

2021



CHARLESTOWN, NH  
MASTER PLAN

*Adopted December 7, 2021*

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

VISION .....	3
IMPLEMENTATION .....	5
COMMUNITY FACILITIES .....	10
COMMUNITY FACILITIES RECOMMENDATIONS .....	15
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT .....	16
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT RECOMMENDATIONS .....	20
EDUCATION CHAPTER .....	22
EDUCATION RECOMMENDATIONS.....	28
ENERGY & UTILITIES .....	32
ENERGY & UTILITIES RECOMMENDATIONS.....	36
HISTORICAL & CULTURAL RESOURCES .....	37
HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES RECOMMENDATIONS .....	44
HOUSING.....	45
Housing and Property Taxes in Charlestown.....	50
“Break even” Analysis .....	51
HOUSING RECOMMENDATIONS .....	54
LAND USE.....	56
LAND USE RECOMMENDATIONS .....	63
NATURAL RESOURCES .....	66
NATURAL RESOURCE RECOMMENDATIONS .....	78
RECREATION RESOURCES .....	79
TRAILS.....	83
RECREATION RESOURCES RECOMMENDATIONS .....	90
REGIONAL CONCERNS.....	91
REGIONAL CONCERNS RECOMMENDATIONS .....	95
TRANSPORTATION.....	96
TRANSPORTATION RECOMMENDATIONS .....	100

# VISION

## **Introduction**

Ongoing citizen and business participation has been a critical part of the master planning process. The best community master plans are the product of a process that solicits public input from a wide range of citizens and stakeholders. In a nutshell, the process of developing a Master Plan involves community residents and leaders answering four questions:

1. Where are we now? (Community profile)
2. Where are we going? (Trends)
3. What do we want to be? (Vision)
4. How do we get there? (Action plan)

Visioning is a process of finding out what the most commonly held community values are. Does the community desire economic growth? Where? Are there special natural and historic resources that the community wishes to preserve? What kind of housing should be encouraged? Answering these types of questions helps define the guiding principles and priorities for the master plan and subsequently, the resulting regulations and policies for the town of Charlestown.

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic the first step in the visioning process was to send out a survey to hear what Charlestown citizens thought of the Town and what's missing. Charlestown residents offered their opinions about land use, transportation, natural resources, economic development, housing, and community facilities, utilities and public services. In addition, residents shared their broad vision for what they would like Charlestown to be in ten years and beyond.

A second survey was sent out and results calculated. This survey asked specific questions about the recommendations the Task Forces formulated. The survey input was used to help shape and mold the Master Plan.

The goals for the surveys were the following:

- To generate a set of statements that articulates the desires of Charlestown residents.
- To generate a list of priority issues to be addressed in the Master Plan update.
- To possibly articulate issues that can be incorporated in the Master Plan.

## **COMMUNITY VISION**

In ten years, Charlestown will be a community...

- That meets the needs of the future but reflects the character of our past and today.
- Where our grown children and seniors will continue to live.
- That will be attractive for residential, commercial and industrial development.
- That has conserved its natural, historic, and cultural resources, and where these resources are accessible to all.
- That provides a quality education in the public schools.
- That is a destination for people to visit.

- Where the valuation of real estate improves and property taxes stabilize.
- That continues to be a safe place in terms of crime and traffic.
- Where you continue to know your neighbors.
- That provides recreational opportunities.
- Where a larger percentage of residents are employed locally and are given entrepreneurial opportunities.

The following core principles and recommendations were created from the citizen input shared through the surveys:

## CORE PRINCIPLES

- *Actively manage growth in the community:* Revisit and strengthen regulation in Zone E; ensure that future growth is in keeping with the existing character of the community; that commercial development keeps pace with residential development; and that growth is balanced with preservation of valued resources.
- *Protect and preserve our natural and historic resources:* Protect and preserve our groundwater, shoreland, floodplains, wildlife habitat and other critical natural resources. Protect and preserve our historic homes, sites and structures.
- *Encourage high-quality housing while accommodating a mix of housing types:* Revisit policies on mobile homes, improve the quality of house lots, and implement other measures to raise the quality of the housing stock. Encourage small multi-family residential housing, and other methods to provide affordable housing for elderly residents.
- *Maintain a strong, diversified local economy:* Identify and promote existing businesses and encourage businesses that are small, diversified and tourism-related.
- *Keep our village beautiful and vital:* Beautify Main Street and encourage continued investment in the village. Plan for housing, especially senior housing, close to the village center.
- *Ensure that our greatest resources - our children and our elderly citizens - will be able to continue to live here:* Create policies that result in higher real estate values (e.g. expansion of commercial and light industrial properties), lower taxes, ensure continued local employment for all, ample recreational opportunities, and a high quality of life.

We envision our community as one which will grow, yet maintain its rural character through managed growth. We strive to be excellent stewards of our existing natural assets, while improving these resources. We aim to be business friendly and promote our economic resources. We envision our town to be connected in both technological and transportation ways. The 2021 Master Plan is the pathway to our future.

## **IMPLEMENTATION**

The Implementation Chapter of a Master Plan is one of the most important sections but is most likely to be overlooked or not included. The purpose of the implementation chapter is to identify realistic and achievable actions that may be taken to further the community’s plan as outlined in the Vision chapter. All the information and goals found throughout the Master Plan are compiled into the table below with appropriate information. The Planning Board will review this chapter annually with involved parties and update as necessary.

<b>ACTION</b>	<b>TIME-FRAME</b>	<b>BUDGET</b>	<b>INVOLVED BOARDS/ COMMISSIONS/ COMMITTEES</b>
<b>TOWN-WIDE RECOMMENDATIONS</b>			
<b>COMMUNITY FACILITIES</b>			
<b>Create Capital Improvements Program (CIP)</b>	2023	N/A	Selectboard, Planning Board
<b>Find more suitable location for food pantry</b>	2024	\$30,000	Selectboard
<b>Seek funding for pool replacement</b>	2026	\$475,000	Selectboard
<b>Survey cemeteries to create smaller lots for cremations</b>	2024	\$25,000	Selectboard, Cemetery Trustees
<b>Renovate the Community Room</b>	2024	\$10,000	Selectboard
<b>ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT</b>			
<b>Market Charlestown for clean energy, and informational technology type companies</b>	2022	N/A	Selectboard, Planning Board
<b>Offer annual walking tour of the Town’s historic houses</b>	2025	\$2,000	Selectboard, Heritage Commission
<b>Increase out of town tourism, advertise Charlestown and attractions such as the Fort at No. 4</b>	2024	\$2,000	Selectboard/Townspeople
<b>Offer revitalization tax credits</b>	2024	N/A	Selectboard
<b>Establish an events committee</b>	2022	N/A	Selectboard
<b>Enforce Zoning Regulations</b>	2021	N/A	Selectboard

<b>ACTION</b>	<b>TIME-FRAME</b>	<b>BUDGET</b>	<b>INVOLVED BOARDS/ COMMISSIONS/ COMMITTEES</b>
<b>EDUCATION</b>			
<b>Recreate the SAU 60 Budget Committee</b>	2022	N/A	Selectboard, Town Vote
<b>Strengthen the Charlestown site-based committee</b>	2022	N/A	Townspeople
<b>Create a group to push legislature to reform education funding</b>	2023	N/A	Townspeople
<b>Get parents more involved</b>	2021	N/A	Townspeople
<b>Create a school to work program</b>	2025	N/A	School, Local Companies
<b>Petition for assessment for consolidation of Charlestown schools</b>	2023	N/A	Townspeople
<b>ENERGY &amp; UTILITIES</b>			
<b>Reduce waste</b>	2025	N/A	Selectboard
<b>Review a “pay as you throw” system for transfer station</b>	2023	UNK	Selectboard
<b>Change to enclosed box trailer to remove trash</b>	2028	\$60,000	Selectboard
<b>Educate about renewable energy</b>	2022	N/A	Selectboard
<b>Reduce Town usage of fossil fuel by minimum 10%</b>	2026	N/A	Selectboard
<b>Asset management plan for infrastructure</b>	2023	\$15,000	Selectboard
<b>HISTORICAL &amp; CULTURAL RESOURCES</b>			
<b>Continue Historic Resource Surveys</b>	2023	\$7,000	Selectboard
<b>Enhance Main Street</b>	2022	\$15,000	Selectboard
<b>Maintain mixed uses surrounding the town center</b>	2023	N/A	Selectboard

<b>ACTION</b>	<b>TIME-FRAME</b>	<b>BUDGET</b>	<b>INVOLVED BOARDS/ COMMISSIONS/ COMMITTEES</b>
<b>Create a Historic District Ordinance</b>	2024	N/A	Selectboard, Planning Board, Heritage Commission
<b>Encourage historic preservation</b>	2022	N/A	Selectboard, Planning Board, Heritage Commission
<b>Educate people of historical resources utilizing the Fort at No. 4 and the Historical Society</b>	2022	N/A	Selectboard, Historical Society
<b>HOUSING</b>			
<b>Amend Building Code to allow only manufactured housing no older than 5 calendar years</b>	2022	N/A	Selectboard
<b>Amend Zoning Ordinance – no new Mobile Home Parks</b>	2024	N/A	Selectboard, Planning Board
<b>Increase bus routes – provide “last mile” transportation</b>	2026	\$10,000 +	Selectboard, Southwest Community Services, Vermont Public Transportation Association
<b>Adopt NH RSA 79-E</b>	2022	N/A	Selectboard
<b>Reword Zone-E to clearly allow multi-family dwellings</b>	2023	N/A	Selectboard, Planning Board
<b>Allow multi-family dwellings in Zone D by special exception</b>	2023	N/A	Selectboard, Planning Board
<b>Seek developers to develop high-quality housing</b>	2021	N/A	Selectboard, Planning Board
<b>Continue to assist the economically disadvantaged</b>	2021	\$20,000	Selectboard
<b>NATURAL RESOURCES</b>			
<b>Ensure best management practices are followed</b>	2021	\$500	Selectboard, Planning Board, Conservation Commission
<b>Preserve &amp; protect plantings on Main St.</b>	2021	\$2,000	Selectboard
<b>Conserve agricultural lands</b>	2022	N/A	Selectboard, Planning Board, Conservation Commission
<b>Protect &amp; preserve wildlife habitats</b>	2022	N/A	Selectboard, Planning Board, Conservation Commission

<b>ACTION</b>	<b>TIME-FRAME</b>	<b>BUDGET</b>	<b>INVOLVED BOARDS/ COMMISSIONS/ COMMITTEES</b>
<b>Maintain &amp; improve water quality</b>	2022	N/A	Selectboard, Planning Board
<b>Eradicate invasive species</b>	2021	UNK	Selectboard, Conservation Commission
<b>Protect &amp; preserve wetlands</b>	2022	N/A	Selectboard, Planning Board, Conservation Commission
<b>Manage new builds in the flood plain, review Floodplain Ordinance</b>	2022	N/A	Selectboard, Planning Board
<b>Protect &amp; preserve groundwater resources</b>	2021	N/A	Selectboard, Planning Board, Conservation Commission
<b>Bi-annually review the Hazard Mitigation Plan and Local Emergency Management Plan, update every 5 years</b>	2022	N/A	Hazard Mitigation Committee
<b>RECREATION RESOURCES</b>			
<b>Enhance trail system</b>	2022	\$1,000	Selectboard, Conservation Commission
<b>Insure access to CT River at Patch Park &amp; install docks and utilize the Fort at No. 4 access</b>	2023	\$15,000	Selectboard
<b>Create Main St. walking loop</b>	2024	\$40,000	Selectboard, Recreation Committee
<b>Add wellness stations on a town trail</b>	2026	\$25,000	Selectboard, Conservation Commission
<b>Develop additional programming</b>	2026	UNK	Selectboard, Recreation Committee
<b>Enhance/Expand Patch Park</b>	2027	UNK	Selectboard, Recreation Committee
<b>Hire a Water Safety Instructor</b>	2022	\$12,000	Selectboard
<b>Create sport specific guidelines</b>	2023	UNK	Selectboard, Recreation Committee
<b>Encourage people to volunteer</b>	2022	N/A	Selectboard, Recreation Committee

<b>ACTION</b>	<b>TIME-FRAME</b>	<b>BUDGET</b>	<b>INVOLVED BOARDS/ COMMISSIONS/ COMMITTEES</b>
<b>Recreate friends of recreation list</b>	2022	N/A	Selectboard, Recreation Committee
<b>Promote CT River &amp; CT River Trail</b>	2023	UNK	Selectboard, Conservation Commission
<b>Advertise Charlestown events</b>	2021	\$500	Selectboard, Events Committee
<b>REGIONAL CONCERNS</b>			
<b>Make the town sidewalks accessible for all</b>	2030	\$10/sq. ft.	Selectboard
<b>Enhance healthcare availability</b>	2025	UNK	Selectboard
<b>Build stronger relationships with groups &amp; councils</b>	2023	N/A	Selectboard
<b>Lobby for legislative action on mental and health care</b>	2026	N/A	Selectboard
<b>Prepare for climate change</b>	2025	UNK	Selectboard
<b>TRANSPORTATION</b>			
<b>Promote scenic byway</b>	2022	UNK	Selectboard
<b>Add road signage for bicycle awareness</b>	2024	\$1,000	Selectboard
<b>Evaluate sidewalks leading to and exiting the primary school</b>	2024	\$5,000	Selectboard
<b>Create a ride share forum</b>	2023	N/A	Selectboard

# **COMMUNITY FACILITIES**

## **INTRODUCTION**

The purpose of this section is to evaluate Charlestown's Municipal facilities and equipment. Providing and maintaining both is one of the primary functions of government, as these facilities and equipment add to the quality of life in a community. As the population and demographics of the community change over time, it is important that the Town of Charlestown make adjustment to its delivery of services to meet the needs of the changing community.

This section inventories and assesses current community and recreational facilities, the adequacy of existing equipment, and current and long-term staffing needs. Finally, goals and recommendations for how to meet some of these needs are outlined. Town department heads provided status of their facilities, staffing and equipment lists. They were also asked to provide an assessment of their current and anticipated future needs.

## **CHARLESTOWN MUNICIPAL OFFICES/GOVERNMENT**

### **Facilities and Staffing**

The Municipal Offices provide space for several personnel:

- Administrative Assistant - FT
- Town Clerk / Tax Collector - FT
- (2) Deputy Town Clerk/Tax Collector & Window Clerk - PT
- HR Coordinator - FT
- Assessing Assistant / Welfare Administrative Assistant - FT
- Building Inspector - PT
- Welfare Administrator - PT
- Planning/Zoning Administrator – FT
- Health Officer - PT

The Selectboard Office staff and Town Clerk/Tax Collector share approximately 3,200 square foot building located at 233 Main St. The Administrative Assistant, Assessing Assistant, Welfare Director and Building Inspector occupy approximately 2,530 square feet. The office of the Town Clerk/Tax Collector occupy approximately 670 square feet. The building is in good condition. The HR Coordinator and Planning & Zoning staff occupy roughly 440 square feet. The most pressing issue with the building is that it is undersized for all staff and storage. The office is being rearranged to better utilize available space.

## **POLICE**

### **Facilities and Staffing**

The Police Department currently occupies approximately 2400 square foot building built in 2010. The current personnel include 7 full-time officers, 7 part-time officers, 4 full time dispatchers and 6 part time dispatchers. There is 24-hour police staff coverage.

### **Equipment**

The Police Department has four cruisers. Each year the department tries to replace the oldest cruiser. The department's radio system is only two years old. With the everchanging technology, this system has a life expectancy of ten years. All systems and programs at the Police Department are updated every year. A new repeater has been installed at Mount Ascutney which has improved the radio frequency slightly. A new tower is planned to be erected in 2021 on Birch Drive. This will greatly increase the radio coverage in Charlestown.

## **FIRE**

### **Facilities and Staffing**

The Fire Station is in poor condition. Built in 1974; it is a 4,529 square foot building. The size is not adequate for equipment (listed below) now. The foundation facia is crumbling and the roof is leaking which has caused mold issues. Repairs are ongoing to remediate issues and maintain the building. The department currently utilizes on-call personnel and is moving towards a Fire and Rescue setup. The number of personnel consistently fluctuates and there is always a need for additional volunteers.

### **Equipment**

<b>Name of Equipment</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Life Expectancy (Replacement Year)</b>	<b>Replacement Value</b>
Engine 1 Spartan	2010	2035	\$750,000
Engine 2 Ferrara	2020	2045	\$900,000
Engine 3 Ford Mini Pumper	1996	2026	\$300,000
Tanker 1 International 4900	1998	2038	\$450,000
Forestry 1 Ford F550	2007	2040	\$100,000
Utility 1 Ford F350	2007	2040	\$75,000
UTV 1 Polaris Ranger	2015	2050	\$25,000

\* Replacement year is anticipated life of vehicle. Actual replacement is based on voter approval.

## HIGHWAY

### Facilities and Staffing

There are presently seven full-time employees within the Highway Department. The main Highway Department building is an 80-foot x 60-foot metal building approximately 46 years old. This is a four-bay building that currently houses sixteen pieces of equipment (listed below), along with work benches, oil drums, parts room, bathroom, and office space. This building is inadequate in size to house all the equipment; the building and equipment are being damaged due to the cramped space and employees on occasion must climb over things to access some equipment. The Highway Department also has a storage building that houses signs, barricades, tools, and other equipment. The ‘Salt Shed’ a 30-foot by 100-foot building is in severely poor condition. The walls and roof supports have been eroding away and are falling apart.

### Equipment

Name of equipment	Year	Replacement Year	Replacement Cost – Based on 2020 prices
Int. 7500 w/ plow, wing, sander	2007	2020	\$200,000
Int. 7400 w/ plow, wing, live body	2006	2021	\$200,000
Int. 7500 plow, wing, live body	2007	2021	\$200,000
Int. 4300 w/ plow, wing, sander	2011	2022	\$200,000
Case Backhoe	2021	2036	\$185,000
Dodge 550 w/ plow, wing, live body	2014	2023	\$120,000
JD Backhoe/Loader	2005	2023	\$185,000
Int. Roll Off Truck	2009	2024	\$200,000
Dodge 1-ton pickup w/ plow/live body	2017	2025	\$65,000
Int. 4300 w/ plow, wing, live body	2020	2027	\$200,000
Bobcat Skid Steer	2019	2029	\$65,000
JD 544 Bucket Loader	2015	2030	\$250,000
Bobcat Excavator	2016	2031	\$125,000
Cat 120 Grader	2012	2032	\$300,000
Ford F-600 w/ plow, wing, sander	2021	2036	\$130,000
Ford Ranger	2004	2024	\$50,000

\* Replacement year is anticipated life of vehicle. Actual replacement is based on voter approval.

## **LIBRARY**

### **Facilities and Staffing**

The Library is located on Main Street and Railroad Street. The front of the building was built in 1894 and the back section was added in 1976. It is a 4,500 square foot building. The repair drainage work, roofing and re-mortaring of joints has been completed with LCHIP grant money. Below the library is currently used as storage, the community room where town boards and committees meet and the kitchen where the community meals are prepared. The Library has one full-time Librarian, one part-time Assistant Librarian, and several other part-time staff people.

The new roof is working flawlessly. The winter snowfall slides off reducing the weight on the roof. During the winter the front and rear entrances to the building should be utilized.

## **CEMETERY**

The New Hampshire Big Tree Program has recognized Charlestown's Forest Hill Cemetery on East Street to have the largest American Sycamore in New Hampshire. This tree stands tall at 104 ft and has a 19.25 ft circumference.



## Facilities and Staffing

There are two seasonal employees. One full time and one part time. On average there are typically 25-35 burials a year. The Cemetery Department utilizes the former Ambulance Barn located at 215 Springfield Road. The 2,188 square foot building was erected in 1996 on a .34-acre parcel that was donated to the Town from Stanley Patch. This will provide a centralized location that will fit all equipment.

Cemetery	Location	Year	Capacity
Forest Hill	East Street	1760	Full
Hubbard Hill	Morse Hill Road	1792	Full
Hope Hill	River Road	1853	Half
St. Catherine's	Southwest Street	1880s	Full
Pine Crest	Old Claremont Road	1951	One Third

## EQUIPMENT

Equipment	Year	Life Expectancy	Replacement Value
GMC 1 Ton	2003	2023	\$90,000
Mower	UNK	UNK	\$9,000
Trailer	UNK	UNK	\$10,000

\* Replacement year is anticipated life of vehicle. Actual replacement is based on voter approval.

## TOWN HALL

The town hall, built in 1872, is located on Summer Street. Aside from being the old town hall it also houses the River Theatre Company on the second floor and the Charlestown Food Shelf on the first floor.

The building lacks handicap access to the second story. There are structural issues with the front facade as well as damaged supports. An architect had formulated a plan to secure the facade from deteriorating further. This project needs to be added to a Capital Improvements Plan.

## BAKERY BUILDING

The Nationally Registered Historical Bakery Building was built in 1850. The building was named so after the owner, William Lawrence operated a cracker bakery and peddled the crackers from carts on Main Street. It is located on the corner of Main St. and Depot St. It is currently occupied by the Historical Society and Recreation Department.

## GENERAL FACILITIES

For the Town Pool and Patch Park please see the Recreation Chapter.

For the Water & Sewer Facilities please see the Energy & Utilities Chapter.

## **GENERAL FACILITIES ISSUES**

### **Reuse and Renovation of Existing Town Building Space**

It's inevitable that structures will age and outgrow their original functions. With changes in technology and lifestyle, construction and design are constantly updated to meet modern demands, and older structures are left in the wake of change. Those sensitive to history may prefer to restore older structures to their former glory; however, costs often make this plan unrealistic. An alternate concept is "adaptive reuse" - a process of retrofitting old buildings for new uses, which allows structures to retain their historic integrity while providing for occupants' modern needs.

Charlestown keeps the door of possibilities open for reuse.

### **Capital Improvements Program**

A Capital Improvement Program (CIP) is a blueprint for planning a community's capital expenditures. A capital budget and plan are authorized in the NH Statutes, RSA 674-5 through 674-8. The CIP is a statement of the Town's policies and financial abilities to manage the physical development of the community. The development of a CIP provides a systematic plan for providing infrastructure improvements within a prioritized framework.

There are several benefits from developing and adopting a Capital Improvement Program. It provides a schedule of capital projects that can be considered for the Capital Improvements section of the Annual Budget. It becomes a management tool for the Town administration, and provides valuable information to the Planning Board, citizens, developers and businesses who are interested in the development of the community. The CIP document will also assist in leveraging available resources through improved timing of projects, and coordinating Town projects with those of other public or private entities.

It is important to highlight the fact that this is a fluid document, and changes can occur for many reasons. Revenues can fluctuate because of changing economic conditions or shifts in public policy. Private economic decisions can also affect the timing, scale and location of capital projects. Finally, community objectives are difficult to set and may be altered during the budget process when priorities are often revised. In summary, a CIP should reflect community assets, needs and goals. A CIP should also provide guidelines for growth and development.

## **COMMUNITY FACILITIES RECOMMENDATIONS**

- The Town should create a Capital Improvement Program for major capital projects.
- Find a more suitable location for the Charlestown Food Shelf.
- Survey cemeteries to create smaller plots for cremation burials.
- The lower floor of the Library building has several rooms outside the well-used community room. It is recommended renovations should be made to better utilize the space.

# **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

## **CHARLESTOWN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

Economic Development is the creation of wealth from which community benefits are realized. It is more than a jobs program, it's an investment in growing the economy and enhancing the prosperity and quality of life for all residents.

Approaches used to enhance local economic development include:

- Business Retention and Expansion – enhancing existing businesses
- Business Expansion – attracting new business
- Business Creation – encouraging the growth of new businesses

One example of sparking economic development is getting broadband town wide. Charlestown citizens and government are working to facilitate future economic development by attracting both traditional brick and mortar businesses, and the newly emerging remote workforce.

We are Charlestown, NH – **SAFE, OPEN AND CONNECTED**

**Safe:** To attract businesses, homeowners or other investors to neighborhoods a safe community is important. These characteristics include:

- ✓ No Violent Crimes,
- ✓ No Natural Disasters,
- ✓ No Social Unrest

**Open:** A community needs to have the room for expansion and community leaders who are open minded for development. Charlestown has:

- ✓ Open Space,
- ✓ Open Government,
- ✓ Open to Development,
- ✓ Open to Business

**Connected:** Charlestown is in a prime location geographically. The community has ties to the past and is planning for the future. Charlestown has:

- ✓ Nature (Connecticut River, Town Forest, hills and farms),
- ✓ Highways (I-91, Route 11 - 12),
- ✓ The Past (Historic Districts, Fort at #4),
- ✓ The Future (High-speed Internet Access for every home and business)

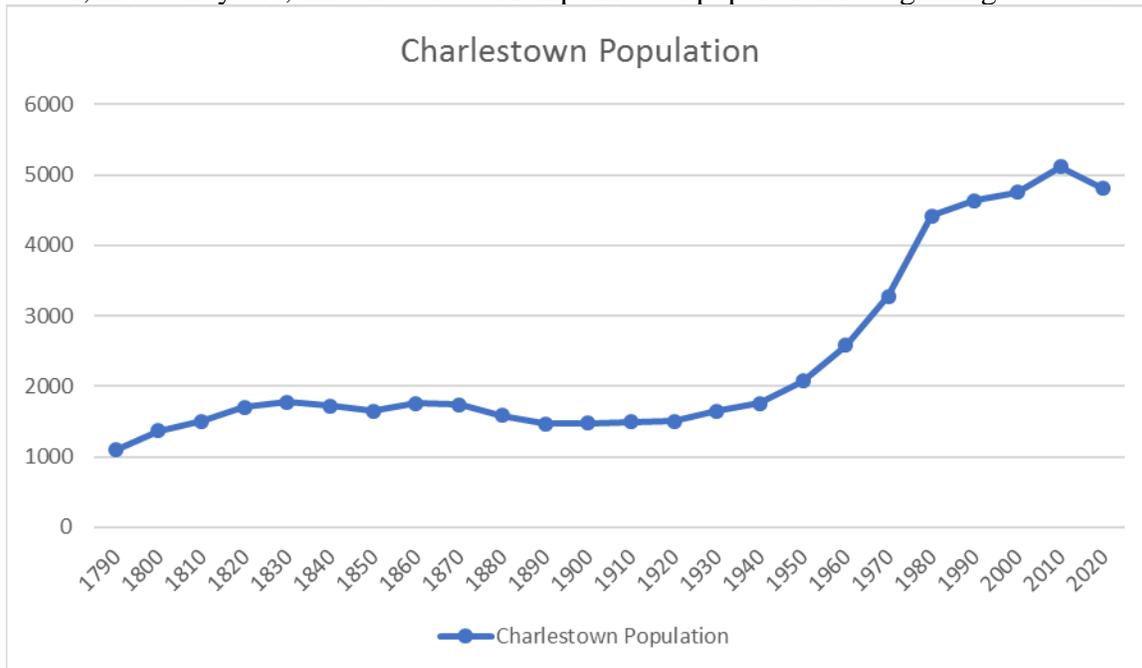
Charlestown has a historic opportunity to develop into a modern, twenty-first century small town while protecting its natural and historic heritage. At a time when the residents of cities and congested suburbs are looking to move into safe, fresh areas, Charlestown must build on its advantages and establish a vibrant presence in the connected digital economy of the future.

