- Small Business Regulations
- Tourism Economy
- Wage Policy

Examples of Projects we Supported:

- ADC Detox Center in Lansing
- Collegetown Innovation District
- Dyson Grand Challenges Initiative, Cornell University
- Ithaca Downtown Conference Center Project
- Healthiest Cities & Counties – Cradle to Career
- INSPIRE Grant Support – Regional
- Historic Ithaca Work Preserve Program
- TCAT: Electric Buses, Low-No Emission Program, Facility

VisitIthaca.com Traffic Overview

A notable finding in reviewing 2020 website traffic is Visitithaca.com saw the highest percentage of new users in at least five years.
Additional goals tracked include travel guide requests through website form (2,401), and new email subscribers through website sign-up (1,767).

	2020	2019	%Change
Total Sessions	465,286	544,337	-14.5
Users	361,009	404,777	-11
New Users	**77.7% of all traffic**	**73.6%**	

See pg. 8 for top Destination Market Area traffic comparison.

A month-to-month comparison, 2020 (blue) vs 2010 (orange) of website traffic shows a slight increase and on-par July through October; Paid Search campaigns ended in April and have not yet resumed.
Global pandemic declared March 11th.



Content Review

Traffic to content pages related to Waterfalls saw a slight increase in traffic from 2019, while Events and Dining pages saw a significant decrease.

Pageviews for a sample of new & updated content pages:

COVID-19 Info for Visitors	24,675 (new)
Fall Foliage Report	6,329 (up 600%)
Things to Do in Winter	5,697 (up 390%)
5 Best Fall Hikes	5,082 (up 68%)
Craft Cider	3,623 (up 15%)
Things to Do with Kids	1,669 (new)



Partners Referrals

Direct click-through to partner websites across all listings:

Total Visit Website clicks = 30,227
Attraction Book Online clicks = 592
Lodging Book Online clicks = 3,422
Check Availability clicks = 29,679



Social Following

Facebook followers (Dec) 42,015 +1%
Instagram followers (Dec) 12,900 +19%

Facebook /Visit Ithaca
Reach 670,930

Instagram Top 9 posts
Reach 80,397 up 25.6%
Engagement 8,145 up 2.2%



Growth in Organic

Organic Search brought in most of the site's overall sessions at 80.5% of overall traffic. VisitIthaca.com's presence in Google Search Results also grew in 2020 compared to 2019 with Organic Clicks and Organic Impressions both being up substantially.

PR & Earned Media

Media hits and outreach

By leveraging the power of relationships, with a reduction in hosting and paid media budget, PR outreach resulted in significant exposure for the Visit Ithaca brand and the Tompkins County region to inspire travel.





Forbes Online
10 Great North American Cities You Probably Haven't Seen, But Should (Feb)
5,945 estimated views

MetroSource Magazine (Print & Digital, Oct) LGBT-focused audience
Autumn Is Calling: Some of our favorite fall destinations in NY, 150,000+ impressions

Bobo and ChiChi (June & late Sept) NYC-based travel influencers
28.7K Instagram followers and 175,000+ monthly pageviews: 6 Instagram static posts; Instagram stories; 2 blog posts mentioning multiple restaurants & attractions

Mad Hatters NYC (Dec)
NYC-based travel, lifestyle, and food blog, 6.5K Instagram followers
Small Town, Big Heart: Why Ithaca Should Be Part of Your Finger Lakes Getaway, included COVID-19 specific travel trips for overnight getaways



- Hosted top tier travel & sustainability writer for two-night FAM trip (Sept)
- Promoted voting for Exprience! Finger Lakes as a 10 Best Wine Tour, USA TODAY
- Promoted Ithaca as a nominee for Best US Small Town, Conde Nast Traveler
- Responded to 12 requests for images from mid-tier publication and for regional promotional use including Albany Times Union, ITH airport, Johnson School at Cornell, I LOVE NY, and Finger Lakes Regional Tourism Council



#WEARAMASK Video

Made in collaboration with IAED, Tompkins Chamber, and Downtown Ithaca Alliance.

YouTube Visit Ithaca channel:
3,300+ views

Facebook /VisitIthaca:,
4,900 Reach;
278 Reactions/Comment/Shares



#IthacaWaterfalls campaign

Ten different waterfalls were highlighted each week from Oct-Dec with a focus on detailed information for new visitors. Posts included a nearby lodging and restaurant recommendation with each waterfall.

