



**DRAFT FOR PUBLIC REVIEW**



# **TOWN OF CHESTERFIELD COMPREHENSIVE PLAN **DRAFT****

**Plan Chesterfield  
January 2025 **DRAFT****

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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CHESTERFIELD

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CLA Site

This Comprehensive Plan Update was prepared with funding provided  
by the New York State Department of State under Title 11 of the  
Environmental protection Fund.



Office of Planning  
and Development

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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The Town of Chesterfield has prepared a Comprehensive Plan to provide a framework to guide decision making for the next 10 to 20 years. This Comprehensive Plan focuses on strengthening connections important to the natural, built and historic elements of the community by promoting a sustainable, inclusive environment with diverse housing options, a vibrant business mix, a lively downtown, and a high quality of life for all. This plan is crucial for the Town to assess current issues and opportunities and set clear goals for future progress, ensuring it can meet the evolving needs of its residents.

The preparation of this plan was led by a Town Board-appointed Comprehensive Plan Committee and included robust community engagement process. The planning process was funded in part by the New York State Department of State Smart Growth Community Planning Program under, which integrates four key themes: Equity, Economy, Environment, and Energy/Climate. As required by the grant program, this Comprehensive Plan aligns with the State's Smart Growth Principles for land use and planning.

Through this framework and community engagement, a shared community vision and eight (8) key categories with unique challenges and opportunities emerged:

- |                                      |                                      |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1. History & Placemaking             | 5. Parks, Recreation, and Open Space |
| 2. Housing                           | 6. Agriculture                       |
| 3. Economic Vitality                 | 7. Sustainability & Resiliency       |
| 4. Transportation, Mobility & Access | 8. Telecommunications                |

The vision for this comprehensive plan is a concise, aspirational statement that describes what the Town of Chesterfield's future should be. The key categories each have dedicated chapters in the comprehensive plan, with goals, identified challenges and opportunities, and recommendations to address the challenges and opportunities in a manner supporting the Town's goals.

The benefit of this Comprehensive Plan lies in its ability to ensure coordinated Smart Growth, minimize conflict in varied development interests, and strategically meet the community's needs. The success of this plan is dependent upon collaboration among Town government, residents, local businesses, nonprofits, stakeholders, and dedicated community members. Aligning the community's efforts and resources with the vision and goals of this Comprehensive Plan will allow the Town to build a future reflective of Chesterfield's shared values and aspirations.

The following pages contain the vision statement for Chesterfield, as well as the goals and recommendations for each chapter. For more information on the goals and recommendations, please explore the full plan.

# Town of Chesterfield

## Comprehensive Plan

### Vision Statement:

Chesterfield is an Adirondack community connected to its history and natural environment. The Town is home to diverse businesses, employment opportunities, a strong workforce and cultural offerings that cater to year-round residents and visitors. An optimized built environment complements the welcoming small-town charm and supports local entrepreneurship. Diverse and attainable housing types, quality services, and infrastructure support all residents and families and allow aging in place. An accessible trail network links local businesses and recreational attractions. Chesterfield's sustainable lifestyle harmonizes with its thriving economy, close-knit community, and rich character, creating an inviting place for all.

### Goals and Recommendations:

#### History & Placemaking

Celebrate the Town's historic and cultural significance by enhancing public spaces, town-wide access, quality of life for residents, and deploying placemaking efforts.

- P1.** Promote adaptive reuse of the existing building stock with an emphasis on Chesterfield's local history and culture.
- P2.** Implement attractive and accessible streetscaping elements within the hamlets to encourage walkability like lighting, curb cuts, landscaping, seating, public art and signage.
- P3.** Encourage maintenance of historic character and aesthetic of existing buildings.
- P4.** Coordinate with the Town of Ausable to repair or replace the Ausable River Street Bridge.

#### Housing

Promote a balanced and sustainable mix of housing types that are accessible. Strategically locate new housing to complement existing and planned services, modes of transportation, recreational assets, and economic development.

- H1.** Conduct a housing study to understand the existing housing stock, future housing demands, and community supported housing types.
- H2.** Prepare a master plan for the underutilized land in the Commerce Park to identify best uses.
- H3.** Incentivize the renovation or new construction of diverse, attainable housing through a planning and zoning process aligning with Smart Growth.
- H4.** Promote the reuse of existing buildings and utilization of mixed-use development to increase opportunities to support growth and development, with a primary focus on the Hamlet of Keeseville.
- H5.** Identify strategies to mitigate Town blight and promote property beautification.
- H6.** Identify approaches to promote housing availability in the Town and state and regional funding opportunities for first time home buyers.

#### Economic Vitality

Promote a pro-business environment offering diverse goods and services, employment opportunities, and revenue sources to the community in a manner compatible with the unique identity of Chesterfield.

- E1.** Develop strategies and provide information to promote Town-wide economic growth and development.
- E2.** Identify approaches for sustaining small businesses, promoting expansion, and attracting new businesses.
- E3.** Support commercial business start-up in the Town of Chesterfield
- E4.** Continue to strengthen and expand partnerships with local, regional, and state agencies to support economic and business growth.
- E5.** Work with Lake Champlain Transportation Company to determine a mutually beneficial future for their private beach, small marina, and former ferry dock.
- E6.** Collaborate with local and regional partners to facilitate festivals and events during all seasons.
- E7.** Connect businesses with resources for growth and development.
- E8.** Develop an effective marketing strategy to promote the Town.

### **Transportation, Mobility & Access**

Provide safe, convenient, and efficient transportation opportunities for people and goods that harmonize with the Town's communities, recreational and scenic assets, and economic clusters.

- T1.** Adopt a Complete Streets policy to promote accessibility and safer access Town-wide.
- T2.** Develop a Bicycle, Pedestrian, and Trails Connectivity Plan.
- T3.** Collaborate with regional partners to consider expanding access to regional transit option(s).
- T4.** Work with Amtrak and local and regional officials to assess the viability of reactivating the Port Kent Amtrak Station.
- T5.** Prepare a traffic study in partnership with Essex County.

### **Parks, Recreation & Open Space**

Enhance Town parks, recreational assets, and access to scenic resources for all people. Link these resources to key economic clusters and neighborhoods.

- R1.** Prepare a preliminary design concept and route for a Chesterfield Bike Loop developed with community input.
- R2.** Expand upon Port Kent's existing assets by enhancing recreational facilities.
- R3.** Develop a marketing plan in conjunction with ROOST to increase recreational tourism within the Town of Chesterfield.
- R4.** Provide safe access to the Ausable River for fishing in the Hamlet of Keeseville.
- R5.** Partner with the NYSDEC to assist the development of the Trembleau Management Plan.
- R6.** Identify potential collaborators like CATS, Lake Champlain Land Trust, or ADK Land Trust, to create a comprehensive trailway map and identify locations for trail markers.

### **Agriculture**

Promote the long-term sustainability of local agriculture. Recognize agriculture as a vital component of Chesterfield's economy and character.

- A1.** Adopt and promote practices outlined in the Essex County Farmland Protection Plan by identifying priority areas for agricultural conservation and connecting land owners to existing resources, programs, and organizations.
- A2.** Bolster agriculture's place in Chesterfield's economy by supporting farmers markets, farm stands, and other opportunities to connect the community and region with local agricultural businesses, through programs like Adirondack Harvest.
- A3.** Encourage the creation of an Agricultural Committee, overseen by the Town and in unison with relevant partner organizations, to advocate for the protection and productive use of agricultural lands and to serve in an advisory capacity to the Town on agricultural land use and development.

### **Sustainability & Resiliency**

Safeguard natural resources and community assets through resiliency measures, hazard mitigation, preservation and restoration of ecosystems, and water quality protection.

