

The Charlotte Town Plan expresses our vision for the future of Charlotte. In its vision for the future, the Charlotte Town Plan builds on the town's most valuable characteristics – its rural landscape, healthy environment, small-town character, history, and a long tradition of active participation by citizen volunteers in local government and community activities.

Charlotte shall continue to be a town that honors its community and agricultural heritage, adapts to present-day forces and factors, and provides for citizens to live in a traditional rural Vermont setting of village areas surrounded by countryside homes that are compatible with healthy natural areas and working landscapes. We will strive to provide a safe, clean and beautiful environment, including Lake Champlain. We also develop policies and standards that protect our natural and cultural features while encouraging entrepreneurial and traditional economic activities compatible with our values.

Goals

- To balance property owner rights to reasonably use their land in keeping with overall public health, safety, welfare and the goals of this Town Plan;
- To reinforce historic settlement patterns by focusing growth in our hamlets, and east and west villages, while conserving our Areas of High Public Value (see **Figure 1 below**);
- To maintain and enhance the integrity and continued viability of natural and cultural features with high public value, including land and active agricultural use, prime and statewide agricultural soils; steep slopes; flood hazard areas, surface and groundwater resources; shoreland buffers; special natural areas, wildlife habitats, water supply source protection areas, and other ecologically important natural areas; scenic views and vistas; historic districts, sites and structures; and conserved land;
- To recognize and protect the Town's natural and cultural resources through both regulatory and non-regulatory actions;
- **To promote social, economic, cultural and racial diversity and sense of community through actions that encourage moderately priced and affordable housing, a sustainable agricultural economy, social, educational and commercial services, and environmentally-sound rural and small business enterprises;**
- To promote access and appropriate use for open land and recreational resources;
- To plan for and prioritize capital improvements consistent with the fiscal ability of the Town;
- To promote community interaction, volunteerism, and spirit;

Population trends in Charlotte and Chittenden County have generally outpaced those of the state in the past 50 years. The age distribution of the county population differs slightly from that of the state in that the county has a smaller proportion of older persons as compared to younger persons. That being said, the population of the region, including Charlotte, is aging with the 65 and older age group expected to increase by 122% over the next 20 years.

Housing in Charlotte has been concentrated in the village settlements, clustered in summer camp communities, or located in a dispersed pattern in the surrounding countryside. It is this dispersed pattern that has become prevalent over the past 30 years. Subdivisions in rural areas have increased, while the village settlements have remained relatively unchanged. Significant concerns of water and septic capacity in the west village have been repeatedly raised by some in the village. While the dispersed pattern has offered a desirable lifestyle, it has the potential to reduce air quality, increase energy consumption and consume open space including viable farmland. It has also failed to provide adequate housing located more convenient to services and prospective public transportation to accommodate a diverse array of residents. Surveys continue to reinforce the importance of protecting Charlotte's rural character, natural resources and agricultural resources. Changes to the land use regulations have been made over the last 15 years to retain these characteristics by encouraging clustered, well-integrated housing and development.

Key Planning Considerations:

1. Charlotte is projected to experience a slower rate of growth over the next 20 years (8.1%) compared to that of the last 30 years (47%).
2. Our regional population is aging. The number of individuals aged 65 and older in Chittenden County is projected to increase by 122% over the next 20 years. The next fastest growing age group is those aged 30-44. This age group is projected to increase by 22% over the next 20 years.
3. **Broad diversity in housing will continue to be necessary to support the required tax base to keep Charlotte financially sound. This must include opportunities for more affordable and senior housing.**¹⁷

¹⁷ In general, housing for which the occupant(s) is/are paying no more than 30 percent of his or her income for gross housing costs, including utilities is considered affordable housing. In the context of this plan, Charlotte further defines affordable housing as that affordable to low or moderate-income households. Households whose incomes are less than 80 percent of the median income for the area are considered low-income families. Households whose incomes are between 81 and 95 percent of the median income for the area are considered moderate-income families (Source: United States Department of Housing and Urban Development).