Instagram: 45,288 Reach; 2,250 Likes

Facebook: 15,185 Reach;
439 Reactions/Comment/Shares



I Love NY loves Ithaca

Ten I LOVE NY blog posts featured Tompkins County partners including:
Best Online Events, Virtual Tours, and Live Cams (March)
Street Art You Need to See (Aug)
Best Farm-to-Table Dining Experience (Oct)
Fun Outdoor Winter Activities for All (Dec)

Posts are shared on I LOVE NY's Facebook page with 1.4M+ followers

Sales is always forward working, booking tours, conferences, and events into the future. The Sales team worked to better position our destination for future success when group travel barriers are lifted. They quickly assisted clients to rebook canceled 2020 events into the future, continued pursuing leads for future years, developed new ways to attract business, and strengthened client relationships to keep Tompkins County top of mind. In doing so, they have established your CVB teame as a trusted resource.

	2020	2019
Leads Sent	64	89
Leads Booked	25	54
Potential EIC	$2,831,269	$2,812,959
Booked EIC*	$ 457,927	$2,053,258

**Economic Impact Calculation.*



2020 Accomplishments

- Completed 74 one-on-one appointments with domestic tour planners at American Bus Association Annual Marketplace, Heartland Travel Showcase in Q1 and at virtual Travel Alliance Partners' TAP Dance in Q3.
- Created Virtual Site Tours to use as a sales tool for clients not able to visit in person.
- Participated as a panelist in a webinar with Twin Travel Concepts in September to promote Ithaca and the Finger Lakes Region to 100 travel agents.
- Distributed quarterly check-in emails to association clients and tour planners.
- Interviewed in December by JTB, an international receptive operator, for a YouTube video promoting Ithaca as a college town to Japanese clients.
- Participated in weekly meetings to support the Ithaca Downtown Community Conference Center development.



Ithaca Scores 2020 Dream Destinations Cover

Travel Alliance Partners awarded the cover of the TAP Dream Destinations Guide to Visit Ithaca, a publication that the TAP members use throughout the year to market partner destinations to their clients.

"I gotta tell you I wanna jump in my car and come to Ithaca – your subject 'remember the places where you feel calm', well it worked. I'm going to build a couple of your itineraries for our fall series and then pray! You are a perfect rebound destination because of the "outdoor" theme and because you are as close to us as traveling to NYC for the day. Thank you for keeping the spirit alive as we wait our safe return!"
- Crystal De Lorenzo, Wade Tours, Inc.



A Glimpse of Normalcy & Hope for the Future

Welcomed Perkiomen Tours from PA in October – our first motorcoach of 2020.

Visitor Experience

"I am in awe of this program! The variety of opportunities, the support of the merchants, the amount of activities/ discounts – OUTSTANDING! I'm so happy Visions is involved in such a quality event!"
—Mandy DeHate, Visions Federal Credit Union



Ithaca Loves Teachers Festival 2020

The Visitor Experience team serves as the frontline with guests to our destination. Extensive and ongoing product knowledge made the team an invaluable asset to visitors as well as to community and tourism partners. From a very successful Ithaca Love Teachers Festival through year-end, your CVB frontline helped visitors virtually by phone, web chat, and email, as well as in person with the safe reopening of both the Overlook at Taughannock Visitor Center and the Downtown Visitor Center.

The 2020 Ithaca Loves Teachers Festival welcomed 4,933 attendees from six states and produced an estimated economic impact of over $319,000 during February, a traditionally slow period for the entire tourism industry. A post event survey of the 2020 Ithaca Loves Teachers Festival attendees revealed:

- 69% of survey respondents reported visiting a business for the first time
- 81% of respondents noted they liked the dining deals best
- 49% of respondents reported spending $150
- 13% of those teachers reporting they spent more than $500



The Visitor Center inside the Tompksins Center for History & Culture was utilized as a check-in location for the first time, and hosted a local food and beverage tasting event organized by the CVB.



The Opening Reception was held at The Hotel Ithaca with approximatly 240 attendees.



The reach of the event continues to grow as partners offer new deals and experiences.
Ithaca College added Continuing Teacher and Leader Education (CTLE) classes.

2020 A Tale of True Visitors

The Visitor Experience team pivoted from an extremely strong Q1 to serve our visitors and partner businesses remotely until the reopening of the Overlook at Taughannock Visitor Center in July and the Downtown Visitor Center in late September. Limited resources supported 67% fewer service hours in 2020, compared to 2019, yet overall visitor touchpoints were down 60% from 2019.