- S1.** Implement strategies that would certify the Town as a Climate Smart Community.
- S2.** Provide resources and assistance to residents looking to retrofit homes for energy conservation and connect them to relevant organizations or agencies.
- S3.** Require septic system testing during transfer of property ownership.
- S4.** Provide information and resources that encourage septic system maintenance, timely replacement, and routine testing.
- S5.** Promote responsible use of fertilizers and pesticides (including manure) to protect natural resources.
- S6.** Develop a plan for the tank farm to identify remediation (if necessary) and best possible future land uses.
- S7.** Utilize green infrastructure to supplement existing grey infrastructure and to offset strain on stormwater systems that may arise from new development.
- S8.** Address streambank stabilization within the Hamlet of Keeseville.
- S9.** Collaborate with regional organizations, environmental groups, and state agencies to survey and catalog invasive species, and develop an invasive species management plan.

### **Telecommunications**

Expand and enhance telecommunication access and infrastructure throughout the Town to improve quality of life, emergency response, support of local businesses, and the overall visitor experience.

- C1.** Coordinate with local, regional, and state-wide public and private partners to provide adequate internet service for all dwellings and businesses throughout Chesterfield.
- C2.** Coordinate with local, regional, and state-wide public and private partners to provide adequate cellular coverage throughout the Town.
- C3.** Work with local and regional emergency responders and cellular service providers to improve public safety by advancing location accuracy.
- C4.** Identify opportunities for free public Wi-Fi in the Keeseville downtown area.

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# SECTION 1. INTRODUCTION

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## Introduction Overview

The Town of Chesterfield is updating its 1977 Comprehensive Plan to address current and future needs and establish a vision for the community's growth. Located on the western shore of Lake Champlain and about 15 miles south of Plattsburgh, this Adirondack Community spans roughly 105 square miles in Essex County. It offers scenic views of and access to Lake Champlain and the Ausable River and features a distinctive blend of historic hamlets, parks, a downtown area, the Mace Chasm Corridor, and rich natural resources, alongside a community of residents and businesses actively invested in the Town's future.

The updated Comprehensive Plan focuses on strengthening connections between these elements by promoting a sustainable, inclusive environment with diverse housing options, a vibrant business mix, a lively downtown, and a high quality of life for all. This update is crucial for the Town to assess current conditions and set goals for future progress, ensuring it can meet the evolving needs of its residents.

Since the original 1977 Comprehensive Plan, the Town has undertaken initiatives that underscore their commitment to a successful future. Building on this forward momentum, the new Plan introduces recommendations and integrates Smart Growth principles to serve as a guide toward a more sustainable and inclusive future for the Town of Chesterfield.

## The Planning Process

This project is funded through the Smart Growth Comprehensive Planning Grant Program provided by the New York State Department of State. The Comprehensive Plan Update process began in January 2024 with the appointment of a 10-member Comprehensive Plan Committee (CPC) whose role was to oversee the development of the Comprehensive Plan.

The CPC was appointed by the Town Board and is comprised of various Town representatives including members of the Town Board, local volunteers and the community at large. The CPC held bi-monthly meetings throughout the development of the Plan, working closely with the community members, with support from Town representatives and their team of consultants. This Plan represents the CPC's efforts in synthesizing challenges and opportunities facing the community and provides strategies to address them.

## Public Engagement

In the development of this Plan, the Town placed a strong focus on engaging citizens during the decision-making process. Participation of residents, landowners, business owners, appointed and elected officials, and other stakeholders throughout the community was paramount to the Comprehensive Plan update effort.

A variety of public engagement methods and formats were utilized throughout the development of this Plan to maximize the engagement of community members. The following is a list of public engagement methods that have taken place with a brief description of each.

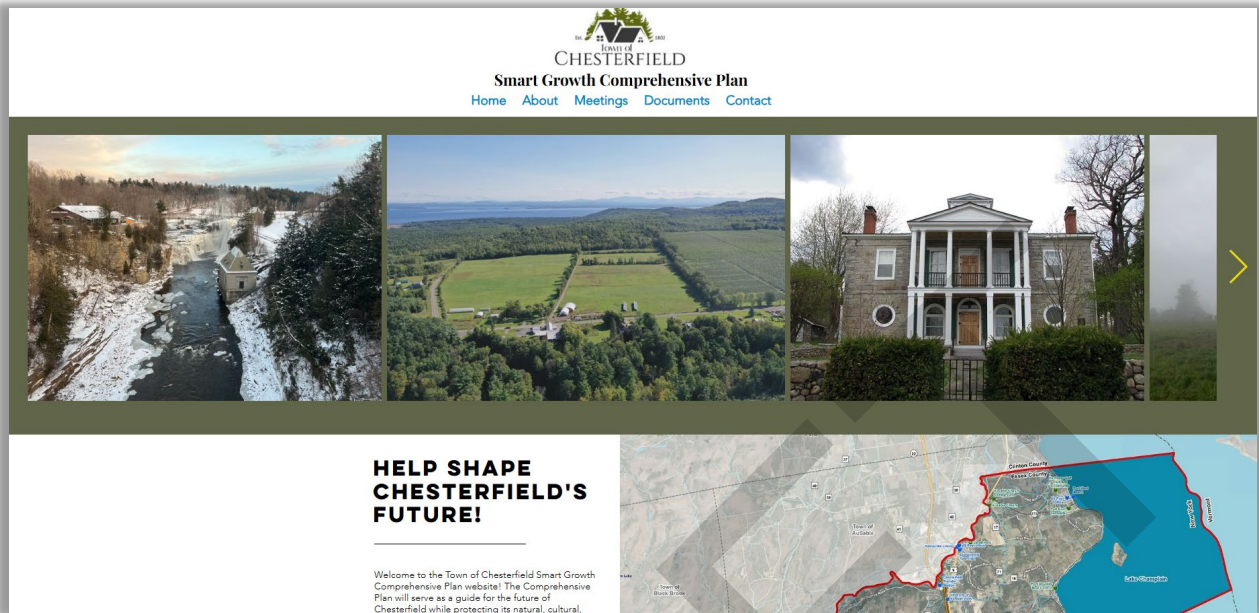
Public Engagement Methods include:

- Project Website
- Public Open Houses
- Community Survey (Online & Hard Copy)
- Stakeholder Meetings
- CPC Meetings
- Social Media Outreach
- Keeseville Community Clean Up Pop-Up Table

In addition to the various engagement opportunities made available to the community, the CPC and Town Board held public hearings before the adoption of the Comprehensive Plan in accordance with §272-A, Town Comprehensive Plan, of New York State Town Law. The CPC public hearing was held on [Information Forthcoming], in the [Information Forthcoming]. The Town Board Public Hearing was held on [Information Forthcoming]

### Project Website

The community was kept informed about the Comprehensive Plan via a [project website](#), prepared by the consultant that was dedicated to the Comprehensive Plan efforts. The project website included general project information including Comprehensive Plan processes, details about how interested community members could participate in the process, CPC meeting presentations and meeting summaries, as well as relevant planning documents. The project website also provided a 'Contact' page in which interested community members could share their thoughts and ideas or submit their contact information to receive news about upcoming public engagement opportunities. A link to the project website was embedded in the Town's official municipal website for members of the community who were unaware of the separate project website.



