



## 10. Tourism Industry Analysis

### Introduction

Tourism is a significant contributor to the Greene County economy. According to the NYS Department of Labor, travel and tourism employment constitutes 10% of all jobs in the County. Unlike construction, retail trade, or manufacturing, however, tourism is not generally classified as a discrete industry; rather, it comprises a diverse mix of industries and establishments that supply goods and services to travelers. Many of these industries supply goods and services to local residents as well. This can make determining the importance of tourism and measuring its activity more challenging than for other sectors of the economy.

#### Components of the Tourism Industry

- Hotels and motels
- Bed-and-breakfast inns
- RV parks and campgrounds
- Performing arts centers and theaters
- Museums and art galleries
- Racetracks
- Historical sites
- Zoos and botanical gardens
- Amusement and theme parks
- Skiing facilities
- Golf courses
- Marinas
- Bowling centers
- Restaurants
- Snack bars
- Bars and taverns
- Passenger air transportation
- Taxi services
- Charter buses
- Passenger car rental
- Travel agencies and tour operators
- Convention and visitors bureaus
- Recreational vehicle and boat dealers
- Gasoline stations
- Sporting goods stores
- Gift, novelty and souvenir stores

Greene County has a rich tradition of family-owned and operated tourism

businesses and numerous resorts and lodging facilities. The area is close to the New York/New Jersey metropolitan area, boasts tremendous natural beauty, offers significant opportunities for outdoor recreation and is home to a variety of historic sites and cultural facilities. These amenities make Greene County unique, drawing not only tourists, but also an increasing number of seasonal residents who have purchased second homes in the County.

Despite these inherent strengths, Greene County's tourism industry faces significant challenges to growth due to changes in the overall travel market. The Project Team set out to develop a strategy to enhance Greene County's tourism assets. The team studied national travel market trends, reviewed prior studies related to tourism in the Catskills, conducted surveys of visitors to the County, analyzed regional tourism employment data, assessed local tourism assets, and interviewed County tourism officials and other representatives of the County's tourism industry.

Based on this research, the Project Team identified the

#### Tourism Defined

"Tourism comprises the activities of persons traveling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes not related to the exercise of an activity remunerated from within the place visited."

- World Tourism Organization

"Tourism is the act of travel for the purpose of recreation and business, and the provision of services for this act"

- Wikipedia

# Greene County Comprehensive Economic Development Plan



## 10. Tourism Industry Analysis

strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats related to tourism in the County and developed a series of strategic recommendations for targeting key markets, improving tourism industry infrastructure, enhancing existing promotional efforts and strengthening Greene County's position as a visitor destination.

### Travel Industry and Leisure Travel Market Trends in the U.S.

According to the Travel Industry Association of America's *Power of Travel 2006* report, the U.S. travel and tourism industry has shown strong growth since 2000, which reinforces Greene County's focus on tourism as a component of its economic development strategy. The most recent data available show that the U.S. tourism industry grew by 7.8% between 2004 and 2005. As shown in the table above, industry growth is projected to continue into 2007, but at a slower rate. Domestic travel has also exhibited steady growth over the past two years; between 2004 and 2005, it increased by 3.5%.

| Projected Spending on U.S. Travel and Tourism |                 |                           |
|---|-----------------|---------------------------|
| Year  | Total Spending  | Growth from Previous Year |
| 2005  | \$645.9 billion | 7.8%                      |
| 2006  | \$674.3 billion | 4.4%                      |
| 2007  | \$700.7 billion | 3.9%                      |

Source: Travel Industry of America

New York State is in the top five of all U.S. states in terms of both the number of visits and spending by domestic and international travelers. The Tourism Industry Coalition of New York State (an affiliate of the New York State Hospitality & Tourism Association) indicates that more than 141 million people visited the state in 2004, generating more than \$39.5 billion in spending.

| Domestic Leisure Travel Volume, 1999-2004 |                            |                |
|---|----------------------------|----------------|
| Year                                      | Person-trips (in millions) | Percent Change |
| 1999                                      | 848.6                      | --             |
| 2000                                      | 865.7                      | 2.0%           |
| 2001                                      | 895.5                      | 3.4%           |
| 2002                                      | 912.3                      | 1.9%           |
| 2003                                      | 929.5                      | 1.9%           |
| 2004                                      | 944.3                      | 1.6%           |

Source: TIA Research Department, *Travelscope*, "The Power of Travel 2006."

Leisure travel now accounts for 81% of all U.S. domestic travel. The table at left shows the volume of domestic leisure travel from 1999 to 2004 in millions of person-trips. A person-trip is one person on one trip 50 miles or more away from home, one way or including one or more overnights. As evidenced by the data, leisure travel shows consistent growth.

Some overall national statistics on leisure travel are consistent with the findings of recent surveys of visitors to Greene County, which are discussed in detail later in this report. For example, both sources indicate that one-third of leisure trips include children, and most leisure trips include an overnight stay of between two and four nights. According to national level data, households are almost as likely to stay with friends or relatives as they are to lodge in a hotel, motel or bed & breakfast. This is not surprising, since visiting friends or relatives is the most popular



## 10. Tourism Industry Analysis

leisure travel purpose, accounting for 50% of all leisure trips; other leisure trip purposes include entertainment (18%) and outdoor recreation (11%). Based on survey data, visitors to Greene County are significantly more likely than the average U.S. traveler to stay in some sort of lodging facility than with family or friends.

While data on average spending of leisure travelers to Greene County is not available, national statistics indicate that households spend \$372 on average during leisure trips, not including spending on transportation to and from the destination. Greene County visitor survey results indicate that the County may not be capturing the full economic benefit of its visitors because a significant number of survey respondents indicated they were not satisfied with the retail and dining options available to them; some skiers even indicated that they only come for the day and drive back home to eat dinner due to a lack of good options.

While the leisure travel industry has experienced steady growth, it has also encountered significant changes during the past decade in terms of what travelers are looking for in a destination, how travelers collect information about potential destinations and make travel arrangements, and what kinds of marketing travelers respond to most effectively. The following summarizes the major trends to be considered in the context of developing strategies to enhance Greene County's tourism industry:

- ***There are more wealthy Americans today than ever before.*** In 2005, the number of millionaires had grown to over 2 million and 13% of households had an annual income of \$100,000 or more. As a result of this wealth, demand for luxury products has reached unprecedented levels.<sup>1</sup> In addition, 30% of consumers say that individual customization is what draws them to a brand today (as opposed to only 6% in 1997) and 35% say environmentally friendly products are worth the extra money.<sup>2</sup>
- ***Nationally, the number of hotel paid room-nights attributable to leisure travel is increasing,*** while business travel is decreasing, according to D.K. Shifflet & Associates. In the high-end hotel segment, gains in the leisure travel market have offset the weakness in business travel. More Americans that used to travel abroad are now staying in the U.S. in upscale accommodations.<sup>3</sup>
- ***The Internet is now the primary means by which consumers gather travel-related information.*** According to the Travel Industry Association of America, an estimated 56% of the U.S. adult population uses the Internet (120 million people) and there are more than 44 million online

<sup>1</sup> Richard K. Miller and Associates, *Consumer Behavior 2006*, a marketing report which integrates the full spectrum of applied consumer psychology and purchasing influences with recent major consumer surveys.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> D.K. Shifflet and Associates, Ltd., DKSA Domestic Performance data. Summit Presentation to American Hotel & Lodging Association, November 2005.

## 10. Tourism Industry Analysis

travel bookers. These “on-line travelers” are not only looking for special deals and promotions; they also want to find high quality, easily accessible information about their potential destination. Use of search engines, such as Google and Yahoo, is the preferred method of 52% of leisure travelers to find information about their destination.<sup>4</sup> Tourism entities need to harness search engine technology to direct potential customers to their websites and ensure that their websites are easy to navigate and include vital information that travelers are seeking. For lodging establishments, this means clear information on pricing and suggestions on nearby restaurants and things to do, and/or links to local tourism promotion agencies for up-to-date information on special events and activities.

- **Spending on “health and wellness,” which encompasses everything from spa treatments and massage therapy to organic foods, has emerged as a major business sector** with a market estimated between \$300 and \$400 billion.<sup>5</sup> The spa industry alone is one of the largest in the U.S., serving nearly 45 million customers each year and generating \$11.2 billion annually.<sup>6</sup> Accordingly, health and wellness is a major attraction for vacation travelers today. Travelers often incorporate spa visits in with other activities while on vacation and 33% of leisure travelers now say that access to a spa is a primary consideration in making their travel plans.<sup>7</sup>
- **In addition to spa travel, vacationers in many demographic clusters are increasingly pursuing experiential or enrichment activities,** according to the Travel Industry Association of America and other travel market research companies. Tourism entities selling complete vacation packages that feature an experience such as cooking school, learning adventures that teach a new skill or sport, educational programming around cultural, heritage or environmental themes, and even volunteer work are becoming quite popular.
- **Demographic changes in the U.S. have created new market segments based on generational differences.** The three major generational groups travel industry professionals must consider in their marketing and promotional efforts today are:
  - The “Junior Matures:” healthier travelers, ages 55-64. They take more trips per year, travel farther and stay away longer than other travelers. They demand a wider variety of activities, both cultural and educational.
  - The “Gen-Xers:” born between 1965 and 1976, they are becoming an increasingly large part of the business travel market and are very Internet savvy.

<sup>4</sup> “Online Travel Worldwide Report,” E-Marketer.com, December 2005.

<sup>5</sup> *Consumer Behavior 2006*.

<sup>6</sup> *The Power of Travel 2006*, Travel Industry Association of America.

<sup>7</sup> *Meredith Travel Marketing Newsletter*, December 2005.

## 10. Tourism Industry Analysis

- The “Millennials:” the children of baby boomers, born 1977-1994. This market segment is ethnically diverse, highly sophisticated in Internet research and has significant exposure to the world through the media.<sup>8</sup>
- **A recent study found significant differences between Baby Boomers and Generation X regarding their travel product preferences.** Baby Boomers tend to be more business and service-oriented, want more security, and prefer an extremely comfortable bed. Gen Xers like more cutting-edge electronics and machines, more “free stuff,” such as Internet access, and a “great bathroom with a Jacuzzi.”<sup>9</sup>
- **In the last several years, high-speed Internet access has become a “must-have” hotel amenity for both business and leisure travelers.** The American Hotel and Lodging Association’s 2006 Lodging Survey found that 89% of U.S. hotel properties currently offer this service, compared to 50% in 2004.<sup>10</sup> An increasing number of hotel chains are installing wireless high-speed Internet access, allowing computer-savvy travelers to check their e-mail and search the Internet in the lobby or by the pool. Technology is expected to have a continuing impact on the hospitality industry for the foreseeable future. “Hoteliers must strive to keep up with the relevant technology that is not only expected from the business traveler, but also the leisure and younger sets. The continual widespread adoption of technology by the public will continue to have impact on the consumer expectation of their hotel experience.”<sup>11</sup>
- **Women are a major target market,** as research has shown they have a significant influence on family vacation spending decisions and are increasingly leaving their spouses and children behind and vacationing with friends instead.<sup>12</sup> Meredith Travel Marketing reports that 1 in 5 women now leave men behind when going on vacation and that 18% of women took a trip with women only in the past three years. In addition, *Consumer Behavior 2006* reports that women drive 85% of new spending on luxury items.
- A report on family vacation travel prepared by the Travel Industry Association of America found that **most family travelers rated “value for the money” (91%) and “variety of things to do”**

<sup>8</sup> “Travel Insights – The Challenge to Brand America,” Travel Industry Association of America, August 2005, p. 13.

<sup>9</sup> D.K. Shifflet and Associates, Ltd., DKSA Domestic Performance data. From Summit Presentation to American Hotel & Lodging Association, November 2005.

<sup>10</sup> “AH&LA Releases Results of the Most Comprehensive Study of the Lodging Industry,” American Hotel & Lodging Association Press Release, July 31, 2006.

<sup>11</sup> “Top Ten Issues in the Hospitality Industry for 2007,” International Society of Hospitality Consultants, November 29, 2006. <http://ahlaradio.hsyndicate.com/news/4029554.html>

<sup>12</sup> *Consumer Behavior 2006*.



## 10. Tourism Industry Analysis

(89%) as somewhat important or very important in selecting their travel destination. As expected, most of those with children (86%) rated “activities for children” as important.<sup>13</sup>

- As a consequence of national population trends and immigration, **ethnic markets will likely comprise a larger proportion of travelers in years to come.** According to the Travel Industry Association of America, between 2000 and 2002, Hispanic travel volume increased 20%, while Asian-American travel volume increased 10%, much higher than the 2% growth of travelers overall.<sup>14</sup> Greene County has experienced a substantial increase in the number of Asian-American visitors. Hispanics now account for 6% of visitors to Hunter Mountain, twice as much as a decade ago, and the ski area has had an upsurge in Eastern European and Asian clients from the New York/New Jersey metropolitan area. Existing resorts and other attractions need to find ways to market themselves to Hispanic and Asian-American populations.
- Another trend to consider is that **vacationers continue to seek out the less-traveled and emerging destinations to seek respite from their busy everyday lives.** As a result of the hectic schedules of many consumers, tourism businesses can attract customers by bundling desired touring, attractions, activities, cuisine and lodging, which makes it easy to plan and book a vacation.

<sup>13</sup> *The Meredith Family Vacation Study 2003: A Special Study of Family Vacation Travel.* Travel Industry Association of America, March 2004, p. 51.

<sup>14</sup> *Fast Facts.* Travel Industry Association of America. [http://www.tia.org/pressmedia/domestic\\_a\\_to\\_z.html](http://www.tia.org/pressmedia/domestic_a_to_z.html)

## 10. Tourism Industry Analysis

### Greene County's Role in Tourism

#### GREENE COUNTY TOURISM PROMOTION DEPARTMENT

The Greene County Tourism Promotion Department (GCTP) is responsible for marketing the County as a tourism destination. The GCTP partners with the County's chambers of commerce, tourism businesses and municipalities to stage and promote various special events that bring visitors to Greene County. It also works closely with the Greene County Department of Planning and Economic Development to help attract new tourism-related businesses and assist existing businesses.



According to the GCTP, domestic visitors to Greene County come primarily from within a 200- to 400- mile radius, with the strongest markets identified as:

- Columbia, Ulster, and Delaware Counties and the Capital-Saratoga Region for day trips;
- the New York/New Jersey metropolitan area;
- Massachusetts and Connecticut; and
- Pennsylvania.

These markets vary seasonally. In winter, New York/New Jersey is the strongest market, because Hunter Mountain and Windham Mountain are among the closest major facilities to the New York City metropolitan area for skiing. In other seasons, Greene County has much more competition from other New York State regions and states.<sup>15</sup> Ulster County, the Lake George/Saratoga region, the Berkshires in Massachusetts, and the Poconos in Pennsylvania are considered Greene County's biggest competitors.