## POPULATION

Understanding our town's population is a necessary component of community planning. Changes in the population will affect land use, consumption, population density and economic development.

### Population Trends

Charlestown's year-round population increased significantly from 1940 to 1980 and then only slightly between 1990 and 2010 (see figure below). This slower increase appears to be the trend of New Hampshire. The period of most active growth (35%) occurred between 1970 and 1980 when many New Hampshire communities also experienced significant economic growth. However, in recent years, like all of New Hampshire our population is beginning to decline.



### Age Characteristics

The largest number of residents falls within an age group common to the workforce, i.e., between the ages of 20 and 64. In 2018, this group of approximately 2,858 residents had a median age of 45.1 and comprised 56.94% of Charlestown's total population. This age group is beginning to shrink. Every year we are seeing fewer people entering this age group than aging up to the retirement group.

This knowledge is important to understand the characteristics associated with community involvement by individuals, communities, and businesses. It assists towns in planning for the future and helps predict needs such as types of facilities needed, school fluctuations and job growth.

## JOB GROWTH

While lower wage jobs have seen the largest increases in New Hampshire, jobs with wages higher than the state average has seen some of the largest declines from 2008 to 2018. In Charlestown’s case, income is significantly lower than the national average. Charlestown’s poverty level is twice as high as New Hampshire’s rate.

## CHARLESTOWN INCOME

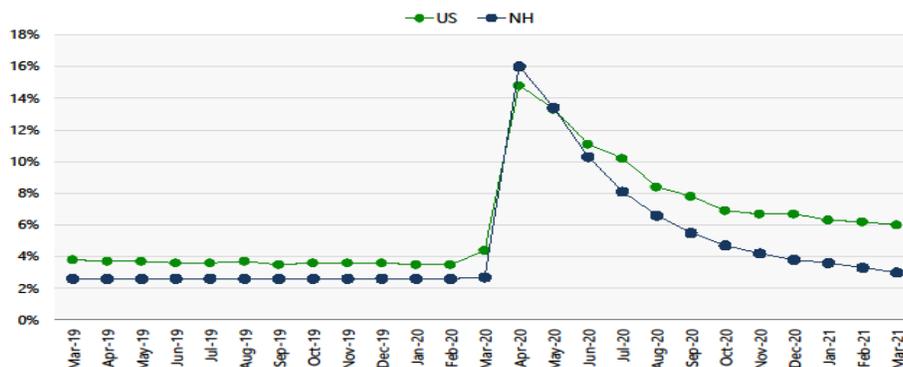
<i>(American Community Survey “ACS” 2019) Income, Inflation Adjusted \$</i>	
Per capita income	<b>\$26,697</b>
Median family income	<b>\$56,853</b>
Median household income	<b>\$47,302</b>
Median Earnings, full-time, year-round workers, 16 years ad over	
Male	<b>\$45,319</b>
Female	<b>\$39,986</b>
Individuals below the poverty level	<b>15.0%</b>

## UNEMPLOYMENT

Unemployment occurs when a person who is actively searching for employment is unable to find work. Unemployment is often used as a measure of the health of the economy. The most frequent measure of unemployment is the unemployment rate, which is the number of unemployed people divided by the number of people in the labor force. Below is a chart that compares the New Hampshire unemployment rate to the United States unemployment rate. It appears that New Hampshire has been closely following suit with the rest of the country. With the Covid-19 Pandemic the unemployment rate spiked up to 16% and has steadily dropped since. New Hampshire is nearly back to the normal average of 3%, well ahead of the rest of the United States.

U.S. and New Hampshire Unemployment Rates, Seasonally Adjusted

Preliminary March 2021 Rates: US = 6.0%; NH = 3.0%



Source: Economic & Labor Market Information Bureau, NHES 13-Apr-21  
Next Scheduled Update: May 2021

## Poverty

Underemployment is also a factor that often contributes to poverty. Put simply, many people live in poverty because they are unable to find a job that pays a living wage—or to find a job at all. Charlestown’s poverty rate is 15.04% overall. The poverty rate among those that worked full-time for the past 12 months was 1.77%. Among those working part-time, it was 16.37%, and for those that did not work, the poverty rate was 24.32%.

## CHARLESTOWN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Charlestown’s high tax rate has proved to be a major barrier to economic development over the last decade. The tax rate is the ratio of the Town’s service costs (after adjustments for state aid) divided by the aggregate valuation of taxable property (i.e. Grand List) per thousand dollars. Below is a chart showing the fluctuation over the past three decades. (See the Housing Chapter for more information).

Municipality	1990 Equalized Tax Rate (per \$1,000)	1995 Equalized Tax Rate (per \$1,000)	2000 Equalized Tax Rate (per \$1,000)	2005 Equalized Tax Rate (per \$1,000)	2010 Equalized Tax Rate (per \$1,000)	2015 Equalized Tax Rate (per \$1,000)	2020 Equalized Tax Rate (per \$1,000)
Charlestown	29.4	39.41	28.79	34.54	26.45	32.19	38.65
Claremont	29.11	40.69	33.71	35.15	31.34	41.47	40.72
Newport	26.76	29.10	32.24	30.80	24.02	29.25	33.10
Franklin	UNK	UNK	32.02	18.16	21.14	25.03	22.84

Charlestown needs robust, smart growth of business and population to lower the current tax rate. The business community needs a local advocate to nurture the relationships between government and current businesses and entice new businesses to come to Town. Commercial and industrial businesses are taxed the same as residential. However, these businesses add to the grand list while not adding equally to the cost of services, such as education.

Town citizens need to focus on the cost of education. The Fall Mountain Regional High School spends \$18,542 per student. New Hampshire’s average is \$16,776 per student<sup>1</sup>; there is room for FMRSD to improve. (See the Education Chapter for more information).

Charlestown’s Planning and Zoning decisions must be business-friendly. Zoning in the downtown village must protect and enhance the historic character of this unique area. Charlestown has a wealth of historic resources including large Historic Districts. Main St and the North Charlestown Historic Districts are listed on the National Register of Historic Places and the Fort at No. 4 is listed on the State Register. In addition, the town has several large forests, many hiking trails, a boat landing and a long shoreline on the Connecticut River. These assets deserve promotion to attract out of town visitors.

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.education.nh.gov/who-we-are/division-of-educator-and-analytic-resources/bureau-of-education-statistics/financial-reports> & <https://www.education.nh.gov/who-we-are/division-of-educator-and-analytic-resources/bureau-of-education-statistics/assessment-data>

## **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. Increase the aggregate valuation through new taxable property in Town and grand list to help reduce the tax rate.
  - a. Actively market commercial, industrial and residential zones to real estate developers who understand the unique needs and assets of the Town.
  - b. Develop and expand our town recreation programs to be more appealing to help draw in more families to Charlestown.
  - c. Consider modifying Zoning Regulations to preserve Charlestown character while increasing the grand list
2. Develop plans to protect existing and attract new small business.
  - a. Use CEDA's assistance to aggressively develop commercial properties north of the village at CEDA Park
  - b. Target IT and clean energy businesses to locate in our town; e.g. a server farm and/or programming shops and solar developers.
  - c. Showcase local businesses visually and through marketing:
    - i. Maintain existing green space appropriately to showcase business properties.
  - d. Identify the amenities needed for new businesses
  - e. As new commercial demands are established by town residents, approach local business to fulfill that demand.
3. Increase out of town visitors by promoting tourism.
  - a. Develop a Connecticut River walking, skating and biking path
  - b. Offer an annual walking tour of Charlestown's Historic Houses and Commercial properties
  - c. Promote, revitalize, restructure and publicize all tourist attractions on the Town's website. Examples: add amenities such as a brewery to the fort, bring in concerts nearby, and stage other events that revitalize the attraction and draw people to the historical site.
  - d. Establish an Events Committee with the following goals.
    - i. Work with existing events such as Yard Sale Day and Old Home Day to further expand them and increase their draw.
    - ii. Create new annual and one-time events such as concerts to liven up the town and bring more exposure to the town.
    - iii. Work with local groups such as the Rotary Club, church groups, and local business to make the events viable and spur local economy.
4. Launch an ad campaign: "Safe, Open, Connected: Charlestown, NH" in urban areas.
5. Hire a grant-writer for the town to secure state and federal funds and place a capital budget of \$100,000 at the town's disposal to use as a 20% match. For example, Carroll County and its partners received a \$250,000 USDA Rural Community Development Initiative (RCDI) grant for Broadband deployment with a 50% match. Similarly, New Hampshire LCHIP provides grants for land conservation and historic preservation projects with a 50% match.
6. Increase affordability of education – Recreate the SAU 60 Budget Committee
  - a. Consider updating regulations for future business development on Main St and possible development of a business district in north Charlestown.

- b. Review the Planning Board regulations to make them coincide with the zoning ordinance as they were voted on by the town.
7. Allow 5G testing in Charlestown once the optical fiber backbone has been installed. 5G is the fifth-generation broadband for cellular networks being faster than the current 4G.
8. Ensure that all school aged students have broadband access. Leverage the broadband contract from Consolidated Communications to assist moderate to low income families afford internet.



Whelen Engineering LLC Charlestown, NH (Photo Credit NH Business Review)

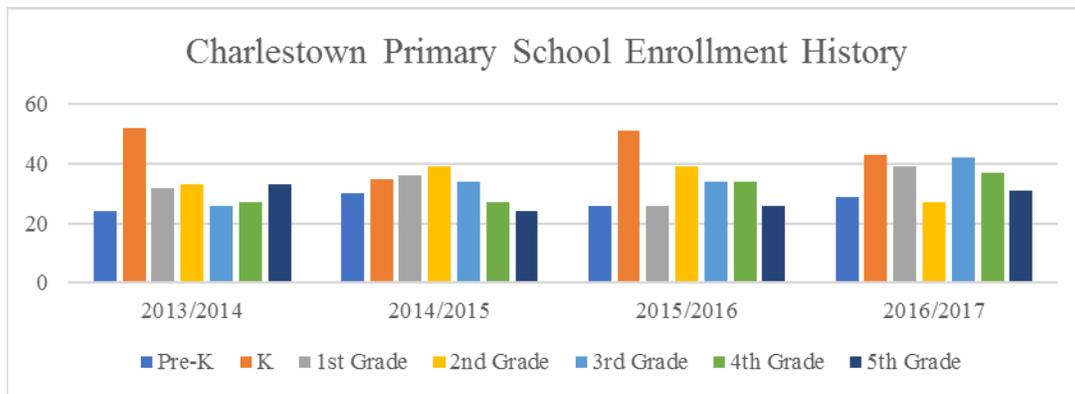
# EDUCATION CHAPTER

## INTRODUCTION

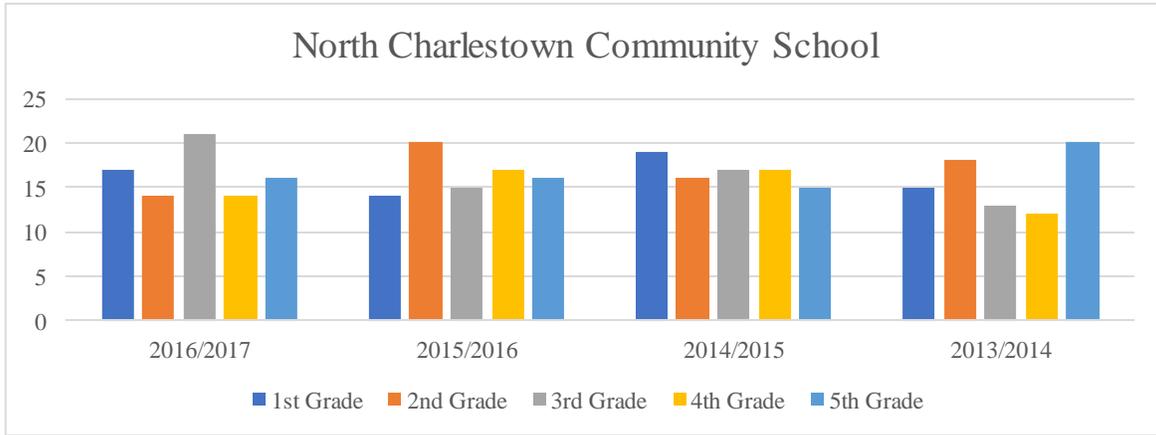
A master plan for education should do far more than describe what Charlestown has for existing programs, history, and demographic environment. It must articulate a community vision which informs our decisions, guides our leaders and decision makers toward common goals, and provides for our children from birth to adulthood, our families, our empty-nesters and our seniors.

## HISTORY AND STATISTICS

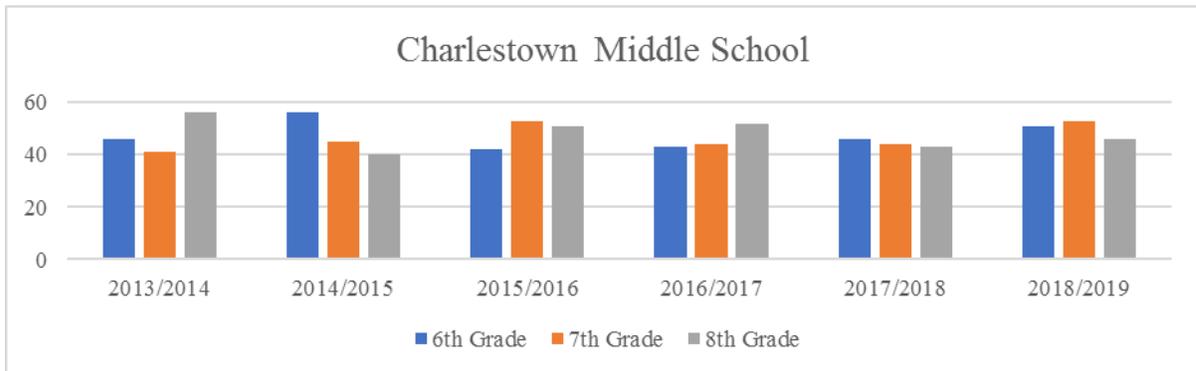
Charlestown is a member of the Fall Mountain Regional School District and SAU#60. Pre-K age 3 through grade 5 attend the Charlestown Primary School, housing an average of 2 classrooms per grade. The Charlestown Primary School was built in 1965 upon the creation of the FMRS, and renovated and enlarged in 2005 when the people of Charlestown voted to bond the funding. An additional first through fifth grade class is in the North Charlestown Community School (NCCS) in the north end of town. This school envelops the historically registered Farwell School, an educational institution since it was gifted to the town of Charlestown in 1890 by the Farwell family. The Farwell school has been listed on the National Register of Historic Places since 1990. The 6th through 8th graders from Charlestown attend the Charlestown Middle School, the former Charlestown High School. There are typically 2 to 3 classes per grade. High school students attend the Fall Mountain Regional High School in Langdon, NH with the four other towns as governed by the articles of agreement comprising the Fall Mountain Regional School District. As evidenced by the following graphs, the enrollment in its schools is largely static or decreasing.



	Pre-K	K	1 <sup>st</sup> Grade	2 <sup>nd</sup> Grade	3 <sup>rd</sup> Grade	4 <sup>th</sup> Grade	5 <sup>th</sup> Grade	Total
2016/2017	29	43	39	27	42	37	31	248
2015/2016	26	51	26	39	34	34	26	236
2014/2015	30	35	36	39	34	27	24	225
2013/2014	24	52	32	33	26	27	33	227



	1 <sup>st</sup> Grade	2 <sup>nd</sup> Grade	3 <sup>rd</sup> Grade	4 <sup>th</sup> Grade	5 <sup>th</sup> Grade	Total
2016/2017	17	14	21	14	16	82
2015/2016	14	20	15	17	16	82
2014/2015	19	16	17	17	15	84
2013/2014	15	18	13	12	20	78



	6 <sup>th</sup> Grade	7 <sup>th</sup> Grade	8 <sup>th</sup> Grade	Total
2018/2019	51	53	46	150
2017/2018	46	44	43	133
2016/2017	43	44	52	139
2015/2016	42	53	51	146
2014/2015	56	45	40	141
2013/2014	46	41	56	143

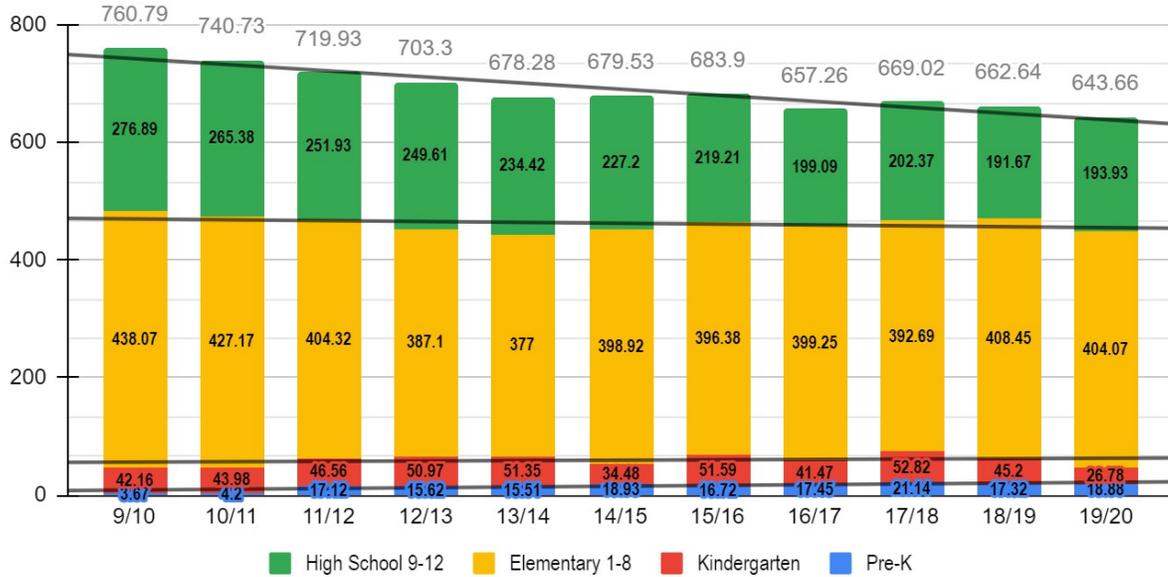
\* This is the most current information available

\*\* All counts come from Nces.ed.gov, My.doe.nh.gov, Reachinghighernh.org and USnews.com

2021 Master Plan Final Draft

ADM-Residency Trend 2010-2020 Charlestown Students

<https://www.education.nh.gov/sites/g/files/ehbemt326/files/inline-documents/sonh/adm19-20v3.pdf>



**CHALLENGES**

Charlestown citizens support individual and collective contributions to educational improvement. However, Charlestown faces many challenges. The median household income in 2019 was \$47,302 and over the last 10 years the number of Charlestown residents earning at or below the poverty level has almost tripled to 16%.<sup>2</sup> Further, during this same time frame the budget of the Fall Mountain School District has increased 24.31%<sup>3</sup> resulting in an education tax rate for 2020 of \$22.75 per \$1000.00 of assessed real estate value.<sup>4</sup> While the solutions to many of the most acute challenges facing Charlestown are beyond the scope of this chapter and will be addressed elsewhere within the Master Plan, it is imperative that those issues within the purview of this chapter be fully addressed.

The financial burden on Charlestown’s taxpayers has reached a critical and unsustainable level. While not the sole contributing factor to Charlestown’s crushing tax burden, the growth of the district budget has been in excess of the rate of inflation. Much discussion has occurred in recent years as to the best approach to control the rate of increase without consensus or appreciable success. In past years SAU 60 had a budget committee; this may need to be a main focus again.

<sup>2</sup> Economic & Labor Market Information Bureau, NH Employment Security, January 2021

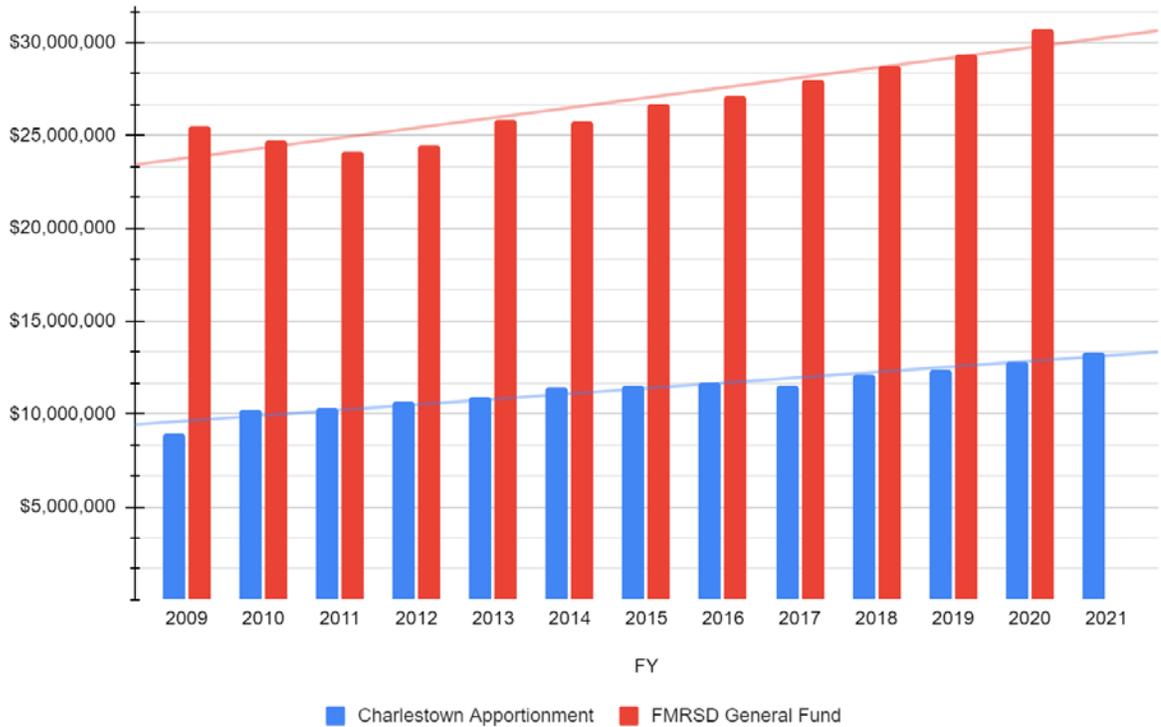
<sup>3</sup> See Charlestown Budget / FMRSD Total General Fund Graph

<sup>4</sup> Town of Charlestown, Town Clerk’s office

2021 Master Plan Final Draft

Charlestown Budget / FMRSD Total General Fund

Data from 2009-2021 School District Annual Reports



The funding of public schools by the State of NH has been a continuing challenge, and one that has drawn much attention from the Legislature and the courts in an attempt to meet the goal of RSA 193 to provide “all students with the opportunity to acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to prepare them for successful participation in the social, economic, scientific, technological, and political systems of a free government, now and in the years to come.”<sup>5</sup>

On every New Hampshire property tax bill, there are two items that fund the local school district: the Statewide Education Property Tax (SWEPT), and the local education tax. Since 1999, every town and city in New Hampshire has been required to apply SWEPT to eligible properties in their municipalities. Because the state doesn’t cover the entire cost of our public schools, most towns and cities must raise additional funds through a local education tax to make up the difference. Charlestown is among many towns struggling to bridge this gap.

According to reachinghighernh.org, a non-profit educational website, New Hampshire may see up to an \$89 million reduction in adequacy aid in FY 2022. The cuts stem primarily from decreased student enrollment, a decrease in paperwork filed applications for the federal school lunch program and the expiration of one-time funding for the

<sup>5</sup> Quoted from NH RSA 193-E & 193-E:1

## *2021 Master Plan Final Draft*

state's most vulnerable communities. It is more important than ever to find a better way to fund education.

During the 2019 legislative session, the New Hampshire General Court created an independent commission to study school funding. The primary goal of the commission was to ensure a uniform and equitable funding policy for public education in compliance with court decisions and Constitutional requirements. The Commission issued its final report on December 1, 2020, and among its conclusions, found that New Hampshire's current system of funding "fails to direct aid to more needy communities in a meaningful manner, and inequities manifest themselves in more needy districts through lower student outcomes and higher property tax burdens."<sup>6</sup> The Commission recommended that state funding be increased and directed toward towns with greater need with the result being "greater taxpayer equity by reducing disproportionate burdens on poorer towns". However, NH Legislature adjourned in 2021 without addressing this issue.

The ConVal School District and three others in the Monadnock Region filed a lawsuit in 2018 against the State of New Hampshire in support of increased State Adequacy Aid. This lawsuit now includes 19 school districts including Fall Mountain, Newport and Claremont. This has been sent to the Supreme Court. The trial is currently scheduled to begin on January 9, 2023.

New Hampshire's Board of Education (BoE) is also looking for a way to help better fund education. The BoE recently approved rules for a new law that has been voted in. The new law creates "Education Freedom Accounts" (EFA) and parents will be able to use state education funds for educational expenses, including private school tuition and home-schooling costs. The money is available to lower-income parents who have withdrawn their children from public schools or whose children never attended public schools to begin with. New Hampshire's EFA program has an income eligibility cap of 300% of the federal poverty level (\$79,500 for a family of four). According to state Dept. of Education, the grant would average about \$4,600 per student in the 2021-22 school year. As mentioned above, families could then use these funds to pay for a variety of educational expenses however, this would divert funding away from public schools. It is unknown at the time of printing how this will affect the Fall Mountain Regional School District.

### **FALL MOUNTAIN SITE BASED COMMITTEE**

School site-based committees were designed to ensure that teachers, parents and community members have an active voice and role in local education matters. These committees need to be an advocate in supporting current technical education classes and programs as well as the development of new educational courses for skills desired by the business and industry in Charlestown.

---

<sup>6</sup> A Report from the Commission to Study School Funding submitted December 1, 2020

## *2021 Master Plan Final Draft*

The overarching outcome of a strong Site Based Committee will be improved by community involvement, creating buy-in in our schools, and a brighter, more positive outlook for our students. An effort to create meaningful partnerships and support between the family, the schools, and the community will strengthen our future as a whole. When families are involved in their children's education, children earn higher grades and receive higher scores on tests, attend school more regularly, complete more homework, demonstrate more positive attitudes and behaviors, graduate from high school at higher rates, and are more likely to enroll in higher education, either a four-year college or trade school. Children who are supported in their community return to their neighborhoods as adults to work, open businesses, settle, buy property, and raise their own family.