*Town of Chesterfield Smart Growth Comprehensive Plan Website*

## Public Engagement Events

### *Public Open House & Visioning Workshop #1*

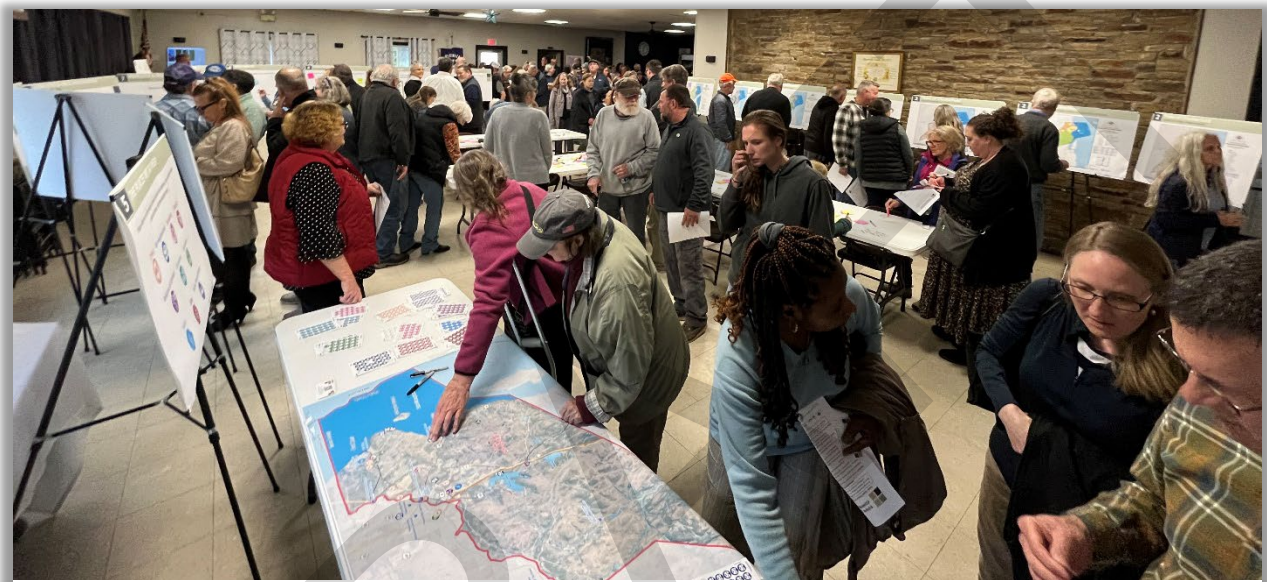
The first public engagement was a Public Open House & Visioning Workshop that took place on April 30, 2024, at the Keeseville Elks Lodge with about 130 attendees. The overarching purpose of this public workshop was to introduce the Comprehensive Plan process and schedule, provide an overview of existing conditions, and learn about needs and opportunities from the community. The workshop included a presentation highlighting the intent and purpose of a Comprehensive Plan. Representatives from the Town, NYSDOS, and the consultant team attended the event. A Participant Guide was provided to attendees to guide them through the various stations. Participant stations included:

- Project Overview; providing an overview of the Comprehensive Plan Process
- Community Profile; highlighting key data points and general inventory mapping of the Town
- Challenges & Opportunities; allowing participants to identify challenges and opportunities in the Town
- Places We Gather; allowing participants to identify places they recreate, shop, etc.
- Serving the Generations; allowing participants to identify which age cohort they belong to
- Hamlets & Neighborhoods; allowing participants to share ideas about the hamlets
- Idea Station; allowing participants to share other ideas about the Town

- Kids Table; providing activities for children in attendance

The event was publicized through a variety of platforms including the Town website, Town email list, project website, local press, social media, and flyers. The consultant team facilitated the event while representatives from the Town, and CPC members participated.

All meeting materials including the meeting agenda, presentation, and summary of the workshop were made available to the public on the project website.



*Public Open House & Visioning Workshop #1, April 30, 2024.*

### *Public Open House & Visioning Workshop #2*

The second public engagement event was a Public Open House & Visioning Workshop. The open house was held on August 21, 2024, at the Keeseville Elks Lodge, with over 30 community members in attendance. The purpose of the Open House was to provide an update on the Comprehensive Plan process, common themes identified through the community survey, the draft vision, goals, and recommendations for the Comprehensive Plan. The public open house consisted of self-led, interactive station-based participation.

The open house format allowed participants to informally walk through 13 interactive activity stations, facilitated by the MJ Team, to learn about the project at their own pace and provide their input and ideas. A Participant Guide was provided to attendees to guide them through the various stations. Participant stations included:

- Project Overview
- Highlights from Previous Public Outreach
- Draft Vision

- Housing
- Economic Vitality
- Agriculture
- Parks, Recreation & Open Space
- History & Placemaking
- Transportation, Mobility & Access
- Sustainability & Resiliency
- Telecommunications
- Kids Table
- Other Thoughts & Ideas.

The event was publicized through a variety of platforms including the Town website, Town email list, project website, local press, social media, and flyers. The consultant team facilitated the event while representatives from the Town, and CPC members participated.

All meeting materials including the meeting agenda, presentation, and summary of the workshop were made available to the public on the project website.



*Public Open House & Visioning Workshop #2, August 21, 2024.*

## Online Community Survey

As part of the public engagement component of the Town's Comprehensive Plan, an online community survey was developed. The purpose of this survey was to gather input from community members, residents, visitors, business owners, and other stakeholders about the Town. This information was used to inform the overall needs, vision, and priorities of the Town and help shape the Comprehensive Plan.

The survey was created and distributed using the Survey Monkey web platform and went live on April 30, 2024. Paper copies were made available at Town Hall on 1 Vine Street, Keeseville. Paper copies were submitted to the Town Hall by June 30. The survey remained open until June 30, 2024, with 324 responses received.



*Community Survey Highlights*

The survey was advertised on the project website and various social media platforms. Several press releases were distributed before and during the survey period. Information and links to the survey were also distributed during the survey period on cards and flyers throughout the Town, which included a Quick Response (QR) code so respondents could access the survey directly on a mobile device.

The survey contained 20 questions that were divided into several topical areas to focus on and categorize the questions. The survey topic areas include Demographics, Quality of Life, and The Future.

### Comprehensive Plan Committee Meetings

As part of the development of the Comprehensive Plan process, the CPC held [Information forthcoming] number of bi-monthly meetings. Each CPC meeting was an opportunity for CPC members to discuss the Comprehensive Plan efforts, review project materials, receive updates on public engagement efforts, and discuss the next steps in the project processes. The meeting materials including agendas, presentations, and meeting summaries were posted to the project website following each meeting.

The CPC meetings were open to the public. Members of the public were allowed to attend the CPC meetings and share thoughts and ideas at each CPC meeting. Residents were able to deliver comments verbally and were provided with the opportunity to submit written comments on paper comment cards, which were available at each in-person CPC meeting. Comments received from the members of the public were documented in each meeting summary.

### Stakeholder Meetings

The stakeholder group meetings were a significant component to the development of the Comprehensive Plan. The purpose of these small group meetings was to learn more about critical challenges and opportunities in the Town based on topic areas. Key stakeholders included property owners, business owners, Town staff, regional partners, community leaders, and more. During the development of the Comprehensive Plan, the Project Team led by MJ Engineering, Architecture, Landscape Architecture, and Land Surveying, P.C., conducted various stakeholder meetings.

Stakeholder Meetings included the following groups:

- Service Organizations & Non-Profits
- Business

- Agriculture
- Local & Regional Partners
- Hamlet of Keeseville
- Port Douglass & The Highlands
- Augur Lake & Trout Pond
- Hamlet of Port Kent & Trembleau Neighborhood.



*Stakeholder Group Meeting; July, 2024*

## Committee Public Hearing

[Information Forthcoming]

## Plan Organization

The Comprehensive Plan establishes a framework for the future; it covers a variety of topic areas and aims to organize a forward-thinking vision with a corresponding pathway for how to get there. The Plan includes a Vision, Goals, and Smart Growth Principles section which sets the direction for the future of the Town, while incorporating Smart Growth Principles. The Plan includes eight (8) chapters with specific goals that address specific topic areas. Those chapters are:

- History & Placemaking
- Housing
- Economic Vitality
- Transportation, Mobility & Access
- Parks, Recreation, & Open Space

- Agriculture
- Sustainability & Resiliency
- Telecommunications

Each of the above-listed chapters begins by identifying the goal and overview for each topic area and includes key challenges and opportunities, and recommendations to address the challenges. It should be noted that some recommendations in any given chapter may overlap with recommendations in another chapter. The overlap between chapters and topic areas is intentional because it underscores the fact that all aspects of the Town work in unison and are dependent upon each other. This Comprehensive Plan Update recognizes that no piece of the Town exists or operates in isolation. All the discrete parts of the community are intertwined and have a synergistic effect that makes up the Town.

