

Schroon Lake Analysis

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Schroon Lake has an enviable history in tourism – a vibrant and iconic tourism that has now slipped away from Schroon Lake and left the town serving lower paying visitors. Still, Schroon Lake knows it can excel in tourism, has the natural resources to put together a dynamic tourism economy, and has the drive to make it happen.

There was no hesitation in the planning sessions when we asked whether Schroon Lake should aim for more similar spending visitors or whether it wants to build an operate a tourism economy aiming at higher return guests. Schroon Lake intends to aim higher than the average visitor it now serves. And the people in the room demonstrated a determination to succeed at that.

What will that take?

Schroon Lake needs to concentrate on the following issues to rebuild and retool it's tourism economy to be vibrant and to attract and serve higher-paying clientele:

- Schroon Lake needs a new core of mid to upper-mid range lodging offerings
- Schroon Lake will benefit from developing architectural standards that reinforce the classic Schroon Lake look.
- Schroon Lake will need to look to the great collection of year round outdoor experiences and develop the stronger of those experiences into products.
- Schroon Lake has a good start on building a vibrant downtown – that needs to expand to include year-round dining that is a match for a higher-paying clientele and for families.
- Schroon Lake needs to take care of its curb appeal, especially on the approaches from the north and south.
- Schroon Lake needs to reopen the lake to visitors that seek dining and lodging with a view

If Schroon Lake is to recapture the vibrancy of its past it needs to aim for a clientele that spends more – that will require the development of mid to upper-mid range lodging. And that lodging will be more successful if it can be oriented to the great natural resources of the region (as those classic Schroon Lake lodges were). The era when it was important for visitors to see lodging as they drove past is over – at least if one is seeking the kinds of clientele that regard the lodging component as a part of their vacation experience.

Schroon Lake is so much more (and has a history to support it) than another lake you can come and play on – and it has much to gain by demanding that as time passes it looks more and more like the classic Schroon Lake that was so successful. That would mean that the community would come together behind some architectural standards (especially along the tourism corridor) that reinforce the classic Schroon Lake look. The payback over time could be enormous as the Schroon Lake look reinforces and becomes the icon for the message that this community is ready to host a world class experience and that it is the penultimate Adirondack lakeside community.

Sleeping in a destination is not enough – the target clientele will need a rich array of products and experiences that are grounded in the strengths of Schroon Lake. The planning group has assembled quite a list of potential products and experiences – those need to be sifted to find those that are differentiators for Schroon Lake. Those differentiators are the experiences that will drive tourism business to and for Schroon Lake – and they need to be developed and or fine tuned to be very successful.

Downtown Schroon Lake is important to the present tourism economy and will become more important to a vibrant new tourism economy. Downtown will need to evolve to match the evolving target market – there will be strong needs for more upscale and year-round dining opportunities, authentic Adirondack arts and crafts, more of the retail that supports outdoor adventures, and continued energy related to coffee shops and bakeries. These changes will also serve locals well, raising quality of life and providing new entrepreneurial and employment opportunities.

Schroon Lake needs to work on its curb appeal. Schroon Lake has done much to upgrade park and waterfront areas – and those efforts have really made a difference in keeping Schroon Lake viable until a substantial reinvestment on the private side can take hold. Downtown is looking much better than it did a few years ago – but a visitor approaching from the north or south passes by poorly maintained and derelict properties, many of which are related to tourism. If a visitor develops a poor impression before hitting town, the value of the experience has been degraded before it starts. There needs to be a strong and concerted effort to seriously upgrade those out of date lodging properties that can be upgraded and remove the rest from the sight of travelers.

The classic period in Schroon Lake's tourism history focused on the waterfront – that needs to be revitalized. Since the days of the grand old lakefront Adirondack lodges, the lakefront has been bought up for the development of second homes. While this move has funneled some revenue into the local economy, it has choked off Schroon Lake's ability to deliver lodging and dining experiences oriented to the lake that is central to the town's history and tourism image. There is no easy answer to this dilemma, but it is an issue that needs to be faced and dealt with as Schroon Lake contemplates its future in tourism.

Those famous Adirondack chairs were designed to sit at a lakefront lodge and look out over the water – it's time to make that happen again in Schroon Lake.

Egret Communications firmly believes that Schroon Lake has the ability to develop a more vibrant tourism economy that serves a higher spending clientele than the average of those coming now. If the six points listed above are satisfactorily addressed, the other issues and opportunities related to the future of Schroon Lake tourism will be relatively easy to address.