### **LIFE LONG EDUCATION**

Charlestown must take proactive measures to create a community that envelops the needs of all citizens across the spectrum of mental health, primary care, health and nutrition education, physical education and other related supports. Parents and caregivers in Charlestown must have the tools, the skills, and the opportunities to meet the basic physical needs of themselves and their dependents. Basic needs are met when children and families have access to a healthy diet including nutritious food and clean water, enough sleep and rest, a safe place to sleep, exercise, and good medical care. All these building blocks contribute to a child's ability to function and learn and an adult's ability to thrive and support a family.

Young people thrive and become resilient adults when they are developmentally supported across all sectors of the population. Creating and nurturing the culture that is necessary to form and sustain positive outcomes for our youth will only occur through intentional and thoughtful collaborations between our local school district, recreation committee, cultural and nature-based organizations, businesses, safety and social services, social and service clubs, faith-based organizations, and all other avenues for youth activity. We have many service and charitable organizations in Charlestown that can be utilized. It is important that public service learning be encouraged and enhanced as a benefit to our community and our worldwide community.

Students are the future of the workforce. Charlestown businesses cover a wide range of skills and offerings, including healthcare, elder care, education, manufacturing, auto and heavy equipment mechanics, construction trades, food services, and public sector services including police and fire. This is by no means close to an exhaustive list! Within our own town, we must fully utilize the unique, cultural and educational gems that we have, including the Fort at Number Four.

## EDUCATION RECOMMENDATIONS

### 1. Academic learning for our children, publicly funded, as a part of the SAU-60 and Fall Mountain Regional School District.

- a. Citizens should petition that FMRSD must recreate a district budget committee, in accordance with RSA 195:12, to support the School Board and the business administration office in their efforts to create balanced and sustainable budgets for Charlestown and the school district.
- b. Charlestown residents should advocate for a district wide committee of concerned citizens to review that Articles of Agreement. Members should include selectmen from each of the five-member towns of the FMRSD, school board representatives to research and confirm the apportionment of each current method and, if needed, determine a new and effective approach for apportioning our school costs.
- c. Encourage for legislature and Board of Education to change how education is funded.
- d. Children in grade levels 1 through 5 are divided, with some attending the Primary School and some NCCS. The school district commission should conduct a study of the feasibility of combining these grades into the Primary School, and possibly the Middle school, for streamlining curriculum, increasing collaboration amongst grade-level teachers and realizing likely cost savings and efficiencies. If the grades are combined, the NCCS building would be repurposed for the benefit of Charlestown families. The Charlestown Primary School bond will be fully paid in the year 2025, and should construction be deemed necessary, we recommend that it commence after the existing bond is paid in full.

### 2. Site-based Committee

Charlestown needs to take a more active and leading role in our school district, encouraging the school board and administration to see the effect of their decisions through the eyes of the people and children of Charlestown. The Charlestown Area Site Based Committee should address and support Charlestown specific concerns, including, but not limited to:

- Improve educational outcomes for all students.
- Immediately create by-laws and structure to create a collaborative environment.
- Support and enhance increased parental involvement with our schools.
- Facilitate community involvement in our schools and vice versa.
- Work to increase and enhance home-school-community communication.
- Establish collaboration with the other attendance area site-based committees.
- Be present and involved at the district level when decisions are made, to advocate for Charlestown.

## *2021 Master Plan Final Draft*

- Establish a process for involving the community in educational planning and decision making, including allocation and use of resources.
  - Provide a responsive system for collective action by all educational and community agencies to address community issues.
- a. The site-based committee must request direct outreach from school administrators and elected town officials to the community in order to strengthen the make-up of the Committee to include parents, teachers, support staff, administration, community members, business leaders, and representatives of town government.
  - b. The site-based committee should request the school board to create after-school programming, tutoring and mentoring opportunities, social and physical recreation and other youth programs. Opportunities will be provided that offer real, meaningful opportunities to practice skill building and expand on what children know and learn – through work, service, and/or advanced learning.
  - c. The site-based committee should coordinate with town officials to regularly and consistently utilize community spaces to offer enrichment opportunities that explore all facets of growth and development. These opportunities include academic classes, STEAM centered workshops - which is an approach to teaching and learning that integrates Science, Technology, Engineering, the Arts, and Math, hobby exploration, and personal growth. Each of these programs will provide opportunities for volunteerism, and offer multiple ways for interaction through senior-adult-youth leadership, collaboration, and partnerships.
  - d. The site-based committee should request that FMRSD sponsor and host training and workshops for supporting parents as partners with their students in their learning. Opportunities should include workshops for parents to learn more about how to help their children with schoolwork at home, how to become active partners in teaching their children the school curriculum, strategies to motivate the beginning reader, techniques to increase reading comprehension, and how to incorporate math into everyday activities.
  - e. The FMRSD should partner with bordering communities who have educational infrastructure already in place, to offer financial aid for Charlestown residents to attend, or offer those established organizations space within Charlestown to offer classes.
  - f. The site-based committee should advocate their support in current technical education classes and programs and request that FMRSD work with programs within our region to expand a student's ability to partake in career specific courses or college courses to further their education.

**3. Lifelong Education in Charlestown**

- a. Charlestown needs to collaborate with the Career and Technical Education Department at Fall Mountain Regional High School, that connects interested students to the jobs available in our community. Opportunities include job shadowing, mentorships, and extended learning opportunities. We will develop community opportunities to seek knowledge, enhance skills, share experiences, ask questions, exchange ideas, and challenge one's self through educational partnerships with local colleges and universities, businesses, and with civic, social, and volunteer organizations. We will offer support and guidance regarding the resources available, making further and advanced education feasible for all families and students.
- b. The FMRSD should encourage all students to utilize online systems like Virtual Learning Academy Charter School (VLACS) to further their education.
- c. FMRSD should develop strategies and practices to ensure that classes are offered in life skills, financial literacy, and parenting education. These supports will help families and individuals overcome hurdles to success.
- d. Our school children should have the opportunity to visit and experience all cultural, historical and educational sites with their classmates during the school year or with their families; if possible, at no cost. We further specifically encourage the collaboration of all our teachers with the Fort to enhance their curriculum and offer a place-based experience to each child.

**4. Family Engagement and Support**

- g. Charlestown citizens should create a parent/caregiver support group. The group will meet regularly in town during the school day. This group will sponsor workshops on parenting skills at regular intervals. Workshops topics should include controlling anger, practicing assertive discipline, and preventing child abuse, and will utilize our community resources, such as the police, fire and rescue, and social service agencies, to conduct the workshops, insuring that they are relevant to the needs of the community at large.
- h. The above group should collaborate with Charlestown organizations, including, PTA and Librarians, to host a "Parents Make a Difference" conference, yearly. Every parent has something they can offer, they just need to hear it. This event will celebrate parent involvement and invite parents to learn new techniques for helping their children succeed in school. Parents will hear talks given by guest speakers, such as authors of children's books, and participate in workshops conducted by the guest speakers.
- i. Parents are strongly encouraged to get involved in their children's classrooms. Classroom assistant duties often include working with small groups of students, tutoring students one-on-one, preparing bulletin boards, and assisting teachers.
- j. All residents are encouraged in their quest to achieve a GED and/or job-centered training through opportunities to seek skills ranging from basic literacy and math

## *2021 Master Plan Final Draft*

through the transition to postsecondary education, workforce training and/or employment.

- k. The Town of Charlestown should provide space for small groups to learn new skills in areas of the arts, health, history, nature, languages, etc.

### **5. Health and social services: strategies and practices to support the whole child and, in turn, the whole family.**

- a. We encourage the Welfare Administrator of Charlestown, in conjunction with the police department, to pursue Southwest Community Services to locate an office in Charlestown. This will enable the citizens in Charlestown to be more fully served.
- b. The Charlestown Food Shelf should continue to have financial support from the town, as well as an easily accessible location in Charlestown.
- c. To provide safe dwelling places, the Charlestown Planning Board and Zoning Board of Adjustment should create enticing opportunities for additional mixed-use developments, thereby providing housing and security for an active workforce. The availability of housing should encourage business growth in Charlestown which in-turn provides economic stability for our town.

### **6. Community Partnerships: business partnerships, service learning and other community building strategies.**

- a. The site-based committee, school board and FMRSD should create framework to facilitate a School to Work program. This would give students the opportunity to work in the public and/or private sector, hopefully sparking a career interest.
- b. Public Service learning projects should be developed to connect students with established community partners who engage in community needs. Instruction, mentoring, and reflection will enrich the learning experience, teach civic responsibility, and strengthen communities. Public Service learning is and will be a benefit to our students as an effective way of teaching intellectual, developmental, social and personal growth through integrated, meaningful community service.

We have the power to change the future course of our town. Our citizens, from birth and throughout their whole lives, deserve to be supported and encouraged to create the best version they dream for themselves.

*“Let us not seek to fix the blame for the past. Let us accept our own responsibility for the future”.*

*John F. Kennedy*

## **ENERGY & UTILITIES**

### **INTRODUCTION**

When a business looks to expand or open in a new town or region, it considers everything from the tax rates to the quality of life. One key part of the decision lies with the availability of municipal utilities. Municipal governments as utility providers play a significant role in promoting economic development activity. Without widely available, reliable and affordable internet, electric water and wastewater services, most projects could not get off the ground.

Utilities are essential services delivered to residents through both public and private companies. Population and usage are driving forces that determine the level of services the municipality requires. This chapter will provide an overview of the utilities in Charlestown and address future goals and needs.

### **SOLID WASTE**

It has been estimated that the average person generates 4.9 pounds of waste every day.<sup>7</sup> Unfortunately, not all or even a large part, of that waste is recycled. Most of it ends up in landfills. The disposal of solid waste is a significant cost to the community. The cost to dispose both household trash and recyclables is ever fluctuating. Recycling is so important because it prevents pollution, reduces the need to harvest new raw materials, saves energy, reduces greenhouse gas emissions, saves money, reduces the amount of waste that ends up in landfills, and allows products to be used to their fullest extent. Recycling continues to be a benefit for our Town, wildlife and the environment.

The current fee for use of the transfer station is \$50 per year for a household. Research has shown that this is significantly lower than most towns surrounding Charlestown.

### **Hazardous Waste**

Hazardous waste is household products that can catch fire, react, or explode under certain circumstances, or that are corrosive or toxic. Products, such as paints, cleaners, oils, batteries, and pesticides can contain hazardous ingredients and require special care when you dispose of them.

Every day, people dump hazardous waste down their drains, into their trash, or onto the ground. These toxins eventually make their way into our drinking water. Teaching people what responsible options they have is critical to keeping our drinking water safe. The Charlestown Transfer Station will dispose of most of the items above for a fee. However, the Upper Valley Lake Sunapee Regional Planning Commission (UVLSRPC) will assist towns in organizing a Hazardous Waste Collection Day to collect all residential hazardous waste and educate people the importance of proper disposal.

---

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.epa.gov/facts-and-figures-about-materials-waste-and-recycling/national-overview-facts-and-figures-materials>

## *2021 Master Plan Final Draft*

Currently Charlestown citizens are encouraged to dispose of their hazardous waste at the Newport or Keene locations.

### **Facilities and Personnel**

The Transfer Station employs five part time staff and a Supervisor. The facility has six buildings: the scale house, recycling building, receiving building, compactor building, the operator house at disposal shoot, and the reuse hut. The buildings are in new to good condition.

### **ENERGY SERVICE**

The Town of Charlestown receives electrical service from three providers.

- Liberty Utilities – Serves the majority of town
- Eversource – Serves North Charlestown
- NH Electric Co-op – Serves the less developed areas in the eastern portion of town.

New Hampshire's average electricity price is 19.05¢/kWh<sup>8</sup> and is the seventh highest in the country. New England has long had some of the highest electric rates in the country. In general terms, we can say this is because we are a region that is literally and metaphorically at the end of the pipeline. There are no major sources of fill fuels nearby, so they must all be trucked or shipped to our region, driving up the costs.

Additional sources of power:

- Fossil Fuel – number one source of heating fuel in New Hampshire
- Natural Gas – possible with tank storage
- Solar – most common alternate source of energy
- Biomass – used in large industrial operations or small communities
- Wind - one of the lowest-priced energy sources available today

In 2020, 19% of New Hampshire's electricity generation came from renewable resources, including small-scale solar installations.<sup>9</sup> Renewable energy can play an important role in U.S. energy security and in reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Using renewable energy can help to reduce energy imports, reduce fossil fuel use and lower one's carbon footprint.

### **COMMUNICATIONS**

Today's society requires having technology and communication. Without them, the world can get disorganized, chaotic and stressful. Technology and established communications bring skills, knowledge, technique, and tools together for solving problems of human beings, making their life secure and easier. Why technology is important today is

---

<sup>8</sup> [https://www.eia.gov/electricity/monthly/epm\\_table\\_grapher.php?t=epmt\\_5\\_6\\_a](https://www.eia.gov/electricity/monthly/epm_table_grapher.php?t=epmt_5_6_a)

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.eia.gov/state/?sid=NH#:~:text=In%202020%2C%2019%25%20of%20New,inclusing%20small%2Dscale%20solar%20installations.>

## 2021 Master Plan Final Draft

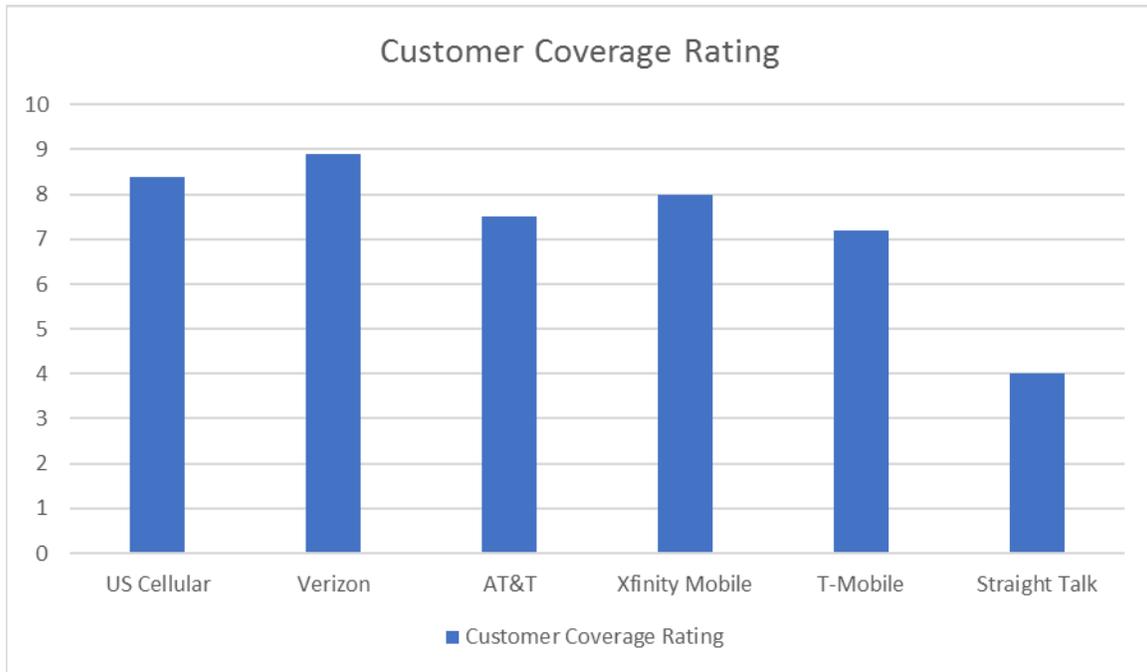
because it drives the world and making it a better place. Technology is ever changing and with that come changes to services and providers.

### TELEPHONE

#### Telephone Landline Providers

- Consolidated Communications – covers the entire town
- Comcast – Internet based landlines, where Comcast services are available

Cell Phone Providers: Cell phones have become a necessity for many people throughout the world. In the event of emergency, having a cell phone can allow help to reach you quickly. There are multiple cell phone providers in town. Below is the graph showing customer ratings for each service provider.<sup>10</sup>



The Planning Board has approved AT&T's site plan to replace the main tower located on Birch Drive. Currently, according to AT&T there are many areas in town that do not have coverage. Their hope is that the upgraded tower will alleviate this issue. AT&T has been awarded to be the company to become The First Responder Network Authority, or FirstNet, to provide a single interoperable platform for emergency and daily public safety communications. This in turn will benefit all AT&T customers.

### INTERNET

<sup>10</sup> <https://coveragecritic.com/coverage-model/best-cell-phone-coverage-plans-in-charlestown-nh/>

## *2021 Master Plan Final Draft*

Internet allows people to improve the quality of their life. It opens access to the previously inaccessible things. With almost three million users, internet has been emerging as one of the most important tools of communication.

Internet services are provided locally by several providers. Comcast and Consolidated Communications cover most of the service area. Internet in the more rural areas of town does not meet current speeds needed for multiple devices to run at the same time. The voters have approved the broadband project, which will expand broadband coverage and will offer citizens accessibility everywhere in town. The hope is that broadband will increase economic development and attract new home owners that can be technologically connected.

### **WATER & WASTE WATER**

Citizens derive great benefits from municipal infrastructure systems, including public health, clean drinking water, waste removal to protect us from disease, public safety, fire protection, healthy rivers, lakes, streams, ponds, wetlands and coastal resources. It also benefits local economies for recreation and tourism strongly linked to the environment and water quality.

The water and wastewater systems serve 1,100 customers in the village area and 134 customers in North Charlestown. The well at Bull Run started production in 2015. This well provides more than four times the needed water capacity of our current usage and does not require treatment to remove harmful contaminants. The North Charlestown well has a limited capacity and must be treated to maintain acceptable levels of contaminants such as arsenic.

The residents have approved the crucial project to connect the North Charlestown water system to the main water infrastructure. This will alleviate all concerns of contaminants in North Charlestown water.

Charlestown's infrastructure is largely underground and invisible to the public. It rarely captures public attention unless it impacts the daily lives of citizens. The issue of being out of sight and out of mind leads to aged water and wastewater infrastructure. Throughout town the infrastructure needs to be upgraded.

There are fourteen buildings and structures at various locations around town that help filter, treat and boost the water and wastewater. All of which are in good condition. Currently there are three full time employees.

## **ENERGY & UTILITIES RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **SOLID WASTE**

- A reduction in solid waste and a 75% recycling rate in five years; assess the cost/benefit of composting, encourage reusable items and educate the public on re-use;
- Provide information to citizen on Hazardous Waste Collection Day locations through the UVLSRPC
- A review of the current rates or consideration for a “pay as you throw” system is recommended;
- A plan for disposal should the landfill in Bethlehem, NH close: research Sweden’s waste-to-energy facilities;
- Consider to change to box trailers for transporting. This will lessen the number of trips; saving fuel, labor costs and wear & tear on the vehicle

### **ENERGY SERVICE**

- The Planning Board should encourage renewable energy on any new commercial construction including municipal projects
- Educate the community on alternate energy
- Reduce Town usage of fossil fuel by 10% in five years; research acquiring an energy analysis audit to see where changes can be made to conserve energy & fuel

### **WATER & WASTEWATER**

- Create an asset management plan, inventory all infrastructure to prioritize repair and/or replacement projects
- Improve the storm water drainage system in the village

## **HISTORICAL & CULTURAL RESOURCES**

### INTRODUCTION

Cultural and historical resources can be defined as physical evidence or place of past and present human activity: site, object, landscape, structure; or object or natural feature of significance to a group of people traditionally associated with it.

The objective of the Historic and Cultural Resources chapter is to summarize important features of the past, take an inventory of our historical and culture assets of today, and use the information gathered to make informed decisions about the future of the Town and determine and propose priorities for the preservation, protection, and management of Charlestown's historic and cultural resources. This chapter attempts to provide a plan for the future preservation of Charlestown by providing a list of goals and implementation strategies to guide preservation proponents. Also, we will go through what cultural ties we have to our past and today.

### HERITAGE COMMISSION & HISTORICAL DISTRICT COMMISSION

In 2014, the town voted to form a Heritage Commission that would encompass the role of the precious Historic District Commission. The Heritage Commission is charged with promoting the preservation of historic buildings and objects in the town, including the two National Register Districts, educating townspeople on the importance of preservation and promoting pride in historic houses. The Commission also has the responsibility of creating and regulating a state-designated local historic district which has not yet happened in Charlestown. The Charlestown Heritage Commission focuses on the town's historic buildings and environment.

### HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The Charlestown Historical Society maintains an Archives Room and museum on Main Street. All the Town cemetery records are available, as well as archives sorted into many categories available for research. It is a treasure trove collection.

Their goal is to foster appreciation and pride in historic features, to furnish information on period appropriate renovations, and to emphasize the importance of preserving the town for future generations.

## HISTORY

Long before there was a “Charlestown,” or indeed a “New Hampshire,” this place was buried beneath thousands of feet of glacial ice. As temperatures rose and ice melted, a huge lake, later called “Glacial Lake Hitchcock” formed and collected sediment for nearly 4,000 years.

Streams ran into the lake, and when the hills in southern Connecticut that had held Lake Hitchcock could no longer support the weight of water, aquatic turmoil ensued. The massive lake journeyed out to sea. The remnant was no longer a lake, but a river, a mighty river, the Connecticut River, and a long valley of rich soil.

The first people to “use” the land, now known as Charlestown, were the native Abenaki peoples, who grew crops in the fertile soil, fished and hunted, living lightly on the land and in harmony with nature. Europeans, carrying the flags of both France and England, gradually arrived to settle and farm. Charlestown was an important destination for English people coming north up the Connecticut River, because the Fort #4 had been built there in the 1740’s and offered a degree of security to settlers seeking a new life.

Settlers sought land to farm, and they built their homes in village centers, much as we see today. Charlestown is notable for its long, 13-mile frontage along the Connecticut River, the longest of any other town in New Hampshire. Streams that dropped down toward the River offered locations for erecting mills, and early settlers harnessed water power as an engine of commerce. Land was cleared laboriously - tree by tree and stone by stone - so settlers could benefit from sheep and later cows as sources of food and marketable meat, wool, and milk. The many miles of stone walls to be found in the area today are mute testimony to the intensity of the agriculture – and the work!

The handsome houses of Charlestown’s villages on Main Street and in North Charlestown on Route 12A attest to the relative prosperity of the town’s early heritage. In the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, our region joined the Industrial Revolution, with factories both small and large producing components of a new machine age. Charlestown had a few machine shops of its own, but most of the people who came to Charlestown in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century built homes scattered beyond our farms and villages and they worked in the sizable industrial facilities in Claremont or Springfield or farther afield. Then, after World War II the machine tool industry began to fade as the manufacturing engine of our region. Many employees lost their former job security, but they had a deep love for the streams and river, the forests and hills of Charlestown, and they used their ingenuity to develop ways to stay here where family roots go deep.

Charlestown has seen many changes between its early settlement in the 1700s and the present day. Charlestown is still a small town with roughly 5,000 people. The town is proud of its history. The citizens have retained many records of its earlier days and have many resources for those seeking information about their forebears.

## *2021 Master Plan Final Draft*

### OBJECTIVES

The Town of Charlestown included this new chapter devoted to Historic and Cultural Resources in the current Master Plan to create a blueprint for future historic preservation activity. The chapter attempts to provide a tool to help define community character and appearance, help inform decisions around land-use policies and economic development, and educate the public about the overall importance of preserving Charlestown's historical and cultural heritage. Preserving and protecting these resources will enable Charlestown to define community character and preserve its history and sense of place.

A healthy downtown and historic center are vital for a community's economic well-being. Reinvestment in historic buildings reinforces the value of existing real estate assets. Preserving historic resources helps protect what makes a community unique. Resources like the Former Connecticut River Bank (currently the Anglican Church), the Silsby Library, the Bakery Building, and numerous other properties in town create a one-of-a-kind place that is distinct to Charlestown.

### LOCAL HISTORIC DISTRICT ORDINANCE

Among the first lessons the preservationist learns is that the legal power to protect historic places lies chiefly with local government. This is a lesson often learned the hard way, for many people assume that the federal government, being the "highest" level of government, is the strongest guardian of historic sites. They assume that if a property is listed on the National Register of Historic Places, it must be protected automatically. This, unfortunately, is not the case. When it comes to historic preservation, the strongest protection is typically found in preservation ordinances enacted by local governments.

In 2014 the Historical District Commission had presented a draft Historic District Ordinance to the Planning Board to give the Commission an official role in preserving the unique historic appearance of Charlestown. The Commission's idea of creating an Ordinance was not to say something cannot be done, but rather advise and guide owners on how to complete a project while preserving historical attributes. At that time, the Planning Board believed they needed more information on the regulations before they were to approve the proposed ordinance. If the Historical District Commission and Planning Board were to refuse a project, the applicant would have the right to go to the Zoning Board of Adjustment to appeal the decision.

### PRESERVATION ACTIVITIES IN CHARLESTOWN

Over the years there have been activities held by the Heritage Commission, the Charlestown Historic District Commission, the Historical Society and private parties that have included an annual historic essay contest, plaques created from the Fall Mountain Schools for the nationally recognized historical sites, preservation of historical documents, re-enactments at Fort # 4, the Old Home Day festival, restore historical artifacts such as the trolley, the water trough, the cannon, and schoolhouse. A private company dismantled and moved historic buildings rather than demolish them, and 3

## 2021 Master Plan Final Draft

volumes of the History of Charlestown books have been written by citizens of Charlestown who wanted to recount significant aspects of the Town's past.

### CONCERNS FOR HISTORICAL & CULTURAL RESOURCES

- There is no long-term plan for the preservation of Charlestown and a lack of financial resources available to help both public and private organizations fund historic preservation projects:
  - The Town lacks adequate funding either to update historical resource inventories or rehabilitate publicly-owned historic structures, and has difficulty identifying where to prioritize grant funding when it is available
  - There is little incentive to revitalize historic buildings/structures. There are few direct funding sources for private citizens who often feel that preservation work presents financial hardship
- There is a proliferation of non-compatible exterior renovations to historic structures as homeowners “modernize.” This trend is manifested by things like vinyl siding and replacement windows.
- There is a lack of information, guidance and educational resources on preservation and restoration of historical properties.

### CURRENTLY REGISTERED PROPERTIES

The National Register of Historic Places is the official list of the Nation's historic places worthy of preservation. Authorized by the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, the National Register is part of a national program to coordinate and support public and private efforts to identify, evaluate, and protect America's historic and archaeological resources. Charlestown has two nationally registered districts; North Charlestown Historic District and Charlestown Main Street Historic District.



### NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

*2021 Master Plan Final Draft*

NORTH CHARLESTOWN

<b>Map #</b>	<b>Tax Map/Lot</b>	<b>Historic Name</b>	<b>Street Address</b>	<b>Const. Date</b>
2	207/027	Hope Hill Cemetery	River & Ox Brook Rd	1852
2A	207/027	Barn	River & Ox Brook Rd	Late 19 <sup>th</sup> C.
2B	207/027	Fountain	River & Ox Brook Rd	1871
3	207/028	Metcalf-Pelouze House	572 River Road	C.1840
5	210/022	Farwell School	509 River Road	1889
6	210/022	Fire Dept. Shed	River Road	C. 1910
7	210/020	Methodist Church	471 River Road	1841
8A	210/019	Shed	451 River Road	C. 1920
9	210/018	Gay House (Methodist Parsonage)	443 River Road	1841-1849
12	210/015	House	423 River Road	C. 1800
13	210/014	Thomas Whipple House	397 River Road	1790-1850
14	210/011	Metcalf House	391 River Road	1830/1870
14A	210/011	Barn	391 River Road	19 <sup>th</sup> C.
15	210/010	David Parks House	373 River Road	C. 1860
16	210/023	Charles Gay House	470 River Road	C. 1870
17	210/027	Allen-Merrill House	18 Chestnut Hill Road	C. 1825
17A	210/027	Barn	18 Chestnut Hill Road	19 <sup>th</sup> C.
17B	210/027	Shed	18 Chestnut Hill Road	C. 1940
18	210/028	Putnam-Way House	398 River Road	C. 1830
18A	210/028	Way Summer House	398 River Road	C. 1880
19	210/029	Wheeler-Gilmore House	390 River Road	1780-1820
19A	210/029	Shed/Shop	390 River Road	C. 1920
19C	210/029	Shed	390 River Road	C. 1920
19D	210/029	Mill Site/Dam Remains	390 River Road	
20	210/030	Horace Metcalf Store	380 River Road	1835
20A	210/030	Water Trough	380 River Road	1891
21	210/031	Union Hall (Grange)	372 River Road	1884
22	E. boundary 210/027	Railroad Culvert	Southeast side - 18 Chestnut Hill Road	1848

*2021 Master Plan Final Draft*

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORICAL PLACES  
CHARLESTOWN MAIN STREET DISTRICT

<b>Map #</b>	<b>Tax Map/Lot</b>	<b>Historic Name</b>	<b>Street Address</b>	<b>Const. Date</b>
1	117/058	Johnson House	23 Main Street	1752
1A	117/058	Outbuilding	23 Main Street	1752
2	117/059	House	33 Main Street	1809
3	117/060	House	47 Main Street	1814
5	117/062	Former North Primary School	63 Main Street	1772
6	117/063	Congregational Church	71 & 79 Main Street	1839
7	117/063	Congregational Parsonage	71 & 79 Main Street	1912
7A	117/063	Garage	71 & 79 Main Street	1920
9	Demolished	Miliken House	-	1831
10	Demolished	Charlestown Inn	-	1817
11	118/100	Briggs House	125 Main Street	1835
13	118/102	Stebbins House	145 Main Street	1856
13A	118/102	Barn	145 Main Street	1900
14	118/104	Bond House	155 Main Street	1887
14A	118/104	Carriage Barn	155 Main Street	
17	118/107	Former Methodist Meetinghouse	169 Main Street	1836
18	118/111	Former Charlestown Firehouse	0 Summer Street	1910
19	118/108	Willard Store	177 Main Street	1806
20	118/109	Building	183 Main Street	1830
21	118/111	Charlestown Town Hall	0 Summer Street	1872-1873
22	118/209	Former Connecticut River Bank	20 Summer Street	1824
25	118/211	Nourse's Pharmacy	203 Main Street	1924
26	118/212	Bowen Garage Company	209 Main Street	1921
29	118/215	Former South Parish Parsonage	265 Main Street	1857
30	118/216	Willard House	275 Main Street	1770-1790
31	118/217	Thompson House	291 Main Street	1872
32	118/217	St. Catherine's Roman Catholic Church	291 Main Street	1880
32A	Demolished	Carriage House	-	1875
34	119/006	West House	28 Olcott Lane	1784
34A	119/005	Stable	42 Olcott lane	1890
34B	119/006	Gazebo	28 Olcott Lane	1890
35	119/007	House	355 Main Street	1740
36	119/008	Olcott House	43 Paris Avenue	1774
36A	119/008	Carriage House	43 Paris Avenue	1860
36B	119/025	Hunt House	42 Paris Avenue	1760
37	119/027	House	27 Bellows Falls Road	1870's
38	119/035	Hubbard House	9 Lower Landing Road	1750
39	119/054	Holton House	364 Main Street	1843

*2021 Master Plan Final Draft*

<b>Map #</b>	<b>Tax Map/Lot</b>	<b>Historic Name</b>	<b>Street Address</b>	<b>Const. Date</b>
39A	119/054	Barn	364 Main Street	1843
40	119/055	Lovell House	338 Main Street	1825
41	119/056	House	326 Main Street	1775
42	119/057	Hunt House	318 Main Street	1881
42A	119/057	Garage	318 Main Street	
42B	119/056	Outbuilding	326 Main Street	
43	119/058	Silsby House	304 Maine Street	1798
44	119/059	Kimball House	296 Main Street	1835
44A	119/059	Barn/Garage	296 Main Street	1880
45	118/001	Labaree House	276 Main Street	1887
45A	118/001	Garage	276 Main Street	1910
45B	118/001	Monument	276 Main Street	1904-1908
46	118/002	Walker House	258 Main Street	1834
47	118/003	South Parish Unitarian Church	242 Main Street	1842-1843
47A	118/003	South Parish Vestry	242 Main Street	1893
48	118/079	Paris Fountain	226 Main Street	1901
49	118/079	Sisby Free Library	226 Main Street	1893-1894
50	118/080	Bakery Building	11 Depot Street	1842-1843
51	118/080	Monument – Civil War Statue	11 Depot Street	
53	118/084	Oliver Hall House	188 Main Street	1776
53A	118/084	Barn	188 Main Street	1890
54	118/084	St. Lukes Episcopal Church	188 Main Street	1863,1869
54A	118/084	Barn	188 Main Street	1890
55	118/089	Hall House	42 Perry Avenue	1822-1840
56	118/091	Sumner House	122 Main Street	1823
57	118/091	Former Sumner Carriage House	122 Main Street	1984
58	Demolished	Hassam House	-	1800
59	118/093	Masonic Hall	94 Main Street	1908
60	117/001	Simonds House	76 Main Street	1807
60A	117/001	Barn	76 Main Street	Early 19 <sup>th</sup> C.
62	117/002	Osgood Doublehouse	62 Main Street	1907
63	117/004	House	46 Main Street	1808
64	117/005	Fletcher House	34 Main Street	1808

**CULTURAL RESOURCES**

New Hampshire’s culture is a melting pot. There is love for the arts, outdoors, conservation, history, dining, frisbee golf, movies, cooking, photography, sports, experiences, brewing, skiing, fishing, horseback riding and so much more. There was concern in the 2007 Master Plan that there was not enough in the area to bring more people to see our Cultural and Historical gems. Inside Charlestown and within 45 minutes of Charlestown there is a plethora of activities to do and see that have a significant role in

## *2021 Master Plan Final Draft*

Charlestown's and New Hampshire's culture; at the end of the chapter these activities are listed with a short synopsis of what it is and what it offers.

### **HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES RECOMMENDATIONS**

The following goals and recommendations are created to balance the economic development of the Town of Charlestown with community planning and preservation goals.

**RECOMMENDATION 1: Continue Historic Resource Surveys (Last property added 2020)**

- Consider listing additional sites and districts to the NH State and National Registers
- Consider local historic districts & ordinances

**RECOMMENDATION 2: Continue to promote and enhance Main Street as a central residential, business and cultural district**

- Promote historic preservation and building reuse as “green” and integral element of economic development

**RECOMMENDATION 3: Maintain a mixture of rural, residential and agricultural uses in areas surrounding the town center**

- Encourage preservation of working farms
- Discuss preservation of rural landscapes

**RECOMMENDATION 4: Encourage public engagement with Charlestown's history through educational programming**

- Create interactive exhibits and website
- Host regional educational events
- Advertise what Charlestown has to offer in local and regional newspapers and/or magazines
- Utilize the Historical Society and Fort at No. 4 for children and adults

**RECOMMENDATION 5: Develop policy and procedure to protect historic buildings and sites to discourage deterioration or demolition**

- Advocate and educate
- Consider local regulations ex: Historical Ordinance that helps guide historical building owners in restoration, repair and updating.

### **NEW HAMPSHIRE CULTURAL RESOURCES IN AND OUTSIDE CHARLESTOWN**

Great amenities have the power to bring communities together. Through the addition of features that meet both the needs and wants of residents, developers have the opportunity to increase the quality of their neighborhoods. Access to basic amenities are a given for any community you design. Residents should always have access to useful, standard necessities that enable them to live comfortably and with dignity.

Within Charlestown you can find amenities of all kinds from outdoor recreation to fine dining. Within 45 minutes travel you will find box stores, breweries, fun activities, grocery stores, top notch medical centers, museums, farms, racing, crafts, and so much more. Charlestown is in a prime location in NH where almost anything is offered.

## HOUSING

### INTRODUCTION

RSA 674.2 states the purpose of the Master Plan is “to set down as clearly and practically as possible the best and most appropriate future development of [Charlestown]” and guide the Planning Board in the performance of its duties to enhance the quality of life in the town.

### OBJECTIVES

The housing chapter addresses the following objectives:

1. Determine the quantity and type of housing required by current and future populations.
2. Promote the construction, installation and maintenance of housing that meets appropriate standards in order to sustain and improve the quality of life for Charlestown citizens.
3. Assure services are available to support (sustain and improve) safe, healthy, and desirable living conditions for all Charlestown residents.
4. Recommend a housing mixture that will favorably impact the town’s tax base so that: 1) the property tax burden for citizens is diminished, and 2) the Town’s burden in meeting the needs of the existing housing mixture is lessened.

These objectives can be achieved by a combination of citizen support, planning, and legislative action.

### Housing for Charlestown’s Present and Future Populations (Table A)

#### Charlestown’s Changing Demographics<sup>11</sup>

Year	Age 0-5	Age 6-19	Age 20-64	Age 65+	Total	% Earning below poverty level
2010	293	881	3322	608	5114	5.8
2012	233	819	3224	822	5098	6.6
2013	258	800	3224	799	5081	9
2014	287	726	3201	846	5060	10.3
2015	342	649	3041	997	5029	13.2
2017	363	696	2945	1004	5008	13.1
2018	331	832	2858	998	5019	15.2
2019	310	710	2902	1099	5021	15.0

<sup>11</sup> Source: “New Hampshire Community Profiles”, New Hampshire Employment Security, Economic & Labor Market Information Bureau ; <https://www.nhes.nh.gov/elmi/products/cp/>

**Housing Definitions**

Manufactured Housing is defined in RSA 674:31 and is understood to mean mobile homes, a key part of the definition being that it is built on a permanent chassis and may be installed with or without a foundation. “Pre-site Built Housing” is a type of manufactured housing, defined in RSA 674:31-a, as prefabricated housing assembled on a foundation onsite. It is distinct from mobile homes as defined in RSA 674:31. In this document “manufactured housing” refers to both pre-site built housing and mobile homes.

**Housing Units by Type in the Region** (Table B)

Municipality	Data Year	Total Units	% Single Family	% Multi Family	% Mobile Homes
Charlestown	2020	2354	52.9	15.7	31.4
Claremont	2020	6129	52.1	41.9	6.0
Acworth	2020	57	95.7	0.3	3.9
Alstead	2020	913	75.4	8.1	16.5
Langdon	2020	318	92.8	3.5	3.8
Walpole	2020	1842	77.4	21.2	1.4

\*Note: The Charlestown rental property vacancy rate in 2010 was approximately 6.5%; in 2020 it is essentially zero<sup>12</sup>

**Trends in Housing Types in the Region** (Table C)

Number of Building Permits Issued, 2010-2019<sup>13</sup>

Municipality	Mfg. Housing	Multi-Family	Single Family
Acworth	4	0	15
Alstead	0	0	27
Charlestown	25	0	17
Langdon	0	0	9
Walpole	-1	59	30

\*Note - Since 2015, 11 building permits have been issued in Charlestown for new frame houses, 25 for the installation of mobile or manufactured homes.

**Implications of the Data for Charlestown’s Population and Housing Needs:**

- Over 30% of Charlestown’s housing stock consists of mobile homes, and mobile homes are being added at a faster rate than frame houses. This indicates a demand for less expensive housing, which contributes to further dilution of Charlestown’s already low assessed valuation. This is examined in section 6 of this report – “Housing and Property Taxes in Charlestown”.

<sup>12</sup> Source: “New Hampshire Community Profiles”, New Hampshire Employment Security, Economic & Labor Market Information Bureau ; <https://www.nhes.nh.gov/elmi/products/cp/>

<sup>13</sup>Source: “Current Estimates and Trends in New Hampshire’s Housing Supply”, NH Office of Strategic Initiatives; <https://www.nh.gov/osi/data-center/documents/housing-estimates-trends.pdf>.

## *2021 Master Plan Final Draft*

- The age 20-64 age group is slowly shrinking, whereas the age 65+ age group is increasing; trends seen throughout New Hampshire. Charlestown's seniors are aging in place, and are not being replaced by younger, working-age residents. This foreshadows a need for more senior housing, including skilled nursing facilities, assisted living and downsized living arrangements, but also a need for services to enable aging seniors to remain in their homes, such as transportation, installation of ramps for wheel chairs, and assistance with day-to-day living activities (e.g., health care, cooking, bathing). Another result of this demographic shift will be increasing numbers of Charlestown taxpayers qualifying for Charlestown's senior tax exemptions, ranging in value from \$20,000 to \$40,000 of assessed valuation, depending on the taxpayer's age and income. This will shift more and more of the tax burden to younger taxpayers over time, and has been cited as one reason seniors choose to "stay put" in New Hampshire (Charlestown).
- The decline in persons in the 20-64 age group is attributed to several causes – lack of 1) local employment opportunities, 2) in-town amenities meaningful to this age group, 3) affordable child care, and 4) affordable housing. The current "hot" market for rental housing reflects the need for additional multi-family and affordable housing.
- An increasing portion of Charlestown's residents live in poverty, and their need for affordable housing is dire. However, Charlestown already has the highest percentage of affordable housing (multi-family and mobile homes) in our four-town SAU 60, resulting in low property valuations, an unsustainable tax rate, and challenges to the town's ability to pay for infrastructure maintenance and other services. Charlestown cannot afford more affordable housing; zoning changes must be considered as one means to increase property values, another is to restrict the proliferation of low-value manufactured homes. While it is to be hoped that neighboring towns will do more to provide their fair share of affordable and subsidized housing, the reality is that these needs will continue to exist in Charlestown. A recent "Keys to the Valley" survey, conducted by the Upper Valley Lake Sunapee Regional Planning Commission as part of the 2020 Housing Needs Assessment, reveals that while most Connecticut River Valley residents recognize the need for affordable housing, few want to see it located nearby. This "NIMBY" attitude is further demonstrated by the number and type of building permits issued by local municipalities (table "C", above).

While predicting the numbers of senior-oriented and affordable housing units needed over time is beyond the scope of this analysis, both are needed, along with associated services. Future analyses, such as that to be provided by the 2020 Housing Needs

## *2021 Master Plan Final Draft*

Assessment, should be evaluated, when available, to better predict Charlestown's housing needs.

### **Housing Quality**

It has long been observed that Charlestown could benefit from improvements in housing quality:

More complete and authentic restoration of the features of historic homes on Main Street could enhance the attractiveness of the picturesque historic district. Barriers to this might be cost, desire to avoid increased tax assessments, and lack of clear objectives and restoration specifications found in a typical historic district ordinance. These could be addressed by identifying grant/loan opportunities, adopting the Community Revitalization provisions of RSA 79e, instilling pride in living in a well-maintained historic district, and enacting a comprehensive historic district ordinance, which provides repair/restoration guidance for owners of historic properties. Further, Charlestown's Heritage Commission could consider a promotion to spark peer pressure to upgrade historic properties.

Seniors who decide to age in place often face deteriorating housing or the need for upgrades to make daily living tasks easier or safer (such as wheelchair ramps, grab bars & handrails, improved lighting, and smoke/CO detectors) and may not have the money to pay for repairs or upgrades. Directing seniors to agencies and volunteer organizations which can provide support or services should be a priority of the town's Human Services department.

Higher quality multi-family housing can appeal to higher-income potential residents who will make a positive contribution to the local economy. Such housing might feature upgraded amenities, greater sound insulation, and premium décor, and would have higher assessed value. Ages 20-64 wage earners seek housing without the need to spend time on upkeep. As more Upper Valley employees seek housing further south, this might be an opportunity and such developments should be encouraged.

### **Tiny Homes**

A recent trend, with the aim of increasing housing affordability, has been the construction of "tiny homes" – homes which may only contain 100-400 square feet of living space, but which permit sleeping, food preparation and consumption, and sanitation. New Hampshire House Bill 588, introduced in 2021, seeks to regulate building codes for tiny homes, but also would require that municipalities allow them as stand-alone residences, as accessory dwelling units, or in tiny home parks. While tiny homes would be unlikely to favorably impact Charlestown's tax base, it is similarly unlikely that they would add significantly to school enrollment and educational costs. Because Charlestown has such a high tax rate and such a high proportion of inexpensive housing already, Charlestown should carefully consider whether and how to regulate the advent of tiny homes.

## **Supporting Services**

A recent “Keys to the Valley” survey conducted by the Upper Valley Lake Sunapee Regional Planning Commission as part of the decennial Housing Needs Assessment showed that transportation is a very important concern for regional seniors. As seniors find themselves no longer able to drive, and for the less financially able who cannot afford cars, shopping, doctors’ visits, and other day-to-day trips become an important issue. Charlestown has limited, low-cost bus service available through Southwestern Community Services. In addition, providing transportation for the “last mile” is problematical. This will be further discussed in the section on Transportation.

Aging seniors who are no longer able to live independently will need assisted living housing and skilled nursing facilities. Encouraging the establishment of such arrangements should be a goal of the Town whenever possible, through appropriate zoning and Planning Board support.

In addition to the housing needs of seniors mentioned above, an increasing number of Charlestown residents are subsisting below the poverty line, according to census data. More recently, the impact of the coronavirus pandemic of 2020 may have adversely impacted the income of many, due to lost jobs or reduced hours of employment. Assistance to find, afford, and remain in suitable housing will be an ongoing essential need for many in Charlestown.

Charlestown’s Human Services Department exists to aid those in need. In addition to directly providing general financial assistance, the department can also guide residents to an impressive array of programs such as:

- The New Hampshire Department of Health & Human Services (direct financial assistance, child care assistance, food stamps, medical assistance, employment assistance)
- ServiceLink (a program of the NH Department of Health and Human Services which helps individuals access and make connections to long-term services and support, access family caregiver information and support, explore options and understand and access Medicare and Medicaid)
- Southwestern Community Services (Homelessness prevention, heating & electricity assistance, weatherization assistance, food assistance, transportation services)
- COVER (home repair, weatherization, home safety).

The Charlestown Human Services Department is currently developing a Facebook page and updating its program materials to better publicize the services available to Charlestown residents. It offers support which is neither intimidating nor impersonal, and can advise community members of programs that might help them, and how to apply.

**Housing and Property Taxes in Charlestown**

Charlestown has always welcomed those who want to live here. For decades Charlestown was home to workers in the machine tool industry, long the economic life blood of this region. As that industry moved to Asia in the 1970's, the town had few employment opportunities that paid wages that could support home ownership and upkeep. Due to the lack of comprehensive zoning or restrictions on manufactured housing, Charlestown was attractive to young families with limited financial resources to pay for housing, but of child-bearing age, which required more services from the School District. Other towns adopted zoning ordinances that restricted low-cost housing and relied upon Charlestown to provide for the region's affordable housing needs. Charlestown now finds itself in a financially unsustainable situation in which 1/3 of our housing units are manufactured homes with low assessed valuations and the Town struggles to pay for basic services. The following analysis shows the interdependence between housing, taxes, public services and zoning.

**Assessed Valuations and Tax Rates in Charlestown and Comparable and Adjoining Towns<sup>14</sup>**

The following table compares the fully equalized 2020 valuation of town properties and tax rates. Franklin and Newport are often cited as comparable to Charlestown in size and demographics; the other four towns, with Charlestown, make up the Fall Mountain school district.

Town	Charlestown	Franklin	Newport	Acworth	Alstead	Langdon	Walpole
Assessed Valuation, \$000's	282,983	692,746	437,054	98,678	163,279	57,446	430,509
Tax Rate, \$/1000	39.1	22.47	37.53	29.07	27.85	27.8	25.51

\*Note: Charlestown has the 2nd highest tax rate in New Hampshire

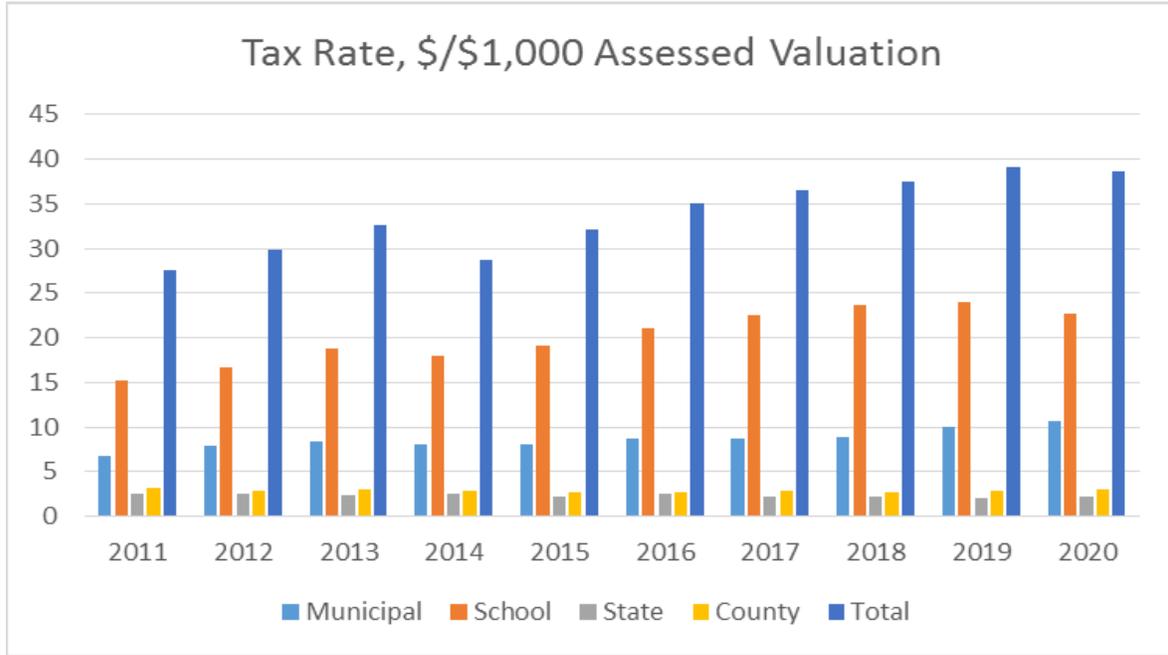
**Average Assessed Valuation of Charlestown Residences<sup>15</sup>**

- Manufactured housing in mobile home parks - \$20,500
- Manufactured housing outside mobile home parks – \$72,000
- Other single-family residences - \$144,887

<sup>14</sup> “2020 Comparison of Full Value Tax Rates”, New Hampshire Department of Revenue Administration; <https://www.revenue.nh.gov/mun-prop/municipal/documents/20-tax-rates.pdf>

<sup>15</sup> Source: Charlestown 2019 Assessment Rolls

**Charlestown Tax Rate Growth, 2011-2020<sup>16</sup>**



**Charlestown School Enrollment in SAU60, 2010-2019<sup>17</sup>**

Year	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Number of Students	761	741	720	703	678	681	684	657	669	663

\*Note: 2020 data not included due to Covid-19 attendance limitations

It should be noted that the lack of growth in school taxes in 2020 was due to a one-time \$900,000 “windfall” in state funding. As can be seen from the above, Charlestown taxpayers suffer not only from low property valuations, driven largely by the high percentage of manufactured homes, but also from ever-increasing tax rates, with school taxes increasing at twice the rate of municipal taxes, despite declining school enrollment.

**“Break even” Analysis**

To begin slowing Charlestown's unsustainable tax situation, the town must adopt measures to encourage development which increases the town's assessed valuations but does not increase demands for services, especially education. Numerous “Cost of Community Services” studies have shown that open land and commercial and industrial properties use far fewer community services than residences, and pay more in taxes than

<sup>16</sup> Source - New Hampshire Department of Revenue Administration – Municipal Property Tax Rates, 2011-2020 tables; <https://www.revenue.nh.gov/mun-prop/municipal/property-tax-rates.htm>

<sup>17</sup> Source – NH Department of Education – Attendance and Enrollment Reports; <https://www.education.nh.gov/who-we-are/division-of-educator-and-analytic-resources/bureau-of-education-statistics/attendance-and-enrollment-reports>

## 2021 Master Plan Final Draft

the cost of the services they receive. They do not, however, come close to bringing in sufficient taxes to offset the low taxes paid by Charlestown's low valuation residential sector. All town properties benefit from the town's police, fire, public works, and social services. The distinction between residential properties and those designated for commercial, industrial, or open space uses, is that residential properties can avail themselves of educational services which only benefit residential property users. To understand the relationship between residential property taxes and the cost of community services, this Master Plan has undertaken a “break-even” analysis.

The intent of a break-even analysis is to calculate an assessed value for a new (incremental) residential household unit that produces an annual tax equal to or greater than the Town’s cost to serve the average residential household, whether that household resides in a frame house, manufactured home, or apartment.

Very simply, the residential break-even analysis calculates the cost of services provided to residences – the sum of educational costs and a portion of the municipal and county costs related to the present total assessed residential valuation – divided by the number of residential units, to arrive at the tax the average residence must generate to pay its share of the costs. Dividing that by the tax rate gives the calculated break-even valuation.

We assume that the cost to serve residential households includes all the education costs assessed to the Town. Furthermore, we assume that residential households share with other property owners in the cost of non-educational municipal services in proportion to their aggregate assessed valuations. The sum of the annual approved municipal and county budgets, multiplied by the fraction of the taxes paid by residences, equals the non-educational municipal cost allocation to all residential properties.

This can be represented mathematically in the table below. In making this calculation, the following values, from the Charlestown 2019 budget and tax rolls, were used:

<b>Acronym</b>	<b>Explanation</b>	<b>Number</b>
B	break even valuation $((\text{ECR}+\text{NECR})/\text{NR}) / \text{T}$	\$111,692
NR	number of residential units	2318 units
T	total tax rate (dollars per thousand)	\$39.11
EL	local educational assessment	\$6,766,085
ES	state educational assessment	\$535,690
M	municipal tax assessment	\$2,842,208
C	county tax assessment	\$825,340
TR	Residential taxes paid	\$8,435,771
TT	total taxes paid	\$10,969,322
ECR	residential educational cost (EL+ES)	\$7,301,775
NECR	residential - non-educational cost of services $((\text{M}+\text{C}) * (\text{TR}/\text{TT}))$	\$2,820,468

2020 tax roll numbers were unavailable at the time of this writing.

It must be recognized that this methodology likely slightly underestimates the non-educational cost of services to residences, since as stated at the beginning of this section, residences typically consume a greater share of services than other taxed properties.

