



City of Glens Falls

Smart Growth Comprehensive Plan

Tourism, Arts, History and Entertainment Focus Group Roundtable Discussion

**Christine L. McDonald Room at Crandall Public Library
December 19, 2024**

Current Characterization of Arts, Culture, and Tourism Sector

1. Emerging Identity

- Glens Falls is gaining recognition as a multidimensional destination, benefiting dining, nightlife, retail, and museums.
- Unique sense of community distinguishes it from nearby areas like Saratoga.
- Venues such as the Queensbury Hotel and Shirt Factory draw significant visitors (e.g., 900 annual events, 50,000 visitors).

2. Geographic Advantage

- Glens Falls benefits from its proximity to major metro areas and seasonal tourism hotspots. It also offers more year-round attractions than some neighbors.

3. Community and Collaboration

- There is strong collaboration among arts organizations, with Glens Falls establishing itself as an arts-focused community.
- The arts community and local champions are key to sustaining cultural growth and drawing visitors.

4. Economic Impact

- Arts and culture tourism is a critical economic driver, contributing to local businesses and the community's growth, but are often underfunded and undervalued.
- Metrics like Return on Investment (ROI) and visitor data are crucial to securing additional funding.
- Visitors are increasingly taking notice of the area's safety, environment, and lifestyle, with some relocating to the city after visits.

5. Challenges

- Lack of outdoor recreation integration with arts and culture.
- Only a fraction of visitors interested in arts and museums follow-through with a visit.
- Parking limitations and land-use inefficiencies hinder accessibility and growth.
- The youth "brain drain" impacts sustainable long-term growth in arts and tourism.

Opportunities for Growth

1. Targeted Marketing

- Focus on niche markets, particularly younger audiences and visitors interested in combining outdoor activities with cultural experiences. Market to locals as well.
- Share and use data (e.g., VISA, hotel stats) to inform and refine marketing strategies.
- Build a local reputation that is separate from Saratoga and Lake George.

2. Youth Engagement

- Create opportunities for education, employment, and participation in arts and tourism. Foster existing interest to retain youth and maintain a talent pipeline.
- Expand arts, culture, and entertainment resources to attract and retain younger residents and employees, including remote workers.

3. Collaboration and Synergy

- Align local events with regional opportunities and position the city as a feeder for Lake George and the Adirondacks. (e.g., supporting Lake George's winter tourism with attractions in Glens Falls that are not weather dependent).
- Consolidate marketing platforms and cross-promote events through ads, kiosks, or digital channels.

4. Infrastructure and Investment

- Expand arts and cultural funding – continue occupancy tax allocations and include a fixed budget line item. Use visitation and spending data to justify this policy.
- Promote historic preservation and infill development for artistic and tourism uses. Consider land use regulations in the Arts District that support arts and culture uses.
- Address missing infrastructure, like overnight parking, wayfinding, and housing.
- Support a consistent definition of "tourism" that includes visual and performing arts.

5. Strengthening Non-Profits and Public Support

- Increase resources for non-profits managing arts and tourism.
Have designated public employees to coordinate arts and cultural development.