

# Tompkins County Tourism Program

Overview for HED Committee  
July 16, 2025





# Questions

- Why do we have a Tourism Program?
- What are the program's goals?
- How does the program work?
- Who administers the program?
- How does staff support this program?
- Who advises the Legislature on tourism?
- What issues and changes are coming up?



# Why do we have a Tourism Program?

- To enhance quality of life for county residents.
- To maintain and enhance our county's appeal as a destination.



# Why do we have a Tourism Program?


- To diversify and grow our local economy.
- 2024 Visitor Profile Study findings:
  - \$29.4 million in tax revenue attributed to tourism
  - \$680.90 local taxes per household
  - 3,218 jobs
- The study also showed...
  - 757,500 people visited Tompkins County in 2024
  - Direct visitor spending of \$380.5 million
  - For a total \$429.4 million economic impact

# Strategic Tourism Plan


- The County's efforts are guided by the *Strategic Tourism Plan*
  - This plan was drafted in 2019 and endorsed by the Legislature on March 3, 2020.
  - The Strategic Tourism Plan establishes eight overall goals.
1. Increase overnight trip length
  2. Increase visitor spending
  3. Offer programming year-round
  4. Increase access to Cayuga Lake
  5. Increase the portion of new visitors
  6. Provide accurate information to decision makers
  7. Continuously refine communication methods
  8. Foster collaboration among partners

# How does the Tourism Program work?

A 5% room occupancy tax is paid by guests at hotels, motels, inns, vacation rentals, etc.

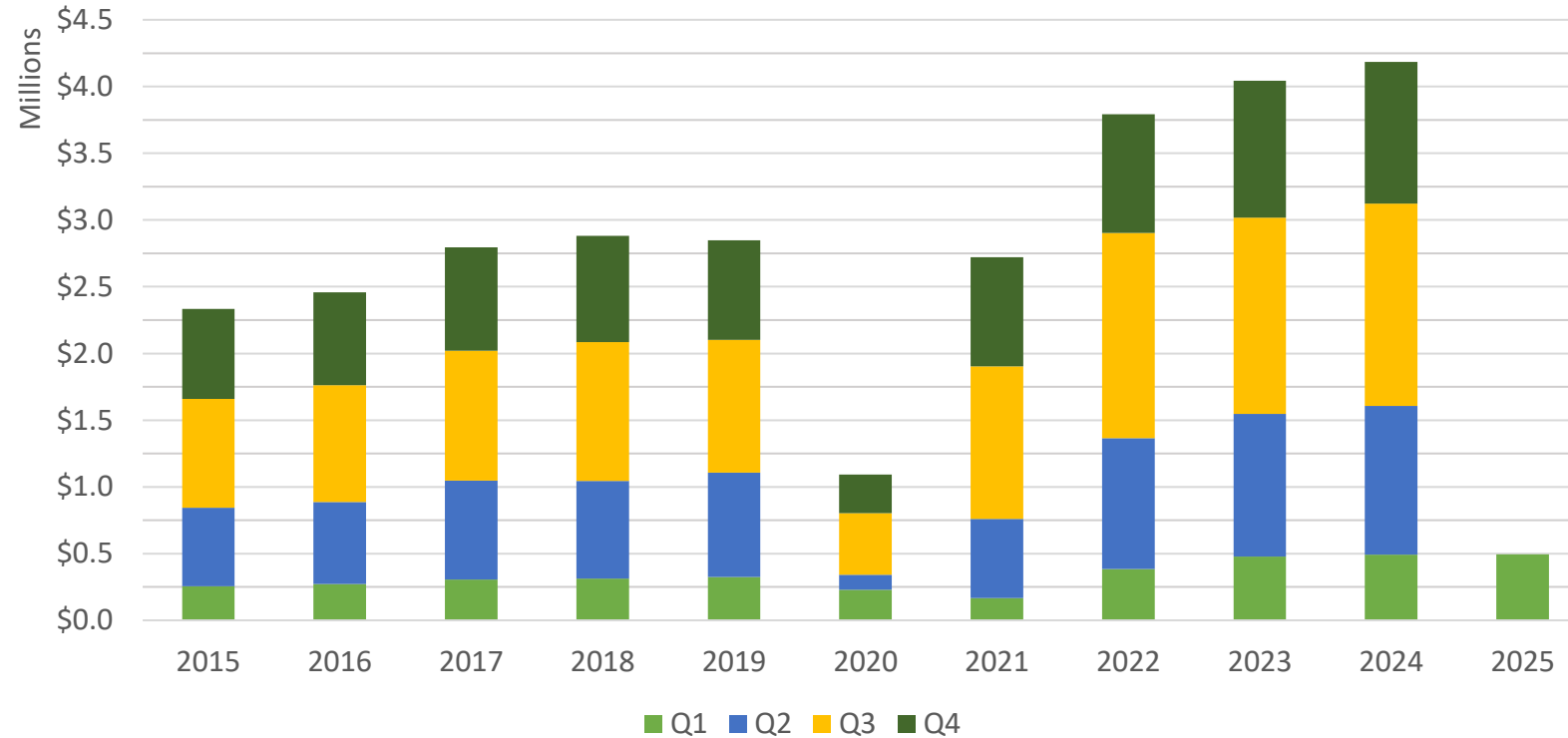


Room tax revenue is allocated to programs and grants that address goals in the Strategic Tourism Plan by the Legislature



Tourism Program Director and Strategic Tourism Planning Board (STPB) evaluate outcomes and recommend changes to the Legislature