## 2021 Master Plan Final Draft

Using the method above, the break-even analysis shows that a residential property that covers the cost of its educational and town services needs to be valued at \$111,692 or higher. This compares unfortunately with the current average residential valuation of \$82,948.

The various housing types can be shown to have the following relative effect on taxes vs. the average cost of services:

Housing Type	Avg. Valuation	vs. Break-Even	Tax Impact
Frame House	\$144,887	+\$33,195	+\$1,298
Manufactured home in mobile home park	\$20,500	-\$91,192	-\$3,567
Manufactured home outside mobile home park	\$72,000	-\$39,692	-\$1,552

It cannot be assumed, however, that simply adding more high-valued residences will greatly improve Charlestown's tax situation. Here are three examples:

- If all Charlestown residences were valued at the break-even level, the tax rate would be \$34.05.
- If Charlestown added only new residences valued at \$300,000, and if they only added half as much to the cost of services as an existing residence, over 550 such residences must be built to reduce Charlestown's tax rate to the median of the other four towns in SAU 60 (\$27.29/1000 in 2019). Charlestown currently has 2354 homes, and has added only one home assessed near \$300,000 in 2021.

While adding more commercial or industrial properties will be beneficial, over \$120 million in new assessed properties would be needed to achieve that same median tax rate, assuming they add nothing to the cost of services. This is nearly double the current commercial & industrial assessed value in Charlestown.

Clearly, it is unlikely Charlestown can add enough new assessable property to correct its high tax problem. Charlestown voters must take steps, outlined in this chapter, to prevent it from becoming worse.

Fundamentally, relief for Charlestown's tax dilemma can only be achieved if the State of New Hampshire assumes a much greater responsibility for the cost of education (adequacy aid) or returns to equalized distribution of the State Wide Education Property Tax (SWEPT) as recommended in 2020 by the Commission to Study School Funding, but which the legislature has failed to act upon – while cutting adequacy aid by \$25 million and approving a voucher system which will further reduce public school funding.

## **HOUSING RECOMMENDATIONS**

Charlestown should consider the following actions in support of the goals of providing the quantities, types and quality of housing for Charlestown's current and future needs, providing the supporting services needed to maintain residents' quality of life, and substantially diminishing the property tax burden:

- Amend the building code to require manufactured housing installed or erected in Charlestown must be no more than 5 years old.
- Amend Charlestown's zoning ordinance to prohibit the development of new mobile home parks. This is specifically allowed under RSA 674:32.
- Limit manufactured homes to fewer areas in Town through revisions in the Zoning Ordinance to encourage new housing be frame or presite built.
- Have the Selectboard reach out to manufactured home park owners to encourage leasing vacant spaces to seniors and others without school age children, and consider adding amenities such as security cameras which would increase value and lessen the burden on town services.
- Encourage the building of higher-value multi-family housing by amending zoning for zone D to allow multi-family housing and to explicitly allow multi-family housing in zone E.
- Rekindle efforts with the Heritage Commission, in cooperation with owners of historic properties, to develop and adopt a Historic District Ordinance that defines Charlestown's and North Charlestown's historic districts and provides standards to guide restorations and improvements to historic properties.
- Consider whether changes to the zoning ordinance or building codes are needed to regulate tiny homes.
- Work with Southwestern Community Services to increase the availability of low-cost bus service, and strategize ways to provide "last mile" transportation services.
- Adopt the provisions of RSA 79-E, the Community Revitalization Tax Relief Incentive, at the 2022 Town Meeting. The NH Legislature recognized in 2006 that communities need additional support to encourage investments in community revitalization. The warrant should further include a clear definition of what will be considered the town center, as defined in RSA 79-E:2 II, making sure to include a substantial portion of the downtown areas of both Charlestown and North Charlestown. Use these incentives to encourage the development high-quality rental housing.

*2021 Master Plan Final Draft*

- Actively seek developers who wish to develop high-quality housing, including rentals, assisted living and skilled nursing facilities. The Selectboard and Planning Board should facilitate development which has a positive impact on our tax base by developing a capital improvement plan that proactively provides for appropriate infrastructure improvements and aiding prospective developers.
- Continue to support the Human Services Department in its efforts to aid seniors and the less economically advantaged to find, afford, and upgrade the quality and safety of their housing.
- Work with the other towns in SAU60 to re-establish a school budget committee to help reduce the rate of school tax increases.
- Aggressively support initiatives to increase state education adequacy aid and equalize distribution of SWEPT funds. The town should participate in any legal actions to do this and residents should specifically and emphatically urge our state legislators to champion these efforts.



## **LAND USE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The vision for Charlestown’s future, as expressed in surveys and public discussions, can only be achieved when the municipality makes good, appropriate decisions around land use – through zoning, site plan and subdivision regulations, and ordinances enacted by the Selectboard. This land use chapter seeks to express the recommendations of the Land Use task force and other Master Plan task forces in terms of the zoning and other decisions that need to be considered.

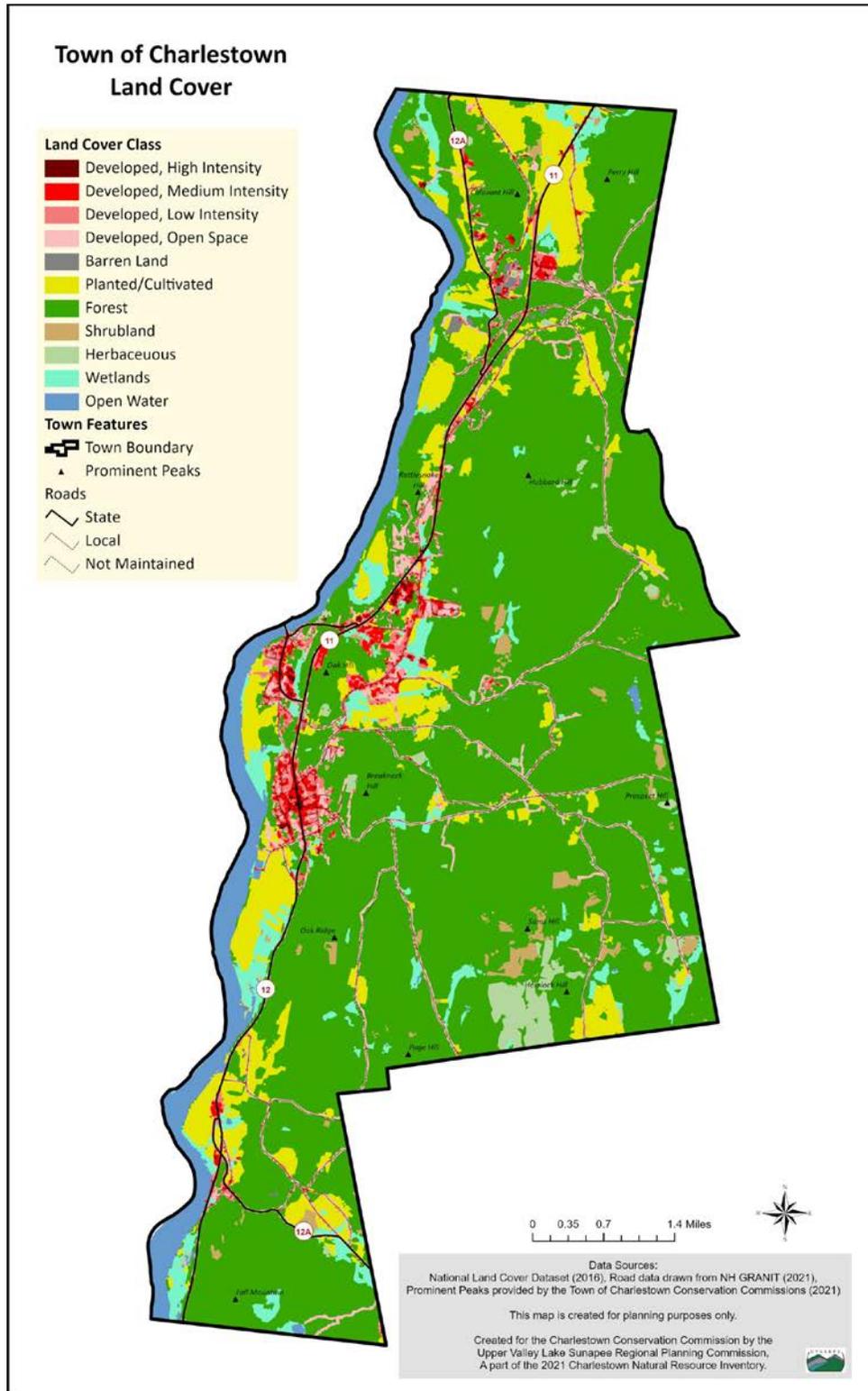
### **HISTORICAL OVERVIEW**

New Hampshire’s legislature first authorized towns to plan for the uses of land within their borders in 1930. Charlestown recognized that a planning board could be beneficial, and one was appointed in 1965. Voters soon wanted a choice about who would be making decisions about beneficial development, and candidates for service on the Charlestown Planning Board have needed voter approval since 1967. Zoning in Charlestown dates to 1951 with the creation of zones A and B. Other zones were added later: C in 1958, D and E in 1981, F-1 and F-2 in 1984, G-1 in 1998, G-2 in 2000, A-1 in 1957, and A-2 in 2014.

While some zones have been established with carefully considered choices about appropriate uses of the land, the largest zone in Charlestown is Zone E where for a long-time resident have not wanted constraints on how they might live. In recent years, however, residents and taxpayers have come to recognize that an area where, according to its zoning definition, “any use is permitted” is too often a place that does not attract good investments and in fact has become a burden to other taxpayers in town. An important aspect of this 2021 Master Plan is a fresh look at Zone E and discussion among townspeople about how and where to raise standards for investment in development so our town can continue to prosper.

CURRENT LAND USE

Figure 1 - Current Land Use in Charlestown 2021



2021 Master Plan Final Draft

CURRENT ZONING DISTRICTS

Figure 2, Current Zones

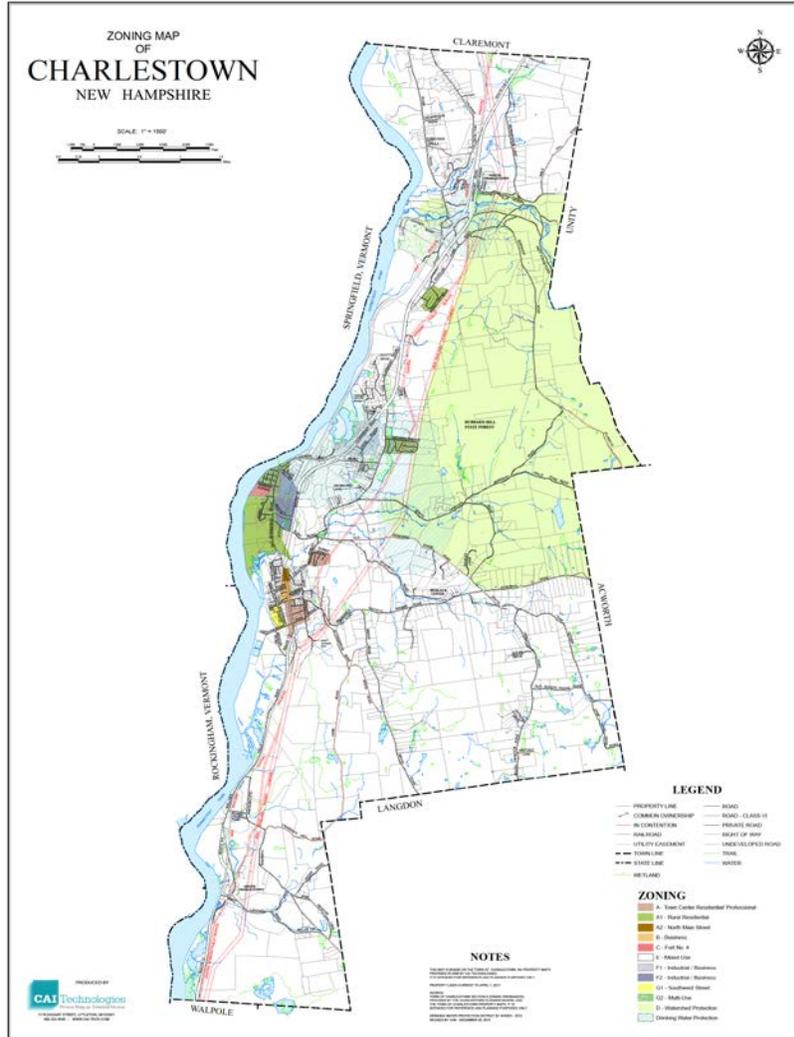


Table 1 – Area of Current Zones (Estimated)

Zone	Acreage	% of Total
A	89	0.4
A1	365	1.5
A2	75	0.3
B	20	<0.1
C	20	<0.1
D	6,573	27
E	16,913	69
F1	96	0.4
F2	87	0.4
G1	19	<0.1
G2	131	1.7

Source: Communication with Planning Administrator

*2021 Master Plan Final Draft*

Table 2 – Zoning Regulations Summary

Zone	Zone Name	Permitted	Min. Lot Size	Other
A	Town Center	1-2 family, maximum 4-family, church, school, library, offices, home occupations	15,000 ft <sup>2</sup> for new constr.	
A1	Rural Residential	Same as A	Same as A	
A2	North Main Street	1-2 family, new maximum 4-family by exception, conversion to maximum 4-family, offices, home occupations, some businesses	Same as A	
B	Business	Same as A, plus commercial, apartments (no limit to number of units)	Unspecified	No limit to # of units in apartments
C	Fort #4	Fort #4 uses	Unspecified	
D	Watershed Protection Area	1-2 family, agricultural	5 Acres	Lot size avg. allowed
E	Mixed Use	Any Use, one 1-2 family residence per lot.	½ Acre if town water & sewer, or 1 Acre	Lot size avg. allowed
F-1	Industrial/Business	Heavier industry, no residential	80,000 ft <sup>2</sup>	
F-2	Industrial/Business	Heavier industry, no residential	80,000 ft <sup>2</sup>	
G-1	Southwest Street Area	1-2 family, new or converted max 4-family dwelling, commercial, industry	Unspecified	
G-2	Multi-Use Zone	1-2 family, commercial, business, agriculture, apartments (no limit to number of units)	1 Acre	

As can be seen from the above two maps, most of Charlestown’s undeveloped land is forested and lies in zones D and E. While zone D is restricted to residential and agricultural use, zone E allows any use and future development here should be carefully managed.

NATURAL CONSTRAINTS ON LAND CAPABILITY

Figure 3 – Water Features

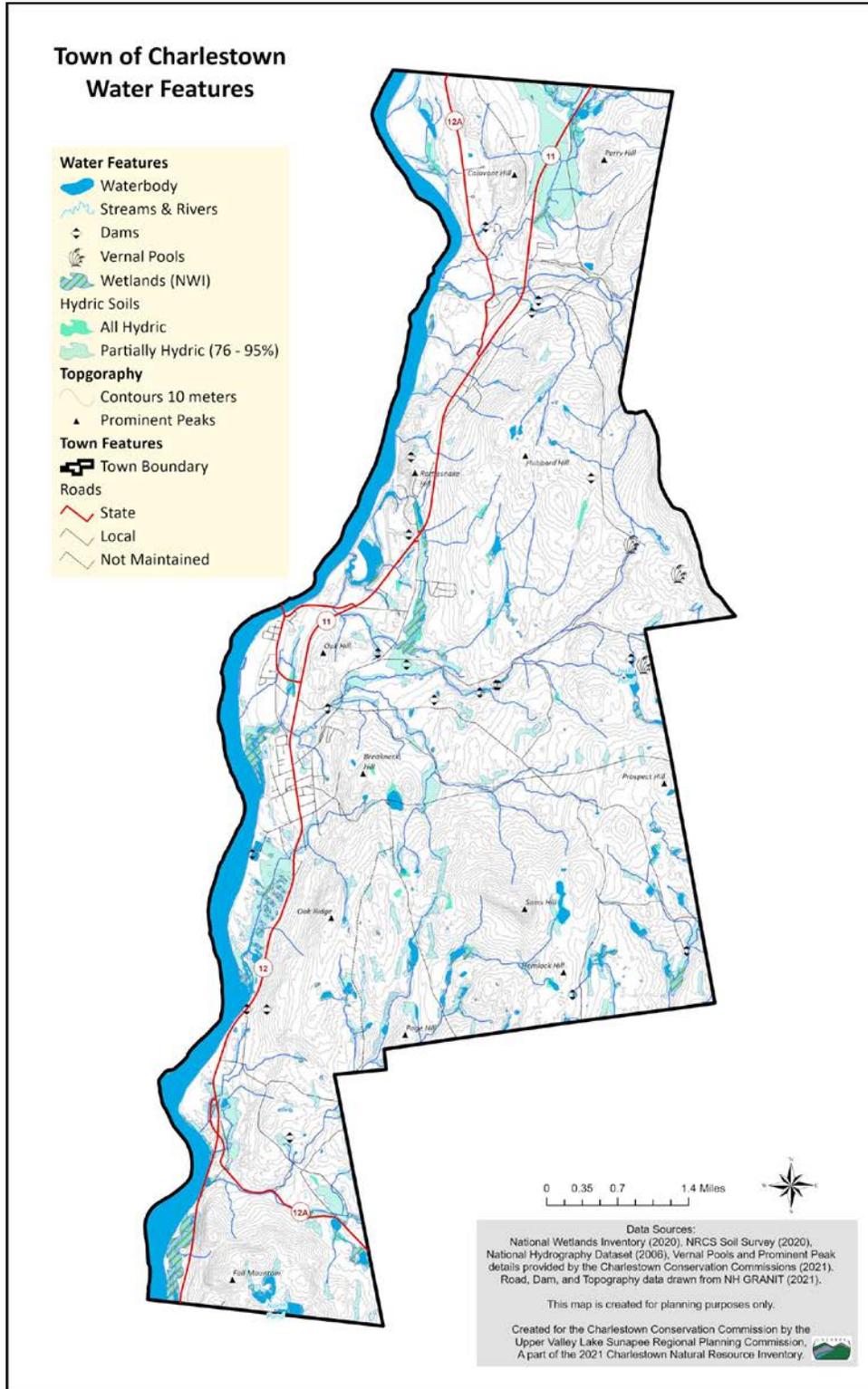


Figure 4 – Agricultural Resources

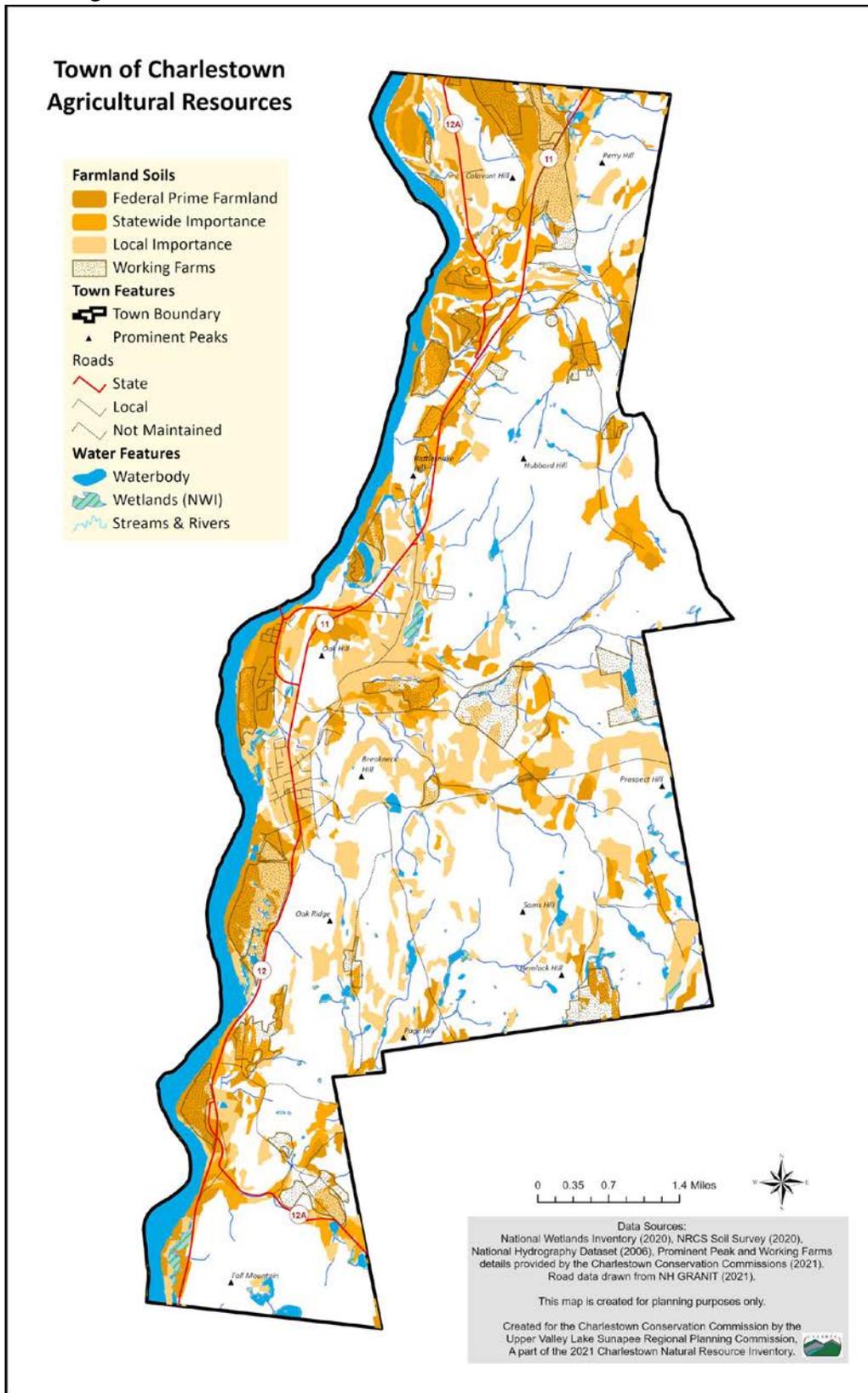
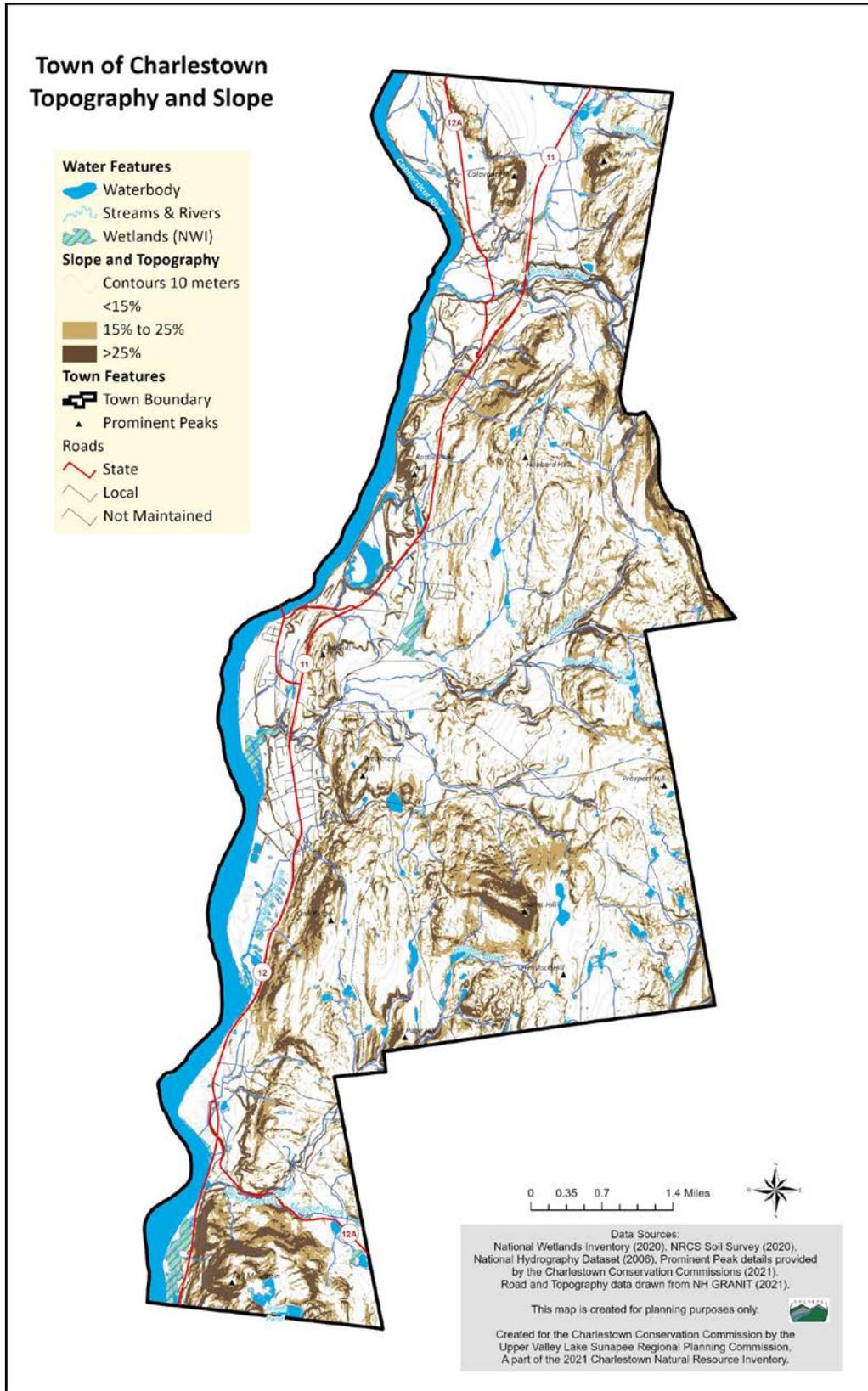


Figure 5 – Topography & Slope



LAND USE PATTERNS AND TRENDS

**Table 3 – Land Coverage Trends in Charlestown**

Land Cover Class	Acreage in 2016	% of Town in 2016	% of Town in 2006	Source – National Land Cover Database, 2016 and 2006 data sets (Data is updated every 10 years)
Developed	2,272	9%	5%	While there is a trend toward development of forested and agricultural land, population pressure has not been the driver of these changes of use – Charlestown’s population has declined slightly in the past ten years.
Agriculture	2,453	10%	12%	
Forest	16,296	67%	74%	
Barren Land	58	<1%	<1%	
Wetland	1,041	4%	3%	
Water	1,475	6%	6%	
Other	750	3%	<1%	

**Note 1 – Tiny Homes and Accessory Dwelling Units**

A recent development in housing trends has been the building of “tiny homes” – small dwellings, typically 100-400 square feet but with provision for sleeping, food preparation and consumption, and sanitation. NH House Bill 588 was introduced in 2021 to regulate tiny house building codes but would require they be allowed in all zones that permit single family residences. It suggests they may be stand-alone, accessory dwelling units, or be in “tiny home parks”. Charlestown currently has no regulations concerning tiny homes,

**LAND USE RECOMMENDATIONS**

The following recommendations for zoning and regulation changes are derived from recommendations with a land use component contained in other Master Plan chapters,

**Economic Development**

- Encourage the siting of any future commercial/industrial development.
- Study the expansion of the west side to the route 11 intersection, making more area exclusively available for residences and small businesses. This would make development more consistent with the downtown area.
- Extend zone A-1 south to Lower Landing to protect the residential nature of the area.
- Evaluate the creation of a North Charlestown business district.