	2020	2019	%Change
Phone	1,208	2,152	-43.87
East Shore VC	286	3,958	-92.77
Downtown VC	957	4,892	-80.44
Taugh. VC	20,659	35,636	-42.03
Web Chat	2,449	2,972	-17.60
Travel Guide	4,262	5,462	-21.97
Off-Site Events	1,346	24,451	-94.50
Total	31,167	79,523	-60.81%

Drive Markets

When overlaying the top destination market areas to our visitor centers over website sessions by metro area, we discovered our traditional feeder markets of New York City and Northern NJ were out-performing local and regional visitation. New York City website sessions were up 22%, even without paid search, as the early days focused on inspirational travel. We saw an increase in traffic to our visitor centers from NYC residents, expressing their desire to get out of the dense city and into socially distanced, mask wearing, nature-rich communities like Ithaca and Tompkins County.

	Walk in Traffic	% Change YoY	% Change Web
New York City	6,788	+8	+22
Syracuse	2,556	-61	-61
Philadelphia	2,081	-39	-32
Rochester	2,027	-22	-22
Buffalo	1,440	-11	-2





"I just had the most amazing live chat with Steen from your office, who was incredibly helpful. I'm from NYC so the fact that I haven't been to Ithaca is frankly embarrassing, and I can't wait to explore. (By the way, that chat is a godsend – I wish more DMOs had it!)"
—Jeff Lesser, Marketing Director, Travelzoo

Visitor Experience

Web-Based Chat Impact

The Visitor Experience team did an excellent job staying abreast of the trails, restaurants, lodging properties and merchants statuses while adding COVID-19 safety parameters to their knowledge base. This proved to be incredibly valuable to exceeding visitor expectations through our webchat service.

Higher Ed Program Pivot

To support the Higher Education goals of the Tompkins County Tourism Program Strategic Plan, we developed a virtual "Introduction to Ithaca" program to showcase area attractions, restaurants, events, and transportation contributing to the quality of life for a college student in Ithaca, with time for Q&A. The program was offered to groups at Ithaca College and at Cornell University. The program with Ithaca College was the highest attended webinar offered by the Admissions Department last fall for prospective students, with 428 students and their families in attendance.

"This was a wonderful experience. I came on this website with so many questions and uncertainties and this chat popped up and this person on the other end of it answered every single one of my questions. I am confident that I will be prepared for my trip! Thank you so much!"
—Webchat User, Hauppauge, NY

"Thanks for tonight's presentation on the town of Ithaca. When my dad and I drove up to see Ithaca College in October, I had no idea there were so many cool things to do. If I'm accepted, I would love to hike those waterfalls!"
—Ithaca College prospective student



Celebrating Success

Site Supervisor, Ryan Shehu, selected as one of Destinations International's 30 under 30 Award Winners.



Lost International Spending

We welcomed guests from 83 countries to our visitor centers in 2019, compared to only 11 countries in 2020, resulting in $1M+ deficit of international guest spending* from visitor center walk-in traffic alone. Top feeder international countries in 2020 were Canada, Brazil, France, and Australia.

**source: US Dept. of Commerce 2020 data*



A2D Training Program

Visitor Journey: Arrival to Departure (A2D) was launched in 2019. There are seven online learning modules, plus an in-person class. The live class was quickly transitioned to virtual and those who had started the program were encouraged to take the virtual class to complete the second portion of the training and become A2D Champions. We successfully trained 48 Champions from 14 businesses.

Advocacy & Partner Engagement

Tourisms is a shared value to our entire community, as was demonstrated during the COVID-19 pandemic. Your CVB team worked to gather information and shared it quickly to all tourism partner businesses.

- Worked to locate financial assistance programs during NY Pause.
- Communicated guidelines for each industry as we transitioned to NY Forward.
- Carried partner concerns forward to local, state, and federal officials.
- Advocated for the need to move forward with the conference center as an economic recovery tool.
- Communicated impacts of Higher Education major events to tourism businesses.
- Partnered with other local economic development agencies to gather accurate information on business openings and service protocols.
- Worked with NYSDMO and NYSHTA to advocate on behalf of event organizers and venues.
- Partnered with US Travel for inclusion of 501c6 non-profits in CARES Act funding.
- Gathered real time travel sentiment research from Longwoods International and Knowland meeting planner surveys.
- Served on the Tompkins County Economic Development Recovery Cabinet.