The GCTP is designated by the County Legislature as the recognized Tourism Promotion Agency (TPA) for Greene County. This designation enables the Department to apply, receive and administer funding granted by NYS Division of Tourism under the annual I Love New York (ILNY) Matching Fund Program. In 2005, 35% of the GCTP's advertising budget was used to purchase print ads in the ILNY Summer Travel Guide and in the ILNY advertising inserts. The GCTP also conducts print and television advertising targeting downstate travel markets; the ad schedule includes *Readers Digest*, the *New York Times*, *Preservation* and *Gourmet* magazines, *AAA Car & Driver*, and other regional publications.

<sup>15</sup> Greene County Tourism Promotion Department, *Marketing Plan 2005/06*.



## 10. Tourism Industry Analysis

The Tourism Information Center at NYS Thruway Exit 21 is managed and staffed by the GCTP; it is open 7 days a week, year-round, to assist visitors, and averages about 200 phone calls per month in the summer. The majority of the space in the Information Center is allocated to displaying brochures of Greene County's attractions, hotels and special events. It is also an ILNY Information Center and offers County brochures and state guides from all regions of the state. Under a reciprocal agreement, Greene County's travel guides are available at Tourism Information Centers throughout the Hudson Valley and Catskill Regions as well as at other ILNY Information Centers.

The GCTP maintains the County's official tourism website, [www.greenetourism.com](http://www.greenetourism.com). This revamped and interactive website was launched in May 2003 and is updated regularly to ensure that the information is current. Web advertising is often used to attract visitors to the site. As an example, in 2006, the GCTP advertised a March Mountain Madness campaign in conjunction with the Hunter Mountain and Windham Mountain ski areas, offering discounts to attract visitors during a historically slower time of the year. The ad was featured on weather web sites and on Yahoo and Google, resulting in 20,000 visits to the Greene County Tourism website during the month of February; the campaign was also judged to be a success by the two ski areas.

The GCTP works closely with the private sector to promote festivals and special events on the site. According to the Department's 2005 Annual Report, the website averages approximately 10,000 unique visits a month. The Calendar of Events and the Lodging/Dining section are the most used features of the site.

The production and distribution of printed material promoting Greene County is one of the GCTP's most important responsibilities. In 2005, the GCTP distributed approximately 170,000 copies of its 48-page Travel Guide, with particular concentration on the New York/New Jersey metropolitan area. Other publications include a calendar of events (75,000 copies), a golf brochure (30,000), and a bird brochure (5,000).

The distribution of the Travel Guide has changed over the years. According to the GCTP, most of the 170,000 copies are delivered directly "to the marketplace, meaning NYS Thruway stops and info centers, corporate parks, shopping malls, hotels, convenience stores, attractions and AAA agencies." The remaining copies are mailed in response to ads in newspapers or magazines or on television. In the past, an ad in the *New York Times* would elicit numerous phone calls and visits to the Tourism Information Center and thousands of requests for the Travel Guide. Today, however, travelers can access information quickly via the Internet, highlighting the value of having an accurate, up-to-date, and user-friendly website.

The objectives of the GCTP's current marketing plan are to strengthen awareness of Greene County as a four-season vacation destination for the leisure traveler, publicize Greene County attractions for



## 10. Tourism Industry Analysis

family travel, and create awareness of Greene County in overseas markets as part of the Hudson Valley and Catskill regions. Promotional strategies target the following segments:

### Domestic

- Families - camping, great outdoors, events
- Couples - romantic getaways
- Golfers – discount packages, tournaments
- Baby boomers - soft adventure, historical sites, events, fall foliage
- Motorcoach market - day trips to events, historical/cultural sites, dining and shopping
- Winter visitors – skiing, snow-related activities

### International

- United Kingdom – fishing, the great outdoors, ski packages
- The Netherlands – great outdoors, Dutch heritage

To enhance the economic impact of tourism on Greene County, the GCTP has focused on increasing overnight stays and attendance at special events. Events are a recognized asset in attracting visitors to a destination; the Department's mission is to provide advertising and promotional materials to support those events, thereby increasing attendance from outside the County. Promotion within Greene County is the responsibility of the events' organizers. The budget to support events in 2006 is \$169,000; in order to obtain funding, event organizers must submit an application to the Tourism Promotion Department by September 15 of each year for the following year's funding.

The GCTP supports more than 45 events annually, including municipal events for Athens, Cairo, Catskill, Coxsackie, East Durham, Freehold, Greenville, Hunter, Lexington, New Baltimore, Purling, Prattsville, Round Top, Tannersville and Windham. The GCTP is also responsible for scheduling events at The Point in Catskill, with an Advisory Committee providing marketing and technical support.

Special events held in Greene County include the East Durham Irish Festival, the Mountain Cultural Festival, German Alps Festival, Greene County Youth Fair, International Celtic Festival, Black Bear Festival, Microbrew & Wine Festival, and the Catskill Mountain Ginseng/Medicinal Herb Festival. With the exception of holiday season celebrations and craft shows, the majority of these events take place between May and October. Some of the events generate up to 10,000 attendees; most, however, have anywhere from a few hundred to a few thousand participants, and contribute to the quality of life as well as the tourism product in the County.

The GCTP is also seeking to tap into the lucrative motorcoach market. According to the American Bus Association, a fully-loaded motorcoach on a charter or tour staying one night or more contributes an average of \$5,000 to \$12,000 per day to the local economy in expenditures including meals,

# Greene County Comprehensive Economic Development Plan



## 10. Tourism Industry Analysis

lodging, shopping, admission fees, souvenirs, etc.<sup>16</sup> Depending on the destination, day tours contribute \$2,000 to \$5,000 per day, according to a recent study.<sup>17</sup>

One of the agency's greatest challenges is how to differentiate Greene County from neighboring counties and still take advantage of the regional name recognition. The GCTP participates in two regional collaborations: the Catskill Association for Tourism Services (CATS), with Delaware, Sullivan, and Ulster Counties; and the Hudson Valley Tourism Promotion Association, comprised of ten counties bordering the Hudson River from Westchester to Albany-Rensselaer. These initiatives have resulted in the production and distribution of various Catskill and Hudson Valley regional publications such as travel guides, a group travel planner, and a winery map. The GCTP also attends or is represented through regional participation at a variety of travel and trade shows.

The Tourism Promotion Department launched an online hotel reservation system in July 2004. The system allowed visitors to book hotels in Greene County right from their computer. In addition to offering online bookings for overnight stays, the system featured special ski packages and golf packages. The reservation system was discontinued, however, due to lack of participation from the lodging sector. The GCTP is considering other types of systems that would only show room availability and direct the user to the hotel's website for reservations.

In the future, the GCTP plans to continue enhancing and updating its website with driving itineraries for the individual traveler; more detailed information on campsites; more in-depth information on hunting and fishing; an interactive county map; a trade-only section with suggested itineraries and packages; and a press room with selection of feature stories and images. These activities are expected to increase Greene County's exposure to travelers from throughout the world.

### GREENE COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Recognizing the important connection between economic development and tourism and the need to help Greene County's tourism businesses succeed, the Greene County Department of Planning & Economic Development (GCDPED) has been increasingly proactive in developing programs targeted to the local tourism industry.

<sup>16</sup> American Bus Association, <http://www.buses.org/press%5Froom/Industry%5FFacts/>

<sup>17</sup> *Impacts of the Motorcoach Industry on Society and the Economy*. Prepared by Nathan Associates for the American Bus Association, January 2006, pages 17-18.

# Greene County Comprehensive Economic Development Plan



## 10. Tourism Industry Analysis

In 2005, Greene County requested and received \$400,000 from the Governor's Office for Small Cities to establish a Tourism Enhancement Program. The primary objectives of the Tourism Enhancement Program (TEP) are to:

- stimulate private investment in tourism and lodging facilities;
- improve the ability of lodging facilities to compete effectively by meeting the demands of today's travel market;
- create business ownership and year-round employment opportunities for Greene County residents; and
- provide affordable capital for lodging owners.

The lack of quality rooms has been a barrier to the expansion of Greene County's tourism industry. Despite the regional demand, lodging facilities in Greene County have closed as owners have retired or been unable to modernize, and new construction has been limited. Not-for-profit groups from outside the area have also purchased several older properties. Because they have substantial access to outside capital and do not have to operate the properties on an economic basis, they can make substantial offers for property in the County. The TEP was designed to address these issues by providing significant opportunities for business creation, enhancement, and expansion; indeed, Greene County sees the TEP as an essential part of its overall business retention and expansion program.

*The opening of the Kaatskill Mountain Club at Hunter Mountain brought a new standard of service and amenities to the mountaintop, a standard by which all other accommodations in Greene County will probably be measured. It is important for our lodging industry to realize that, to combat the competition and attract both former and new visitors, they cannot rely on the past. Travelers today expect certain services and amenities, for which they are willing to pay. Lodging establishments that cannot invest in physical improvements and modernization will see their occupancy drop.*

Source: Greene County Tourism Promotion Department, 2005 Annual Report

The TEP program offers grants of up to \$25,000 to new and existing lodging establishments. Eligible recipients must be owners of lodging facilities within Greene County that are open to the public. Although all lodging facilities in the County are eligible to apply, the program specifically targets existing facilities that have the opportunity to develop into year-round establishments and/or move into different or more upscale markets through modernization and/or expansion.

TEP funds can be used for interior and exterior renovations, winterization, construction and expansion, furniture and fixtures, and other related facility upgrades; projects must create new employment at the property. Other business needs such as inventory, working capital, equipment and acquisition may be financed through the County's existing revolving loan program, the Quantum Fund, or through traditional bank financing.

## 10. Tourism Industry Analysis

Since the award of GOSC funding for the Tourism Enhancement Program in fall 2005, the GCDPED has received an overwhelming response from the local tourism industry. To date, it has approved TEP financing for eight projects:

- In Greenville, the *Rainbow Lodge and Restaurant* was acquired, renovated and reopened by Kathleen and Jose Pineiro with the help of a Tourism Enhancement Program grant and a Quantum Fund loan. The TEP grant will assist with renovation of the 10-room lodge (renamed Clancy's Rainbow Lodge) and a 348-seat restaurant. Plans call for new paint, carpeting, bedding, window treatments and other improvements to the lodge, which has been closed for the past few years. These improvements will, in part, support the Pineiro's plans to keep the lodge open year-round. To attract families, the new owners plan to install a pool in the spring and potentially add eight more rooms over the kitchen and bar area. The restaurant reopened in fall 2006.
- *Blackhead Mountain Lodge and Country Club* in Round Top is building a new conference and fitness center with the help of a Tourism Enhancement Program grant. The facility is part of a comprehensive renovation and upgrade project at the resort, which has been owned by the Maassmann family since 1967. Construction of the new two-story 1,500 square foot building is expected to be complete in fall 2006. Designed to draw corporate business mid-week, the new conference center will accommodate groups of up to 32 people and will offer high-speed wireless Internet service and state-of-the-art conference equipment. The fitness center, which will be open to guests and members of the resort's golf club, will offer exercise machines, weights, massage room, showers and stunning views of the Blackhead Mountain range. A second project has been proposed for the renovation of eight rooms at the property.
- *Aragona's Country Place* in Durham received a Tourism Enhancement Program grant to help the owners upgrade the hotel restaurant's kitchen and begin offering sit-down lunch service to capitalize on business from Zoom Flume Waterpark.
- *The Bavarian Manor Country Inn*, a converted 1865 summer boardinghouse in Purling, is scheduled for a series of improvements, including new beds, a hot tub, and modest restaurant upgrades, to be financed with the help of a Tourism Enhancement Program grant. The project,



# Greene County Comprehensive Economic Development Plan



## 10. Tourism Industry Analysis

which will be completed in 2007, will enable the inn's owners to better serve their target market and increase occupancy rates.

- In Hunter, *Scribner Hollow Lodge* plans to expand its award-winning restaurant with assistance from a TEP grant and a Quantum Fund loan. The expansion project will allow the restaurant to better accommodate weddings and increase business for the 39-room hotel during the shoulder seasons.
- Owned by the same family for more than fifty years, *Glen Falls House* in Round Top is being acquired and renovated with assistance from a TEP grant and a Quantum Fund loan.

In addition to the Tourism Enhancement Program, the GCDPED is currently conducting a pilot initiative as a component of its Promotion of Industry Program to provide business development services to the hospitality industry. The County provides funding for business plan assistance, commercial appraisals, the development of marketing plans, and other technical assistance.

In May and again in November 2006, the GCDPED sponsored a special two-day training seminar for owners and managers of resorts, lodging facilities, restaurants, attractions, tourism operators and others involved in the tourism industry. The program featured sessions on business plan development, pricing and revenue management, customer service and marketing – each led by experts in the fields. In addition, participants received information about the Tourism Enhancement Program. Based on the success of this session, the GCDPED expects to offer more training seminars in the future. The GCDPED will likely combine with the Tourism Promotion Department to offer an intensive internet marketing seminar in spring 2007.

Here's one tourism seminar owners and managers of resorts, lodging, restaurants, attractions and retail shops won't want to miss.

As part of its new Tourism Enhancement Program, Greene County Planning & Economic Development is sponsoring a two-day seminar for Greene County resort/lodging/tourism operators. Come both days or just come one to learn from experts how to improve your tourism business. You'll also hear the ins and outs of applying for loans ranging from \$3,000-\$25,000.

**Tourism Enhancement Program Training**  
May 15-16, 2006  
Emergency Operations & Training Center  
Catskill, New York

- Business Plan Development
- Pricing and Revenue Management
- Customer Service
- Marketing

Plus...  
How to Tap into Tourism Enhancement Program Loans

Additional funds from the Promotion of Industry budget line are being used for a Business Attraction Initiative, where the County matches advertising dollars spent by local Main Street organizations for retail business attraction. While not a direct investment in the County's tourism industry, the vitality of the historic Main Streets in the County is very important to the ability of the County to attract upscale tourists. The first two programs were implemented with the Heart of the Catskill Association (HOCA); HOCA credits the initiative for the initial success of the new "Home Interior Center of the Hudson Valley" campaign that is filling storefronts on Main Street in Catskill. Additional business attraction programs are planned for other Main Streets in the County.

## 10. Tourism Industry Analysis

### GREENE COUNTY RESORT AND HOSPITALITY ASSOCIATION

The Greene County Resort and Hospitality Association is a private organization whose members represent more than 70 hotels and resorts. Formerly known as the Greene County Tourism Association, the group was originally



established to promote tourism, using private funds for marketing; until the 1970s, the County did not have its own tourism promotion agency. Today, with the GCTP responsible for marketing Greene County, the Resort and Hospitality Association serves primarily as an advocate for the tourism industry, meeting about once a month. It also maintains a website, [www.thecatskills.com](http://www.thecatskills.com), which provides information on events, attractions, lodging and dining, albeit with a focus on its members.