**Housing**

- Revise the zoning ordinance to prohibit the development of new mobile home parks in any zone.
- Actively seek developers who wish to develop high-quality housing, including rentals, assisted living and skilled nursing facilities. The Selectboard and Planning Board should facilitate development which has a positive impact on our tax base

## *2021 Master Plan Final Draft*

by developing a capital improvement plan that proactively provides for appropriate infrastructure improvements and aiding prospective developers.

- Add a section to the building code that allows manufactured housing to be installed or erected on any property only if built within the last five model years.
- Modify the zoning ordinance for zone D to allow the construction of new multi-family housing by special exception, and explicitly allow multi-family residences in zone E, to permit added housing capacity and higher value properties.
- Adopt the provisions of RSA 79-E, the Community Revitalization Tax Relief Incentive, to encourage the development of senior, affordable, and higher-value rental housing. In doing so, clearly define the town center (see RSA 79-E:2 II) to include substantial portions of the downtowns of Charlestown and North Charlestown.
- Create and adopt a historic district ordinance to define the historic districts and guide restorations and improvements to historic properties.
- The Planning Board should consider if zoning or building code changes may be needed to regulate the building of tiny homes, either as attached accessory dwelling units, stand-alone residences, or in tiny home parks.

### Natural Resources

- Modify section 8.4.9 of the zoning regulations to require main building setbacks of at least 100 feet along the Connecticut and Little Sugar Rivers to help prevent pollution of these protected streams, note that this is greater than the setback required by the Shoreline Water Quality Protection Act.
- Add “vernal pools”, “wildlife habitat”, and “wildlife corridors”, as identified in the Charlestown Natural Resources Inventory to the list of natural features to be noted on major site plan applications in section 5.6.1 L of the site plan regulations. This will help protect sensitive habitat from degradation.
- Consider creating a wildlife habitat/corridor overlay district to include all Charlestown properties abutting the Acworth town line, the Unity town line south of Unity Stage Road, and the Langdon town line east of South Hemlock Road. Allowed uses of those properties to be residential or agricultural, with other uses permitted only by special exception.
- Create a steep slopes district within our zoning ordinance. Wording like the following is suggested:

#### **STEEP SLOPES DISTRICT.**

##### **Purpose**

The purpose of the Steep Slopes District is to prevent development on slopes more than 25 percent. Development on such slopes causes soil erosion and stream sedimentation, unnecessary loss of vegetative ground cover and destruction of trees, on-site waste disposal problems, difficult street construction, and expensive street maintenance.

##### **Description of Steep Slopes District**

The Steep Slopes District includes all areas having slopes more than 25 percent that are located within Charlestown. The slope of the natural terrain shall be determinative of whether land is within the district. As a general guide, areas of slope in excess of

## 2021 Master Plan Final Draft

25 percent are delineated on the Steep Slopes Map prepared as part of the Charlestown Master Plan.

### Permitted Uses

No buildings, structures or parking lots shall be permitted in the Steep Slopes District. Otherwise, the following uses are permitted:

- A. Wildlife refuges, conservation areas and nature trails.
- B. Open space and outdoor recreation.

### Special Exceptions

- A. Roads and driveways may be granted special exceptions to cross the Steep Slopes District subject to the following findings by the Zoning Board of Adjustment.
  1. The lot cannot be reasonably used without such a crossing.
  2. The design and construction of the crossing will not cause:
    - a. Soil erosion; or
    - b. Stream sedimentation; or
    - c. Loss of excessive vegetative cover; or
    - d. Expensive public maintenance costs.
  3. The crossing will not adversely scar a ridgeline or hillside that is a prominent visual amenity in Charlestown.
  4. All other requirements for special exceptions, as set forth in Section 8.10 are met.
- B. Structures accessory to a use permitted by this section, such as trailside shelters or kiosks.
- C. Commercial forest management and agriculture using best management practices to protect streams from drainage and to prevent sedimentation.

### Utilities and Energy

- Add the following to site plan regulations section 5.7.1: “All new construction shall consider the inclusion of sources of renewable energy, in compliance with all relevant zoning requirements for such sources.”
- Seek a revenue sharing benefit from hydropower production on the Connecticut River as a condition of the Great River Hydro license renewal by FERC,



## **NATURAL RESOURCES**

### **Introduction**

Nature is one of Charlestown's major assets, led by the Connecticut River frontage, followed closely by agricultural lands, and forested areas with hill tops. All become an asset for human activities. In 2020 a survey was sent out with the town tax bills. 94% of responses stated that the town should preserve natural resources. Specifics included: more connections to the Connecticut River, increase open spaces, and make more of the town walkable and bikeable.

This chapter provides an overview of Charlestown's environment to include its open spaces, forests, wildlife, watersheds, rivers, ponds, other natural systems and climate change. Suggestions are made in this chapter to conserve and derive benefits of these considerable resources.

### **Forest Resources**

Extensive forested areas are an appealing aspect of Charlestown. Wooded areas include a wide variety of species, sizes and ages of trees. Forests, maple farms, timber harvests, trails and street plantings are some of the wide range uses seen in Town. Three quarters of Charlestown is forested and approximately 85% of that is privately owned; 18,000 acres, out of Charlestown's 24,339 acres. The state of New Hampshire owns roughly 2400 acres; the town owns nearly 500 acres and over 1500 acres are protected by an easement. (See Charlestown Important Wildlife Habitat Map next page, on the Legend, the last section is wildlife habitat type, which also includes forest types).

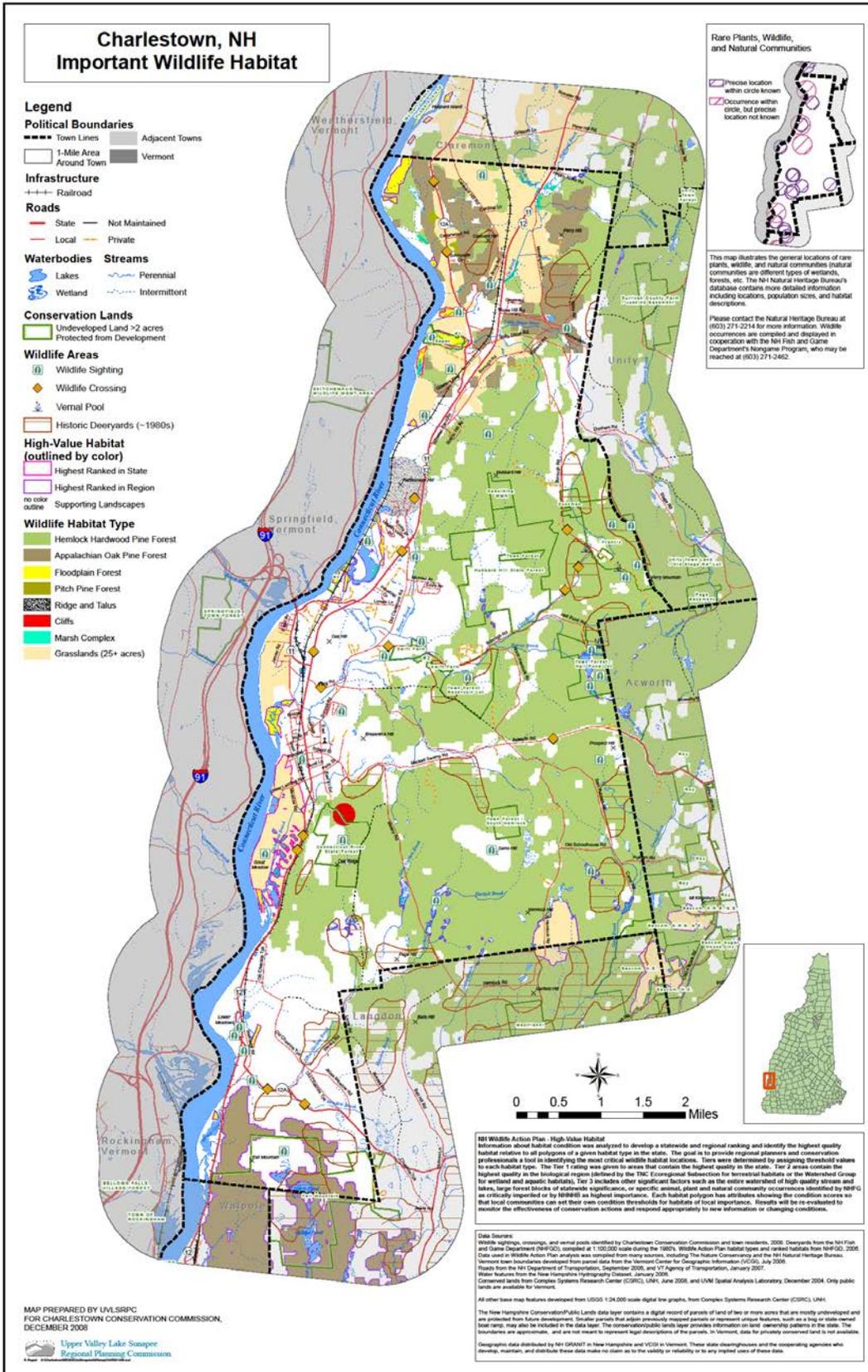
These areas provide many benefits including:

- Contribute to the scenic landscape – which brings in tourists
- Serve as a recreational resource
- Provide important wildlife habitat
- Provide jobs and raw material for construction, wood products and maple farms
- Improve air quality
- Create shade, acts as windscreens and reduces temperatures
- Stabilizes land to minimize soil erosion and sedimentation, which degrades water quality.

Residential trees also play many important roles in the town of Charlestown. Local efforts to improve the appearance of our streets was started by the Woman's Club and continued by the Community Tree Committee, the Beautification Coalition and other citizens through their efforts to plant and maintain hardy native plants along Main Street and adjacent public areas.

Among other benefits, residential and street trees provide shade, beauty, windbreaks, clean air, and higher property values. Trees provide cooling in summer and help winter heating bills. They also slow rainwater and thus reduce runoff. It is important to plant native site-suitable trees to keep maintenance costs low and prevent impacts from natural hazards.

# 2021 Master Plan Final Draft



## Agricultural Resources

Charlestown lies in the Connecticut River valley which is underlaid by deep deposits of well-drained soils. In Sullivan County there are three classes of agricultural soils, chosen by their relative value for raising crops or livestock.

Agricultural soil class	Charlestown acreage	% of town
Prime farmland	1,964	9%
Statewide importance	1,966	9%
Local Importance	3,735	16%
Total	7,665	33%

Prime farmland soils, or the best soils to produce food, feed, fiber, forage, and oilseed crops have been designated under provisions of The Farmland Protection Policy Act of 1981. Less than 2% of New Hampshire soils have been classified as Prime. In Charlestown that 9% puts the town well above the average. Statewide importance is tier 2 of the importance of the soil and local importance is tier 3. Tier 2 and 3 soils have importance for agriculture but have limitations because of stoniness, nutrient limitations or excessive drainage. (map 2, next page – Important Soils Map. The Legend, lower section, shows where the Prime Farmland and statewide and local importance lie).

Farming maintains open land that also provides bucolic views, habitat and travel corridors for wildlife, educational opportunities for schools and breathing space for locals and visitors. Local farms provide fresh, high-quality food for the community and the region. They contribute directly to the local economy. There are ten or more major farms in Charlestown and many smaller farms. If a local family maintains a vegetable garden, they are also considered local farmers. There are four major and many smaller maple sugar houses operating in the forested section of town.



## **Scenic Resources**

The scenic landscape of a community helps define its cultural and historic heritage, thus establishes its identity. A visually pleasing environment makes a significant contribution to a community's overall quality of life. Studies indicate high economic value to open space because it brings in more in taxes than it uses in resources. Open space also attracts and retains businesses. A scenic landscape is the foundation of the economic sectors of agriculture, forestry, and recreation. Open space is defined as any open piece of land that is undeveloped, has no buildings or other built structures and is accessible to the public. Open space can include: land that is partly or completely covered with grass, trees, shrubs, or other vegetation. Open space also includes outcroppings, rivers and ponds.

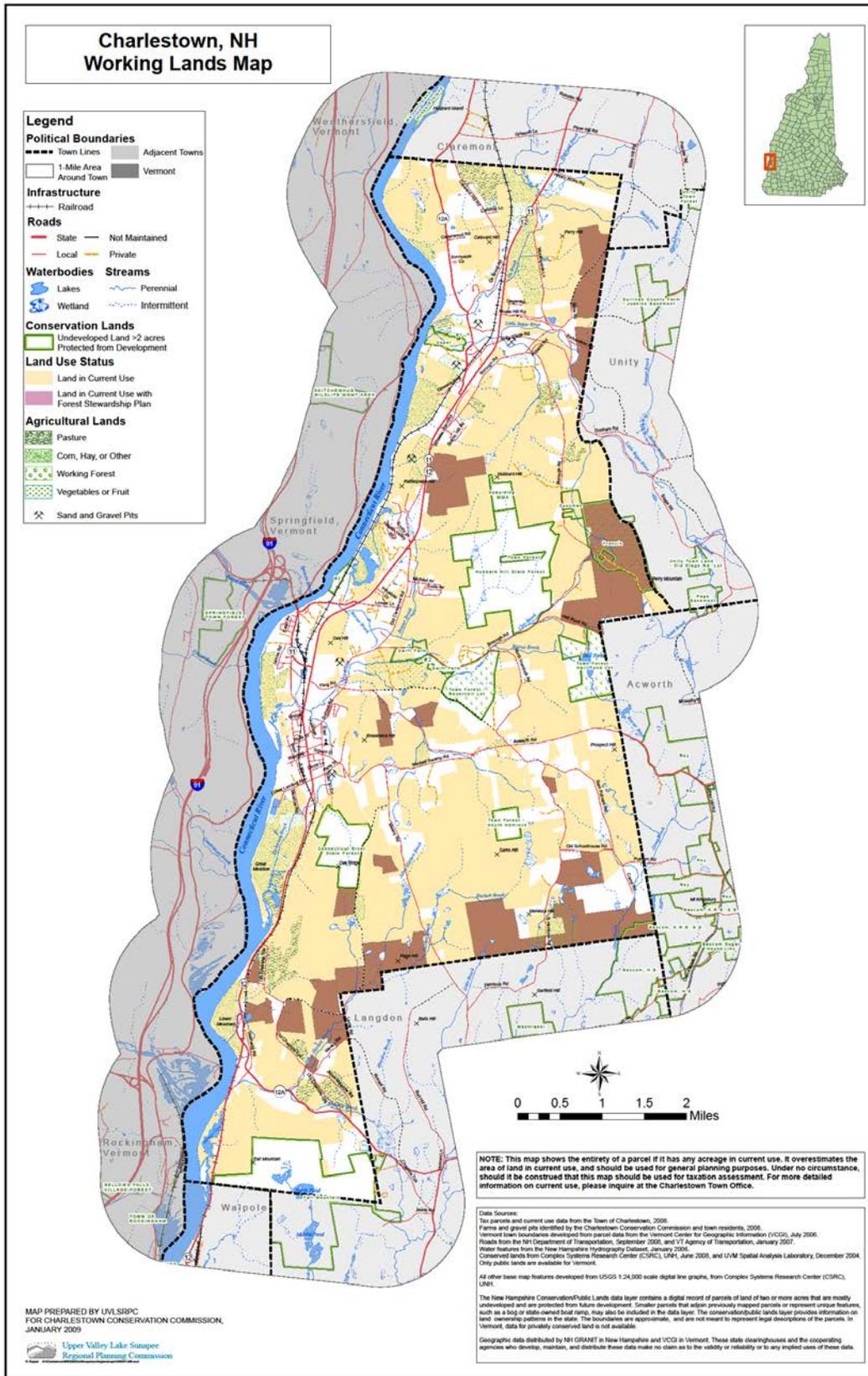
The Current Use Program in New Hampshire provides property owners the benefit of reduced property taxes on open space land of 10 acres or more, but does not ensure long-term protection. The purchase of conservation easements, development rights or fee simple acquisition of significant open space or agriculture lands does provide long-term protection. (see Working Lands Map – next page – its Legend includes Conservation Lands and Land Use Status which includes current use land)

What draws more people to town is the scenic landscape of the Connecticut River which forms the western border of Charlestown. It is a major route for migratory birds. The Great Meadow along Connecticut River is part of the Connecticut River Valley Important Bird Area, designated by the National Audubon Society for areas crucial to migratory or residential bird populations. Stan McCumber, a local birding enthusiast, has documented over 180 bird species in Great Meadow.

The New Hampshire Natural Heritage Inventory (NHI), a state program within the Division of Forest and Land, finds, tracks and facilitates the protection of New Hampshire plant and animal species of concern. The NHI's data represents the best available information for locations and status of species of concern. Rare plant species and natural community's information indicates that there are five areas in Charlestown where such communities may occur. The general locations of these species are shown on the Important Wildlife Habitat map (see map on page 2) as red marked areas. Only the general locations are listed to maintain confidentiality of these protected species.



# 2021 Master Plan Final Draft



## **WATER RESOURCES**

One of Charlestown's advantages is that the Connecticut River flows sixteen miles along the town's western border, and because of this water resources are central and highly valued resources of the town's landscape. Besides the Connecticut River, its tributaries contribute to the scenic environment, provide important habitat and present a variety of recreational opportunities. Groundwater resources provide important existing and potential drinking water sources for town residents. The topics in this section are presented in subsections but it is important to remember the interconnection of all water resources. All water in the environment is part of one hydrologic cycle and any alteration to one feature may lead to changes in another. Water resources know no political boundaries. What affects one community often reflects on another community.

### **Watersheds**

All of Charlestown is within the Connecticut River watershed. In the north part, waters drain into the Little Sugar River and in the south, water drains into a small section of the Cold River. In between, Ox Brook, Smith Brook, Clay Brook, Great Brook, Hackett Brook, Jabes Meadow Brook, and Beaver Brook flow into the Connecticut. Also, Charlestown has two ponds, Halls Pond and North Pond. (see Water Resources Map which shows the ponds, rivers, brooks and wetlands).

### **Surface waters**

Protecting the surface water in town must be primary goal of all its people. Surface water pollution can result from a variety of human activities within a watershed. Nonpoint source pollution (pollution that cannot be traced to a single source such as a pipe) is the biggest contributor to water quality degradation. Examples include, pollution from pesticides, herbicides, septic systems, road chemicals, and other sources.

Primary ground water impacts: Surface impoundments, manure storage facilities, industrial chemicals, septic disposal lagoons, subsurface disposal concentration, junkyards, landfills and dumps, hazardous waste, salt piles, salted roads.

Primary surface water impacts: erosion, snow dumps, stormwater runoff, agriculture runoff, pesticide use.

Through RSA 483-B, the Comprehensive Shoreland Protection Act, Charlestown can protect the Connecticut River and other bodies of water in town by limiting the building of structures on shorelines of waterways. This act governs structures within the protected zone. The primary building setback calls for a buffer zone of 50'. The Connecticut River Joint Commissions, following the recommendation of the Connecticut River Corridor Management Plan, recommends a vegetative buffer zone of at least 100' along the Connecticut River. This buffer will remove 60% or more of pollutants and provide important habitat. However, a wider buffer may be needed if the land is floodplain or the

## *2021 Master Plan Final Draft*

land is sloped. Most think this applies only for the Connecticut River, but a disturbed area on the edge of a tributary stream with steep banks will likely result in more erosion or sediment than a flat plain along the river.

Much of the Connecticut River frontage is controlled by Great River Hydro power company and thus not available for development. RSA 36-A authorizes the Conservation Commission to acquire Fee Simple (full title) or a lesser interest in land for conservation purposes in the name of the town. Other water resource protection options are conservation easements, which place permanent restrictions on certain uses of the land or landowner donations.

Erosion: Sedimentation control and stormwater management are other tools that can be used to decrease surface water quality degradation associated with development and other activities. Development on steep slopes is a significant source of sedimentation of surface waters. The erosion potential is greater because the soils tend to be shallower in these areas and the volume and velocity of surface water runoff is higher. Area with slopes over 15% pose a challenge to develop in an environmentally sound and cost-effective manner. Land with slopes over 25% is often best left as open space, due to the potential for erosion once disturbed. (See steep slope map, next page).

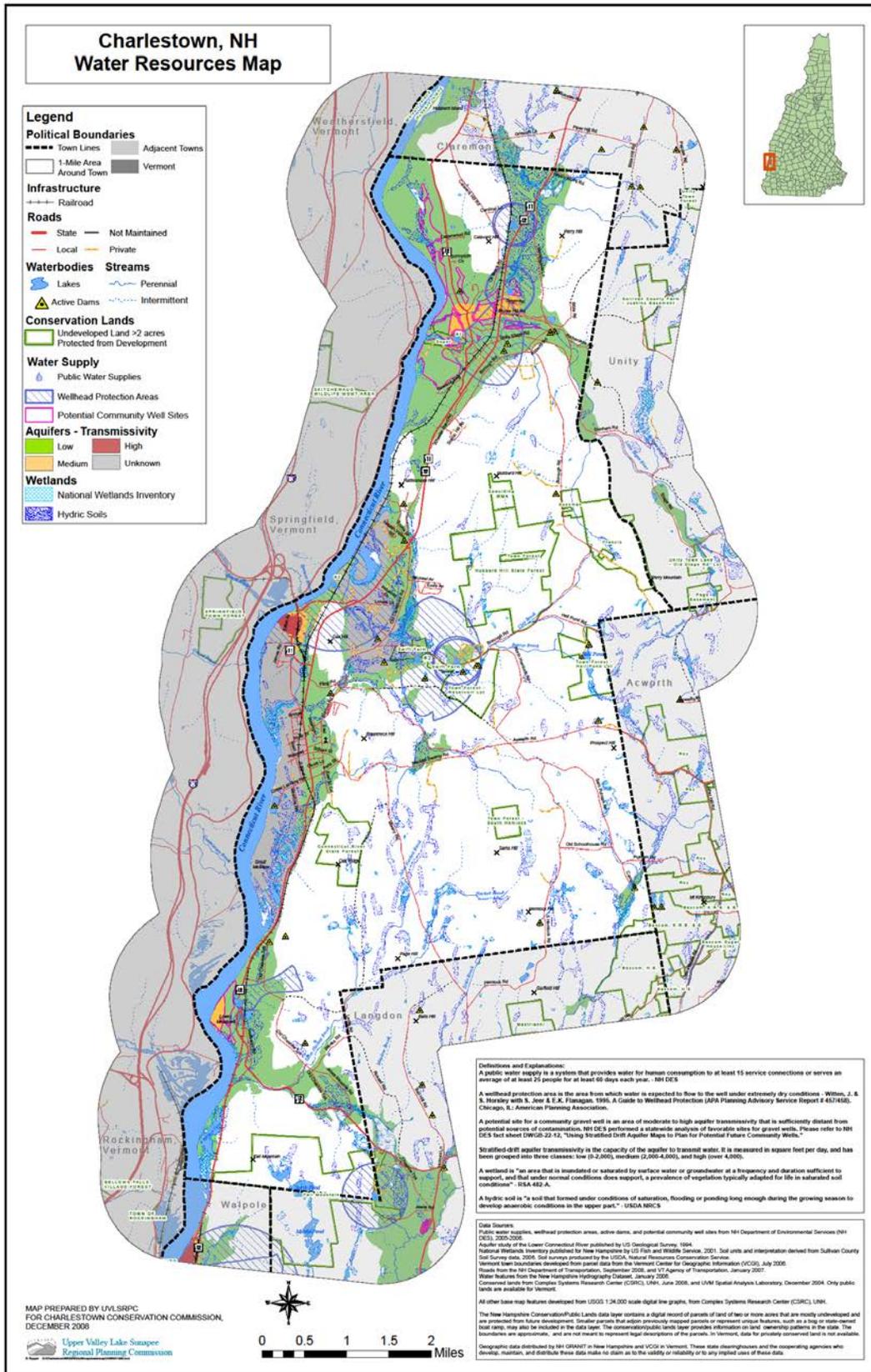
Stormwater runoff from roads and other impermeable surfaces often enters surface waters directly or via drainage systems and carries with it salt, sediment and other pollutants. With more frequent intense precipitation events it's imperative to do what we can to protect against pollution. One approach, termed "low-impact development" or "LID" promotes dispersed, onsite practices that slow and cleans runoff on its way to ground or surface waters. This approach uses low-tech methods such as rain gardens, open drainage swales and depression storage to disperse and treat stormwater runoff.



*Richard Perry*

#319 South Charlestown in flood of March 1936.

# 2021 Master Plan Final Draft



## **Wetlands**

The state defines wetlands by three characteristics: hydrology, soils, and vegetation. All three must be met to be considered a wetland. Wetlands are the areas that are inundated or saturated by surface water or groundwater at a frequency and duration of enough length to support vegetation typically adapted for life with saturated soil conditions. Wetlands are valuable for groundwater and stream recharge, flood attenuation, pollution abatement and wildlife habitat. Most wetlands in Charlestown are found in areas of poorly drained soils associated with the Connecticut River and ponds and feeder brooks and rivers. (The Water Resources map three pages earlier, shows wetlands in blue and is called “Hydraulic Soils”).

While vernal pools are not included in the National Wetlands Inventory; these small ponds are filled with water in the spring and early summer but dry up completely for the rest of the year. Vernal pools provide breeding habitat for many amphibians, because the pools do not support aquatic predators. Thus, for these amphibians these wetlands are a highly important resource. Charlestown partakes in the New Hampshire program which encourages the documentation of vernal pools.

Wetlands are delicate ecosystems, susceptible to disruption by change in the surrounding environment. Wetlands possess the ability to absorb nutrients from sewage, wastewater effluent and runoff that carry trace metals and agricultural chemicals. These pollutants can be trapped by wetlands before reaching surface waters and groundwater. Partial loss of wetland area can reduce the capacity of a wetland to perform these important functions. Frequently, this loss is accompanied by an increase in runoff carrying pollutants to surface waters and increasing sedimentation.

The state guidebook, *Buffers for Wetlands and Surface Waters* (NH Office of Energy & Planning) recommends 100’ as minimum buffer width to protect wetlands for the benefit of wildlife, drinking water quality, scenic beauty and the local economy. Acquisitions by the Conservation Commission or easements are excellent non-regulatory strategy for protecting important wetlands.

The Conservation Commission has several major responsibilities toward protection of wetlands, including the opportunity to review and comment on any proposed local wetlands projects to the NH Wetlands Bureau or the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. The Conservation Commission is also responsible for inventorying and mapping wetlands and advise the Planning Board if a project will disturb any wetlands.