Senior or elderly housing is defined as housing which is specifically designed and intended for occupancy by at least one person who is 55 years of age or older. In accordance with the federal Fair Housing Act, elderly housing includes housing that: (1) is specifically designed for and occupied by elderly persons under a federal or state housing program; (2) is to be occupied by a person 62 years or older; or (3) at least 80% of the dwelling units are to be

The long-range success of economic development projects generally hinges on an area's competitive advantages (e.g. policies), market characteristics and community values. Smart economic development recognizes that prosperity both depends on and drives quality of life. The economy in Charlotte is inextricably linked to agriculture, the environment, and sustainability. Those factors combine for a unique mix of business and residential interests that create a distinctive sense of purpose and community that Charlotte residents value.

Economic development promotes complementary business initiatives to support our agricultural enterprises, provide products and services to residents and visitors, contributing to increased productivity and economic health in Charlotte, while maintaining the Town's distinctive character. Therefore the challenge is to position the community for a productive and prosperous future by sustaining a strong economy despite a shrinking tax base, crumbling infrastructure, an aging population, and a large inventory of premium-priced real estate.

This chapter intendeds to provide specific recommendations to address these challenges while preserving Charlotte's character and values, and to align closely to the following the goals stated in Section 1.1 ("Vision and Goals"):

1. To balance property owner rights to reasonably use their land in keeping with overall public health, safety, welfare and the goals of this Town Plan;
2. To reinforce historic settlement patterns by focusing commercial activity and residential development in our villages;
3. **To promote social, economic, cultural and racial diversity, and sense of community through actions that encourage moderately priced and affordable housing, a sustainable agricultural economy, social, educational and commercial services, and environmentally-sound rural and small business enterprises;**
4. To plan for and prioritize capital improvements consistent with the fiscal ability of the Town;

Additionally, the economic development chapter is guided by the following principles:

1. Prosperity and productivity will drive quality of life for the Charlotte community;
2. Maintaining our Town's prosperity and dynamism in a time of economic flux and demographic change requires additional effort and focus on economic development;
3. A distinctive combination of engaged commercial activity with agricultural and residential interests consistent with Charlotte's history and values will serve as the engine of our Town's prosperity and dynamism;
4. Restarting Charlotte's economic engine in a way that respects our unique history and community would revitalize it and translate to positive benefits for current and future residents alike;

8. Preservation of Charlotte's natural, cultural, and historic resources is essential to the maintenance of key industries including agriculture, real estate, tourism, and construction. Water and wastewater rights and use, solid waste management, stormwater management, and transportation all have a substantial effect on the Town.
9. The Charlotte Library is an evolving resource for the working population of our town and their families.

Economic Development Policies:

10. The Town promotes the protection and enhancement of agriculture and other traditional industries, and supports local job creation. Compatible, entrepreneurial enterprises operated as home occupations will also be supported that do not detract from the character of the area in which they are located.
11. The Town encourages the retention and creation of businesses and non-profit organizations that provide the services and community resources that reflect the values and aspirations of its residents.
12. The Town supports concentration of additional moderate-cost residential development in and adjacent to the villages with pedestrian access to basic commercial services.
13. The Town will encourage the provision of adequate infrastructure that is supportive of a healthy economy and environment.
14. The Town will advocate for the safe and responsible use of the railway and associated facilities.

Economic Development Strategies:

1. Encourage and support the formation of a local 'Farm and Food Council' to create a directory of local farms and food outlets, to work with local farmers on agricultural development strategies, to access outside resources such as the UVM Extension Service and the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets, and to increase community awareness of and access to healthy, locally produced food.
2. Support strategic planning efforts of the library to expand their services, to include the creation of a co-working space for Charlotte citizens, fostering inclusive community engagement, supporting life-long learning, provision of computer training resources, resume-writing classes, wi-fi access, computer loans, and printer services.
3. Support the development of community based water and wastewater systems in West Charlotte Village. Develop a framework for moving forward with the work completed by