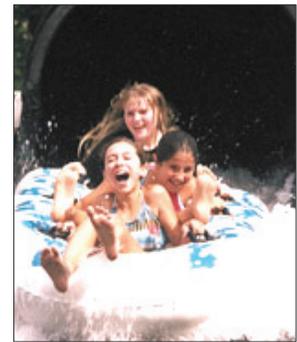
With an increased awareness in the County that the local tourism industry should be protected, and positive working relationships established with the GCTP and GCDPED, the Greene County Resort and Hospitality Association is considering new roles and opportunities for its future. This may include developing travel packages, distributing an e-mail or Internet newsletter, and seeking group discounts on insurance.

### Tourism Assets

Greene County possesses a number of significant tourist attractions, cultural and recreational amenities, and related support businesses, including hotels, motels, and B&Bs, and retail shops and restaurants. In combination, these assets provide a solid foundation upon which to strengthen the County's tourism industry. This section provides a brief snapshot of the County's major tourism attractions and activities for which Greene County is best known, as well as a discussion of lodging properties.

### ACTIVITIES AND ATTRACTIONS

Zoom Flume (East Durham) is one of the most popular outdoor attractions in Greene County. Zoom Flume, founded in 1981, is a family waterpark offering "safe water fun, excitement and relaxation for all ages in a beautiful natural setting." The waterpark has regularly added new attractions and services to meet changing customer needs.



Greene County's other most popular attractions are its ski areas, *Hunter Mountain* and *Windham Mountain* (formerly Ski Windham), which together draw in excess of 600,000 people to the County during the winter months.

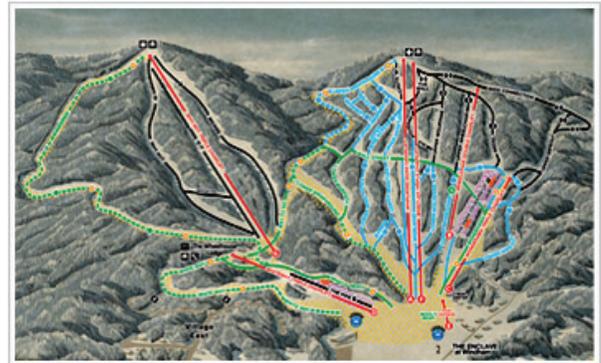
## 10. Tourism Industry Analysis

Hunter Mountain has provided skiers with a mountain experience for nearly half a century. With 11 lifts, 54 trails, and 240 skiable acres, Hunter can accommodate winter sports including skiing, snowboarding, snowshoeing and snowtubing.



Hunter Mountain has made a series of improvements over the last several years. The Learning Center was designed to make it easy for families and beginners to learn to ski and snowboard. Conference facilities have been developed, allowing Hunter Mountain to accommodate weddings, banquets, and trade shows. In the summer and fall, Hunter Mountain hosts a series of weekend festivals, such as a microbrew and wine festival, a Celtic festival and Oktoberfest, packed with music, dancing, kids' activities, and food. In 2005, Hunter Mountain opened the Kaatskill Mountain Club, which combines the distinctive architecture of nineteenth century Catskill Mountain resorts with top-of-the-line twenty-first century amenities; it offers lodging by night as well as condominium ownership. With expanded opportunities for staying slopeside, Hunter Mountain has become one of the Catskill region's premier resort destinations.

Windham Mountain has seen many changes since it opened in 1960 as the Cave Mountain Ski Area; however, it has long been known as a family-friendly resort. The ski area has 8 lifts, 45 trails, and 257 skiable acres, and like Hunter Mountain, it can accommodate a full range of snow sports. A recent \$2.5 million expansion project provided 100,000 square feet of lodging, a larger children's learning center, and additional parking to make Windham Mountain a more attractive ski resort and tourist destination for the area. In addition, a \$22 million luxury townhome and condominium project, the Enclave Club, was developed at the base of Windham Mountain. In 2005, a group of investors purchased Windham Mountain and plan to invest more than \$5 million for additional improvements, including two new chairlifts, 3 new trails, and a skating rink which opened in December 2006.



## 10. Tourism Industry Analysis

### THE ARTS



In modern times, Greene County has not been widely recognized for visual and performing arts, but that perception is improving. Attractions related to the arts in the County include a wide range of galleries, performing arts centers, and theaters. These can be found in all areas of the County, with concentrations in Hunter, Windham, and Catskill. According to a recent article in *About Town*, a regional publication, the number of art galleries in Catskill has expanded from one at the start of 2005 to eight today. The article notes that many of the galleries are “operated by resident artists who bought the buildings they occupy and did much of the renovation work themselves,” contributing to the revival of downtown area.<sup>18</sup>

The Hunter-based *Catskill Mountain Foundation* was formed in 1997 and has become one of the most active cultural organizations in Greene County in a relatively short period of time. It operates a multi-theater film and performing arts center, a bookstore and art gallery, and produces the annual Mountain Cultural Festival, celebrating life in the mountains with music, film, crafts, a book fair, art exhibits, food, and mountain sports events. The Festival draws upwards of 5,000 visitors to the Mountaintop in July, about half of whom are from outside Greene County.

Since 2001, the Catskill Mountain Foundation has partnered with the Windham Chamber Music Festival to produce a series of top-notch classical and jazz concerts in a restored 1826 Presbyterian church. The festival, founded in 1997, has received national acclaim. All of the concerts are recorded, and several performances are broadcast on National Public Radio every year.

The Catskill Mountain Foundation also owns the *Sugar Maples Center for the Arts and Education*. Now in its fourth year, the mission of the school is to create a nationally-recognized center for the study of the visual and performing arts while simultaneously renovating the 80-acre, 22-building property that formerly comprised the Sugar Maples Resort in the hamlet of Maplecrest. The school offers over one hundred courses for students of all ages during the summer season.



<sup>18</sup> Dickenson May. “A New Catskill?” *About Town*, Winter 2005/06, pp. 3 and 5.

## 10. Tourism Industry Analysis

Presently, the Sugar Maples Center complex consists of five fully renovated buildings and a small organic farm. Future plans call for the construction of additional studios, performing arts rehearsal spaces, classrooms, exhibition space, a library, faculty housing, student accommodations, a fitness center, a dining facility and a Natural Agriculture museum. In addition, the Catskill Mountain Foundation is in the process of transforming the long-dormant Orpheum movie theater in Tannersville into a larger, multi-format, state-of-the-art performance facility. These two facilities hold promise in bringing Greene County's arts community to the forefront as it was in years past.

### HISTORIC AND CULTURAL SITES

Greene County's history is reflected in the historic and cultural sites open to the public and frequented by travelers. Although many of the mountain resorts that brought New York's elite to the Catskills in the nineteenth century are long gone, other important aspects of the County's heritage remain.

The *Bronck Museum* (Coxsackie) is a complex of Dutch Colonial dwellings and nineteenth-century barns, including the Hudson Valley's oldest surviving Dutch home. The site was operated as a working farm by eight generations of the Bronck family. The 1663 and 1738 dwellings are furnished with eighteenth and nineteenth century furniture and art. Owned and operated by the Greene County Historical Society, the museum is open for tours from Memorial Day through mid-October.

The *Thomas Cole National Historic Site* (Catskill) is the residence and studio of the founder of the Hudson River School of landscape painting. The house contains galleries of oil paintings and prints as well as rooms with Cole artifacts and period furnishings. The 1815 Federal-style home was in derelict condition until the mid-1990s, when the Greene County Historical Society initiated a restoration campaign. The renovated house and grounds, known as Cedar Grove, were opened to the public for tours in July 2001. Cedar Grove also hosts art exhibitions and a series of "Sunday Salons," which combine informal discussions and a wine reception.



Most recently, Cedar Grove has developed the Hudson River School Art Trail, which maps the painting sites of artists Thomas Cole, Frederic Church, and their contemporaries including Asher B. Durand, Sanford Gifford and Jasper Cropsey. Through website development and increased marketing, the Art Trail project aims to attract more visitors to the historic sites, museums, hiking trails, waterfalls, and other cultural and natural resources in the "birthplace of American landscape

## 10. Tourism Industry Analysis

painting.” The project is funded in part by the Arts & Business Council of New York, which awarded Cedar Grove one of only nine New York State Cultural Tourism Initiative grants in 2006.



Cedar Grove markets the region in conjunction with other cultural organizations, including Olana, the historic home of painter Frederic Church in Columbia County, and the *Mountain Top Historical Society* (MTHS) in Haines Falls. A non-profit organization “dedicated to discovering and preserving the unique and rich history of the Catskill High Peaks,” the MTHS offers lectures and programs and leads hiking trips oriented to the history and culture of the Mountaintop region. For many years, the MTHS has been restoring the former Ulster and Delaware Railroad Station (pictured) as its headquarters; a great deal of work has been done to save the circa 1913 station. In August 2006, the MTHS celebrated the grand

opening of the Hudson River School Art Trail Interpretive Center, which is expected to become a major attraction.

The *Irish American Heritage Museum* is one of several establishments in East Durham reflecting the area’s Irish heritage. In the 1940s and ‘50s, Irish natives living in New York City vacationed in Greene County because the landscape reminded them of the countryside in Ireland. The museum features exhibits and educational programs that reveal the impact of the Irish heritage on the United States. The mission of the *Michael J. Quill Irish Cultural & Sports Centre* is to promote and preserve the cultural and artistic heritage of the Irish and those of Irish descent. While dedicated to maintaining the traditional aspects of the past, the Centre presents a variety of Irish cultural programs, both historic and contemporary. The Centre produces the East Durham Irish Festival on Memorial Day weekend; the annual Catskills Irish Arts Week and the Traditional Irish Music Festival, both in July; and the East Durham Feis in August.

### GOLF

The *Greene International Golf Association* is a private organization dedicated to “promoting the healthy, recreational and economic benefits of the pursuit of golf in Greene County,” according to its website at [www.greencountygolf.com](http://www.greencountygolf.com). With a state grant from Senator James Seward, the Golf Association has developed and designated the *Rip Van Winkle Golf Trail*. The trail connects nine golf courses in Greene County. Golfers who completed play at all nine courses between April and October 2006 were entered into a raffle for \$10,000, which was awarded at their annual dinner in November.

## 10. Tourism Industry Analysis



The Golf Association offers special events and challenges for avid golfers. In 2005 and 2006, the Golf Association and the Greene County Tourism Promotion Department staged a 5-day promotion at Chelsea Piers in Manhattan. Thousands of visitors/golfers had a chance to stop by the Greene County Golf displays, talk to golf pros and pick up the County's golf brochure. The two organizations have also attended golf consumer shows in Westchester and New Jersey. To further promote golf in Greene County, the

Golf Association has worked with several area hotels to develop resort packages combining lodging and dining with free rounds of golf.

The Greene International Golf Association reports that over 250,000 rounds of golf were played at all of its member golf courses in 2005. Since the County, state, and the Golf Association have mutually funded marketing efforts, they have seen a 12% to 14% increase in golf rounds played annually (this data does not differentiate between County residents and visitors who came from outside the County to play golf).

### OUTDOOR RECREATION

The natural beauty of Greene County has always been a strong lure for visitors to the region. The vistas and sites that inspired the Hudson River School of landscape painting, the mountainous woodlands that offered rest and recuperation to urban dwellers, and wild trout streams brimming with fish form the basis of today's outdoor adventures. Greene County attracts hikers, hunters, campers, anglers, skiers, snowtubers, snowmobilers, swimmers, mountain bikers, birders, and other outdoor recreation enthusiasts. Approximately 79,000 acres in Greene County are in the Catskill Forest Preserve, an area that covers more than 290,000 acres of state land.<sup>19</sup> There are abundant opportunities for exploration, particularly in the state's Wild Forests and Wilderness Areas, from the cascade of Kaaterskill Falls to the open views at Huckleberry Point.

...what greater contrast to the ceaseless maddening din of the city's whirl than to stroll hatless and carefree along the leafy paths of mountainous woodland where ears are greeted with naught save Dame Nature's softest sounds; the gentle murmur in of breeze swept leaves, the mellow trickling of bubbling springs, the merry chirping of sweet-voiced birds; a subtle, satisfying sense of consoling calm, of perfect peace, invades the entire being, and in this forest dreamland of consciousness one forgets, as if it never been, the waging war of the world without.

From Charles B. Wells, "A Catskill Reverie," 4 Track News (June 1906). Cited on the Catskill Archive website ([www.catskillarchive.com/4track/1.htm](http://www.catskillarchive.com/4track/1.htm)).

<sup>19</sup> New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, *Draft Revision Catskill Park State Land Master Plan*, August 2003, page 2.



## 10. Tourism Industry Analysis

The Hudson River has boating opportunities at boat launch sites in Athens, Catskill, and Coxsackie, and at private marinas throughout Greene County. More than a dozen campgrounds have sites for tents and recreational vehicles, with the DEC North-South Lake Campground in Haines Falls among the most popular. Fishing continues to draw visitors; in 2006, Greene County hosted a total of 15 bass fishing tournaments.

Several years ago, Greene County developed a brochure on bird watching. More than 270 species of birds have been reported in the County over the years. Studies have found that birders typically have high income levels and tend to spend significant amounts of money in the places that they visit, so pursuing this market segment could prove beneficial to Greene County.

### ACCOMMODATIONS

Information included in the 2006 Greene County Travel Guide indicates that the County has approximately 120 lodging establishments, including bed-and-breakfasts (B&Bs), country inns, cabins and cottages, condos, hotels and motels, resorts, and retreats. Statistics on these properties and selected amenities are shown in the table below.

Two categories – hotels, motels, and lodges, and bed-and-breakfasts (B&Bs) and country inns – account for the largest number of establishments, with 47 and 33, respectively. The B&Bs average about 7 rooms, with a maximum of 21. Hotels and motels, on the other hand, average 22 rooms. The largest hotels/motels are the Quality Inn & Conference Center in Catskill (74 rooms) and the Best Western New Baltimore Inn (63 rooms), two of only four chain-affiliated lodging properties in Greene County, the majority being smaller, “mom-and-pop”-type motels.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>20</sup> A business-class Holiday Inn Express, to be located off Exit 21B of the NYS Thruway, recently received approval from the Town of Coxsackie Planning Board.