## **Floodplains**

Floodplains are the periodically inundated flatlands adjacent to rivers and streams. Floodplains serve as storage areas for water during times of flooding and provide travel corridors for wildlife. Due to their important ecological characteristics, development in floodplains presents some special problems, including: 1) a high probability of property damage during flooding, 2) The restriction of periodic water storage resulting in

potentially greater flooding, 3) the increased likelihood of erosion and sedimentation, which can cause increased turbidity of water in rivers and streams.

## **Groundwater Resources**

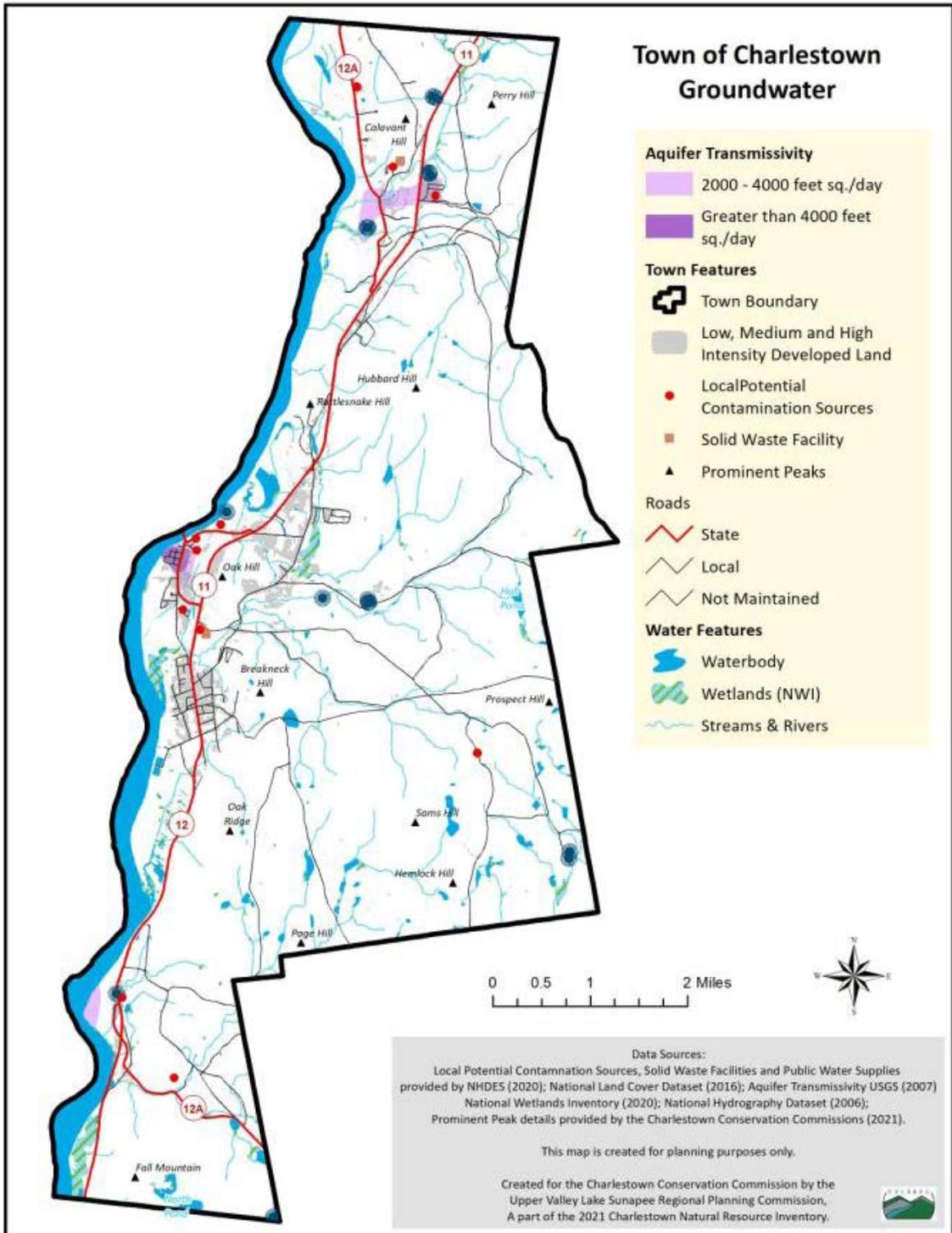
Charlestown's location in the Connecticut River Valley makes it especially rich in groundwater resources, in the form of stratified-drift aquifers. Stratified-drift aquifers are sand and gravel deposits from glacial lakes and rivers through which water can flow in large quantities. Only 10% of New Hampshire is underlaid by aquifers, but 25% of Charlestown's land and water is underlaid by aquifers. (See Groundwater Resources map, last page). Stratified drift aquifers have the greatest potential for community wells. In Charlestown, approximately one-third of the residents are not served by the community water system thus are reliant on groundwater resources. Additionally, more than a third of the water used in agriculture for irrigation and livestock watering is from groundwater resources.

A Drinking Water Protection Ordinance was adopted by Charlestown in 1998. The Drinking Water Protection District is an overlay zone encompassing the wellhead protection area delineated around Charlestown's municipal wells. Within those wellhead zones some prohibited uses are: uses that involve toxic or hazardous materials, single walled fuel tanks, snow dumping, automotive uses, laundry, and dry-cleaning, landfills, and road salt storage. Certain other uses are allowed only by conditional use permit from the Planning Board, for which the applicant must show the use will not be detrimental to groundwater quality or quantity. These include: multifamily residences, industrial or commercial uses, animal feedlots, sand and gravel excavation, and storage of chemicals for water treatment.

In many cases, the water quality impacts associated with development and other activities can be minimized if proper care is taken in how the activity is planned and carried out. Best Management Practices (BMP's) are strategies to prevent or reduce nonpoint source pollution. These have been developed for many activities, which can be found at on the State website or at [https://www.nh.gov/nhdfl/documents/new\\_final\\_utility\\_bmp\\_manual\\_3\\_8\\_19.pdf](https://www.nh.gov/nhdfl/documents/new_final_utility_bmp_manual_3_8_19.pdf)

Some of the BMPs include:

- Septic systems, regular maintenance – e.g. – proper tank cleaning
- Road construction and maintenance, to control erosion and sedimentation – e.g. grass in drainage ditches to control sedimentation
- Road salting and snow dumping – e.g. limit the use of road salt near water bodies
- Site development – e.g. provide vegetative buffers between development and water resources
- Excavations – e.g. limit the amount of exposed gravel at any given time
- Agriculture – e.g. proper use of fertilizers
- Stormwater management – e.g. reduce peak stormwater flows by detention
- Use and storage of hazardous materials – e.g. make sure storage is undercover and over an impervious surface



## **CLIMATE CHANGE**

### **Water**

Changes to water resources can have a big impact on people's lives. In the north-eastern states, the frequency of heavy downpours has increased. In many regions, floods and water quality problems are likely to be worse because of climate change.

### **Food**

Our food supply depends on climate and weather conditions. Although agricultural practices may be adaptable, changes like increased temperatures, water stress, diseases, and weather extremes create challenges for the farmers and ranchers who put food on our tables.

### **Health**

Human health is vulnerable to climate change. The changing environment is expected to cause more heat stress, an increase in waterborne diseases, poor air quality, and diseases transmitted by insects and rodents. Extreme weather events can compound many of these health threats.

### **The Environment**

Ecosystems are affected by climate change. Habitats are being modified, the timing of events such as flowering and egg laying are shifting, and species are altering their home ranges. Forest species are migrating as are insect and plant disease infestations. Changes are also occurring to the ocean. The ocean absorbs about 30% of the carbon dioxide that is released into the atmosphere from the burning of fossil fuels. As a result, the ocean is becoming more acidic, affecting marine life. Rising sea levels due to thermal expansion and melting land ice sheets and glaciers put coastal areas at greater risk of erosion and storm surge.

### **Mitigation & Adaptation** (From [Climate.Nasa.gov](https://climate.nasa.gov))

Adapting to life in a changing climate involves adjusting to actual or expected future climate. The goal is to reduce our vulnerability to the harmful effects of climate change (like sea-level encroachment, more intense extreme weather events or food insecurity). It also encompasses making the most of any potential beneficial opportunities associated with climate change (for example, longer growing seasons or increased yields in some regions).

Reducing climate change involves reducing the flow of heat-trapping greenhouse gases into the atmosphere, either by reducing sources of these gases (for example, the burning of fossil fuels for electricity, heat or transport) or enhancing the “sinks” that accumulate and store these gases (such as the oceans, forests and soil). The goal of mitigation is to avoid significant human interference with the climate system, and “stabilize greenhouse gas levels in a timeframe sufficient to allow ecosystems to adapt naturally to climate

change, ensure that food production is not threatened and to enable economic development to proceed in a sustainable manner.”

## **NATURAL RESOURCE RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **Overall Highest Priority Recommendations**

- Ensure Best Management Practices are followed in all aspects
- Preserve and protect Charlestown’s forests and street plantings to ensure they continue to provide environmental, aesthetic and economic benefits.
- Conserve our agricultural lands for their positive impact on the economic base resulting from their scenic qualities and food production.
- To protect and preserve sufficient habitat to ensure the continuation of healthy wildlife in Charlestown. Especially for the rare species.
- Maintain or improve the water quality in all the town’s surface water features. Ensure the water bodies continue to support environmental, recreational and other values.
- Eradicate invasive species - Invasive species are a threat to existing wildlife habitats and economic value of forests such as Japanese Knotweed, Milfoil, Asian Long-horned Beetle, Purple Loosestrife, Hemlock Woolly Adelgid, Emerald Ash Borers and many more.
- Protect and preserve wetlands to ensure continued habitat preservation, flood control and purification of surface waters.
- Manage development of the 100-year floodplain so that the floodplain can perform its function of passing and storing floodwaters.
- Bi-annually review the Hazard Mitigation Plan and update every 5 years.
- Protect the groundwater resources in Charlestown to ensure that an adequate supply of clean drinking water is available for residence, businesses and visitors.
- Gather information and resources for, and implement, best management practices to protect surface water and groundwater from nonpoint pollution.



Photo credit: Upper Valley Lake Sunapee Regional Planning Commission

## **RECREATION RESOURCES**

### **Vision**

Recreation in Charlestown must fill a vital role of improving community health, enhancing quality of life, promoting personal enrichment, preserving natural resources, providing access for all social-economic groups, and encouraging economic growth. We aim to:

- Promote Health and Wellness of all Charlestown citizens, across all demographics
- Expand and enhance recreational facilities, parks, trails, and bike paths
- Create and implement improved maintenance plans with adequate funding
- Enhance both sport and non-sport recreational and cultural programming
- Build strong and effective community and regional partnerships

This will be accomplished by enhancing what Charlestown already does well, and working with the schools, commercial establishments, and community volunteers to create organized programs and self-guided recreational opportunities.

### **Charlestown Recreational History**

As far back as 1942, a sum of \$200 dollars was set aside in the budget for recreation. This was for up-keep of the old swimming pool and Swan Common. In 1946 the amount was doubled to \$400 dollars.

At the Town meeting in 1961, a Warrant Article was adopted that the Town elect a committee for Recreation consisting of 6 members. The committee was formed to plan and develop all public community recreational facilities and operate on funds allocated in the town budget and received through solicitations of donations. Currently, Charlestown offers its citizens an active Recreation Department, composed of volunteers and a part time salaried director. The Recreation Department continues to operate largely under the same format as was adopted in 1961. In 2010 the Selectboard decided to change the recreation director from an elected official to appointed official. The reason behind the change was to ensure the safety of children through the requirement of a background check, for anyone, before acceptance to the committee.

A variety of programs and activities are offered. This is accomplished by working with the schools, commercial establishments, and community volunteers to create organized programs and self-guided recreational opportunities. The Recreation Committee strives to set program registration fees at a rate that will recover the cost of offering the program while at the same time making the program affordable. The department attempts to accomplish this goal by partnering with local civic groups and small businesses to solicit donations of time, talent, services, and monetary contributions to supplement the annual operating budget and make program registration fees as affordable as possible.

## *2021 Master Plan Final Draft*

A survey done in August, 2020, showed inconclusive results to 17 recreation related questions. Only two questions managed to garner over 50% support from the 122 completed surveys. Those questions were regarding: "The further development of our current trail network to include all season biking, hiking, walking, and running" (51% of respondents rating this a 1 or 2 priority) and "The continuation of maintenance and operation to our outdoor swimming facility and plan for future facility improvements" (53% of respondents rating this a 1 or 2 priority). It should be noted that these two questions also received 34% and 35% non-support votes (a 4 or 5 vote), respectively. Interestingly, when a neutral vote of 3 is included as a supporting vote, the town supports the initiatives in all 17 questions. This leads to the conclusion that our town has many wide and varied ideas of recreation and activity, and any forward movement to create opportunities will be beneficial.

### **Facilities Inventory**

Parks and recreation facilities play a key role in the physical health of a community. Designated outdoor recreation space encourages physical activity and provides a connection to nature. Studies suggest that communities with a greater availability of parks, greenways and trails have residents with lower rates of chronic disease and obesity and longer life spans. (National Recreation and Park Association, Synopsis of 2010 Research Papers: The Key Benefits).

#### **Swan Common**

On the Town Warrant in 1968, Article 19 was adopted to budget \$2500 to construct a concrete slab on Swan Common for the general recreational use of adults and children. It is used as a tennis court and basketball area, and as a central location for outdoor festivals. Located at Swan Common is a fenced in basketball court and tennis court and a gazebo.

#### **Town Pool**

The Town of Charlestown built the current pool adjacent to the town gravel pit and across the street from its then new Charlestown Primary School in 1973 at a cost of \$100,000. A large pool of 150,000-gallon capacity, with a depth of 3 to 4 feet in the primary rectangle, the design includes a 2-foot shallow end for non-swimmers and an 11-foot deep offshoot. It accommodates approximately 250 swimmers. The facilities include an office space for lifeguards, 3 lifeguard chairs, an ADA compliant chair, a bike rack, a pump room, an equipment shed, men's and women's locker rooms with showers and 1 BBQ grill. There are also picnic tables on deck and one charcoal grill in the lawn just outside of the pool fence. The town pool is open each summer from mid-June to mid-to-late August. The operating expenses comprise primarily a seasonal pool manager and a staff of Red Cross certified lifeguards, often high school or college students on summer break. This incidentally provides good summer jobs to young members of our community.

## *2021 Master Plan Final Draft*

The community demonstrates strong support for the ongoing presence of this significant recreational asset. Given its age, the pool will need renovation or replacement in coming years, as the concrete structural lining and coping have deteriorated and the circulating infrastructure is sub optimally designed and challenging to maintain. Overall the facility is tired but functioning and patrons can enjoy it without detracting from their fun, comfort, and safety. The town pool is a necessary communal amenity, where many gather regularly during summer for recreation and social engagement. It would be tragic to merely demolish it and abandon this commitment.

### **Patch Park**

In 1976, Stanley and Helen Patch, residents of Charlestown, donated about 15 acres of land on the Connecticut River adjacent to Fort No. 4, as a major town recreation area. In 1981 the Recreation Commission started planning the development of the area for community use. The park is a tribute to the generosity of Stanley and Helen Patch and to the spirit of community involvement, demonstrated by those who sacrifice their time and effort. (Excerpt from '84 Master Plan).

Patch Park features three levels of open space housing a playground and soccer field on the first level, space for three soccer fields of varying regulation size for all ages, a public gazebo, concession snack shack, a playground with ADA compliant swing, two baseball diamonds, and a softball field on the second level, and a beach volleyball court with picnic space and 5 BBQ grills on the lowest level on the river. A nine-hole disc golf course spans all three levels. There is potential in considering expansion of Patch Park to create additional field space, thereby allowing for additional recreational opportunities to be developed. This expansion would also allow for redevelopment of the upper level into parking.

In addition to the sports fields and play areas, Patch Park, at one time, featured access to the Connecticut River for recreational purposes such as fishing and non-motorized boat launches. There is a dock owned by the town of Charlestown that can be placed in the water and accessed by a set of stairs located on the bank.

### **Lower Landing Boat Ramp and Picnic Area**

Charlestown has a boat access ramp and dock to the Connecticut River located at 170 Lower Landing Road which is owned & maintained by Great River Hydro. There is ample parking for vehicles and trailers. There is a picnic area with picnic tables and a port-a-potty and the Great Meadow Trail Head is located here as well.

### **Trail System**

The Charlestown Conservation Commission maintains trails throughout town that are used for hiking, running, biking and cross-country skiing. The maps are available at the town office and Silsby Library. These trails run from short to long and easy to difficult.

*2021 Master Plan Final Draft*

The Old #4 Rod, Gun & Snowmobile Club maintains 37 miles of snowmobile trails through Charlestown which includes the New Hampshire Route 399 N&S snowmobile trail. The snowmobile club receives landowner permission for the snowmobile trails. The permission is for snowmobile use only. Private properties, State and Town forests do not allow motorized wheeled vehicle use.

The next section of this chapter reviews each hiking and biking trail. It describes the trail and rates the difficulty.



## TRAILS

### Nature Trail

This is Charlestown's first trail, opening in 1969.

#### Multi-Use Trail

- Walking
- Biking
- Snowshoeing
- Dog Walking

#### Length

- .5 miles,  
One way

#### Difficulty

- Easy

#### Town

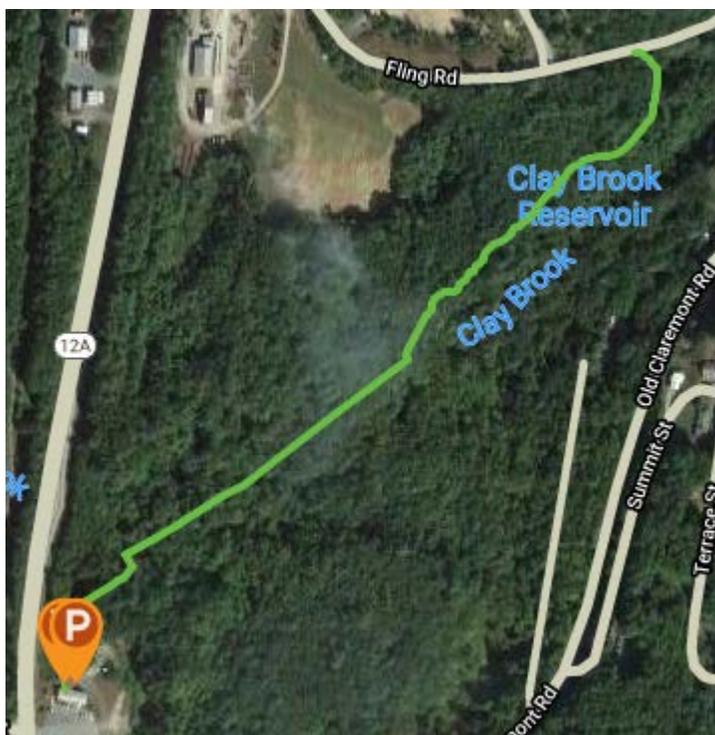
- Charlestown NH

#### Surface

- Packed Earth/Dirt

#### Pets

- Permitted (Please clean up after them.)



### Description

This trail passes through a variety of habitats and is used by the school for nature education. If you are at the Fling Road end of the trail you can look over the brook and see the remnants of a grist-mill dam.

### Trailhead Information

To access the trail head, go to the Police Department you may pull down behind the building to find the trail head. This trail will bring you up over a ridge and down to Clay Brook, over the culvert and upstream through the riparian buffer zone where hemlocks, hardwood, finishing in a pine stand.

## Great Meadow Trail

This is a very beautiful trail that follows the Connecticut River. Great for Families and Children of all ages and capability. It is a flat, easy trail.

### Multi-Use Trail

- Walking
- Biking
- Snowshoeing
- Dog Walking

### Length

- 1.2 miles,  
One way

### Difficulty

- Easy

### Town

- Charlestown NH

### Surface

- Grass/Meadow

### Pets

- Permitted (Please clean up after them.)



### **Description**

This trail is a very easy trail with a wide mowed path that follows the Connecticut River south. This an "out and back" trail that offers great views of the Connecticut River, the Great Meadow, and the majestic Ascutney Mountain as well. Great Meadow is an important migratory stop for birds designated as a "Connecticut River Valley Important Bird Area" by the National Audubon Society. It offers a diverse population of wildlife and is a crucial property for many bird populations. A favorite spot for bird watchers; over 180 bird species have been documented there. Species include: heron, hawks, swallows, many warbler, owls, geese, ducks, pheasant, and bald eagle.

### **Trailhead Information**

Starting at the center of Charlestown, head south on Route 12 until you reach the southern end of town, just past the Charlestown Middle School. Take a right onto lower Landing Road and follow it to the end. There is plenty of parking as there is a recreational boat launch. If

you are looking at the river, the trail starts through a few trees to the left. Follow the mowed path past the water treatment plant.

### Connecticut River State Forest Trail

Steep climb up an old logging road, then into the forest.

#### Multi-Use Trail

- Walking
- Hiking
- Running
- Biking
- Snowshoeing

#### Length

- 1.3 miles,  
One Way

#### Difficulty

- Advanced  
(Especially on a  
bicycle)

#### Town

- Charlestown NH

#### Surface

- Packed dirt
- Logging road

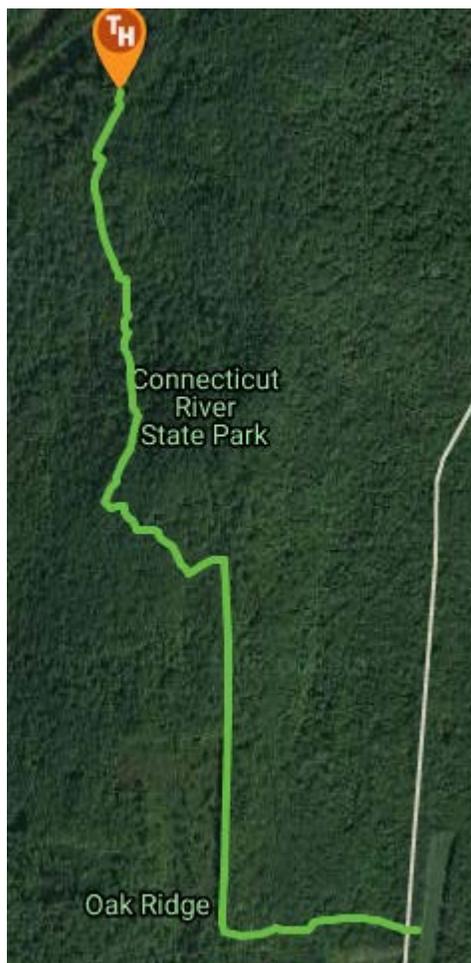
#### Pets

- Permitted

#### **Description**

A difficult trail. The first part of the trail is a steep incline for about a mile, after which flattens out. The trail ends at the Lamb Road (Which is a class 6 unmaintained road). It is possible to walk out the Lamb Road to the Meany Road back around, but it's many miles on back country roads. If done in the opposite direction it is an excellent little mountain biking decline. The lot just east of the forest was just recently logged and offers a diversity of habitat for wildlife. Deer, bear, bobcat, and fisher cats have been seen in the area.

#### **Trailhead Information**



## 2021 Master Plan Final Draft

From Main Street, head east onto East Street, go south past the Primary School, and up the dirt road to the parking area at the trailhead. There is a kiosk in the parking area. The trail begins a little further up the class 6 road.

### Halls Pond Trail

**Up a snowmobile trail, around Halls Pond and back.**

#### Multi-Use Trail

- Walking
- Running
- Hiking
- Biking
- Snowshoe
- Horse

#### Length

- 3.1 miles,  
One way

#### Difficulty

- Moderate

#### Towns

- Acworth NH
- Charlestown NH

#### Surface

- Packed Dirt

#### Pets

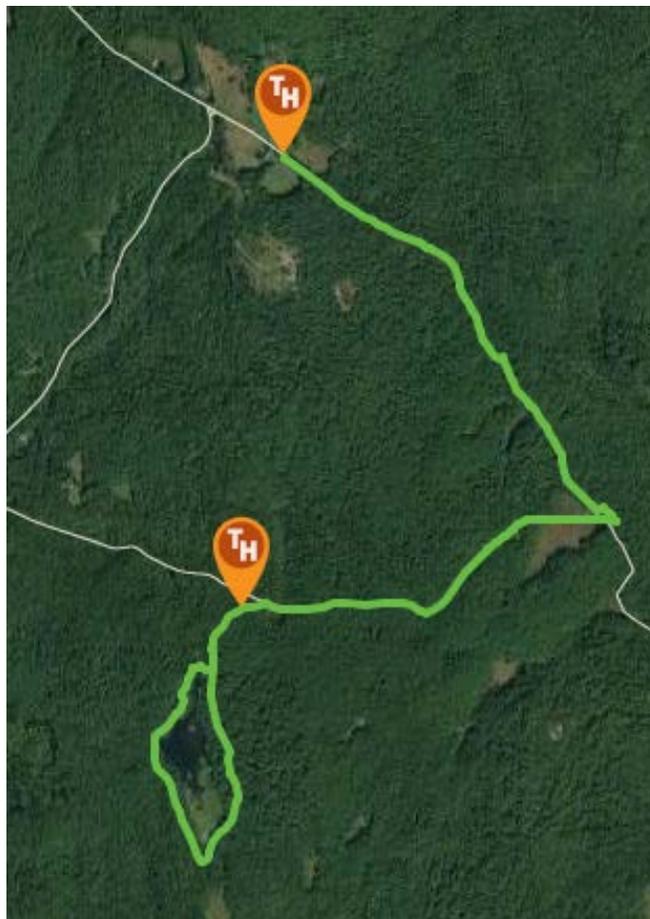
- Permitted

#### **Description**

A moderate trail. The Trailhead is 0.2 miles back on a class 6 road. (Reminder: a class 6 road is an unmaintained road and will usually require a vehicle with high clearance.)

The first part of the trail is along a snowmobile trail with a slight incline, 0.2 miles to the pond. The snowmobile trail turns right, and the hiking trail is straight ahead. Around the pond it is flat, except for a rock garden towards the back with a bridged stream crossing. At 0.7 miles, turn right back onto the snowmobile trail which runs past the concrete dam and then over an earthen dam and back to the trail split, left and back down to the trail head. The upper end of the pond where the incoming brook runs into the pond is tricky but has had a new bridge added. There are many deer signs and an occasional moose. There are also many birds, and, in the migrating season, the pond holds ducks and geese.

If you bring two vehicles, a second vehicle can be staged on the Borough Road at the sharp turn beside the traffic island, a second trailhead. At the Halls Pond trailhead walk out the class 6 road into



## 2021 Master Plan Final Draft

Acworth, just past the forested swamp, 0.8 miles to a T intersection (just past a large open swamp on both sides of the road), turn a sharp left onto another Class 6 road which will bring you back to the Borough Road trailhead. Total length 2.1 miles. This trail uses some private property and runs over the Acworth town line for a short distance and back into Charlestown, between a farmhouse and barn.