The Plan then analyzes governance within the Town and provides recommendations for implementation. Finally, the Plan discusses the implementation of the recommendations and includes an implementation table to guide the Town in making the goals of this Plan a reality. Each recommendation in the Plan has a number identification but this number does not indicate the prioritization of recommendations, nor does it indicate which recommendations should be completed first or given priority. The Town is not obligated to complete these recommendations in any such order and should work to complete recommendations in any order they deem appropriate.

The Appendices of the Plan contain documentation and background information to support the recommendations. The appendices include:

- Appendix A – Community Profile and Existing Conditions Mapping
- Appendix B – Public Engagement Materials and Summaries
- Appendix C – Community Survey Highlights and Results
- Appendix D – Public Participation Plan
- Appendix E – Committee Materials and Summaries

## SECTION 2. TOWN OVERVIEW

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### Town Overview

Located within Essex County and bordered by the Adirondack Mountains, the Ausable River, and Lake Champlain, Chesterfield offers residents and visitors scenic landscapes, outdoor recreation, and historical significance. The Town's wild forests, varying topography, and waterways provide a backdrop for various outdoor activities that serve as a major draw.

Chesterfield's roots trace back to the late 18th century when it was first settled. The Keeseville Historic District is home to numerous notable buildings that showcase diverse architectural styles, many constructed using Ausable River sandstone. This rich heritage is celebrated through community, brings residents together, and highlights the Town's unique identity.

Chesterfield is characterized by a strong sense of civic engagement, with residents actively involved in local governance, volunteer organizations, and initiatives focused on preserving the Town's character, advancing the community toward its larger goals, and improving the quality of life for all.

The Town of Chesterfield is dedicated to sustainable growth, focusing on preserving its unique natural, historical, and cultural resources while also addressing the need for modern infrastructure and amenities. With its beautiful landscapes, rich history, and strong community connections, Chesterfield embodies the enduring charm of Adirondack life.

### History

Early settlement of the region dates to the late 18<sup>th</sup> century when the area was originally inhabited by the Mohawk people. The Town of Chesterfield's history is closely tied to the development of the Adirondack region and the Champlain Valley. Chesterfield was established in 1802 through the division of the Town of Willsboro. Initial settlement of the Town was primarily driven by the agricultural potential of its fertile lands and access to a key transportation corridor: Lake Champlain.

Geographically, Chesterfield is defined by its position along the Ausable River, proximity to Lake Champlain, and terrain. These natural features were pivotal in the early economic activities of the Town, serving as essential routes for transportation and trade. By the 19th century, agriculture became the primary economic driver, with numerous farming operations established across the region. Concurrently, the River enabled industrial activity, providing power for sawmills, gristmills, and other facilities critical to early economic development.

During the 19th century, Keeseville emerged as an industrial center. Its strategic location near the Ausable River supported the production of iron, lumber, and other commodities essential to regional growth. Simultaneously, the Ausable Chasm, a prominent sandstone gorge within the Town, became a recognized natural landmark and an early tourism destination, contributing to the Town's evolving economic profile.

The Town's cultural and historical heritage is preserved in its rural landscapes, historic architecture, and connection to the Adirondack wilderness. Notable landmarks, such as period churches and homes within its hamlets, provide tangible links to its historical development. Today, Chesterfield maintains its historical identity while integrating modern economic and community advancements. Its scenic landscapes, recreational opportunities, and historically significant sites, including the Ausable Chasm, continue to support its role as a regional destination.

## Hamlets

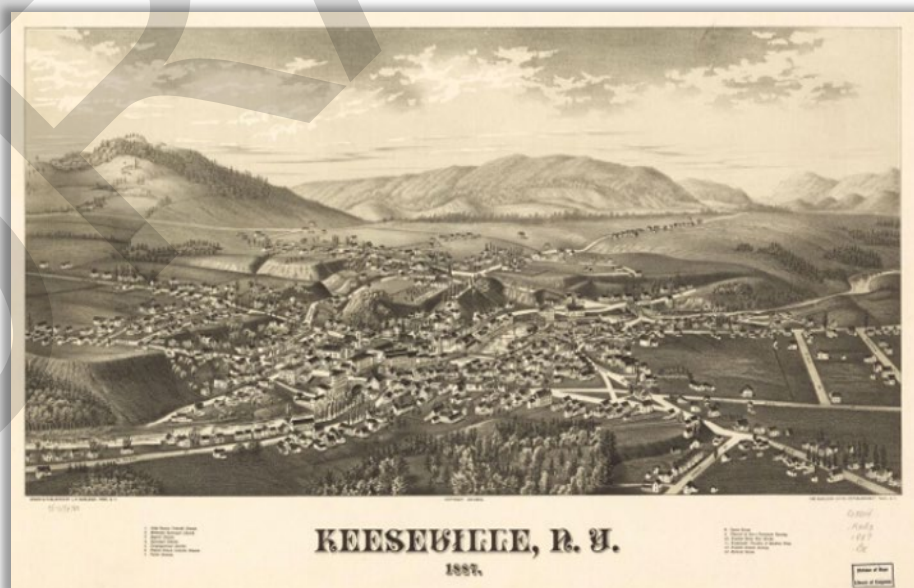
The Town of Chesterfield boasts several distinct hamlets; Keeseville, Port Kent, and Port Douglass, each of which plays a different role within the Town.

## Keeseville

Partially located within Chesterfield and the neighboring Town of Ausable, Keeseville is recognized for its historical architecture and its historical role as an industrial center. This hamlet was previously an incorporated Village that bridged the Chesterfield and Ausable communities.

However, the Village of Keeseville was dissolved in 2014, and the Keeseville community was physically divided between the Towns of Chesterfield and AuSable. Though the village of Keeseville is no longer, its legacy persists amongst residents in both Towns.

*Keeseville, 1887*



*Source: [Storied Boards, Keeseville History](#)*

Keeseville features 19th-century stone buildings and iron bridges spanning the Ausable River, showcasing its legacy in the milling and ironworks industries. Keeseville also

possesses a distinct cultural identity, with the nearby Ausable Chasm attracting visitors to its stunning sandstone gorge, which has been a tourist destination for over a century. Today, Keeseville is considered Chesterfield's downtown area with significant potential.

### Port Kent

Situated on the shores of Lake Champlain, Port Kent is primarily recognized for its former ferry service to Burlington, Vermont, which historically provided cross-lake transportation. This service established Port Kent as a gateway for travelers between New York and Vermont. Although the ferry service has since closed, Port Kent still has a dock where boaters can rent slips. This community also offers scenic lake views and is adjacent to Trembleau Mountain. Port Kent also includes a large campground, several neighborhoods, and public golf course with a restaurant and a banquet hall.

*Port Kent Road Sign*



*Source: [Anderson Falls](#)*

### Port Douglass

Located south of Port Kent, Port Douglass is a smaller, more secluded lakeside hamlet known for its quiet charm and scenic views of Lake Champlain. While it lacks the infrastructure found in larger hamlets, Port Douglass features a NYS boat launch and a Town-owned public beach area that attracts visitors for boating and fishing activities. The hamlet's tranquil atmosphere appeals to individuals seeking a peaceful retreat, highlighting Chesterfield's natural beauty and outdoor recreation opportunities. Many of the homes are vacation residences and there is one private residential club. Port Douglass is also the site of the former jet fuel tank farm which is now abandoned.

Together, these hamlets each bring a unique aspect to Chesterfield's overall identity: Keeseville with its historic downtown center atmosphere, Port Kent with its scenic attractions and previous ferry and railroad service, and Port Douglass with its quiet, tranquil lakeside charm. These differences not only reflect Chesterfield's diverse history but also enhance its appeal as a varied place with attractions and activities for all.

