

Realtors join Adirondack resort fray

ADK Works campaign budgets \$100,000 for ads amid court test of project
 By Brian Nearing
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Tupper Lake

The real estate industry's state lobbying arm is throwing its weight into the struggle over a proposed Adirondack resort project in this economically challenged Adirondack village.

Supporters of the delayed Adirondack Club and Resort project, which has been enmeshed in a lawsuit since shortly after it got approval from the Adirondack Park Agency, unveiled a coalition Tuesday of residents, businesses and civic groups to push a media blitz calling for more economic development in the 6-million-acre Adirondack Park.

Called ADK Works, the \$100,000 campaign is being fueled by the Albany-based New York State Association of Realtors, which represents real estate agents statewide, said Tupper Lake resident Jim LaValley, a local Realtor who will be coordinator of ADK Works. More than 100 people attended the group's kickoff in the village.

Mike Kelly, director of government affairs for the real estate association, said the Tupper Lake project has become a "flash point" in the seminal Adirondack debate over the right balance between development and environmental protection.

"We are concerned that as the Adirondack Club project continues to be tied up in the courts, it would fall off people's screens," he said. "We want to help keep the issue on the front burner for people ... What is happening in Tupper Lake could happen anywhere in the Adirondacks."

Kelly said the association's seed money will be enough to launch a three-month media campaign on radio, television, in newspapers, and electronic media. Ads will tout the benefits of projects like the resort, and highlight the region's economic difficulties, such as declining populations, school closures, declining tax bases and underemployment.

"I'm concerned about the eroding tax base, and how fewer people are carrying the burden. These are very challenging times," said Roger Amell, Tupper Lake town supervisor.

Supporters like Amell said the project will bring more than \$20 million in new tourism spending, create more than 300 temporary and 500 permanent year-round private-sector jobs and generate more than \$11 million in new tax revenue, including \$6.4 million annually for the local school district.

The 6,300-acre resort project in Franklin County is the largest ever approved in the history of the 6-million-acre Adirondack Park.

Along with rebuilding the aging Big Tupper ski resort, project developer Michael Foxman also would create about 700 new homes, 29 luxurious "great camps" on forest tracts, a 60-room inn and miles of new roads, plus sewer and water lines. A lawsuit has stymied work on the project, which was approved in January 2012 by the Adirondack Park Agency.

The lawsuit, which was filed by Protect The Adirondacks, is in the Appellate Division of state Supreme Court, which could issue a ruling sometime next year, according to lawyers for both sides. The lawsuit claims the APA violated its own environmental and procedural rules.

"I remember the enthusiasm of the entire Tupper Lake community the night the APA approved the project by a vote of 10 to 1. We all felt this vote would signal the battle was finally over and the project would begin," said Assemblywoman Janet L. Duprey, who attended the ADK works event.

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Media push

Examples of ads for the ADK Works media campaign can be found online at <http://adkworks.com>

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