GREAT NORTHERN CATSKILLS OF GREENE COUNTY

FY2022 Destination Marketing Plan

FY2022, January 1, 2022 – December 31, 2022

Invested Community Partners

GREENE COUNTY LEGISLATURE

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TOURISM ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Courtney Reinhard, Baumann's Brookside (Lodging – Resort)

Chip Seamans, Windham Mountain (Attraction – Ski Resort)

Lenore Whitcomb, Winter Clove Inn (Lodging – Resort)

Brian Christman, Christman's Windham House (Lodging – Golf Resort)

Russ Colton, Hunter Mountain (Attraction – Ski Resort)

Patty Handel, Blackthorne Resort (Lodging – Resort)

Marianna Leman, Albergo Allegria (Lodging – Inn/B&B)

Jennifer Greim, Thomas Cole National Historic Site (Attraction – Arts and Culture)

Tinker Nicholsen-Pachter, Sunny Hill Resort & Golf Course (Lodging – Golf Resort)

Background

The region was settled in the 17th century by Dutch and English colonists who were enticed by its fertile ground. However, other nationalities began to take root as industry along the Hudson River flourished and Catskill became the most important cultural center outside of Albany and New York City. By the time construction of the Erie Canal was underway in 1817, an influx of Germans, Italians, and Ukrainians had settled in the area.

As the region developed, the Great Northern Catskills of Greene County quickly became an established vacation destination for wealthy New Yorkers. Eager to escape the oppressive city heat and enjoy the fresh mountain air, people flocked to the legendary "mountain houses." Perched on scenic bluffs, tucked away high in the mountains, the Catskills hotels flourished.

Simultaneously, in the early 19th century, the area's scenic views and striking landscapes inspired a new genre of American art with the Hudson River School of painters and motivated Washington Irving to set his famous 1819 short story, Rip Van Winkle, in the Catskill Mountains. The legacy persists and throughout the year, visitors can explore the home of painter Thomas Cole, now a historic site, or hike the Hudson River Art Trail, a journey to many of the places that inspired some of America's greatest landscape painters.

Today, the Great Northern Catskills (GNC) of Greene County is a four-season destination providing endless outdoor recreation, historical and cultural options, one-of-a-kind lodging opportunities, festive events, and much more! Located in the Catskill Park and Hudson Valley region, the county offers breathtaking views of the Hudson River and Catskill mountains.

Introduction

The Great Northern Catskills of Greene County is part of two New York State Tourism Regions, Hudson Valley Tourism (HVT) and the Catskills Association of Tourism Services (CATS). Both organizations receive funding from the County via ILNY/Empire State Development Matching Funds program. The budget for the department is from the appropriation of funds designated by the Greene County Legislature.

Due to the recent worldwide pandemic, GNC is employing a back-to-basics approach. We will ensure our dollars are spent in the most economical and efficient way to deliver the best return on investment. We recognize that many of Greene County's businesses may not have the financial means to execute a strong marketing campaign so the county will look to implement a more robust sales strategy to encourage group and international travel. Our efforts will be key to their recovery.

In this plan there is a heavy focus on marketing to consumers who are in-state and those surrounding the New York State boarder. There is also an emphasis placed on the travel trade market, both domestic and international. In 2021 we built new pages on our website to promote group travel. We have an emphasis on building the travel trade market through relationships developed at the IPW 2021 Convention.

Additional information on the regional tourism impact, marketing and advertising analytics, and the strategic goals can be found on the bottom of the following webpage, https://greenecountyedc.com/business-support/projects-plans-studies/.

Marketing Tactics - 2022

PAID ADVERTISING

- Will rely heavily on digital strategies. Will use channels that use behavioral targeting; retargeting those interested in the Great Northern Catskills of Greene County, and use authentic visuals and video.
- A portion of advertising spend will focus on building relationships with tour operators and receptive operators to increase individual and group travel, such as leisure travel, to the domestic and international markets.