# Greene County Comprehensive Economic Development Plan



## 10. Tourism Industry Analysis

| Greene County Lodging Inventory |                             |   |        |                   |                 |                                  |         |          |       |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------------|---|--------|-------------------|-----------------|----------------------------------|---------|----------|-------|
|                                 | B&Bs and<br>Country<br>Inns | Cabins,<br>Cottages,<br>and<br>Efficiencies | Condos | Farm<br>Vacations | Golf<br>Resorts | Hotels,<br>Motels, and<br>Lodges | Resorts | Retreats | TOTAL |
| Number of Establishments        | 33                          | 7   | 3      | 2                 | 5               | 47                               | 22      | 2        | 121   |
| Number of Rooms/Units           | 245                         | 121   | 66     | 6                 | 196             | 1,027                            | 1,749   | 158      | 3,568 |
| Avg Number of Rooms/Units       | 7.4                         | 17.3  | 22.0   | 3.0               | 39.2            | 21.9                             | 79.5    | 79.0     | 269.3 |
| Establishments Open All Year    | 32                          | 3   | 3      | 0                 | 0               | 36                               | 6       | 1        | 81    |
| Establishments with:            |                             |   |        |                   |                 |                                  |         |          |       |
| Private Bath                    | 26                          | 7   | 3      | 2                 | 5               | 44                               | 22      | 2        | 111   |
| Air Conditioning                | 22                          | 6   | 2      | 1                 | 5               | 40                               | 22      | 2        | 100   |
| TV/Cable                        | 24                          | 7   | 3      | 2                 | 5               | 44                               | 20      | 1        | 106   |
| Jacuzzi                         | 10                          | 0   | 2      | 0                 | 1               | 6                                | 9       | 0        | 28    |
| Fitness Center                  | 3                           | 0   | 2      | 0                 | 1               | 3                                | 8       | 0        | 17    |
| Pets Allowed                    | 16                          | 2   | 1      | 1                 | 0               | 14                               | 1       | 0        | 35    |
| Handicapped Accessibility       | 3                           | 1   | 1      | 0                 | 2               | 17                               | 14      | 1        | 39    |
| Indoor or Outdoor Pool          | 4                           | 7   | 2      | 0                 | 4               | 24                               | 22      | 1        | 64    |
| Bus Parking                     | 2                           | 0   | 2      | 0                 | 4               | 17                               | 20      | 1        | 46    |

Source: 2006 Greene County Travel Guide.

The County's 22 resorts account for nearly half of the room count, however. Ranging in size from 21 to 500 units, the resorts generally offer an array of activities for families, from go-karts and golf to hayrides and barbecues. Some of the resorts have been operated by the same families for generations, and have customers that return year after year. The market for these resorts is changing, however. In the past, people used to book a resort stay for two weeks or even a whole summer; today, travelers are seeking shorter stays, constrained by their hectic lifestyles and unrelenting work schedules.

In addition, resorts that traditionally catered to large ethnic populations are finding that their customers are literally dying off, without being replaced by new waves of immigrants. Fifty years ago, Germans went to a German resort, Italians to an Italian resort, and so on. Today, those ethnic resorts must appeal to a broader clientele to survive. The result has been that many older resort properties have experienced substantial disinvestment and fallen into a cycle of disrepair and low occupancy rates; many have been sold to religious and other not-for-profit organizations for various uses and are no longer on the tax rolls.

Data from the Travel Guide indicates that two-thirds of all the lodging properties in Greene County are open all year, with many resorts (particularly those off the Mountaintop) closed from November to March to April. Some of the smaller hotel and motel properties also close for part of the year, while virtually all of the B&Bs and country inns are open year-round.



## 10. Tourism Industry Analysis

In terms of amenities, 91.7% of the lodging properties in Greene County have rooms with private bath, 87.6% have TV/cable, 82.6% have air conditioning, and 52.9% have an indoor and/or outdoor pool. The Greene County Tourism Promotions Department notes that pool facilities are among the most widely requested amenities when visitors are looking for accommodations. Although they are available in all of the resorts and about half of the hotels and motels, relatively few B&Bs have a pool.

Approximately one-third of the properties are handicapped accessible, 28.9% allow pets, 23.1% have a Jacuzzi, and 14.0% have a fitness center on the premises. Finally, 38.0% of the lodging properties in the County have bus parking. Some of these properties offer as little as 15 or 20 rooms, however, and therefore may not meet the standard requirements of motorcoach tour operators. Again, this amenity is much more common among resorts, hotels, and motels than among B&Bs.

Occupancy data for Greene County lodging properties is not available. Past attempts by the Greene County Tourism Promotions Department to compile such information have been met with resistance from lodging owners; indeed, an online reservation service launched by the GCTP last year had a similar result, with the lack of participation by the lodging sector eventually bringing the effort to a halt. Surprisingly, 36 of the 121 lodging properties listed in the Travel Guide, including hotels, motels, and resorts, do not even have a website where potential guests can check room prices and amenities, let alone the availability of rooms on a particular day. Given that the Internet is now the primary means by which people gather information on vacation destinations and make travel arrangements – indeed, a web site in the 21st century is as essential as a marketing brochure was in the 20th century – this is an issue which must be addressed.

### Tourism Metrics

Reliable, standardized metrics for determining travel and tourism's importance and tracking its performance in Greene County are not readily available. With respect to travel volumes, the Greene County Tourism Promotion Department estimates that it gets about 75,000-80,000 overnight visitors staying at lodging facilities per year. The number of day trippers could easily equal or exceed that figure, but data from local attractions is available only a limited basis, and does not differentiate between local residents and visitors from outside the County. The situation is similar with special events; figures on attendance are normally estimates, and again, do not break out participation by local residents.

Another problem in measuring travel volumes in Greene County is that many visitors utilize state lands for hiking, camping, hunting, fishing, and other forms of outdoor recreation, and because there are few formal "entrance" points, it is almost impossible to track utilization. According to the Catskill

## 10. Tourism Industry Analysis

State Park Land Master Plan, “no overall census of visitor use of Catskill Forest Preserve recreational facilities has ever been undertaken. The only facilities for which visitation statistics are systematically collected are the state campgrounds, day use areas and the ski area [Belleayre]. “The numbers are undoubtedly significant, but the actual level of use is undefined.

Without local data collection systems involving active participation from stakeholders in a full range of tourism-related industries, many communities use bed tax revenue data and/or lodging facility room counts and occupancy rates to evaluate the performance of the tourism industry. In fact, bed tax data is considered to be one of the most credible because it is collected by an outside, disinterested source. Greene County, however, does not have a bed tax, and historically, the owners of lodging facilities have been reluctant to provide monthly occupancy data, despite promises of confidentiality, to the Greene County Tourism Promotion Department.

Measuring visitor spending is perhaps even more fraught with difficulty. Again, the issue is determining what share of goods and services in a particular industry is purchased by visitors as opposed to non-visitors. Survey data can be reliable, if labor-intensive. In Greene County, answering the visitor expenditures question depends on whether or not one includes seasonal or part-time residents, owners of second homes who are not technically “visitors,” but who often have similar spending patterns and a level of affluence less common among the year-round population. Based on the approximately 6,000 seasonal or recreational housing units in the County reported by the 2000 Census, it is estimated that seasonal residents boost Greene County’s population by 15,000 people during certain times of the year. There is no question that these individuals have an enormous impact on the local economy.

Some researchers use formulas and ratios gleaned from anecdotal information or national studies: for example, for every \$1 spent on a ski lift ticket, another \$7 to \$9 is spent on other goods and services in the community. This helps in understanding the impact of the ski industry, but does not necessarily provide the level of detail necessary for other purposes, such as market feasibility studies and monitoring changes over time.

In New York State, one of the few options available at the county level to determine the importance of the tourism industry is employment. As noted in a 2003 report by the Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City, tourism employment “is often the only industry-level measure available” for substate areas.

### EMPLOYMENT & WAGES

Measuring employment in the tourism industry is largely an issue of definition. As noted in the introduction, the business of providing tours, accommodations, and other services for travelers actually

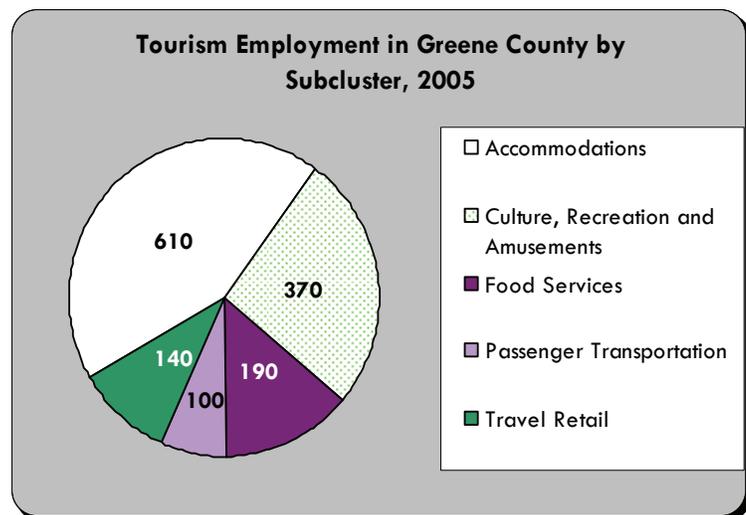


## 10. Tourism Industry Analysis

comprises a range of industry classifications. Tourism is not a discrete industry at all, but rather is an amalgam of diverse industries or sectors that directly or indirectly cater to the needs of the tourist. To complicate matters, many of these industries (e.g., retail trade, food services, golf courses) cater to the needs of the resident population as well as visitors.

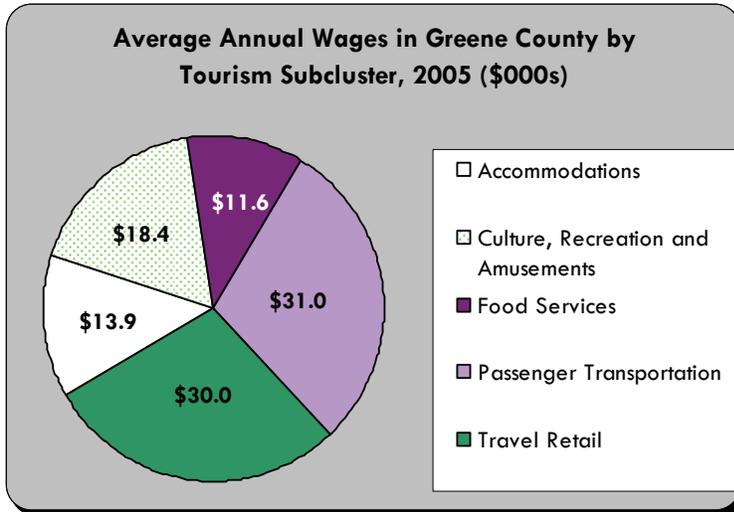
Some analysts attempt to estimate tourism employment by adding together the number of jobs in industries such as accommodations and food services, passenger transportation, and arts, recreation, and entertainment. This approach tends to overstate tourism employment, because it does not differentiate between visitor and non-visitor consumption. Recognizing the limitations of this approach, Empire State Development has established a working definition of travel and tourism that encompasses employment (more precisely, a prorated share of employment attributed to traveler spending) in 70 six-digit North American Industrial Classification System (NAICS) codes. For the purposes of analysis, the 70 industry classifications can be organized into the following subcategories:

- **Accommodations Subcluster** – Hotels, motels, bed-and-breakfast inns, RV parks and campgrounds, rooming houses.
- **Culture, Recreation and Amusements Subcluster** – Theaters, performing arts companies (music, dance, theater), racetracks, museums, historical sites, zoos and botanical gardens, amusement and theme parks, casinos, skiing facilities, golf courses, marinas, bowling centers.
- **Food Services Subcluster** – Full-service and limited-service restaurants, cafeterias, snack bars, food service contractors, caterers, drinking places.
- **Passenger Transportation Subcluster** – Passenger air transportation, taxi services, charter buses, scenic and sightseeing transportation, passenger car rental, travel agencies, tour operators, convention and visitor bureaus.
- **Travel Retail Subcluster** – Recreational vehicle and boat dealers, gasoline stations, sporting goods stores, and gift, novelty, and souvenir stores.





## 10. Tourism Industry Analysis

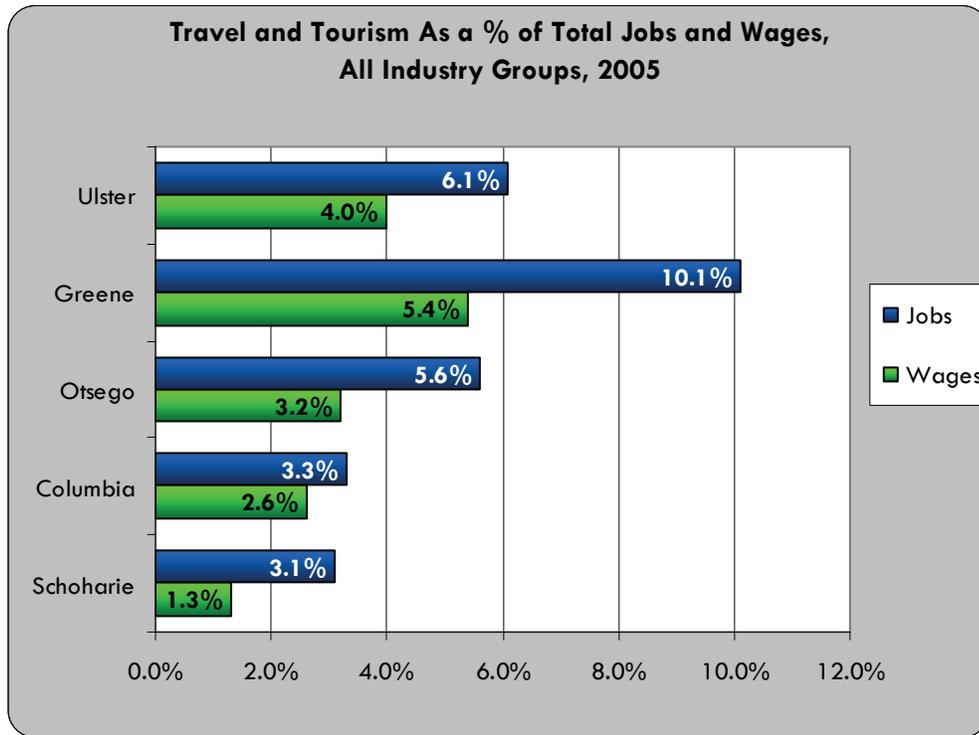


Using the ESD definition, the NYS Department of Labor calculated travel and tourism employment in Greene County at 1,410 (about 10% of total employment) in 2005, with annual wages of nearly \$25 million. As shown in the chart on the previous page, the accommodations subcluster is the largest in Greene County in terms of employment, accounting for 610 jobs; passenger transportation, which supports 100 jobs, is the smallest. Average annual wages, however, are significantly higher in the passenger transportation subcluster.

How does Greene County's tourism industry compare to nearby counties with respect to its contribution to employment? Overall tourism employment in Greene County is well below that of Ulster County (3,790 jobs) and is comparable to Otsego County (1,350), but exceeds the levels in Columbia and Schoharie Counties (690 and 280, respectively). As a *proportion* of total jobs and wages, however, the NYS Department of Labor data indicate that travel and tourism accounts for a greater percentage of the Greene County economy than those of the comparison areas.