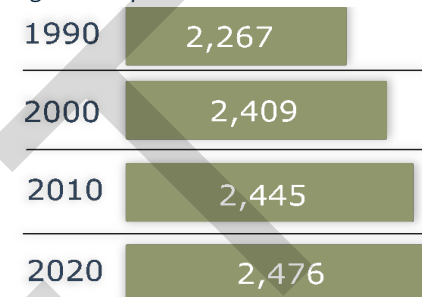
## Demographic & Socio-Economic Trends

The following figures and descriptions are intended to provide a snapshot of the existing conditions in the Town of Chesterfield. For a full review of existing conditions, please see Appendix A, Community Profile and Existing Conditions Mapping.

### Population

In over 30 years, Chesterfield's population has grown. In 2022 the Town's had 2,544 residents, which is about a 12% increase from 1990. This population's growth rate is slower than some of the other smaller, surrounding communities, but Chesterfield is growing faster than Essex and Clinton County, as well as the City of Plattsburgh.

Figure 1: Population Growth

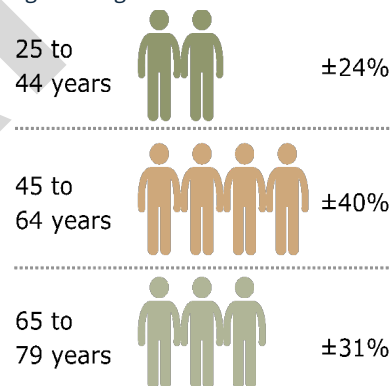


Source: Decennial Census, 2022;  
American Community Survey

### Age

In 2000, residents aged 65 and over comprised 12.4% of the population; by 2022, this group had grown to 23.6%. Compared to Essex County and surrounding communities, Chesterfield has a more stable under 18 population, but a declining percent of residents between 35 and 64. The Town's growing 65+ population is expected to impact economic growth with fewer people in the workforce, increase demands on transportation and public infrastructure, and drive the need for diverse housing options. Additionally, it will likely lead to greater demand for health services, home-based care, assisted living, and nursing facilities.

Figure 2: Age Cohorts

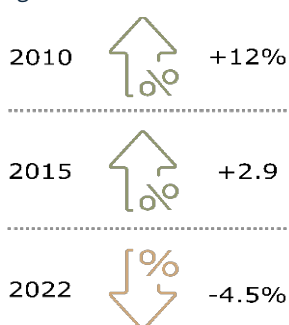


Source: Decennial Census, 2022;  
American Community Survey

### Housing

A worrying trend is the recent fall in the number of households within Chesterfield. During the same period the number of households in the County increased. This may be indicative of the increase in second homeowners and the rise of the short-term rental market.

Figure 3: Percent of Households in Town

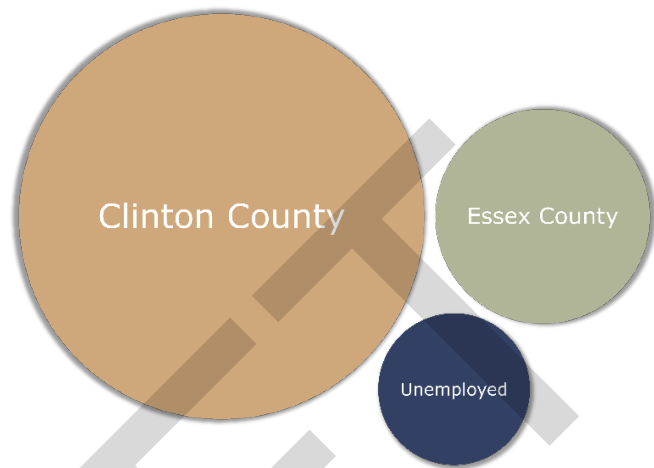


Source: Decennial Census, 2022; American  
Community Survey

## Employment

Most residents of the Town of Chesterfield who are in the labor force work in Clinton County (49.4%) or in Essex County outside Chesterfield (14.1%). Over the years, Chesterfield has become a bedroom community for Plattsburgh.

In 2022, the unemployment rate was about 7%, which is generally considered high in comparison to the 4.2% national unemployment rate (2024 U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics), especially given Chesterfield's relatively small population.



## Town Land Use and Zoning

According to the Existing Land Use Map below, the Town's land use is primarily characterized by the 'Parks & Recreation' 'Residential – Low Density', and 'Vacant Land' land use codes. Beginning at the southern municipal border, following along I-87 (Northway), the land use on either side of the roadway is 'Parks & Recreation'. Around Butternut Pond, the land use changes to primarily 'Vacant Land' and 'Residential', which continues further north until the Hamlet of Keeseville. Along Mace Chasm Road, there is a mix of 'Agricultural', 'Residential', and some 'Commercial'.

As for the Town's distinct hamlets, Keeseville represents the Town's downtown area. It has the most diverse land uses clustered around the intersection of Main and Front Street. Keeseville is primarily comprised of 'Mixed-Use', 'Residential', 'Community Services', and 'Commercial'. From there, there are three main roads traveling extending into the rest of the town: Kent Street, Clinton Street, and Chesterfield Street.

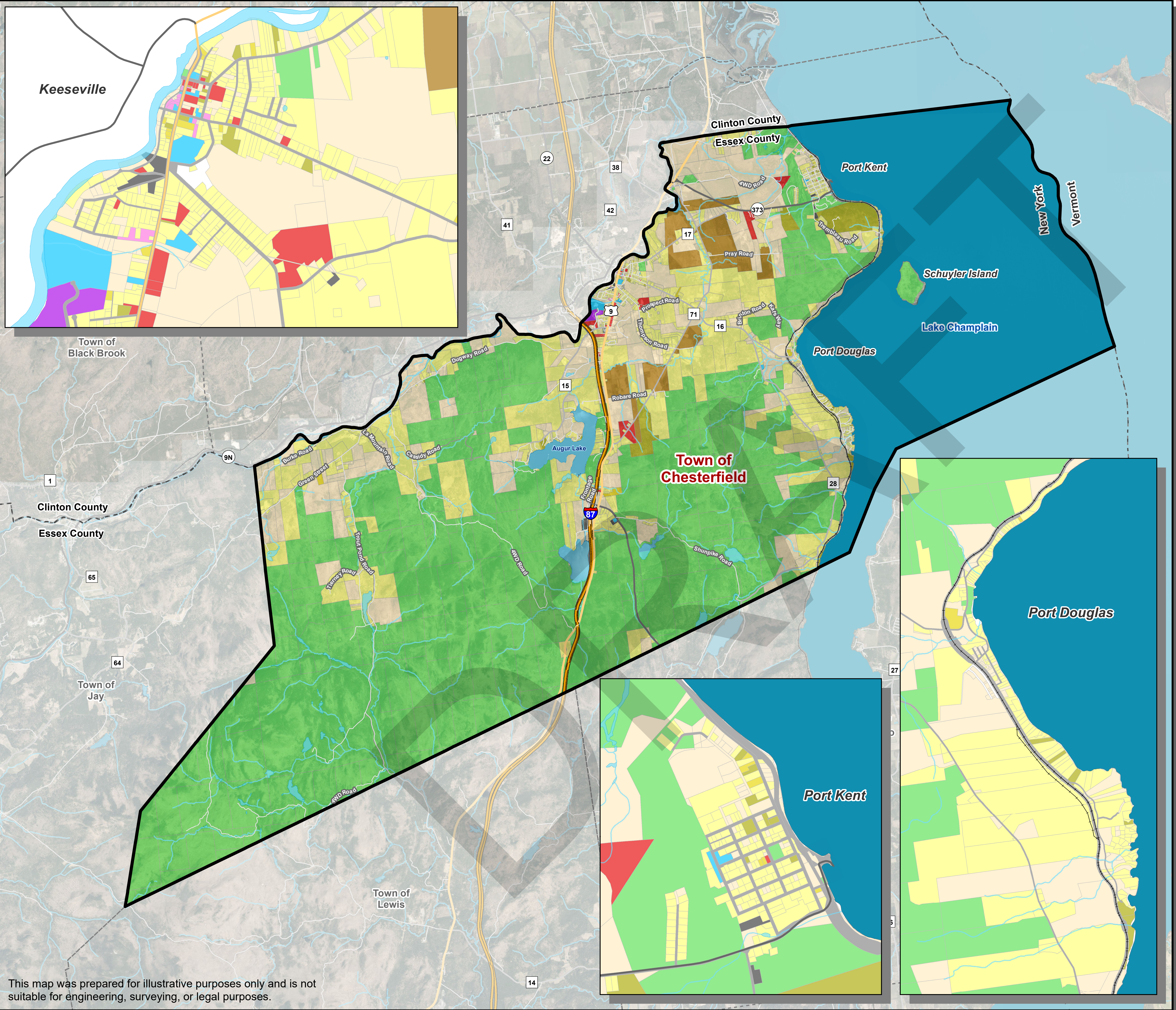
Along Kent Street, extending into the Town in a northeasterly direction, most of the properties are classified as one of the varying residential intensities, 'Vacant', and one larger 'Parks and Recreation' parcel. Along Clinton Street, extending into the Town in a southeasterly direction, most of the parcels are 'Residential- Low Density'. Lastly, along Chesterfield Street, extending into the Town in a southern most direction, most of the parcels are also 'Residential – Low Density' with a large 'Commercial' tract near the Prospect Road intersection. It is also important to note that situated between Kent, Clinton, and Chesterfield Streets are large parcels classified as 'Vacant'.

