

# Schroon Assessment

Updated November 2008

## Intro Statement

Schroon Lake is a quaint village on the shores of a beautiful lake. The town has had a long history with tourism. As a rule, early visitors were more affluent than current visitors and arrived by stage (and later auto) to stay at magnificent classic Adirondack lakeside retreats. Photos of those classic lodges adorn the walls of town hall and remind locals that Schroon Lake used to be a hopping place.

Travel patterns changed and Schroon Lake found itself serving weekenders driving north from the cities and staying in some fairly budget motels that were strategically placed to appeal to people on the highway.

Times changed again and the Northway construction left Schroon Lake and those motor lodges out of sight to highway travelers. Schroon Lake did not succeed in creating demand for continued strong patronage of the destination. Without a good flow of patrons, there was not ample reinvestment in lodging and Schroon Lake fell behind times.

The view from the highway as one passes south to north through Schroon Lake is dominated by out of date lodging. Some of that lodging is in poor repair. That image sticks in the mind and influences who spends time in Schroon Lake, what they are willing to pay, whether they seek a nice meal, how long they stay, whether they shop, and what kinds of activities they engage in. None of those outcomes are good for Schroon Lake.

In recent times, the town has reinvested in its historic downtown and the waterfront. The waterfront park is inviting. The boat launch and band shell areas look very good. The entire waterfront park is a classic Adirondack look and very well maintained.

Downtown is looking good. There is a selection of dining that is new and seems to be well received. The mix of retail is reflecting visitors' wants as well as local needs. If Schroon Lake could secure a steady flow of visitors who spend several nights and engage in activities from a local base, then downtown would flourish.

Schroon Lake has a great base-camp location. If one was comfortably lodged here, one could explore the region from Lake Champlain to the high country to the west. There are great hiking trails and quiet roads to explore by car or bicycle. In the winter there are miles of wilderness trails for snowshoeing or cross country skiing. There are ample opportunities to snowmobile and ice fish. Most of all there is Schroon Lake itself, which lends itself to great family boating and fishing.

## Snapshot of Current Tourism

This is an evolving document – more will be added as it comes to the table through research and community discussion. The following lists are not prioritized. Key items are presented in red.

### ***Infrastructure***

- Town Park and Boat Launch
- Schroon Lake and beach
- Hiking and Snowmobile Trails
- Scenic Drives
- Proximity to Northway
- Proximity to Amtrak/Trailways Bus
- Forever Wild Lands
- Lakes and Ponds
- Historic Downtown
- Historic Homes and Churches
- Seagle Music Colony and Schroon Lake Arts
- Older lodging establishments
- Word of Life
- Sunrise Lutheran Camp
- Airport
- Golf Course
- Paradox Lake
- State Land
- Library
- Movie Theater
- Town's Infrastructure

### ***Experiences***

- Boating
- Fishing
- Hiking
- Ice Fishing
- Snowmobiling
- Snowshoeing
- Touring routes for Adirondack vistas
- Small and big game hunting
- Seagle Music Colony and Schroon Lake Arts
- Spiritual Retreats
- Movie Theater
- Lakes and Ponds
- History
- Cultural Events
- State Land
- Main Street
- Golf Course
- Tennis
- Beach/swimming
- X-C Skiing
- Ice Skating
- Town Park
- Ski Hill
- Annual Events
- Youth Events

### ***Products***

- Older lodging establishments
- Dining
- Downtown Retail
- B&Bs
- Local Events and Contests
- Ice Fishing Derby
- Guide Service
- Youth Events
- State Land
- Golf Course

## **Gaps**

- Lodging that matches destination and current market demands
- Anchor experiences
- Turning experiences into products
- Dining – experience dining with a view
- More “current” lodging inventory – should contain amenities
- Conference/Banquet Center
- Limited year round businesses
- Indoor activities for inclement weather
- Lakefront dining
- Parking and Traffic Flow
- Wilderness trail improvements on State Land (Hoffman Knotch)
- Signs and trailhead improvements (DEC needs to be doing)
- Year round restaurants
- Bike trails
- Cell Phone Coverage and Internet Access
- Public Transportation
- Local Services (i.e. hair dresser)
- Empty storefronts

## **Seasons**

Schroon Lake has an ample array of experiences to achieve a year-round economy. Currently, there are not specific motivators in place to drive that traffic to Schroon Lake.