## 10. Tourism Industry Analysis



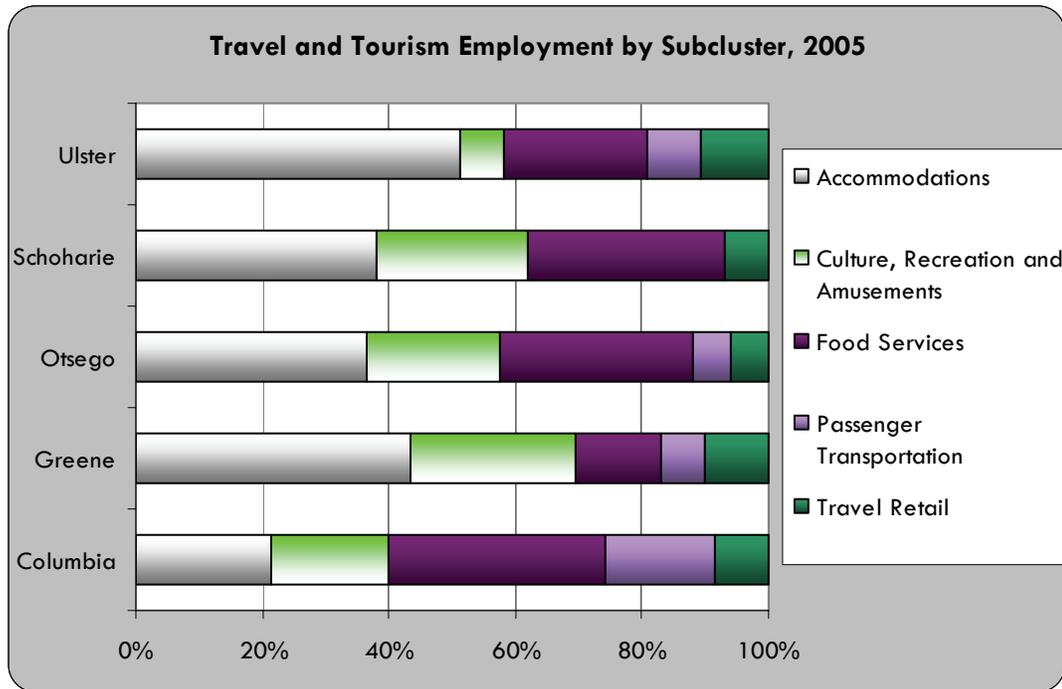
The NYS Department of Labor data also show that Greene County has a higher proportion of its tourism employment in culture, recreation, and amusements subcluster (which includes the ski areas) than the comparison counties, as well as a higher proportion of jobs in accommodations than all of the other counties except Ulster.<sup>21</sup> Greene County has a relatively small proportion of tourism jobs in food services. This suggests a weakness in the County’s travel and tourism industry and a possible area for expansion.

<sup>21</sup> It should be noted that the travel and tourism employment and wage data from the NYS Department of Labor is calculated only on an *annual* basis, so seasonal changes are not apparent. Information provided by the two ski areas in Greene County, Hunter Mountain and Windham Mountain, indicates that taken together, they employ as many as 1,800 people during the winter months and as little as 200 in the summer. Many of the traditional resorts, on the other hand, are closed for the winter. Although the unemployment rate in Greene County tends to be higher in January and February, the seasonal extremes found in parts of the Adirondack region are not present here, perhaps because the local economy is much more diverse.





## 10. Tourism Industry Analysis



### SALES TAX

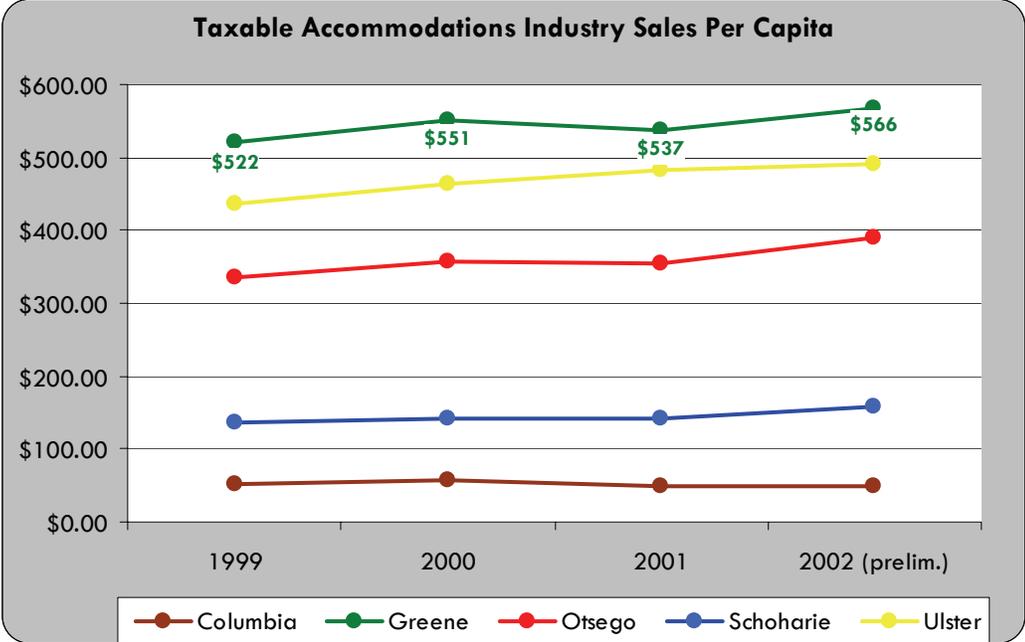
The NYS Department of Taxation and Finance publishes semi-annual reports of taxable sales and purchases by county and by industry. This data should be used with caution to gauge the performance of the County's travel and tourism industry. First of all, there is a significant amount of lag time between data collection and reporting; as of September 2006, the most recent reports available were for the period March 2002 – February 2003. Second, the NYS Department of Taxation and Finance uses standard industry classifications and, unlike the Department of Labor, does not produce sales figures specifically for the tourism industry based on the ESD definition. As a result, taxable retail and restaurant sales include purchases made by both visitors and non-visitors.

The one piece of valuable information in the sales tax reports is with respect to the accommodations industry, whose sales are primarily (but not completely) derived from tourism. In the 2002/03 selling period, Greene County lodging establishments had approximately \$27.3 million in taxable sales. In comparison, taxable sales on lodging were \$87.1 million in Ulster County, \$24.1 million in Otsego, \$4.9 million in Schoharie and \$3.0 million in Columbia County. On a per capita basis, Greene



## 10. Tourism Industry Analysis

County had higher sales than any of the other counties (see chart below). This is consistent with the tourism employment data.





## 10. Tourism Industry Analysis

### Prior Study Findings

A look at prior economic development and tourism studies conducted for the Catskills region provides useful insights into the challenges facing the tourism industry in Greene County. Indeed, an abundance of such studies have been conducted in the last half-century. Two of the most recent studies on the region are the *West of Hudson Economic Development Study* conducted for the Catskill Watershed Corporation (CWC) in 1999, and the *Catalyst Catskills Marketing Plan* sponsored by the Catskill Business Roundtable in 2003. The CWC study included a series of five reports, one of which is a baseline economic analysis and community assessment of the region conducted by Hamilton, Rabinovitz & Alschuler, Inc. (HR&A) that summarizes many of the studies of the region conducted over the last 30 years and also includes original market research. The Catalyst Catskills report relies heavily on data in the HR&A baseline study.

The major finding at the heart of these two studies is the need to develop a “coherent image of the region through a coordinated, comprehensive marketing campaign.”<sup>22</sup> Both reports emphasize that the need for branding goes beyond a tourism promotion plan, and the Catalyst Catskills report gives credit to the Catskill Association for Tourism Services (CATS) for coordinating tourism promotion for the region and moving to create a Catskill brand for tourism. Greene County is currently active in the CATS campaign; the director of the Greene County Tourism Promotion Department is the president of CATS.

Aside from pointing out the need for branding, both studies include a number of findings which reinforce or supplement information the Project Team collected via the visitor survey and interviews with representatives of Greene County’s tourism industry:

- **Stability in tourism, but a shift in the hotel sector.** The tourism industry overall remained stable throughout the 1990s in terms of total dollar expenditures. The hotel sector lost a substantial number of jobs, while restaurants, amusement and recreation services remained stable or showed modest job growth. This suggests that the accommodations industry is shifting away from the traditional single-destination, full-service, high employee-to-guest ratio resorts for which the Catskills were once known, and towards a combination of short-stay niche destinations and second homes.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>22</sup> “Catalyst Catskills Marketing Plan Development,” Catskills Business Roundtable, September 2003, p.5.

<sup>23</sup> “West of Hudson Economic Development Study for the Catskill Watershed Corporation,” July 1999, p.13.

## 10. Tourism Industry Analysis

- **Shortage of well-located and modern tourist facilities.** The reports point out that there is no shortage of hotels in the Catskill region, but that many of them are out-of-date and badly located, and there are virtually no luxury or large-scale lodging facilities that can draw business and conference travelers. In addition, many recreational facilities have not been adequately developed – for example, there are not enough bike paths and there is a scarcity of retail opportunities for visitors.
- **Lack of amenities.** While recognizing that the rural character of the region is its biggest strength, the reports point out that the scarcity of dining, entertainment and retail opportunities makes it difficult to attract visitors. The reports also note that this scarcity is partly a matter of perception; in some cases building improvements and better marketing of what specific towns, villages or hamlets do have to offer could help guide visitors. For the most part, however, the area simply needs to offer more amenities for tourists.
- **Potential for historic charm.** The Catskill region holds enormous potential to develop a reputation as an historic and charming place to visit, particularly in scenic villages near skiing and recreational areas. The reports note that previous visitor surveys reveal a demand for quaint, historic villages with bed & breakfasts and shops, similar to Stowe, Vermont; Stockbridge, Massachusetts; and Cooperstown, New York.
- **Potential for eco-tourism.** The undeveloped character of the Catskill region makes it an ideal center for eco-tourism, which can attract a significant number of tourists and help preserve the natural environment. According to a 1990s study of eco-tourism cited in the HR&A Baseline Economic Analysis, Americans spend more money on eco-tourism activities than on sporting events and movies combined. Bird watchers spend nearly \$27 million a year around refuges near Atlantic City, and \$15 million around refuges along the Rio Grande in Texas. These types of activities can complement forestry resources and add value.

Since the CWC and Catalyst Catskills studies were completed, some of these issues have been addressed in Greene County. For example, the Greene County Department of Planning and Economic Development established the Tourism Enhancement Program utilizing Community Development Block Grant funding to improve and modernize tourist facilities, and its Main Street Revitalization Program (MSRP) has had a major impact on the condition of historic buildings and streetscapes in village and hamlet areas, renovating nearly 100 facades since the program's inception in 2003. The MSRP is widely credited with jump-starting the substantial inflow of capital and businesses into Main Street Catskill.

## 10. Tourism Industry Analysis

A third report reviewed by the Project Team highlights the changing demographic composition of skiers to Greene County. An analysis conducted by the Cornell Institute for Social & Economic Research (CISER) used data on customers with seasonal passes to identify Hunter Mountain's key market segments and the socio-economic characteristics, lifestyles, and preferences associated with these segments. Much of the analysis is proprietary; however, the analysis did indicate that Hunter "has been moving in the direction of a more affluent, more family-oriented and more ethnically diverse crowd for several years now," in the words of Hunter Mountain's marketing director Rob Megnin.<sup>24</sup> This characterization has important implications for the development of new business establishments on the Mountaintop. Retail, dining, and lodging facilities will need to understand and reach this market in order to succeed.



D.K Shifflet & Associates (DKS&A) is a company specializing in market research and consulting services to all sectors of the travel industry. Public and private sector organizations, including tourism offices and chambers of commerce, often utilize DKS&A information to understand travelers' demographics and travel patterns and better position themselves in the marketplace.

Like the more recent Cornell/Hunter Mountain study, a DKS&A profile of travelers to the Catskills region in 2002 indicates that compared with U.S. averages, visitors to the Catskills tend to be older (an average age of 47, vs. 43 for the nation as a whole) and more affluent (an average income of \$74,000, vs. \$69,000 for the U.S.). They are also much more likely to travel by car (86%, vs. 72% for the U.S.), largely because they come to the region from an average of 245 miles away (the national average is 522 miles away). According to the DKS&A travel profile, relatively few people, about 12%, visit the Catskills for a business purpose, compared with 25% for the U.S. overall.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>24</sup> "Kaatskill Mountain Club Signals Upscaling of New York's Hunter," Mountain News, November 14, 2005.

<sup>25</sup> "Catskills Region Top Line Visitor Profile 2002," D.K. Shifflet & Associates, Ltd., August 2003. This report was commissioned by the Catskill Association for Tourism Services (CATS).

## 10. Tourism Industry Analysis

### Visitor Survey Findings

To better understand the Greene County tourism market, a survey of visitors was developed and distributed with assistance from the Greene County Chamber of Commerce, the Greene County Tourism Promotion Department, and local lodging facilities and attractions. The objectives of the visitor survey were to:

- Understand the geographic origins and the demographic, socio-economic, and other characteristics of visitors to Greene County.
- Determine how and where visitors spend their time and money while in the area.
- Identify improvements needed and any additional attractions, facilities, and amenities desired by visitors to Greene County.
- Assess travelers' perceptions of Greene County with respect to factors such as the quality of accommodations, things to do, cultural amenities, and value for the money.

The survey was conducted once at the peak of the summer season and again during the winter ski season. Survey questions addressed visitor origin and demographics, the purpose of the visit, trip dimensions, activities in which visitors participated, etc. Feedback was also solicited about the types of activities or amenities needed to improve or enhance the travel experience, increase the amount of time (and/or money) spent in Greene County, and ensure repeat visits.

### SURVEY METHODOLOGY

To get a jump on the summer season, the two-page Summer Visitor Survey was developed in conjunction with the Tourism Subcommittee in June 2005, prior to the official project initiation meeting for the Comprehensive Economic Development Plan in August. The survey was distributed during the month of July at the Greene County Fair, the Athens Street Festival, and the Hunter Mountain Cultural Festival. In addition, the Greene County Department of Planning and Economic Development (GCDPED) sent a letter to the owners of B&Bs, motels and inns, asking them to make the survey form available to their guests/customers; copies of the survey were provided. As an incentive, visitors who completed the survey and provided their name and phone number would be entered into a drawing for prizes donated by local businesses. At the end of July, completed surveys were picked up from 20 participating lodging establishments.

Despite the best efforts of those involved, only 243 responses to the summer survey were received. In retrospect, the Project Team and members of the Tourism Subcommittee agreed that the survey



## 10. Tourism Industry Analysis

distribution had been rushed, and that the process may have been hindered by the lack of publicity about the purpose of the survey and the Greene County Comprehensive Economic Development Plan at that point in time. It is recommended that Greene County repeat the summer visitor survey at regular intervals, soliciting the involvement of the business community to the extent possible.