In Port Kent, the land use classifications are less diverse. Following north and south along Lake Champlain, the land use is classified as 'Transportation' due to the railroad and Lake

Champlain Transportation Company owned property, though neither mode is active. Moving inland, the Port Kent neighborhood is situated in a grid with most land parcels classified as ‘Residential – Low Density’ and some as high and medium densities. Port Kent also has a relatively large tract classified as ‘Parks & Recreation’ and a few medium sized ‘Vacant Parcels’.

As for Port Douglass, most of the parcels to the east of the railroad are large, ‘Residential – Low Density’, ‘Vacant’, and Parks and Recreation’ classified parcels. Along the lakeside most parcels are classified as ‘Residential – Low Density’ peppered with few high and medium residential densities, reflecting Port Douglass’s more quiet and tranquil character.

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This map was prepared for illustrative purposes only and is not suitable for engineering, surveying, or legal purposes.



# Town of CHESTERFIELD Comprehensive Plan

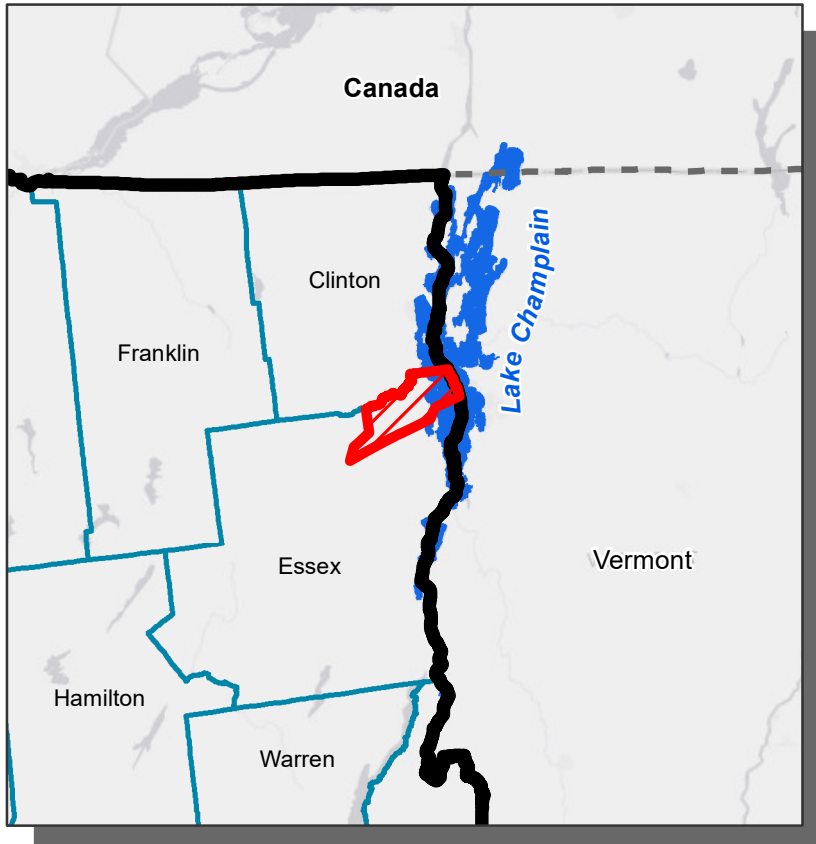
**DRAFT**  
**Existing Land Use**

March 2024

## LEGEND

- Study Area
- County Boundary
- Town Boundary
- Interstates
- US Routes
- State Routes
- County Routes
- Local Roads
- Railroad
- Waterbody
- River / Stream
- Agricultural
- Commercial
- Community Services
- Industrial
- Mixed Use
- Parks and Recreation
- Residential - High Density
- Residential - Medium Density
- Residential - Low Density
- Transportation
- Utilities
- Vacant Land

Land Use	Land Use Codes	Acres	Percentage of Land Use
Agricultural	105-151	1,183.9	2.3%
Commercial	416-486	181.1	0.4%
Community Services	611-695	47.0	0.1%
Industrial	710	21.2	0.0%
Mixed Use	481, 483	5.0	0.0%
Parks & Conservation Lands	910-971	31,728.6	62.6%
Recreation & Entertainment	532-592	391.6	0.8%
Residential - High Density	230-281, 411	552.1	1.1%
Residential - Medium Density	215, 220	59.6	0.1%
Residential - Low Density	210, 240-283	8,567.9	16.9%
Transportation	842, 845	1,021.7	2.0%
Utilities	822-831, 874	56.8	0.1%
Vacant Land	311-331	6,893.9	13.6%
<b>TOTALS</b>		<b>50,710.4</b>	<b>100%</b>



Sources:  
Esri, NYS ITS, DEC,  
Essex County, Town of Chesterfield

0 0.75 1.5  
Miles

Engineering and  
Land Surveying, P.C.

## Adirondack Park Agency

The Adirondack Park Agency (APA) is a New York State agency responsible for overseeing land use within the Adirondack Park, a vast protected area encompassing both public and private lands across six million acres. Established in 1971, the APA administers the Adirondack Park Land Use and Development Plan, which sets guidelines and zoning rules to balance environmental conservation with sustainable development. The agency works closely with local governments, landowners, and state agencies to ensure that activities within the park—such as building, resource management, and tourism—comply with regulations designed to protect natural resources, maintain scenic and recreational values, and support the area’s unique ecological landscape.

Per the APA Private and State Land Classification map (see appendix A for mapping), much of the Town’s land area is classified as Resource Management with smaller pockets of Wild Forest. Around Augur Lake, the land use classifications become Low Intensity and Rural Use. Toward Keeseville, the land use classifications change to Moderate Intensity and Hamlet. Near the Towns northern most border, there are clusters of Low and Moderate Intensity and some Wild Forest. The Port Kent area is classified as Hamlet with Moderate Intensity and Rural Use surroundings. As for Port Douglass, much of the Hamlet is classified as Moderate Intensity and Resource Management. Note that the Town of Chesterfield Zoning codes supersedes the APA Private and State Land Use Classifications.

