



# *DuPage GPS: A Tourism Roadmap*

*Grow, Prosper and Share Our Communities*



## **DuPage Roadmap Advisory Board**

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# *1. Executive Summary*



# ***GPS: A Tourism Roadmap***

## ***Executive Summary***

### **Introduction to the Roadmap**

DuPage County's tourism industry is a major economic contributor to the health and vibrancy of communities throughout the County. Today, it possesses the second largest base of hotel rooms outside of the Central Business District of Chicago. In order to maximize the potential of the industry, the DuPage Convention and Visitors Bureau (DCVB) undertook a new long range strategic planning process in May of 2016.

The planning effort was named ***GPS: A Tourism Roadmap***, recognizing its goal of helping the industry Grow, Prosper and Share.



While the Roadmap was coordinated through the DCVB, it incorporated input from a wide range of tourism

professionals from around the county, and thus the plan is an industry-wide plan which helps direct initiatives of both the DCVB and its many partners.

### **Broad Participatory Process**

In order to incorporate a diverse array of perspectives in the process, a Roadmap Advisory Board was developed which brought professionals representing areas such as lodging, retail, education, heritage and governmental leadership. This Board helped coordinate a series of input sessions around the County, bringing together more than 200 individuals to help identify the opportunities and challenges facing the industry. A dedicated GPS: A Tourism Roadmap web presence was also launched, providing another opportunity for feedback. Interim findings were presented at the DCVB Annual Meeting in October, and feedback was incorporated in the final set of recommendations.

Through this inclusive process, the Roadmap has strong potential to be embraced and utilized, not just by the DCVB, but also with the many businesses and professionals throughout the County, helping maximize the potential of this critically important industry cluster.

### **State of the Industry**

The process began by investigating the current "State of the Industry" (SOI), essentially what critical factors faced DuPage's visitor industry. The SOI focused on four key strategy areas: Customers, Products, Delivery

Systems and Competition. Participants in the input process provided insights within these strategy areas and a wide mix of research was then investigated to better evaluate key findings. Key findings in each of the areas follows.

### **Customers**

- ◆ The tourism industry within DuPage County is powerful, attracting almost \$2.5 billion dollars of visitor spending in 2015.
- ◆ DuPage County has seen improving vibrancy in the visitor industry, with improvements in both lodging occupancy rates and average daily rates.
- ◆ While experiencing positive trends, other competitors in the state have grown even more rapidly and have pulled market share from DuPage.
- ◆ This loss of market share cost the County over \$27 million of visitor spending in 2015 alone.
- ◆ The large size of the county, its many communities and the range of entities undertaking tourism promotion can result in a fragmented, confusing presentation to visitors.
- ◆ The group and conference market is of critical importance to DuPage's visitor industry and ongoing efforts to maximize this segment should be pursued.
- ◆ While recognizing the importance of the group market, the leisure segment also holds deeper opportunities for DuPage.
- ◆ There is a great diversity of experiences that customers come to DuPage for - it is more important than ever to "connects the dots" for DuPage customers.

### **Products**

- ◆ The DCVB is increasingly moving from a Destination Mar-

keting Organization to a Destination Management Organization, seeing product development as a key function.

- ◆ The term "Destination Architect" should increasingly be used in thinking about this evolving role.
- ◆ The integration of DuPage products has been pursued in the past with themes like Route 66, Science & Technology and Architecture.
- ◆ New approaches need to be used to better understand how visitors are linking and integrating DuPage products.
- ◆ DuPage Forest Preserve District holds strong potential for greater visitor alliances.
- ◆ Deeper connections with non-traditional businesses already located in DuPage should be pursued.
- ◆ Amateur sports is an important, evolving segment and merits further research and local input.

### **Delivery Systems**

- ◆ In delivering visitors to DuPage County, the many organizations vying for attention often presents a fractured presentation to prospective visitors.
- ◆ The DCVB should increasingly play the role of a county-wide umbrella organization, presenting a holistic presentation to prospective visitors.
- ◆ Expanded community integration by the DCVB is necessary to ensure the full range of tourism industry benefits is understood by leaders and residents.
- ◆ A refined branding initiative should be pursued that helps clarify DuPage County's competitive advantage.
- ◆ New steps should be taken to ensure the DCVB pos-

sesses resources that are competitive with other similar organizations.

### **Competition**

- ◆ DuPage County faces a broad range of competitors vying for the same prospective visitor - a competitive reality that is resulting in lost market share.
- ◆ Many of these competitors possess strong attributes they use to shift interest to their destination.
- ◆ More should be done to keep these DuPage competitive realities “top of mind” with both industry partners and political leaders.
- ◆ This competitive framework should serve as the foundation that reinforces a mindset of “Cooperate Internally—Compete Externally”.