The Winter Visitor Survey represented a revised shorter version of the Summer Visitor Survey. Recognizing the need to significantly increase the number of responses, a decision was made to post the visitor survey on the Internet via Zoomerang, a company that provides web-hosted technology for customized survey research.

A significant boost to the plan for survey distribution was received when both Hunter Mountain and Windham Mountain offered to send an e-mail “blast” telling their customers about the winter visitor survey and encouraging them to complete it. This allowed Greene County to reach thousands of visitors in a short period of time. Respondents would also be rewarded for their participation with a chance to win lift tickets from the two ski areas.

The visitor survey was formally “launched” online in December 2005. Visitors could access the survey by clicking on the link on the Greene County Tourism website, on the Greenebusiness.com website, or in the e-mail distributed by Hunter Mountain and Windham Mountain. Hard-copy survey forms were also distributed to local lodging facilities by the Greene County Chamber of Commerce. To take advantage of the busy Presidents’ Day weekend, the winter visitor survey continued through the end of February 2006, by which time 2,416 responses had been received.



## 10. Tourism Industry Analysis

### SUMMER VISITOR SURVEY FINDINGS

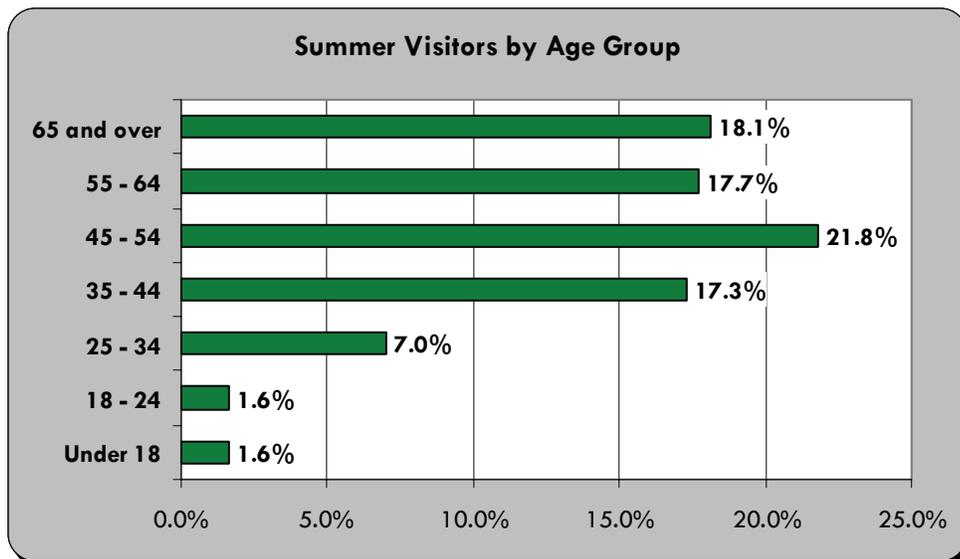
As noted previously, 243 Summer Visitor Surveys were completed and tallied. Based on the limited distribution, with six lodging facilities accounting for a large proportion of the completed surveys, it is believed that the results are *not* representative of all summer visitors to Greene County. The survey results are presented below for comparative purposes; however, these findings should be used with caution.

- The summer visitors responding to the survey were generally very satisfied with their overall experience in Greene County. On a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 rated as excellent, these visitors rated their experience an average of 8.5. Most characteristics that visitors were asked to evaluate were rated as “excellent” or “very good,” with particularly high marks given to the quality of lodging facilities and hospitality staff. Nearly one-third of the summer visitors, however, rated retail variety as “fair” or “poor.”
- The majority of summer visitors responding to the survey came from New York and New Jersey. More than 62% of the survey respondents reported that they were from New York State and 16.1% were from New Jersey; 5.2% indicated that they visited from Massachusetts and the same percentage were from Connecticut. Zip codes provided by respondents suggest that most of these summer visitors live within a 200-mile radius of Greene County (see map at right).
- Based on the survey data, the majority of summer visitors had been to Greene County before. Approximately 60% of the survey respondents said that they had visited six or more times, while 16.9% had been to the County three to five times before. Fully 15.2% of the respondents, however, were visiting Greene County for the first time.



## 10. Tourism Industry Analysis

- Information on the overnight stays of summer visitors is consistent with the large number of surveys distributed through local lodging facilities. Only 10% of the survey participants were visiting for the day; in contrast, 50.2% were planning to stay in Greene County for four or more nights, mostly at resorts, hotels/motels, and B&Bs. Few individuals intending to camp or stay in their motor home responded to the Summer Visitor Survey. Future visitor surveys should include those staying in DEC campgrounds and private campgrounds and RV parks to get a more representative sample of overnight visitors to the County.
- The majority of the summer visitor survey respondents (54%) reported that they heard about Greene County through word-of-mouth; 23% knew about the area from other sources, such as family or friends, or had been to the area as a child, on vacation, etc. Approximately 12% had consulted the Greene County Travel Guide or Greene County Tourism website.
- Summer visitors most often reported vacation/sightseeing as the primary purpose of their visit (61.3%), followed by visiting family and friends (18.9%). Nine percent said they came to attend a special event, while fewer than 5% of the respondents indicated that outdoor recreation was the main reason for coming to Greene County. The latter does not reflect the popularity of the Catskill region for golfing, hiking, fishing, and similar activities, and is probably attributable to the wording of the question.





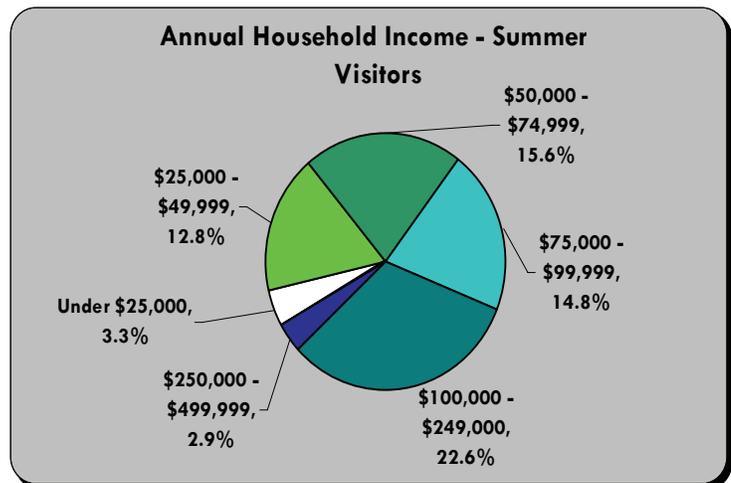
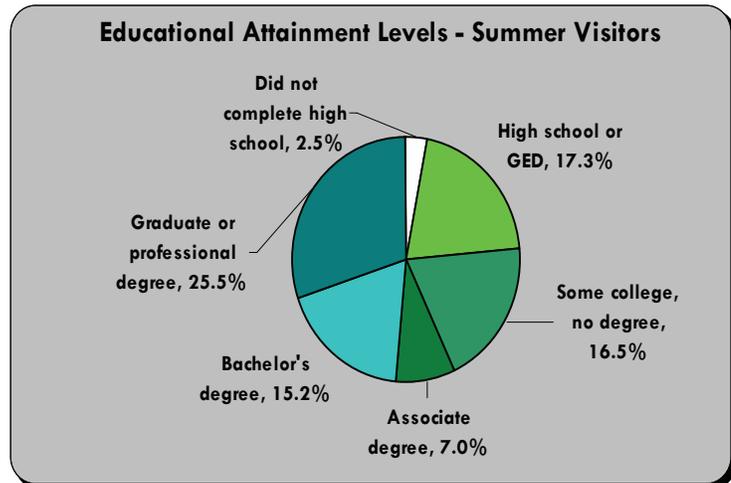
## 10. Tourism Industry Analysis

- Asked about the types of places they visited and activities in which they participated during their visit to Greene County, respondents most often selected swimming (42.0%), shopping (41.2%), festivals and special events (36.2%), farm stands (34.2%), and golfing (31.7%). It is important to note, however, that some of these responses are attributable to the distribution of the survey at festivals and special events and at lodging facilities that offer golfing packages.
- The survey results suggest that summer visitors are more heterogeneous than winter visitors to Greene County. Most of the survey respondents were between the ages of 35 and 74. While 40.7% of the summer visitors reported that they had at least a bachelor's degree, 16.5% had attended college without receiving a degree and 17.3% did not continue their education beyond high school. The income levels of the respondents were similarly diverse. One-quarter reported household incomes of \$100,000 or more, 14.8% of \$75,000 to \$99,999, and 16.1% of less than \$50,000 annually.



## 10. Tourism Industry Analysis

- The final question on the summer visitor survey asked participants to identify any additional attractions, amenities, or other improvements that would encourage them to visit Greene County more often. The majority of the responses referenced the need for more restaurants and retail stores and of various types, from general merchandisers to outlet stores to “quaint shopping.” More cultural events, amusement parks, evening activities, and things to do, a movie theatre, and simply, “clean up trash” were among the other most popular responses.

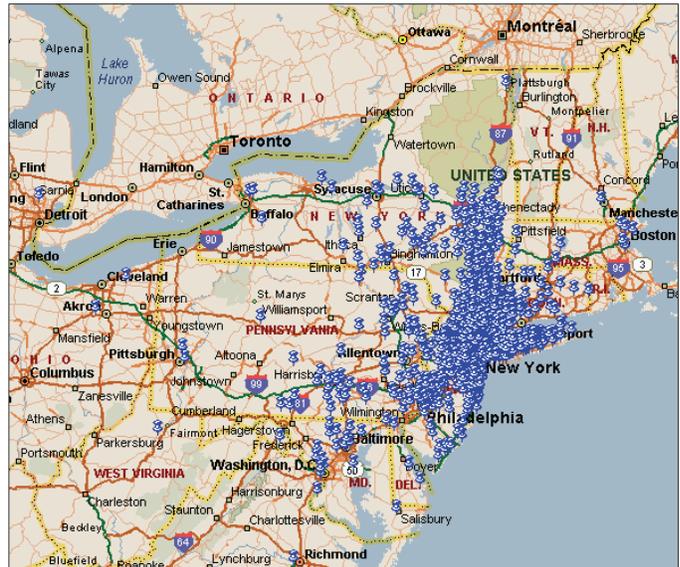


## 10. Tourism Industry Analysis

### WINTER VISITOR SURVEY

**Key Findings.** The survey results yielded a number of key findings about the Greene County winter visitor market as summarized below:

- Overall, winter visitors are very pleased with recreational opportunities and the quality and friendliness of hospitality staff in Greene County. Nearly 70% of survey respondents rated recreational opportunities as “excellent” or “very good.” Visitors are less satisfied with shopping, however; 46% rated the variety of retail as “fair” or “poor.”
- The majority of winter visitors come from New York and New Jersey. More than 64% of the survey respondents reported that they were from New York State and 24.7% were from New Jersey; 4.1% indicated that they visited from Pennsylvania and 3.1% from Connecticut. Zip codes provided by respondents suggest that most winter visitors live within a 200-mile radius of Greene County (see map at right).
- The average winter visitor has been to Greene County many times before. Fully three-quarters of the survey respondents said that they have visited six or more times, while 11.9% have been to the County three to five times before. Less than 6% of the respondents were visiting Greene County for the first time.
- Winter visitors comprise a mix of day trippers, weekenders, and second homeowners. One-third of the survey respondents reported that they were visiting only for the day; 14.8% were staying for one night, 29.0% for two nights, 10.4% for three nights, and 11.0% for four or more nights. Lodging, such as hotels, motels, inns, or bed & breakfasts, was used by 42% of the respondents staying overnight. Nineteen percent were staying in short-term rental arrangements, such as condominiums, 15% with family and friends, and 12.4% in seasonal or vacation homes.





## 10. Tourism Industry Analysis

- Winter visitors generally travel to Greene County in small groups. The average size of a travel party, based on the survey responses, is 4.4 persons. Fully 36% of respondents reported that their travel party was comprised of family, including children; 22.7% indicated that the composition was a mix of family and friends.
- The majority of the winter visitor survey respondents (64%) reported that they heard about Greene County through word-of-mouth, and 23% heard about the area from other sources. This includes people who commented that they have “been coming here for years,” “visiting since childhood,” “my family lives in the area,” “grew up nearby,” “long time visitor,” etc. This is probably due to the fact that Hunter and Windham Mountain ski areas are well-known within the region.
- Downhill skiing is still the most popular outdoor activity in Greene County during the winter; 83.5% of the respondents identified it as one of the activities on their trip. Snowboarding ranked second, with 30%. Other popular recreational activities were hiking/snowshoeing (21%) and sledding (12%). Favorite indoor/in-town activities included shopping (23%), festivals and special events (20%), and the arts (9%).
- Less than half of the survey respondents identified additional attractions or amenities they would like to see available during future visits to Greene County. Pubs and taverns and fine dining restaurants were the top responses, followed by entertainment/nightlife, a day spa, wireless Internet access, outlet shopping, activities for families and kids, and ethnic restaurants.
- Approximately 500 winter visitors provided written comments on a wide range of topics, from general positive remarks to the rundown condition of properties. Many comments were made about the need for additional restaurants, stores, and lodging options and things to do. Several people expressed concerns about the potential for overdevelopment, calling on County leaders to “keep Greene County ‘green.’”