## Community Organizations

### Keeseville Elks Lodge

[The Keeseville Elks Lodge #2072](#), located in the Hamlet of Keeseville is a part of the national Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks. This lodge serves the local community by promoting charitable activities, supporting veterans, providing scholarships, and hosting community events. The Keeseville Elks Lodge is dedicated to fostering fellowship among its members while contributing to local and national charitable programs. It serves as a gathering place for social activities and community engagement, reinforcing the values of brotherhood, service, and civic responsibility within Keeseville and surrounding areas.

### Ausable Valley Grange

The [Ausable Valley Grange #973](#) is a fraternal organization located in the Town of Ausable near the Arch bridge. The Grange’s mission is to "Cultivate Community through Service, Art, and Education." With historical roots in agriculture, today’s Ausable Valley Grange works to improve rural life through programs such as town clean-up days, gardening and home improvement workshops, and a winter clothing exchange. Additionally, the Grange partners in the launch of innovative projects such as a community radio station and a tool lending

library. Located on Main Street in Keeseville, the historic Ausable Valley Grange building also serves as a hub for music and art events, and as an affordable rental space for private parties and organizations. Though the Grange is situated in the Town of Ausable, it remains an important community organization for the Town of Chesterfield.

### Knights of Columbus

The [Knights of Columbus](#) plays a significant role in the Town of Chesterfield as a community-focused organization dedicated to charitable work, faith-based initiatives, and civic engagement. Their activities include partnering with local parishes to organize religious events, providing assistance to families in need, and supporting relief efforts. The organization also prioritizes youth and family programming, mentorship opportunities, and family-focused events. Additionally, the Knights contribute to civic life through active participation in local events and by supporting veterans and first responders with recognition and donations. The Knights of Columbus in Keeseville offers meals for seniors 60 and over Monday through Friday. Socialization, education, and information on topics important to seniors are also offered regularly.

### AMVETS

AMVETS (American Veterans), located in Keeseville, is a community organization dedicated to supporting veterans, their families, and the broader community. The organization provides essential services such as advocacy for veterans' rights, assistance with accessing benefits, and support for transitioning to civilian life. In addition to its veteran-focused mission, AMVETS contributes to the community through charitable activities, fundraising efforts, and local events that promote patriotism and civic pride. Their initiatives often include organizing Memorial Day observances, supporting local youth programs, and participating in community improvement projects, making them a valued presence in Keeseville and the surrounding areas.

### VFW (Veterans of Foreign Wars)

The VFW is a national organization dedicated to supporting U.S. veterans who have served in overseas conflicts, offering advocacy, assistance, and community engagement. The VFW operates through the Keeseville VFW Post 1505, located in Keeseville. This local post provides a space for veterans to connect, access resources, and participate in activities that honor their service and foster camaraderie. The Town also shows its commitment to veterans through Veteran's Park in downtown Keeseville, reflecting a shared dedication to remembering and supporting those who have served.

### Keeseville Community Development Corporation

The [Keeseville Community Development Corporation \(KCDC\)](#), established in December 2017, is a nonprofit organization based in the hamlet of Keeseville. Its mission is to unite residents of the Chesterfield and Ausable communities to identify, fund, and oversee

community and economic development projects aimed at strengthening and enhancing the resilience of both towns. KCDC focuses on improving, developing, or rehabilitating local areas to foster community improvement and capacity building.

### North Star Underground Railroad Museum

The [North Star Underground Railroad Museum](#) in the Town of Chesterfield serves as a community organization dedicated to preserving and educating the public about the region's role in the Underground Railroad and the broader struggle for freedom and equality. Situated near the historic Ausable Chasm, the museum highlights the stories of those who escaped slavery and the local residents who aided them. Through exhibits, educational programs, and public events, the museum raises awareness of the area's historical significance while promoting values of justice and human rights. Its efforts not only honor the legacy of the Underground Railroad but also serve as a cultural and educational resource for the community and visitors alike.

### Anderson Falls Heritage Society

The [Anderson Falls Heritage Society \(AFHS\)](#) is a volunteer community organization focused on preserving the historical and natural significance of Anderson Falls and its surrounding area. Society works to maintain and promote the heritage of the region by organizing events, educational programs, and initiatives that highlight the cultural and environmental importance of the falls. Their efforts also include the preservation of historical landmarks, like the Heritage House in Keeseville, and the promotion of local history.

The [Heritage House Museum](#) serves as a historical and cultural center dedicated to preserving the heritage of the region. The museum is housed in a historic building that once served as a home in the 19th century, reflecting the architectural and social history of the area. It showcases exhibits related to local history, including the significance of Anderson Falls, early settlement, and the area's industrial past.

### Keeseville Business Association

The [Keeseville Business Association \(KBA\)](#) is a local organization that supports and promotes the growth of businesses in the Keeseville area. The KBA works to enhance the economic vitality of the community through networking, collaboration, and advocacy for local businesses. It organizes events, such as festivals and business promotions, to increase community engagement and attract visitors.

## SECTION 3. VISION, GOALS & SMART GROWTH PRINCIPLES

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### VISION, GOALS & SMART GROWTH PRINCIPLES OVERVIEW

A vision is an aspirational statement that establishes the direction of the community for the future. The vision forms the basis for the Comprehensive Plan and all subsequent recommendations aim to achieve the established vision. The vision below was developed with the CPC members utilizing input gathered from the public at public workshops, stakeholder meetings, CPC meetings, and input from the online community survey.

#### VISION

Chesterfield is an Adirondack community connected to its history and natural environment. The Town is home to diverse businesses, employment opportunities, a strong workforce and cultural offerings that cater to year-round residents and visitors. An optimized built environment complements the welcoming small-town charm and supports local entrepreneurship. Diverse and attainable housing types, quality services, and infrastructure support all residents and families and allow aging in place. An accessible trail network links local businesses and recreational attractions. Chesterfield's sustainable lifestyle harmonizes with its thriving economy, close-knit community, and rich character, creating an inviting place for all.

#### GOALS

To help achieve the vision for the community, eight categories (below) were identified, and for each category, a goal was developed. Taken together each goal presents a sustainable framework for a healthy, productive, and creative community.

The goals are intended to be an overarching guide to the specific recommendations that will follow. A community is a series of interconnected systems, networks, and people – each dependent on the success of the other. As such, the goals are closely interconnected. Below are the goals that this Comprehensive Plan sets out to achieve. Each goal is listed under its respective category heading. The general health, safety, and welfare of the population and needs of specific subgroups of the population; pre-school age children, people with disabilities, cultural minorities, and older residents are primary considerations for a community committed to inclusivity and are addressed by the Goals and Recommendations of this Plan.

### *1. History & Placemaking*

Celebrate the Town's historic and cultural significance by enhancing public spaces, town-wide access, quality of life for residents, and deploying placemaking efforts.

### *2. Housing*

Promote a balanced and sustainable mix of housing types that are accessible. Strategically locate new housing to complement existing and planned services, modes of transportation, recreational assets, and economic development.

### *3. Economic Vitality*

Promote a pro-business environment offering diverse goods and services, employment opportunities, and revenue sources to the community in a manner compatible with the unique identity of Chesterfield.

### *4. Transportation, Mobility & Access*

Provide safe, convenient, and efficient transportation opportunities for people and goods that harmonize with the Town's communities, recreational and scenic assets, and economic clusters.

### *5. Parks, Recreation & Open Space*

Enhance Town parks, recreational assets, and access to scenic resources for all people. Link these resources to key economic clusters and neighborhoods.

### *6. Agriculture*

Promote the long-term sustainability of local agriculture. Recognize agriculture as a vital component of Chesterfield's economy and character.

### *7. Sustainability & Resiliency*

Safeguard natural resources and community assets through resiliency measures, hazard mitigation, preservation and restoration of ecosystems, and water quality protection.

### *8. Telecommunications*

Expand and enhance telecommunication access and infrastructure throughout the Town to improve quality of life, emergency response, support of local businesses, and the overall visitor experience.