### **The Roadmap Strategy**

Using the SOI findings as a foundation, a refined Vision and Mission statement for the DCVB was developed. Building on the Vision and Mission statements, three Goal Tracks were identified:

- ◆ Market,
- ◆ Develop, and
- ◆ Coordinate.

### **DCVB Vision**

*Position DuPage County as a “must visit” destination for all types of visitors to the Chicago area, possessing a mix of experiences no others can match.*

### **DCVB Mission**

*Actively promote and develop DuPage County as an enticing destination, attracting individual travelers and meeting/event planners in order to enhance the County’s economic fiber and resident quality of life.*



## Market

Target and connect with full range of prospective visitors to maximize county-wide performance.

**Market Objective 1-** Maintain success in group markets - deepen connections with leisure visitors.

Strategy 1: Pursue new research identifying current demand by segment.

Strategy 2: Develop evaluation of marketing connections among varying targeted segments.

Strategy 3: Investigate factors driving leisure travel in metro-Chicago—demonstrate DuPage relevancy.

**Market Objective 2** – Ensure visitor industry outreach max-

imizes connections with broader economic development initiatives.

Strategy 1 – Reinforce county economic development goals – maximize “Halo Affect”.

Strategy 2 – Deepen collaborative efforts with Choose DuPage.

**Market Objective 3** – Refine DuPage brand to connect with diverse prospective segments.

Strategy 1 – Showcase the competitive advantages of DuPage.

Strategy 2 – Develop range of approaches that resonate with group and leisure segments.

**Market Objective 4** — Showcase the full range of offerings and experiences available to DuPage visitors, presenting a county-wide perspective.

Strategy 1 – Showcase the diversity of products and experiences available throughout the county.

Strategy 2 – Help industry partners promote the full range of products that are available to DuPage County visitors.



## Develop

Identify and stimulate new product opportunities that reinforce unique strengths of DuPage County.

**Develop Objective 1-** Identify and track full range of county products and experiences using a mix of internal and external resources.

Strategy 1 – Use a mix of resources to identify and classify products.

Strategy 2 – Identify how products are being linked and integrated by actual visitors.

Strategy 3 – Maximize “cross-connection” of products for visitors throughout the county.

**Develop Objective 2** – Launch “Product Development Working Group” that brings together senior representatives to evaluate new opportunities.

Strategy 1 – Use Working Group to both link existing products and stimulate new concepts.

Strategy 2 – Undertake an “Amateur Sports Destination” analysis.

Strategy 3 - Evaluate potential meeting space options to accommodate larger groups.

**Develop Objective 3** – Engage non-traditional tourism businesses and demonstrate how they should be involved in the tourism industry.

Strategy 1 – Identify key DuPage businesses and how their business themes have been developed in other destinations.

Strategy 2 – Using “case studies”, connect with prospective business partners and demonstrate a tourism connection.

Strategy 3 – Build on the existing range of nature based assets and expand integration with visitors.

**Develop Objective 4** – Work to develop an incentive fund that would help stimulate the “right” kinds of new development efforts.

Strategy 1 – Use role as a “Destination Architect” to build organizational support

Strategy 2 – Investigate allocation of resources to help stimulate targeted new development.





## Coordinate

Foster an integrated spirit that brings all industry partners together to present a coordinated DuPage offering to prospective visitors.

**Coordinate Objective 1-** Refine DCVB structure to promote integration of full range of communities throughout the county.

Strategy 1 – Investigate range of DMO structures and move towards option that allows integration of all DMOs and industry participants.

Strategy 2 – Incorporate other DuPage DMOs in planning sessions to identify DCVB roles and activities that would be most desired and valued.

**Coordinate Objective 2** – Showcase full range of visitor industry benefits to community leaders, building greater support for the industry.

Strategy 1 – Identify broader ways DuPage visitor industry benefits both businesses and residents of the county.

Strategy 2 – Launch “internal marketing” campaign that illuminates these benefits.

**Coordinate Objective 3** – Build momentum among industry participants that supports a “Cooperate Internally and Compete Externally” spirit.

Strategy 1 – Identify new initiatives and successes of competitive destinations.

Strategy 2 – Use competitive realities to foster greater internal cooperation.

**Coordinate Objective 4** – Expand resources available to DCVB to position them competitively among other destinations and ensure they have the ability to implement the Roadmap.

Strategy 1 – Identify funding levels of similarly positioned DMOs around the county.

Strategy 2 – Build clarity of what DCVB funding would be required to bring the organization to a competitive basis.

Strategy 3 – Demonstrate how incremental resources would be deployed.

# The Roadmap Timeline