# Greene County Comprehensive Economic Development Plan



## 10. Tourism Industry Analysis

**Detailed Survey Results.** This section summarizes the results of the winter visitor survey in more detail.

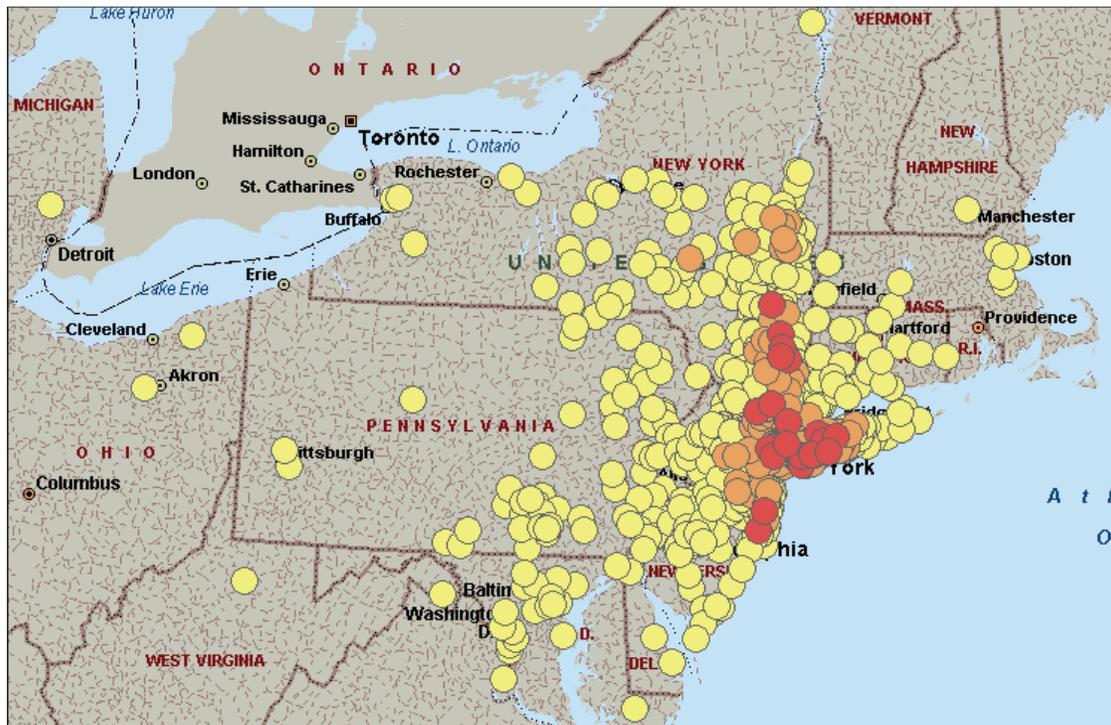
### Visitor Market

Greene County serves as a winter destination for people living in the New York/New Jersey metropolitan area and surrounding counties. It is a very concentrated market, as the map below suggests. Survey data indicates that 64.3% of the visitors live in New York State, 24.7% in New Jersey, 4.1% in Pennsylvania, and 3.1% in Connecticut. A small number of respondents reported that they reside in Maryland, Massachusetts, and Florida.



## 10. Tourism Industry Analysis

The following map shows the concentration of respondents; the darker the color, the greater the number of winter visitor survey responses received from that zip code. Zip codes with 15 or more responses included 07030 (Hoboken, NJ); 11793 (Wantagh, NY); 11795 (West Islip, NY); 12603 (Poughkeepsie, NY); 10583 (Scarsdale, NY); and 11743 (Huntington, NY).<sup>26</sup> The darker-colored circles generally align with population concentrations along the Hudson River corridor and in New York City, Long Island, and northern New Jersey.

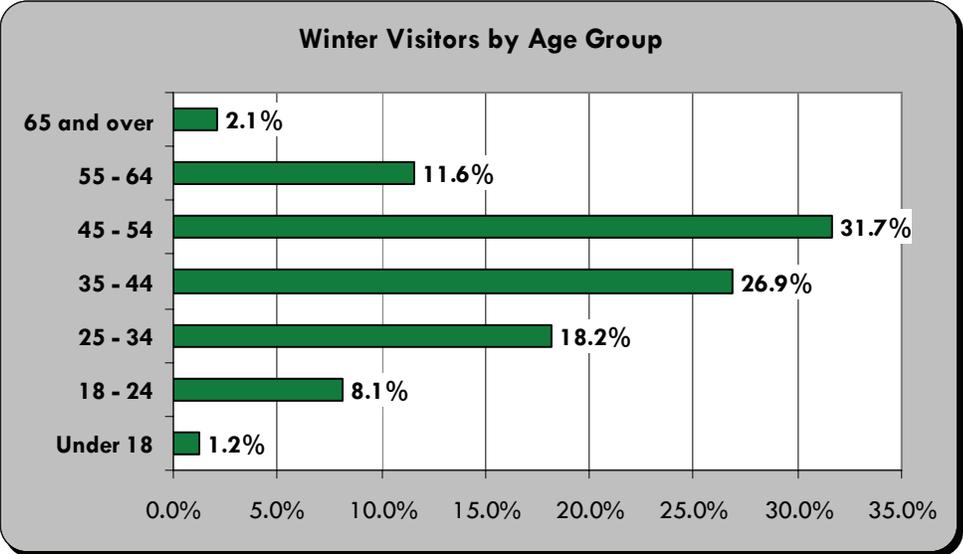


<sup>26</sup> Market segmentation data from Claritas, a leading market research company, indicates that these five zip codes are home to some of the most affluent market segments in the nation.



## 10. Tourism Industry Analysis

The profile of respondents to the winter visitor survey is that of a highly-educated, affluent individual between the ages of 25 and 64. Relatively few responses were received from visitors under age 25 or over age 65. More than two-thirds of the winter visitors have a bachelor's degree or higher. Approximately 50% reported household incomes of \$100,000 or more; 19.6% reported incomes of \$75,000 and \$99,999 annually.





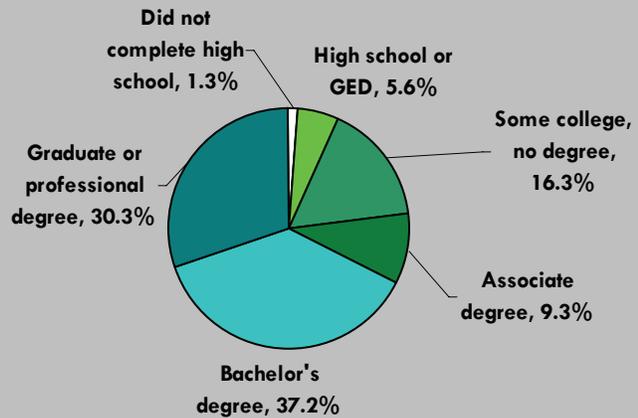
## 10. Tourism Industry Analysis

Winter visitors generally travel to Greene County in small groups. The average size of a travel party is 4.4 persons. Only 5% of the survey respondents indicated that they traveled alone. In contrast, 36.0% of the respondents reported that their travel party was composed of family, including children; 22.7% indicated that it comprised a mix of family and friends; and 17.8% included friends or associates without family.

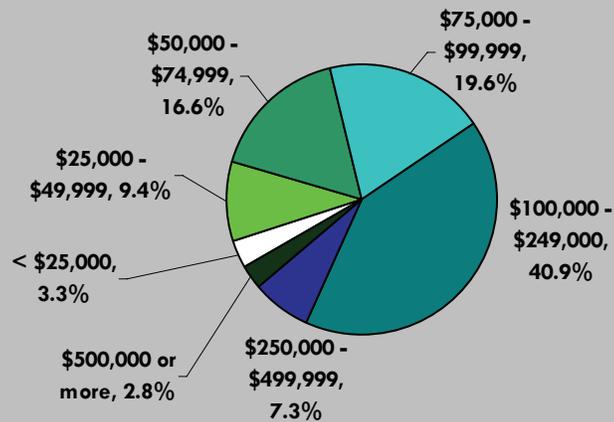
### Trip Purpose

Given the involvement of the two ski areas in survey outreach, it is perhaps not surprising that 86.6% of the winter visitors reported winter sports as the primary purpose of their visit to Greene County. Few respondents gave visiting family or friends, doing business, or attending a special event as the main reason for their trip. Of the approximately 9% who listed other responses, most indicated that they had a vacation home or second home in the area, or were combining skiing with other activities.

**Educational Attainment Levels - Winter Visitors**



**Annual Household Income - Winter Visitors**



## 10. Tourism Industry Analysis

### Trip Length, Accommodations, and Planning

With the exception of second homeowners, most winter visitors to Greene County are short-term guests. Nearly 35% of the survey respondents reported that they were visiting only for the day; 14.8% were staying for one night, 29.0% for two nights, and 10.4% for three nights. Eleven percent planned to stay in Greene County for four or more nights.

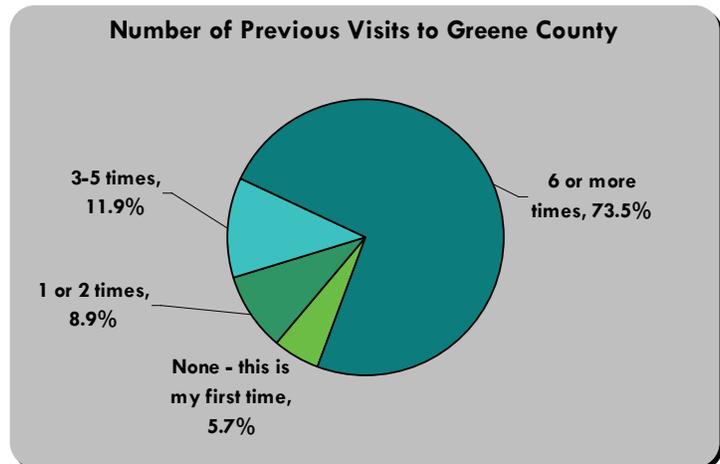
Lodging, such as hotels, motels, inns, or bed & breakfasts, was used by 42% of the respondents staying overnight. Nineteen percent were staying in short-term rental arrangements, such as condominiums and 14.8% with family and friends. The majority of those listing other responses (12.4%) indicated that would be spending the night in their second or vacation home.

Survey responses suggest that winter visitors generally do not make their travel plans well ahead of time: 35.1% of the respondents said that they planned their visit between a week and a month in advance; 33.4% made plans less than a week in advance; and 15.9% reported that their visit to Greene County was spur of the moment. This finding may be associated with the large number of day trippers among the survey respondents.

### Visitor Awareness

The vast majority of the winter visitor respondents knew about Greene County through informal means. Nearly two-thirds said they found out about the area by word-of-mouth, while 23% selected “other,” indicating in their comments that they have been coming to Greene County for many years with their families. Brochures and the Internet were tied as the next largest source of information, at 11%; the Hunter Mountain and Windham Mountain websites were cited most frequently, though respondents mentioned other sites (e.g., SkitownUSA.com, CatskillMtn.com) as well. Six percent of the winter visitor survey respondents heard about Greene County from the Greene County Travel Guide and website.

Greene County has a very strong following of repeat visitors during the winter months. Three-quarters of the survey respondents reported that they have visited Greene County at least six





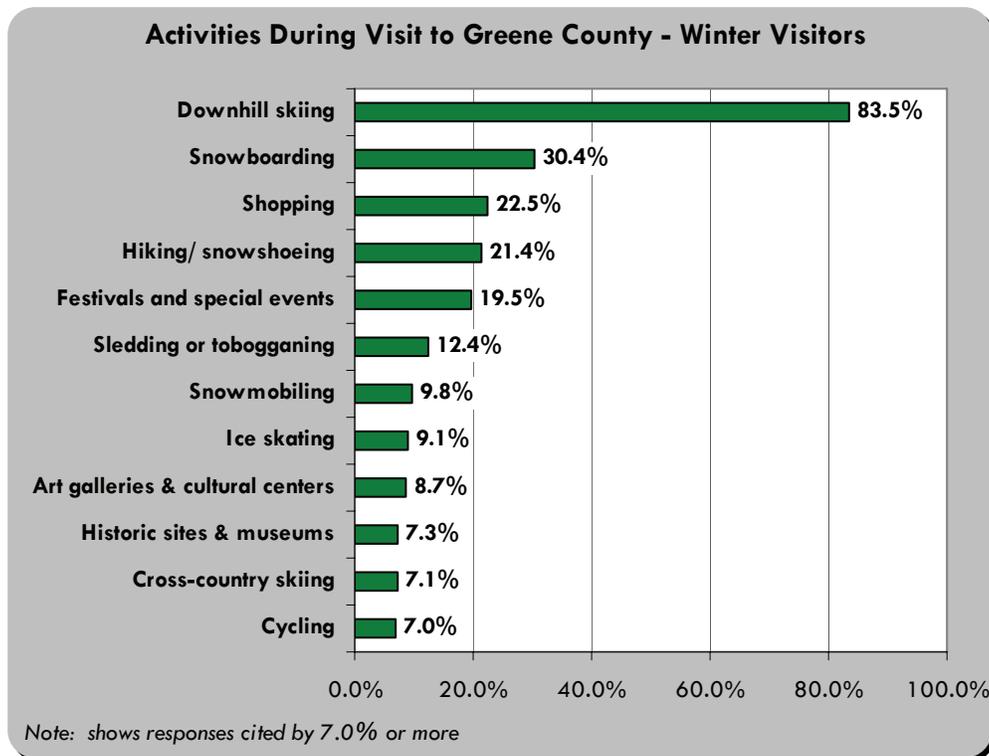
## 10. Tourism Industry Analysis

times before, while 11.9% have visited three to five times previously. Fewer than 6% were first-time visitors to the area.

### Visitor Activities

Downhill skiing is unquestionably the most popular outdoor activity in Greene County during the winter; 83.5% of the respondents identified it as one of the activities on their trip. Snowboarding, with 30.4%, ranked second, followed by shopping (23%), hiking/snowshoeing (21.4%), festivals and special events (19.5%), and sledding (12.4%).

Despite Greene County's rich cultural heritage, only 8.7% of respondents reported that they visited art galleries and cultural centers, while 7.3% visited historic sites and museums. This is due to the fact that some cultural facilities have limited hours or are closed completely during the winter months. There is an opportunity for growth here, however, and the Catskill Mountain Foundation has been active in the development of arts and cultural activities on the Mountaintop to fill some of the void (see section on Tourism Assets).



## 10. Tourism Industry Analysis

Approximately 7% of the respondents wrote in “other” activities in which they participated while in Greene County. These include dining, fishing, camping, golf, horseback riding, snowtubing, going to wineries, and antiquing.

Participation in various activities appears to be fairly consistent across age categories, although survey results indicate that visitors under age 25 are more than twice as likely as other visitors to enjoy snowboarding while visiting Greene County. In addition, two activities – visiting art galleries/cultural centers and hiking/snowshoeing – are correlated with income; the higher the visitor’s income level, the more likely they are to participate.

### Additional Attractions or Amenities Desired

Less than half of the survey respondents identified additional attractions or amenities they would like to see available during future visits to Greene County. The top responses, mentioned by 24% or more of the respondents, were pubs and taverns, fine dining restaurants, entertainment/nightlife, a day spa, wireless Internet access, outlet shopping, activities for families and kids, and ethnic restaurants. The interest in these additional amenities may be based, in part, on the desire for other things to do, particularly for non-skiing family members. There also appears to be a need for complementary “après-ski” amenities, as indicated by the interest in restaurants, pubs, and nightclubs.

Six percent of the respondents cited “other” attractions or amenities not listed on the survey. Popular responses included better cell phone reception; an indoor pool or waterpark; and other lodging options (e.g., upscale, moderately-priced, family-friendly, dog-friendly). In addition, many visitors indicated that “it’s just fine the way it is.”

Perhaps one unexpected result was the limited interest in two amenities for which demand has been identified in other reports on tourism in the region: specialty retail, which was selected by just 12% of the visitors, and conference facilities, selected by less than 2%.