OBJECTIVES

- Focus on digital media tactics for a trackable, conversion-based campaign lift.
- Continue to increase brand awareness of the Great Northern Catskills of Greene County a must-experience destination.
- Focus on diverse Greene County lodging (i.e., family resorts, yurts, treehouses, B&B, etc.).
- NEW: Deliver leads to county hotels for individual and group travel.
- NEW: Create opportunities for area businesses to participate in these media opportunities.

MARKETS

- Phase 1: Drive Markets/In-state
- Phase 2: Northeast / New England markets
- Phase 3: Domestic and International
- Behavior based instead of geographic
- Vacation Planners (travel trade)

TACTICS

- Approx. 75% Digital; 25% Broadcast/Print/Radio
- Retargeting (People interested in in the Catskills)

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PUBLIC RELATIONS AND EARNED MEDIA

- Conduct media missions to involve local area businesses to tell the story of the GNC experience. Markets chosen as consumer sentiment and research dictates.
- A portion of the public relations spend will focus on building relationships with tour operators and receptive operators to increase individual and group travel, such as leisure travel, to the domestic and international markets.

OBJECTIVES

- Maximize exposure of Greene County as a tourism destination and highlight area businesses to showcase things to do during visit.
- Connect county area businesses with media to increase brand awareness of a GNC vacation.

MARKETS

- Phase 1: Drive Markets/In-state
- Phase 2: Northeast / New England markets
- Phase 3: Domestic and International
- Behavior based instead of geographic
- Vacation Planners (travel trade)

TACTICS

- Proactively pitch story ideas to writers and publications, bloggers/vloggers, social influencers, and broadcast outlets.
- Send monthly media e-newsletter to a travel media contact list where an emphasis is on continuing to build the list with applicable media.
- Host media in destination—reactive and proactive.
- Attend ILNY Media Night to connect with and pitch media.
- Identify relevant media, resonating storylines, coordinate individual/group media missions/ appointments.

SOCIAL MEDIA

- Social Media Channels:
    - Facebook: GreatNorthernCatskills
    - Instagram: catskilltourism
    - YouTube: CatskillsNY
    - Twitter: CatskillTourism
- Continue to leverage social media to inspire visitors to choose the Great Northern Catskills of Greene County as their next vacation destination.

OBJECTIVES

- Increase followers and engagement on social channels.
- To more effectively and better diversify the inclusion of county businesses into GNC social content.
- Improve brand awareness.

MARKETS

- In-State
- Drive Market, Northeast
- Behavior based instead of just geographic

TACTICS

- Leverage Crowdriff to secure user generated content to showcase authentic experiences.
- Apply and promote hashtags to maximize aggregation, engagement, and reach.
- Utilize Instagram stories to highlight 'things to do.'
- Use Influencers to promote the GNC brand.
- Educate locals and area businesses on ways to share our messages on their social media.

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WEBSITE AND CONTENT

- The website will continue to be a good resource for all things Greene County travel.
- Continue to optimize website to make more relevant and increase authority so it can rank well and drive more qualified traffic to the website.

OBJECTIVES

- To more effectively and better diversify the inclusion of county businesses and their content into GNC online and social content.
- Utilizing content, increase awareness of the Great Northern Catskills of Greene County, with a special emphasis on unique lodging.
- Educate area businesses about relevant marketing and tourism trends and best practices.

MARKETS

- Local tourism industry/area businesses when focusing on internal communications
- In-State
- Drive Market, Northeast
- Behavior based instead of just geographic

TACTICS

- Drive traffic to GreatNorthernCatskills.com via digital ads, social media, search engine optimization efforts, and other marketing tactics.
- Utilize and promote hashtags to maximize aggregation, engagement, and reach.
- Optimize website to showcase business listings and hyperlink to their websites.
- Enhance event listings to become the "go to" website for all events in Greene County.
- Optimize search feature on website.
- Generate business e-newsletters with relevant and timely tourism trends and best practice.