### Hubbard Hill State Forest Trail

An easy to moderate trail, it crosses and parallels power lines at points while following along snowmobile trail.

#### Multi-Use Trail

- Walking
- Hiking
- Running
- Biking
- Snowshoeing
- Snowmobile
- Horse

#### Length

- 2.2 miles,  
One Way

#### Difficulty

- Moderate

#### Town

- Charlestown NH

#### Surface

- Packed Dirt

#### Pets

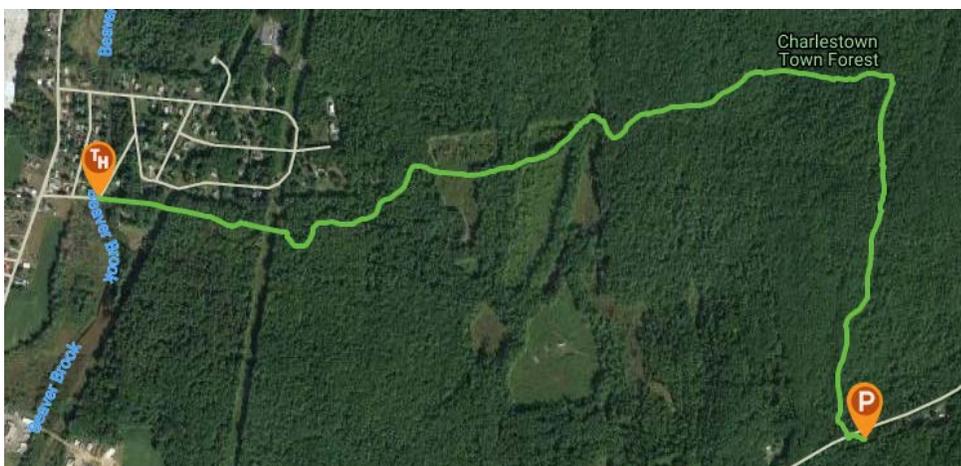
- Permitted

#### **Description**

An easy to moderate trail. This whole trail is along a snowmobile trail, crossing and parallels power lines at points. The other end of the trail is near the Old Fort# 4 Rod and Gun Club's shooting range off Ann Avenue, off the Old Claremont Road.

#### **Trailhead Information**

Follow North Hemlock Road to Borough Road. The trailhead is 0.5 miles on the left. look for the "Hubbard State Forest" sign at the parking entrance.



## Reservoir Lot Trails

Three trails, two connected loops and side spur. Trail has streamside walks and wooded areas.

### Multi-Use Trail

- Walking
- Hiking
- Biking
- Horse
- Snowshoeing

### Length

1. 1.8 miles Network

### Difficulty

2. Moderate

### Town

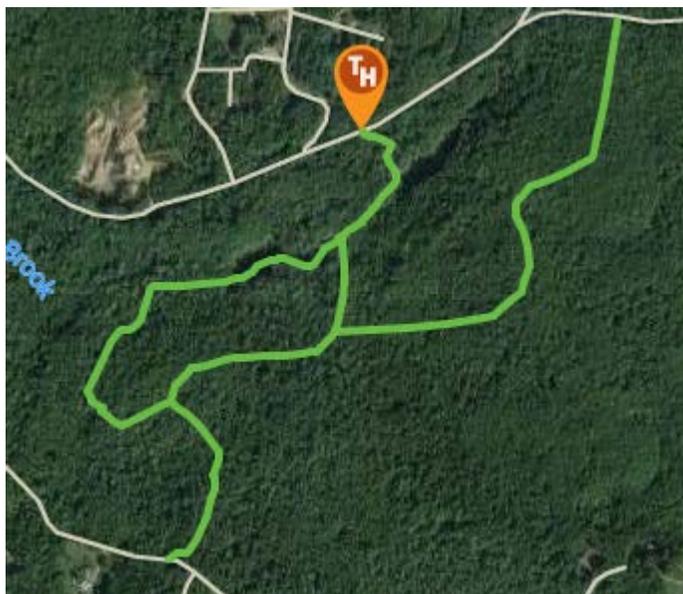
3. Charlestown NH

### Surface

4. Packed dirt

### Pets

5. Permitted



## Description

The southwest loop is of moderated difficulty. The Northern trails is more difficult. The trail to the Old Acworth Stage Road is an easy to moderately short jaunt. Out and back is recommended on this one. From the trailhead, follow the trail to the old lower reservoir where the trail splits, continue straight for the southern loop or turn left for the northern trail. They come together fifty feet up the trail. The southern loop is mostly dominated by hemlock and the northern trail is mostly hardwood. The end of the northern trails ends back at the Hemlock Road, turn left and it's a short walk back to the trail head. Deer, turkey, bear, and fisher cats have been seen along this series of trails.

## Trailhead Information

Follow North Hemlock Road to the trailhead on right, down behind an open white gate, right after the intersection with Blueberry Hill Road and before the intersection with the Borough Road.

## **Recreational Opportunities of Regional Significance**

**Fort at No. 4 Open Air Museum** located at 267 Springfield Road was founded in 1947, our open-air museum and historic site continues to delight visitors of all ages who wish to step back in time and experience life as it was for settlers during the Colonial Era. Our grounds faithfully recreate the details of the original structures that existed at the Fort at No. 4 and our volunteer reenactors bring the story to life through engaging demonstrations, hands-on workshops, and informative lectures. Some of our most popular events include our re-enactment of the French-Indian War, our Native Legends Storytelling event, and our Women of the Fort weekend. (from their website). <http://www.fortat4.org>

**Morningside Flight Park** Morningside Flight Park, located at 357 Morningside Lane is often considered one of the most complete flight parks in the country, sits among the Connecticut River Valley's rolling hills in New Hampshire on land that must have been cosmically designed for hang gliding and paragliding. The property's gently elevating slope has made it a world-renowned training ground for beginners and a challenging launch site for experienced pilots. The park also offers tandem hang gliding, as well as aero-towing for solo pilots with the proper ratings (from their website). The flight park also features breath taking mountain top zip lines and outdoor laser tag. <https://flymorningside.kittyhawk.com>

**North Charlestown Soccer Field** located at 509 River Road was created by the Farwell Trustees for the use of Charlestown and residents.

**Old #4 Gun and Snowmobile Sportsman's Club** located at 741 Old Claremont Road is a membership-based club featuring a shooting range with voice release trap system and covered shooting pavilion for 25, 50, & 100 yd targets as well as miles of signed, well-groomed snowmobile trails to enjoy throughout the season. <https://old4sportsmen.com>

**Twin State Valley Tennis, Inc.** is a tennis club in Charlestown, located at 199 Old Claremont Rd. TSV opened in the summer of 1978 with 40 family memberships. The club is owned by its shareholders and run by a Board of Directors. <http://www.tsvtennis.com>

### **A Recreation Plan for Charlestown:**

Based on the information gathered in the recreation inventories and the survey done in August, 2020, the last section is a prioritized listing of the work Charlestown should seek to undertake for residents of Charlestown.

## **RECREATION RESOURCES RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. Enhance trail system, potentially connecting trails along the historic Crown Point Road
2. Develop more multi use trails to encourage outdoor enthusiasm and potential economic growth
3. Ensure public access to Connecticut River at Patch Park
4. Create a Main St. walking loop with wellness workout stations
5. Work with the Sugar River Regional Destination Council to update and publish all trail maps
6. Offer one free session of swimming lessons to each 5-year-old in Charlestown
7. Offer fitness classes on deck and in the water at the town pool each summer
8. Work with Patch Park abutters to enhance recreational opportunities
9. Increase physical exercise opportunities such as flag football leagues or walking clubs
10. Develop additional adult and family-based programming
11. Create a skate park at Swan Common or Patch Park
12. The Town should set aside money every year for the replacement of the town pool and begin to draw up plans for a pool no lesser in size or depth.
13. Pool staff should also offer swimming lessons for the public every summer, as an investment in our youth.
14. Work towards hiring WSI (water safety instructor) certified pool manager and/or head lifeguard
15. Create sport specific guidelines and schedules to insure timely planning, registration, uniforms, sponsorships, scheduling.
  - Create a "citizen commissioner" position to focus on each respective sport. They will organize and maintain the planning, scheduling, inventory and record keeping for each season
  - Create a tournament and snack shack schedule
16. Encourage volunteers to learn to coach/referee/umpire games by offering regularly scheduled, seasonally appropriate, training
17. Create and maintain a capital plan for equipment and supplies
18. Recreate Friends of Recreation list – a list of volunteers to assist current rec staff
19. Install and appropriately anchor the docks on the CT River at Patch park
20. Update Geocaches and partner with Vital Communities Valley Quest
21. Promote the Connecticut River as recreationally accessible and enjoyable
22. Actively pursue our appearance and information on websites and social media. Essentially, brand Charlestown.
  - Broadly advertise Charlestown events such as the Fall Festival, Yard Sale Day, the Penny Sale and all other events that draw outside visitors.

## **REGIONAL CONCERNS**

### INTRODUCTION

The intent of this section is to acknowledge situational awareness of Charlestown's place in our geographical area and how politics at the town, regional, state and federal level can be leveraged to Charlestown's benefit. Charlestown is in a dynamic region of the state that is located by the Connecticut River with Route 12 running through the middle. We need to understand how our current rural beauty can be preserved, economic vitality increased, and overall quality of life be enhanced through community-based efforts, cooperation with existing and newly developing non-governmental agencies, other towns, and especially with the private sector. Agencies like the Upper Valley Lake Sunapee Regional Planning Commission, which has written a 421-page Regional Plan and projects such as the Route 12A Corridor, continue to present opportunities and challenges for Charlestown. While the Town can and will move forward on its own, it must be recognized that regional dynamics, regional cooperation, and partnerships must be a part of any sustainable outcomes.

### HISTORY

Since World War II, Charlestown morphed from a typical NH agrarian small town with mixed light industry and small businesses to a booming bedroom community. The Town is dependent mostly on large regional employers in producing a burgeoning middle-class lifestyle for many.

Over the years there have been many efforts to regionally advertise Charlestown by various clubs, groups, boards, and commissions. Some with names like Sullivan County Economic Development Corporation, Upper Valley Lake Sunapee Regional Planning Commission, Sullivan County Agricultural Fair, CEDA-T, New Hampshire-Vermont Solid Waste Project, and so on, have been involved, yet Charlestown continues to be a by-passed town.

### VISION

“We need people who can dream of things that never were.” John F. Kennedy.

Charlestown's Master Plan has been developed by the Planning Board with external input from a myriad of task forces comprised of diverse townspeople. If implemented as intended, the plan should provide Town leaders an impartial, comprehensive and unified way forward.

## *2021 Master Plan Final Draft*

In this chapter we will highlight some of the struggles Charlestown faces and the opportunities the town has.

- Geographical location
- Serving an aging population
- Healthcare
- Building upon the region's economic strengths
- Education
- Affordable housing
- Climate Change
- Regional Agencies

### GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION

Charlestown is located along the Connecticut River on the western border of New Hampshire. It is bordered to the north by the city of Claremont, to the east by the towns of Unity and Acworth, to the southeast by the town of Langdon, and to the south by Cheshire County with the town of Walpole. To the west, across the Connecticut River, is the state of Vermont, and specifically the town of Rockingham and Springfield.

### SERVING AN AGING POPULATION

The aging of the baby boomer population, called a “Silver Tsunami” by the New Hampshire Center for Public Policy Studies, is a key concern to look for remedying. In Sullivan County, the population of persons over the age of 65 is projected to nearly double over the next 20 years, growing to approximately one-third of the region's population. With limited state investment in aging services, the region's senior citizens centers, housing, and healthcare are underfunded and will soon be over capacity. While aging in place is a goal of many rural, elderly residents in the region, there are few public transportation options outside of the Lebanon-Hanover and Claremont-Newport employment centers. This makes non-emergency medical transportation a significant challenge in the region. As a result, many communities in the region rely on persons over 65 years of age to volunteer on town boards and committees, and provide volunteer rides for people in need of non-emergency medical transportation. As the population demographics change, New Hampshire is seeing the 65+ age group grow significantly while the workforce aged group of 19 years old to 55 years old declines. This in turn is causing regional issues. For example: without an influx of new volunteers, many communities may face a “volunteer gap” in both the public and private sector. There needs to be a regional plan to help bridge this gap.

See the Transportation Chapter for the NHDOT ten-year plan, increasing the bus service, and the “last mile” problem.

## *2021 Master Plan Final Draft*

### HEALTH CARE

Access to health care, dental care and mental healthcare are significant concerns for our region. With our region being so rural, the distance between households and services makes it difficult to access certain resources and opportunities. Many citizens have difficulty accessing affordable medication, psychological counseling, social support, and/or rehabilitative services. New ideas are required to help community leaders find innovative solutions for a challenge such as this.

### BUILDING UPON OUR ECONOMIC STRENGTHS

As a region we need to spur new economic development by building upon the region's economic strengths. The industries that show strength in the Lake Sunapee Region compared to the nation include Health Care and Social Assistance, Manufacturing, and Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation sectors. The absence of truly well-paying jobs finds many professional townspeople commuting to such areas as Lebanon/Hanover and Keene, in NH, and Springfield and Bellows Falls in VT for suitable employment. Twenty to twenty-five years ago, many area planners were sure that the ever-burgeoning regions would ultimately spill over economically into Claremont and Charlestown. The current trends do not necessarily reflect such an outcome.

### EDUCATION

New Hampshire ranks lowest of all states in education funding. In the 2019-2020 school year, 31.4% of New Hampshire's education funding came from the state level, while 63.7% came from local taxpayers and 4.8% from the federal government. The national average is 47.1% for state contributions and 45.6% for local contributions.

When the state provides such little aid to communities, it makes it far more difficult for the districts with lower-than-average property values to raise the necessary funds to provide an adequate education for their students. Charlestown is among many towns that has this struggle.

### CLIMATE CHANGE

Charlestown has both vulnerabilities and resiliencies to climate change impacts on its ecosystems and environment, natural resource industries, and infrastructure. The major concerns for climate change include, but are not limited to, extreme heat, catastrophic precipitation, drought, decrease in snow cover, risk to the maple syrup industry, lengthening growing seasons, misalignment in timing with food sources for migratory birds, and reduced seasonality which will affect tourism. We need to prepare for the impacts of climate change and reduce risks to all properties and citizens. Please see the Natural Resources Inventory for more information.

## *2021 Master Plan Final Draft*

### REGIONAL AGENCIES

Seemingly there should be little doubt about potential for regional influences having a positive and/or negative impact on Charlestown. Charlestown is in the Upper Valley region, but often appears to be forgotten. There are many regional agencies and we must put our foot in the door and make Charlestown noticed. There is a newly created group that wants to focus on towns in the Sugar River watershed area. The focus of the Sugar River Regional Destination Council is to increase the tourism in our area. They aim to make Sullivan County a destination by advertising what the county has to offer.

The Upper Valley Lake Sunapee Regional Planning Commission (UVLSRPC) has been providing professional planning assistance to municipal boards since 1963. Their current staff's areas of expertise include comprehensive planning, land use regulations, transportation planning, natural resource inventories, community/economic development, affordable housing, and hazard mitigation planning. The Regional Planning Commissions (RPCs) seek to promote intergovernmental collaboration and coordination throughout the regions they serve. The Commission is governed by Commissioners appointed by member communities and counties and a small number of at-large-members. It is the Commissioners' role to be a regional collaborator and bring local issues to the attention of the Commission and conversely to articulate regional strategies that can benefit local efforts. UVLSRPC has assisted in updating Charlestown's Hazard Mitigation Plan and Natural Resource Inventory this year. The RPC also has access to regional grants that may help move Charlestown into the future.

The Connecticut River Joint Commission (CRJC) is a remarkable partnership among the governments in Vermont and New Hampshire. CRJC's mission is to preserve and protect the visual and ecological integrity and sustainable working landscape of the Connecticut River Valley, and to guide its growth and development through grassroots involvement. The commission consists of the two states, businesses, farmers, conservationists, and other citizens from many walks of life. Working together through the Connecticut River Joint Commission, they seek to build a strong and vibrant economy while conserving the natural wealth and beauty of this special place.

Today the Connecticut River is a crucial scenic resource that needs to be protected from climate change and erosion. Charlestown people have boats and enjoy the river for recreation and fishing. Great River Hydro LLC owns three hydroelectric dams that control the river's flow. They are currently applying to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) for a 40-50 year license to operate the dams. Current operation of the dams and climate change have caused substantial erosion of river banks. Flow management is a major concern that FERC is considering. As a town, we must protect the Connecticut River where we can by land use regulations. See the Land Use Chapter for more information. During the relicensing Charlestown should advocate for adding an agreement with FERC and Great River Hydro LLC to establish a trail that runs the length of the Town along the Connecticut River. See the Recreation Chapter for more information.

## REGIONAL CONCERNS RECOMMENDATIONS

*To quote John F. Kennedy “There are costs and risks to a program of action, but they are far less than the long-range risks and costs of comfortable inaction.”*

1. Produce buildings, products and environments that are usable by everyone, not limited to specialized designs for specific age groups or people with disabilities. Curb cuts or sidewalk ramps, essential for people in wheelchairs but used by all, are a common example.
2. Enhance healthcare availability - Healthcare needs increase every day. Research is required to better bridge the divide between health and the healthcare provided. The citizens should continue to support projects such as town-wide broadband. This is will help provide more access to health and mental health care via tele-health visits.
1. Enhance the relationship between the Town and both the Connecticut River Joint Commission and the Upper Valley Lake Sunapee Regional Planning Commission
2. Build a relationship with the Sugar River Regional Destination Council to increase tourism in Charlestown
3. Promote the tourism economy within the region utilizing the Connecticut River Scenic Byway and Lake Sunapee Scenic Byway councils
4. Lobby for legislative action on how the state funds education
5. Aggressively lobby for legislative action to improve policies to expand mental and health services to make them more comprehensive, more culturally responsive, more accessible, and more affordable
6. Charlestown must prepare for climate change
  - Review the Floodplain Ordinance
  - Maintain shaded areas at recreational locations
  - Remind citizens to conserve water
  - Review Hazard Mitigation Plan bi-annually
  - Actively train the Fire Department how to battle wildfires
  - Survey the culverts annually – maintain, repair and replace culverts when necessary
  - Ask the Conservation Commission to educate citizens about climate change and best practices for all projects

## **TRANSPORTATION**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The purpose of the transportation section of the Charlestown Master Plan is to evaluate current, and predict future, transportation needs. It should consider all pertinent modes of needed transportation, both public and private, and encompass both infrastructure and services. It should provide a framework for both adequate local needs and for coordination with regional and state transportation plans. In developing recommendations, this plan draws on data from community surveys, the Upper Valley Regional Planning Commission, the Office of New Hampshire Employment Security, New Hampshire Department of Transportation, and Southwest Community Services.

### **HISTORY**

#### **Bus Service**

Charlestown provides an allocation for bus service to Claremont. A twice daily round trip was started by Community Alliance Transportation Services (CATS) and taken over by Southwestern Community Services (SCS). This was expanded to three times daily. Because of the 2019 study of the public transit needs of Sullivan County, plans are for the service to increase to four times daily. SCS strives to provide excellent customer service while maintaining clean and comfortable buses. Safety is their number one priority. Passengers may take as many parcels as can be carried onto the bus in one boarding. Pets are permitted on the bus if the pet is restrained and secured. The pet must always be completely under control. Service animals are always permitted.

#### **Sidewalks**

There have been many sidewalk upgrades, and these continue to be a priority. Work is ongoing as the Master Plan is being written. Most of the sidewalks are in the village on Main Street.

#### **Beautification Improvements on Main Street**

Over the past several decades, various groups have worked to improve the beauty of our Main Street. The Charlestown Women's Club planted trees and installed street light poles with hanging flower baskets. The Garden Club planted flowers in various locations, and the community Tree Committee planted numerous Liberty elms and other trees.

As a cooperative effort of the above organizations, the Beautification Coalition was founded. Among the projects accomplished have been installing additional light poles with hanging flower baskets, planting additional trees, placing planters in front of Dan's Max Saver, and maintaining trees, shrubs, flower gardens and two grass islands in front of 200 Main Street.

## **Route 12 South**

After more than a decade of planning and discussions Route 12 has been saved from falling into the Connecticut River. The work included reconstruction of Route 12 to widen the roadway towards the Connecticut River, which provided 11-foot lanes and four to five-foot wide shoulders. The widened roadway resulted in an armored slope along the Connecticut River, updated drainage and storm water management, substantial utility relocation, and guardrail installation.

Sargent Corporation of Stillwater, Maine was the contractor for the \$14.8 million project, which was completed in August 2021. This road improvement is a major benefit to local businesses and travellers between Charlestown, Walpole, Bellows Falls and beyond.

## **Ten-year Plan**

NH law requires that the New Hampshire Department of Transportation (NHDOT) propose a plan for improvements to the State's transportation system every two years. The purpose of the Ten-year Plan is to develop and implement a plan allowing New Hampshire to fully participate in federally supported transportation improvement projects as well as to outline projects and programs funded with State transportation dollars.

The current ten-year plan shows there are two bridge projects and complete reconstruction of Route 12 between Almar Street and the Route 12 & 12A intersection. You can find the ten-year plan at:

<https://www.nh.gov/dot/org/projectdevelopment/planning/typ/index.htm>

## **Scenic Byways**

Highways along the Connecticut River in both New Hampshire and Vermont were designated in 2005 as a National Scenic Byway. As a result, the Connecticut River Scenic Byway has had support from the Federal Highway Administration for byway signage and for ten visitor centers along the byway route. The nearest to Charlestown are in Claremont and Bellows Falls. The byway designation, maps and guidebooks offer quality support for tourism, and the benefits of attracting visitors to enjoy the historic and natural assets of Charlestown.

Scenic Roads, are special town designations of Class IV, V and VI highways where cutting or removal of a tree, or disturbance of a stone wall, must go through the hearing process and written approval of local officials. (See RSA 231:157). In Charlestown there are five Town designated scenic roads: Meany Road, Lamb Road, Old Acworth Stage Road, and sections of Borough Road and Sam Putnam Road.

**ROAD INVENTORY**

**Charlestown Road Classification Mileage**

<b>Roadway Classification: RSA 229:5</b>	<b>Miles</b>
Class I. Primary State Highways—NH Route 12	13.307 miles
Class II. Secondary State Highways—NH Route 12A	7.197 miles
Class V. Town Roads and Streets	61.005 miles
Class VI. Unmaintained Roads	5.385 miles
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>86.892 miles</b>

**Demographic Information**

**Who travels Charlestown; where and how**

**Commuting to Work**

Workers 16 years and over	
Drove alone, car/truck/van	<b>78.1%</b>
Carpooled, car/truck/van	<b>16.6%</b>
Public transportation	<b>1.6%</b>
Walked	<b>3.4%</b>
Other Means	<b>0.4%</b>
Worked at home	<b>0.1%</b>
Mean Travel Time to Work	<b>24.5 minutes</b>

Percent of Working Residents: American Community Survey 2014-2018)

Working in community of residence	<b>21.7%</b>
Commuting to another NH community	<b>60.9%</b>
Commuting out-of-state	<b>17.4%</b>

Source - Economic & Labor Market Information Bureau, NH Employment Security, 2020. Community Response Received 6/19/19

**CONNECTIVE RESOURCES**

<b>Transportation</b>		
Road Access	State Routes	11,12,12A I-91 (VT), Exit 7
Nearest Interstate – I-91 (VT) Exit 7	Distance	2 Miles
Railroad	Amtrak – 12 Plains Road	Claremont – 10 Miles Southbound Train – 12:00 pm Northbound Train – 5:30 pm
Destinations: VT, PA, WA, MA, CT, NY, NJ & MD		
Public Transportation	Southwest Community Services	<a href="https://www.scsheps.org/transportation/">https://www.scsheps.org/transportation/</a>
Public Use Airport: Claremont Municipal Airport	Runway	3,098 ft. asphalt
Lighted – Yes	Navigational Aids - Yes	
Scheduled Services - No		10.7 Miles to Charlestown
Airport with Scheduled Service: Lebanon Municipal Airport	Runway	10,696 ft. asphalt
Lighted – Yes	Navigational Aids – Yes	
Scheduled Services – Yes		32 Miles to Charlestown
Number of Passenger Airlines Servicing Airport		1
Driving distance to selected cities:		
Springfield, VT		6 Miles
Manchester, NH		76 Miles
Portland, ME		168 Miles
Boston, MA		126 Miles
New York City, NY		235 Miles
Montreal, Quebec		213 Miles
Source - <a href="https://www.nhes.nh.gov/elmi/products/cp/profiles-htm/charlestown.htm">https://www.nhes.nh.gov/elmi/products/cp/profiles-htm/charlestown.htm</a>		

**DOT Traffic surveys**

Not enough recent data was available to be useful. For intersections that did have traffic counts, there were gaps in the record of several years. There are intersections which have been problematic. See recommendations for solutions.

## *2021 Master Plan Final Draft*

Route 12 at Unity Stage Rd  
Route 12 at Sullivan St  
Route 12 at Lovers Lane Rd

Even though there have been many accidents recorded and near misses at these three intersections, further study is needed to identify potential infrastructure improvements.

### **TRANSPORTATION RECOMMENDATIONS**

Include reference to the Connecticut River Byway when promoting Charlestown Tourism.

Evaluate if the Selectboard should adopt additional provisions under NH RSA 261:153 VI to collect an additional fee for supporting municipal and transportation improvement fund. This would allow for increased road maintenance without such a budgetary constraint.

#### **Bicycles**

Evaluate the feasibility of adding road signage in selected areas for bicycle traffic awareness

#### **Sidewalks**

Evaluate adding sidewalks to East Street Extension and South Main Street; leading to and exiting the Primary School as a DOT Safe Route to School

#### **Bus Service**

Leverage grant programs to expand bus routes and address the Last Mile problem. The “Last Mile” term means, a lack in public transport because it doesn’t take us exactly where we need to go. Charlestown’s rural nature makes this problem have a heavy impact. We have a bus to Claremont. How do you get to the bus?

Create a ride share forum to facilitate carpooling and bring people together to provide rides for those who need them

**Master Plan Adoption Statement**

The Charlestown Planning Board, in accordance with the provisions and procedures of RSA 675:6; including conducting a public hearing on December 7 2021, does hereby adopt the new Town of Charlestown Master Plan. The goals and recommendations contained in this plan are designed to aid the Planning Board and other town boards in the performance of their respective duties for the purpose of guiding and accomplishing the coordinated and harmonious development of the Town of Charlestown, New Hampshire.

Date Adopted: 12/7/2021

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Planning Board Chair – Patricia Chaffee

I hereby certify that Patricia Chaffee (Name) appeared before me on this 14<sup>th</sup> day of December, 2021, and signed this form in my presence.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Notary Public Signature

Jessica K. Dennis Feb 17, 2026  
Notary Public, State of New Hampshire  
My Commission Expires Feb 17, 2026

My Commission Expires (Date)