NYSDMO NYS Destination Marketing Organizations

WHEN IT'S TIME FOR YOU, WE'LL BE READY
Let's GO There

Longwoods INTERNATIONAL





"I appreciate your total devotion to promoting the Finger Lakes region in general and Tompkins County in particular, and helping to make things happen. I look forward to doing more productive collaboration with you in the future."
—Ibe Ibeike-Jonah, Grassroots



"Thank you. You are doing a great job working miracles. I appreciate you."
—Barbara Raab, County Inn & Suites, Ithaca

Financial Performance & Assets

Our Decision to Sell 904 East Shore Drive



In September 2020, after significant discussion and deliberation which took place over the course of a two years, multiple Chamber Committees, the Board, and the Staff all agreed that placing the Chamber building on the market was the right decision. This decision was made with considerations in mind, including: the organization's goals to be more financially sustainable in the long term; the building no longer met the Chamber and CVB's needs in the short term (despite numerous investments and renovations); the short- and long-term impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the nature of remote and hybrid work environments for years to come. There was universal agreement that it was time to sell the building, and also to envision what comes next for the organization.

Our Next Home Is…

Throughout 2021, the Chamber & CVB staff and Board will be evaluating many options for our new space, and considering the ways that space can not only meet our needs, but connect us more deeply to the community and our stakeholders. We look forward to the process, and sharing our outcomes with you by the end of the year.

Combined Balance Sheet, December 2020	
Assets	
Current Assets	$375,528
Fixed Assets	$932,237
Total Assets	**$1,307,765**
Liabilities	
Current Liabilities	$158,506
Long Term Liabilities:	$557,745
Members Equity /Fund Balance:	$59,513
Total Liabilities & Equity:	**$1,307,765**

Chamber P & L, December 2020	
Revenue	
Member Dues	$297,654
Events, Program Admin	$165,679
Grants, Cost Share, Misc	$162,820
Total:	**$626,152**
Expenses:	
Personnel Expenses	$355,347
Building/Occupancy	$78,226
Operating Expenses	$99,681
Total Expenses:	**$569,044**
Net Profit/Loss:	**$57,109**
Total Reduction in Budget:	*($172,198)*

CVB P & L, December 2020	
Revenue:	
Tompkins County Tourism Program Matching Funds /other grants	$964,407
	$103,436
Advertising sales & program revenue	$ 59,827
Retail Sales/Misc	$ 36,564
Total:	**$1,164,234**
Expenses:	
Administration	$430,468
Group Sales	$122,736
Marketing/PR	$402,293
Visitor Services	$217,465
Total:	**$1,172,962**
Net Profit/Loss:	**($ 8,729)**
Total Reduction in Budget:	*($620,234)*

Tompkins County Chamber of Commerce and Ithaca/Tompkins County Convention & Visitors Bureau

Jennifer Tavares, CEcD
PRESIDENT & CEO

Peggy Coleman
VP TOURISM & CVB DIRECTOR

Rachael Atkins-Walpole
SITE SUPERVISOR

Sarah Barden
MEMBER RELATIONSHIP MANAGER

Maia Consolo
SENIOR VISITOR EXPERIENCE SPECIALIST

Carly Hansen
DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS, HR

Diane Hemly
BOOKKEEPER/OFFICE MANAGER

Jordan Herson
MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS SPECIALIST

Sarah Imes, CTIS
TOUR & TRAVEL MANAGER

Steen Kittredge
SENIOR VISITOR EXPERIENCE SPECIALIST

Jodi LaPierre, PDM
DIRECTOR OF VISITOR EXPERIENCE

Nana Potenza
BUSINESS & DEVELOPMENT SPECIALIST

Erin Rafalowski
DIRECTOR OF MARKETING

Ryan Shehu
SITE SUPERVISOR

David Walton
EVENTS & PROGRAMS MANAGER

This work was accoplished with contributions from the following in 2020:
Dominick Recckio, Ritza Francois, Kendall Blizzard, Katie Kutz, Cameron Coughlin, Beth Duff, Danielle Hemly, Matt Janson, Pei Pei Liu, Jessica Plue, Justin Scheidweiler

VALUES

Reflected in the way we operate internally, and in the way we interact with stakeholders in the community.

Participation & Collaboration
Free Enterprise & Commerce
Entrepreneurial Spirit
Involved Leadership
Integrity & Accountability
Environmental Stewardship
Diversity & Inclusion
Commitment to our Community





Image by Kris Reynolds