## **Quality**

Travelers have come to expect style and amenities that are lacking in the current lodging selections in Schroon Lake. There are great qualities of experiences in nature and in the historic downtown.

## **Rates**

Lower than the destination deserves – far lower than potential.  
B&B's are upgraded – motels are not.

## **Competitiveness**

Most of the currently available lodging is of an earlier era and has not seen the reinvestment necessary to compete in the current era. B&B's are upgraded – motels are not.

## **Positive and Negative Impacts**

There are a number of visitors evident in Schroon Lake and all of those visitors generate impacts (wear and tear on public infrastructure, sewage, power consumption, exhaust, congestion). Those visitors are not currently leaving enough in Schroon Lake's economy to offset those impacts.

### **Benefits**

- Visitors are spending money downtown.

### **Visitors (demographics)**

Lodging issues are driving down the demographic profile of Schroon Lake's overnight visitors.

### **Visitor Satisfaction**

### Potential New Products and Experiences

- Lodging
- Guided Experiences
- Ecotourism
- Geocaching
- Birding
- More guided experiences
- Paddling/Kayaking
- Dinner Cruises
- Mill Brook (area behind Main Street shops to the river that could open Main Street up)

### Community Wants

- Jobs and Business Opportunities
- More visitors of a higher value

### Community Concerns

- Second Home development driving out opportunity to have tourism infrastructure that interfaces the lake
- Are there enough local resources to bring about needed change?
- Lakefront is private property

## Visitor Perspectives

### ***Products and Experiences that Contribute to a Sense of Destination***

- Schroon Lake
- Town Waterfront Park and Beach
- Historic Downtown
- Great Drives based from Schroon Lake
- Boating
- Great hiking and snowmobiling trails
- Lakes and Ponds
- State – Forever Wild Lands
- Annual Events
- Seagle Music Colony and Schroon Lake Arts
- Word of Life
- Guided Experiences
- Fishing

### ***Products and Experiences that build on Essex County/Adirondack Sense of Destination***

- Schroon Lake
- Town Waterfront Park and Beach
- Historic Downtown
- Great Drives based from Schroon Lake
- Boating
- Great hiking and snowmobiling trails
- Lakes and Ponds
- Fishing
- Guided Experiences
- Cultural Events

### ***Products that Conflict with Destination Appeal***

Outdated Lodging (sometimes in poor repair)

Second home development blocking tourism access to waterfront lodging and dining.

### ***What Makes This (or Would Make This) a Destination***

- Current Quality Lodging, preferably oriented to the Lake, woods, or a pond
- Dining with a view
- A standout image or experience that would capture potential visitors' imaginations and help them understand what Schroon Lake is all about

### ***Visitor Satisfaction (what contributes, what detracts, what is needed)***

- The real question here is: What do the visitors Schroon Lake really wants to serve think of the current situation – what would bring them to Schroon Lake?
- Packaged ecotourism (needed)

## Other Issues from Local Input

### Word of Life

#### Summary

Schroon Lake is certainly challenged because it lacks a current and competitive lodging component. The lack of those facilities precludes Schroon Lake's success among visitors who might otherwise be a good match for the destination. The presence of outdated and (sometimes) poorly presented lodging facilities further devalues the destination and can serve to attract visitors who are not as profitable and could, themselves, make it more difficult to achieve long term success. The lack of ability to construct and operate those facilities in a way that faces Schroon Lake, certainly puts constraints on the development of quality tourism.

The second key issue for Schroon Lake is that it has a long list of quite acceptable experiences – but it does not have a key experience that defines the destination. While Schroon Lake is a great (perhaps even quintessential) small town Adirondack lakefront experience, it will need to better communicate that in order to differentiate Schroon Lake from other small towns that also regard and present themselves as quintessential small town Adirondack lakefront experiences. Schroon Lake will benefit from making some decisions about where to focus and then getting strong energy behind that direction – and making a name for itself.

It will be important for Schroon Lake to establish itself as a hub for multiple days of experiences. To do that, one will want to prepare exciting packages that show off the region's best assets, activities, and experiences and mix those with a variety of dining options.