# Room Tax Collection History



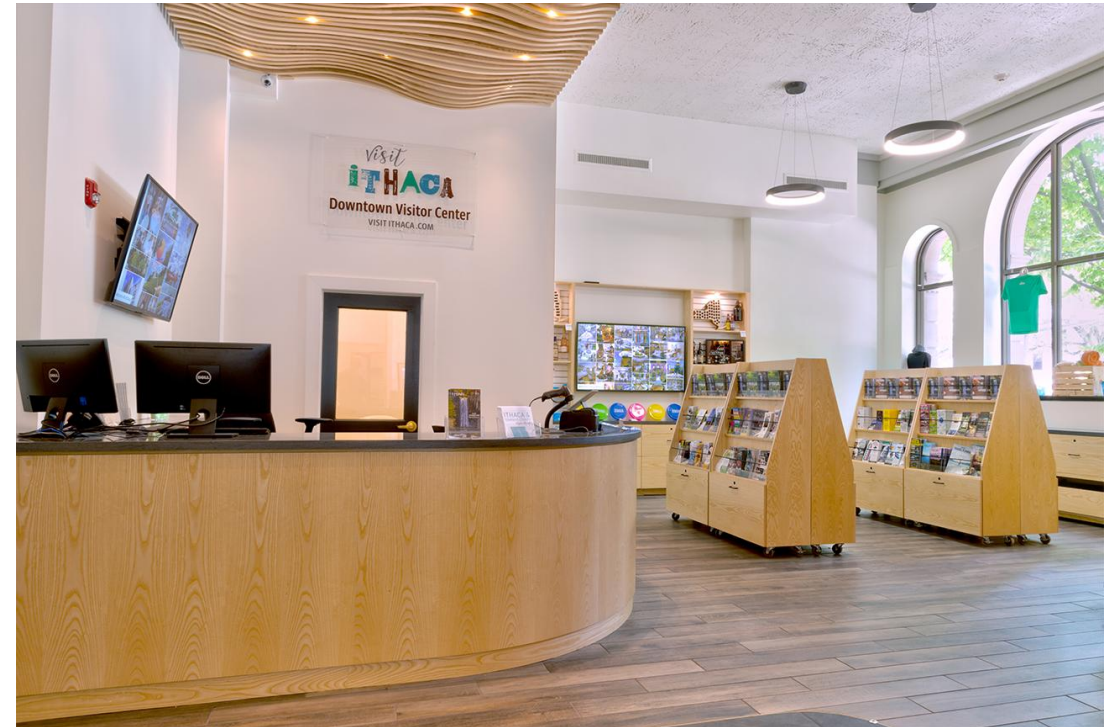
# 2025 Tourism Program Budget

Category	Amount (\$)	Percent (%)
Grants	\$552,200	13%
Grant Administration	\$16,620	<1%
Annual Programs	\$313,600	7%
General Operating Support	\$420,000	10%
Long Term Contracts	\$2,435,520	57%
Other	\$542,031	13%
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$4,279,971</b>	<b>100%</b>



# How does the Tourism Program work?

- Current **programs** include:
  - Convention and Visitors Bureau
  - Community Beautification
  - Downtown Ambassadors & Activation
  - Hospitality Employment Training
  - Market the Arts



# How does the Tourism Program work?

- Current **grants** include:
  - Community Celebrations
  - Tourism Advancement
  - Tourism Capital
  - Tompkins Outdoors
  - Arts and Culture Organizational Development



# Who administers the Tourism Program?

- Department of Planning and Sustainability
  - Tourism Program Director (100%)
  - Administrative Assistant (50%)
  - Principal Account Clerk (12.5%)
  - Commissioner (7.5%)

# How does staff support the Tourism Program?

- Prepare and track 70-80 contracts annually for grants & annual programs
- Evaluate grant reports
- Issue payments on grants and contracts
- Coordinate with County Admin., Finance Dept., and County Attorney
- Lead development of annual budget proposal with STPB
- Project annual room tax collection based on available data
- Analyze hotel performance and compare to budget projections



# How does staff support the Tourism Program?

- Support the advisory board (STPB) by preparing agendas & minutes for monthly meetings
- Support STPB committees
- Prepare and send *Tourism Talk* e-Newsletters quarterly
- Ensure content on the Tourism Program website is current and accurate
- Develop and issue press releases for funding cycles and other matters
- Identify and implement measures to enhance equitable access to room tax funding

# How does staff support the Tourism Program?

- Serve on board of
  - Local Development Corporation (LDC) for the Ithaca Downtown Conference Center
  - Cayuga Lake Scenic Byway
- Serve on governance council for Tompkins Center for History & Culture
- Procure and manage consultants for studies (i.e., Visitor Profile Study)
- Monitor state and federal legislation related to tourism (i.e., Finger Lakes Nat'l Heritage Area)
- Lead long range planning efforts (i.e., updating the Strategic Tourism Plan)

# Who advises the Legislature on tourism?

- Strategic Tourism Planning Board (STPB)
  - 18 voting members (including Greg Mezey)
  - 8 non-voting members
  - Legislative Liaison (Mike Sigler)
  - 2025 Chair: Doug Levine
  - 2025 Vice Chair: Kelly Makosch
  - Meets monthly on 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday

# What issues are coming up?

- Implementing new short term rental registration system
- New Downtown Activation program launching in 2026
- Revised ACOD grant guidelines
- Update to Strategic Tourism Plan



# Contact the Tourism Program


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