Cross-tabulations by age, income, travel party, and other characteristics yielded a number of interesting findings, as described below:

- Although the survey results were fairly consistent across most age groups, visitors under age 25 indicated greater than average support for outlet shopping, and the 35-44 group was more likely to support additional family and kids’ activities. Visitors whose travel party included children also showed above-average interest in activities for families and kids.

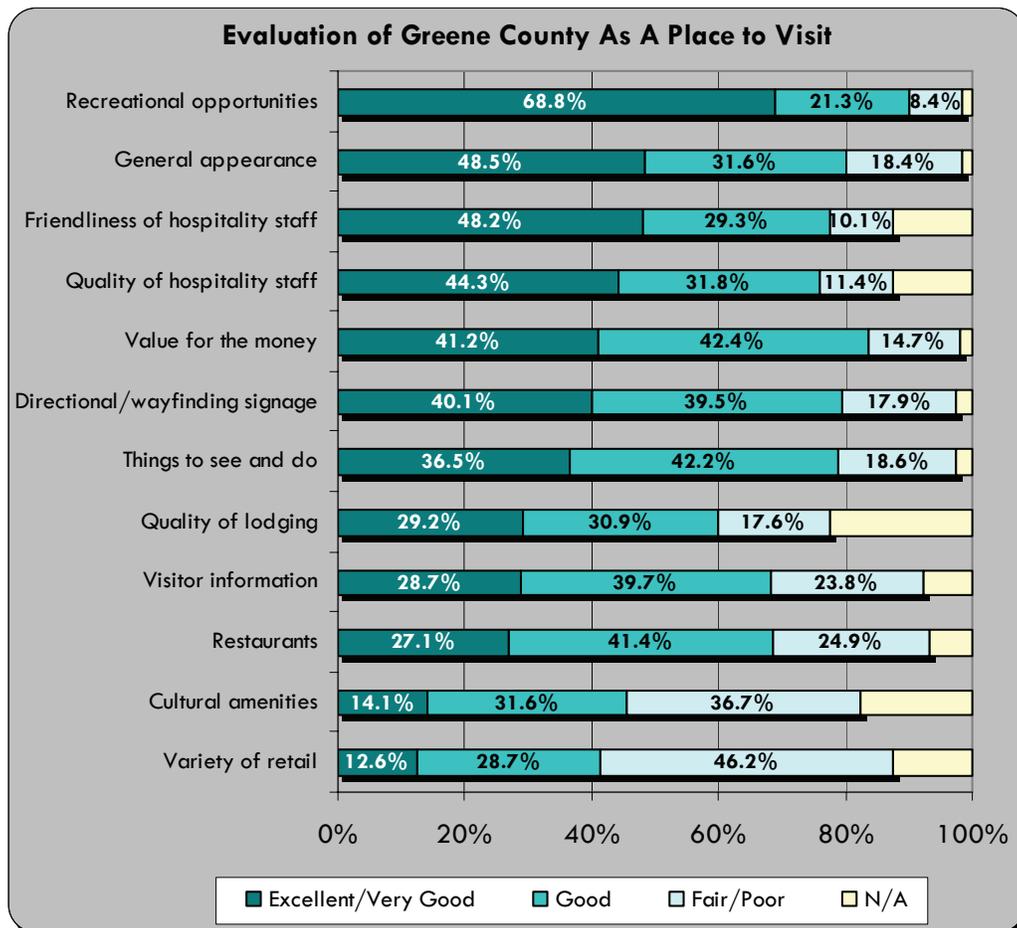


## 10. Tourism Industry Analysis

- Interest by winter visitors in fine-dining restaurants and in wireless Internet access tends to be correlated with income – visitors who are more affluent indicated greater interest in these amenities than those with moderate income levels.
- First-time visitors and those who have been to Greene County only once or twice before were less likely than all respondents to want more locally-produced arts and crafts, specialty retailers, or wireless Internet access.

### Evaluation

The final closed-ended question on the winter visitor survey asked participants to evaluate Greene County as a place to visit according to 12 different factors, from visitor information and things to see and do to the quality of lodging, retail variety, and recreational opportunities.





## 10. Tourism Industry Analysis

Based on the responses, winter visitors perceive the recreational opportunities, friendliness of hospitality staff, and quality of hospitality staff in Greene County as very good to excellent most often. Retail variety and cultural amenities, on the other hand, had the highest proportion of fair to poor responses than any of the other factors listed. It is not clear whether visitors interpreted the term “cultural amenities” as entertainment and nightlife (e.g., movie theaters, musical performances) and/or as museums and historic sites; as noted previously, the latter may be closed or have limited hours in the winter.

Interestingly, visitors who indicated that they were first-time visitors or had been to Greene County one or two times before were more likely than winter visitors overall to rate visitor information as excellent or very good, and less likely to rate retail variety as fair or poor. A probable explanation is that these visitors have come strictly for skiing, and are not looking for other things to do, such as shopping.

Travelers with children were more likely to rate retail variety and the quality of lodging as fair or poor relative to all winter visitors responding. The negative perception of lodging may be attributed to the fact that large suites to accommodate families are often not available in moderately-priced lodging facilities in Greene County. Lodging options for families on a budget, especially those who want to stay close to one of the ski mountains, are also more limited.

### Additional Comments

The online survey gave respondents an opportunity to provide additional comments about their winter travel experience in Greene County, or any other topic related to tourism in the County. Comments were received from nearly 500 people, or about 20% of the visitors participating in the survey.

Although the narrative remarks covered a wide range of topics, five overall themes were observed: (1) General positive comments; (2) The need for more amenities and things to do; (3) The condition of buildings and property; (4) Concerns about the potential for overdevelopment; and (5) Suggestions for enhancing tourism. Examples are provided below.

### General Positive Comments

- “Always a lot of fun.”
- “Hats off to the Greene County Highway Department – the roads are always maintained during snow storms.”
- “Great place to go for the weekend!”
- “I have enjoyed visiting Greene County for over 15 years.”
- “Love it.”

## 10. Tourism Industry Analysis

- “It offers great value, dollar-wise.”
- “My grown children live in NYC. When I come to visit, Hunter is close enough to get a day or two of skiing with them. It is a great place to get together.”
- “Thanks! Windham is awesome.”
- “We look forward to our winter trip every year.”

### The Need For More Things To Do

- “Aside from winter sports, there isn't much to do in the area. It certainly lacks shopping and entertainment. I believe if you had entertainment or events, many more people would enjoy visiting Greene County.”
- “Greene County should promote more cultural centers, and try to get more shopping on main streets - Catskill, Hunter, etc. Greene County needs to compete with the surrounding areas and offer excellent activities.”
- “There needs to be more for non-skiing members of a group or family [to do].”
- “We basically go to Greene County to ski at Hunter only. There really isn't much else for us to do up there. I wish that there were more nice restaurants so that we didn't have to drive home to have dinner after a day of skiing.”
- “Would like to see more festivals in the Windham area, like wine tasting, microbrews, music.”
- “I was recently looking for a reasonable, family-friendly lodging [facility] with an indoor pool for the kids near Hunter and/or Windham and couldn't find one.”
- “Would love to see better restaurants in the area – sushi and more upscale and ethnic dining options.”
- “There is absolutely nothing to do here in the evenings but drink – not good for families with children.”

### The Condition of Buildings And Property

- “The Village of Hunter is run down and detracts from the experience. It's a shame that people come to Hunter to ski and Tannersville outshines the Village of Hunter. The Village of Hunter should be a quaint alpine village with shops, restaurants, and lodging.”
- “From the Thruway to Hunter there are numerous rundown and deserted homes and buildings. This is an area that could use improvement, as first impressions are usually lasting.”
- “Love Windham and Hunter for day trips from NJ. We have stayed for extended trips, but in general have not been happy with lodging. On the drive in from the Thruway, half the time I'm looking for the banjo player from 'Deliverance.'”
- “It's very dated. Building are in poor shape, no sidewalks or parking, hotels are in poor condition and very '60s. Some improvement [has been made] the past few years, but a lot needs to be focused on. Really needs large capital improvements.”

## 10. Tourism Industry Analysis

### Concerns About Overdevelopment

- “Best thing about Greene County is lack of overdevelopment. Natural amenities, not commercial ones, are what we come for. Casinos and large outlet malls would only detract.”
- “Don’t overdevelop. Keep the County green.”
- “I do not want to see Greene County change its personality and become overdeveloped like the Hamptons in Long Island. Its small town feel is what is important and appealing. Definitely no gambling.”
- “NJ is overbuilt. That is why I like the natural setting of Greene County.”
- “If there are plans to build up Greene County, please do not bring in those big chain stores. We can get that anywhere.”
- “Keeping Greene ‘green’ would be my main objective. It seems pristine; natural areas full of untouched nature are becoming too few and far between these days.”
- “We are not in favor of developing the county by adding shopping outlets or large hotel/condo complexes. We like the rustic scenery.”
- “Part of the charm of Greene County is its rural, friendly nature. I would hate to see a lot of rapid development such as fast food, shopping strips, etc.”

### Suggestions for Enhancing Tourism

- “If Greene County would offer a county-wide tour, or a nature walk, or even just pamphlets on the best outdoor activities in the area, I’m sure more people would be attracted to the area. I know I’d definitely go more often.”
- “Shuttle from New York City may be appealing for day trippers.”
- “The Catskills have to be the next big destination from N.Y.C. It can only get better. The Hunter area has to be on the front edge of gaining stature by improving its infrastructure, accommodations and activities. If we build it, they will come. If they come, they will spend. If they spend more, improvements will follow and even more people come. Done in the right way, I view this as a great thing.”
- “Greene County does not do enough to promote itself as an affordable and beautiful alternative to other places in NY and MA... It is an overlooked gem and somehow that word should get out.”
- “Hunter is fun. Don’t know if I would go to Greene County for any other reason, but then again, I don’t know what [else] there is. You should find a way to let customers know of other things in the area. I have never received marketing about it.”
- “Improving the appearance and infrastructure of [Route] 23A from Haines Falls to Hunter would help change the outdated views many visitors still have of the area. The County also would have success positioning itself less as a budget destination... and more as an alternative to Vermont or the Hamptons or Jersey Shore.”



## 10. Tourism Industry Analysis

In addition to the insight that the survey provided, the following discussion of tourism employment data in Greene and neighboring counties reinforces some findings of prior studies and of the survey results.

### Conclusions/Summary

The following chart organizes the major findings of the research and analysis described above into a summary of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats related to the tourism industry in Greene County (listed in no particular order):

|                      |   |
|----------------------|---|
| <b>STRENGTHS</b>     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Proximity to NY/NJ metropolitan area</li> <li>▪ Ski areas have excellent name recognition, continuing to invest in facilities</li> <li>▪ Vast opportunities for outdoor recreation, especially in the Catskill Park Preserve</li> <li>▪ Unspoiled natural beauty, mountains, streams</li> <li>▪ Rich cultural heritage</li> <li>▪ Increasing presence of the arts (e.g., art galleries, Sugar Maples Center)</li> <li>▪ Strong core of weekenders and repeat customers</li> </ul>  |
| <b>WEAKNESSES</b>    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Antiquated lodging facilities and inability of owners to invest in improvements due to lack of private capital</li> <li>▪ Lack of moderately-priced lodging facilities with suites to accommodate families; few large hotels to accommodate groups, bus tours, and meetings</li> <li>▪ Rundown appearance of community gateways and many downtown areas</li> <li>▪ Limited shopping and restaurants</li> <li>▪ Need to “brand” Greene County and/or the Catskill region for greater impact (e.g., Vermont has New England charm, Green Mountain identity)</li> <li>▪ Internet marketing of many lodging facilities is not sophisticated enough for Internet savvy travelers</li> <li>▪ No standardized data on inquiries, visitors, event attendance, occupancy, etc. with which to evaluate tourism industry</li> </ul> |
| <b>OPPORTUNITIES</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Aging baby boomers with money and time to travel</li> <li>▪ Growing population of the Hudson Valley and NY/NJ metropolitan area</li> <li>▪ Increasing wealth of NY/NJ metropolitan area residents</li> <li>▪ Growth in demand for high quality resorts and health &amp; wellness products</li> <li>▪ Demand for experiential vacation packages featuring historic, cultural, environmental, or adventure activities</li> <li>▪ Ethnic population growth and immigration creating new markets</li> <li>▪ Entrepreneurship and investment by visitors and second homeowners</li> <li>▪ E-mail marketing to build relationships and encourage repeat visits</li> </ul>  |



## 10. Tourism Industry Analysis

|                |   |
|----------------|---|
| <b>THREATS</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Competition from Ulster County for Catskills visitors</li> <li>▪ Competition from the Berkshires and the Poconos for visitors seeking a mountain vacation experience</li> <li>▪ Ease of access to other vacation destinations from NY/NJ metropolitan area</li> <li>▪ Potential overdevelopment</li> <li>▪ Inability to build business beyond the core audience</li> <li>▪ Continued loss of lodging properties to non-profit sector without sufficient replacement</li> <li>▪ Rising housing costs and demographic trends impacting workforce recruitment</li> <li>▪ Impact of global warming on winter ski season</li> </ul> |
|----------------|---|

Of the weaknesses described, perhaps the most significant from an economic development perspective involves the lack of retail and dining options. Many of Greene County’s competitor destinations offer a range of services and retail amenities to complement their attractions. For example, Ellicottville, one of New York’s most popular ski destinations with HoliMont and Holiday Valley, has become a resort town for western New York, Canada, Ohio, and Pennsylvania. SKI Magazine has dubbed Ellicottville the “Aspen of the East’... dotted with good restaurants and bars, intriguing shops and galleries...a town where tourism hasn’t erased reality.” Ellicottville is currently experiencing an unprecedented building boom, with millions of dollars being invested in new hotels and vacation homes. While there are parallels between the upscale slopeside lodging under development and Hunter Mountain’s Kaatskill Mountain Club, the abundant shopping, dining and nightlife in Ellicottville provides a tremendous competitive advantage, as well as source of jobs and revenue for the community.

It should be noted that the Mountaintop is not the only area of Greene County with limited retail and dining options, nor is the problem unique to the tourism sector. Indeed, as suggested by the results of the Consumer Preference Survey, the County appears to be significantly underserved with respect to both resident and visitor markets. This impacts the quality of life as well as Greene County’s ability to attract and retain visitors.

The abundance of aging lodging and other tourist facilities in Greene County is also a major economic development issue. The County’s Tourism Enhancement Program is designed to address the issue by providing loans to improve and modernize lodging facilities and encourage private investment. In some cases, however, structures may be too far gone, or owners are either unwilling or unable to participate in the program. Size is also an issue; tapping into the meeting and conference market, attracting large groups, and bringing in motorcoach tours will require more facilities exceeding 50 rooms. Ultimately, keeping the County’s tourism sector fresh and exciting may require establishing *new* businesses – hotels, motels, amusement parks, tour companies, and so on – as well as reinvestment in existing establishments.