Creative and Broadcast Production

- The Annual Travel Guide will continue to lead the yearly campaign for all other print and broadcast elements.
- Continue to develop "Virtual Main Street" destination videos

OBJECTIVES

- To develop one cohesive message amongst all creative elements to further brand awareness.
- Develop an East Durham Destination video to create a vacation destination video (similar to Round Top and Purling)

MARKETS

- Local tourism industry/area businesses when focusing on internal communications
- In-State
- Drive Market, Northeast
- Behavior based instead of just geographic

TACTICS

- Drive traffic to GreatNorthernCatskills.com via paid media and print production elements.
- Incorporate QR codes into print elements, where necessary.
- Development of promotional materials and printed products, such as:
  - ✓ Travel Guide
  - ✓ Mountain Bike Guide
  - ✓ Dining Guide
  - ✓ Motorcycle Guide
  - ✓ Beverage Guide
  - ✓ Golf Guide
  - ✓ Vacation Guide
- Partner with Famous Destination's to execute "Virtual Main Street" destination video

VISITOR SERVICES AND GUIDES

- Effectively promote the locations of the visitor center and kiosks throughout the county.
- Find new ways to distribute guides and collateral to eliminate waste.

OBJECTIVES

- Provide a safe and fun environment for our visitors.
- Continue in-county promotion of Travel Guide and general brochures.
- Advocate for locals to be brand ambassadors to help extend our reach.

MARKETS

- Local, regional, and statewide.

TACTICS

- Ensure visitor center and county kiosks have up-to-date travel collateral to assist visitors.
- Use New York State Thruway Travel Plaza Centers and other outlets as budget allows to distribute our collateral.
- Distribute travel guide and other brochures to local businesses bi-annually, or on an as needed basis.

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Overview of Sales

SALES: GROUP SALES – *NEW FOCUS*

- The primary goal of the GNC sales department is to promote Greene County as the ideal destination for individual, family, and small group travel.

OBJECTIVES

- Provide sufficient funding to seize opportunities to book additional visitation into the destination or for programs that will generate leads for new group business.
- Identify listings within third-party online destination sales and marketing channels.
- Generate qualified group leads and increase room nights for Greene County hotels and other tourism businesses.

MARKETS

- State and regional leisure group planners
- Destination wedding specialists and planners
- Domestic travel agents

TACTICS

- Participate in industry tradeshows which connect GNC to our target markets.
- Host Familiarization Tours (FAMS) for meeting planners from target market segments.
- Careful selection of qualified third-party planners will be included in these FAMS, as they may acquire all types of segments of business.

SALES: TRAVEL TRADE – *NEW FOCUS*

Reaching international foreign independent travelers is done working through both Tour Operators located internationally and Receptive Operators, who are located stateside. Collectively, International Tour Operators and Receptive Operators are referred to as the Travel Trade.

OBJECTIVES

- Become top-of-mind among international travelers who are booking long-haul trips to the Catskills and the Hudson River Valley.
- Identify Tour and/or Receptive Operators to creative campaigns promoting Greene County as the ideal long-haul holiday and generate bookings from international markets.
- Maintain relationships with Tour and Receptive Operators in order to keep them informed of updates in the area and to stay current on any materials needed (images, copy, etc.) for their printed sales brochures and website landing pages.
- Continue to participate in opportunities to meet with product managers to increase offerings for the area to the international market.
- Keep international reservation agents educated on the amenities of the area so they can assist guests in booking the destination for their holiday.

MARKETS

- Tour and Receptive Operators representing the international markets
- Focus on Europe and Canada.

TACTICS

- Hold some funding in contingent status in order to have it readily available for time-sensitive opportunities that will generate international bookings for the area.
- Participate in industry tradeshows which connect GNC with Tour and Receptive Operators who service our target markets.
- Host Familiarization Tours for international product managers and reservation agents.
- Utilize and enhance listings within third party online destination sales and marketing channels such as Touroperatorland.

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Effectiveness Measurements

RESEARCH

Current relation with Rove Marketing includes a dashboard of the past three years of near data (mobile data of select points of interests) and AirDNA (short-term rental data).

OBJECTIVES

1. Develop the Catskills region and county dashboard including, but not limited to, Google Analytics, Website Goals, Social Media Stats, Tourism Economic Results, and much more.
2. Identify other data indicators to include in the county dashboard.

TACTICS

1. Leverage research data to make sound marketing decisions to keep the Great Northern Catskills of Greene County the top destination of choice for all travel needs.

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