## Smart Growth

### *What is Smart Growth?*

Smart Growth is a planning and development approach that prioritizes sustainability, community well-being, and efficient land use. It focuses on creating walkable neighborhoods, fostering a sense of place, protecting natural resources, and providing diverse housing and transportation choices. By emphasizing compact, mixed-use development, Smart Growth minimizes sprawl and supports economic growth while enhancing quality of life. Programs like Smart Growth America and New York State's initiatives integrate these principles to revitalize communities, reduce infrastructure costs, and address climate and environmental challenges. This approach aims to balance development with long-term social, economic, and environmental health.

### *NYS Smart Growth Grant Program*

The NYS Department of State (DOS) administers a portion of the State Smart Growth grant program, which is funded annually through the Environmental Protection Fund. DOS and the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) designate Smart Growth funding for a variety of purposes. DEC applies funds exclusively to Smart Growth planning and projects in the Adirondack and Catskill Parks; DOS uses funds for a variety of purposes related to community planning and development. This Comprehensive Plan is funded through this program.

New York State developed [Smart Growth Principles](#) as an approach that communities can adopt to create livable, sustainable, and equitable communities. Smart Growth varies in appearance based on location, but at its core, it embodies a holistic development strategy promoting a blend of various building styles and functions, a range of housing and transportation choices, integration within established neighborhoods, and active community involvement.

The New York State (NYS) Smart Growth Program offers municipalities the opportunity to plan and zone for their community by addressing all aspects of Smart Growth. The Smart Growth approach integrates what is known as the “4 Es” – Equity, Economy, Environment, and Energy/Climate.

Smart Growth promotes several land use planning principles that create livable, sustainable, and equitable communities, including:

1. Develop plans and land use regulations that allow for and encourage mixed-use neighborhoods.
2. Enable a diverse mix of housing types, providing opportunity and choice for all.
3. Prioritize infill and redevelopment of existing buildings to revitalize neighborhoods and downtowns, including areas around public transit.
4. Provide well-planned, equitable, and accessible public spaces.

5. Encourage compact neighborhood design and concentrated development around existing infrastructure.
6. Preserve open space, agricultural resources, and natural resources.
7. Prioritize transportation options such as walking, cycling, and public transportation.
8. Promote climate resiliency and adaptation, preferably through nature-based solutions, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.
9. Build on unique traits to create an attractive and welcoming community with a strong sense of place.
10. Engage in an inclusive, collaborative public planning process that considers the needs and character of the community.

The Smart Growth Principles are embedded throughout this Comprehensive Plan and will aid the community in achieving its vision. Below is a table that identifies the above-listed Smart Growth Principles and organizes the recommendations of this Comprehensive Plan that are associated with one or more of the Smart Growth Principles.

Smart Growth Principles		Aligning Comprehensive Plan Recommendations
1.	Develop plans and land use regulations that allow for and encourage mixed-use neighborhoods.	<b>Housing:</b> H2, H3, H4, <b>History &amp; Placemaking:</b> P1
2.	Enable a diverse mix of housing types, providing opportunity and choice for all.	<b>Housing:</b> H2, H3, H4 <b>History &amp; Placemaking:</b> P1
3.	Prioritize infill and redevelopment of existing buildings to revitalize neighborhoods and downtowns, including areas around public transit.	<b>Housing:</b> H1, H2, H3, H4, <b>History &amp; Placemaking:</b> P1
4.	Provide well-planned, equitable, and accessible public spaces.	<b>History &amp; Placemaking:</b> P3 <b>Transportation, Mobility &amp; Access:</b> T1, T2
5.	Encourage compact neighborhood design and concentrated development around existing infrastructure.	<b>Housing:</b> H2, H4 <b>History &amp; Placemaking:</b> P1
6.	Preserve open space, agricultural resources, and natural resources.	<b>Agriculture:</b> A1, A2, A3 <b>Parks, Recreation, &amp; Open Space:</b> R4

		<b>Sustainability &amp; Resiliency: S6</b>
7.	Prioritize transportation options such as walking, cycling, and public transportation.	<b>Transportation, Mobility &amp; Access: T1, T2, T3, T4</b>
8.	Promote climate resiliency and adaptation, preferably through nature-based solutions, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.	<b>Sustainability &amp; Resiliency: S1, S2, S3, S4, S6, S7</b> <b>Transportation, Mobility &amp; Access: T1, T2, T3, T4</b>
9.	Build on unique traits to create an attractive and welcoming community with a strong sense of place.	<b>History &amp; Placemaking: P1, P2, P3, P4, P5</b>
10.	Engage in an inclusive, collaborative public planning process that considers the needs and character of the community.	<b>Housing: H1</b> <b>Economic Vitality: E5</b> <b>Parks, Recreation, &amp; Open Space: R1, R2, R4, R6</b> <b>History &amp; Placemaking: P3,</b>

## SECTION 4. HISTORY & PLACEMAKING

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### History & Placemaking Overview

**GOAL:** Celebrate the Town's historic and cultural significance by enhancing public spaces, town-wide access, quality of life for residents, and deploying placemaking efforts.

The Town of Chesterfield's history is rooted in its natural surroundings and location along the Ausable River and Lake Champlain. In its early years, Chesterfield's economy centered around agriculture and milling, with hamlets like Keeseville developing as industrial hubs powered by the Ausable River. By the mid-19th century, Port Kent became a critical transportation link with its ferry service across Lake Champlain to Burlington, Vermont. Meanwhile, the Town's proximity to the Adirondacks shaped its recreational and tourism economy, with landmarks like Ausable Chasm drawing visitors to experience its dramatic sandstone formations. Today, Chesterfield's historical sites, natural beauty, and connection to broader regional economies define its character and serve as the foundation for the Town's future.

"Placemaking," a community concept popularized by the nonprofit "Project for Public Spaces," is a participatory process for shaping public space(s) that harnesses the ideas and assets of the people who use them.

A community's historic and cultural identity and placemaking are often intertwined because placemaking efforts often draw on the community's unique character to create physical

spaces that resonate with both residents and visitors. Chesterfield's history and culture will become foundational elements in the design for future placemaking efforts to underscore what makes the Town unique and memorable. Incorporating the Town's unique identity into the planning of spaces will connect Chesterfield's past with its present and ground the community in its heritage.



*Community Mural, Located at 111 Clinton St: Adirondack Hardware*

## Benefits of Placemaking

Incorporating placemaking elements into a community can:

- Promotes a sense of comfort
- Nurtures and defines a sense of community
- Promotes health by creating more pedestrian-friendly spaces
- Creates improved accessibility
- Builds and supports the local economy
- Fosters social interaction

By engaging in shared community visioning of the use of public areas/resources and implementing programming in line with that vision, "great places" can be created.

## What are the ingredients of a "great place"?

### *Access and Linkages*

Great places are accessible and well-connected to other important places in the area. This includes places that are walkable, accessible to all people and abilities, conveniently located and connected via roadways, sidewalks, multi-use paths, and public transportation where available.

### *Comfort and Image*

Great places should be comfortable and project a good image. Initiatives to create comfort may include designing places to sit and congregate, improving building conditions and landscaping, and making general aesthetic improvements to an area. Incorporating displays of vibrant local art and a focus on sharing a community's unique history are both key to creating a distinctive image.

### *Uses and Activities*

Great places attract people to participate in activities there. Having something to do gives people a reason to visit and return. A variety of activity areas can also encourage people to congregate at different times of the day. For example, a playground may attract young children and families during the day, while a band shell or concert space may encourage adult visitors in the evening.

### *Sociability*

Great places are sociable environments in which people want to gather and return.

These ingredients of a great place all tie into the concept known as ‘Streetscaping’. Streetscaping refers to the design and improvement of public spaces, particularly streets, to enhance their aesthetic appeal, functionality, and safety for pedestrians and drivers. It often includes the addition of landscaping, street furniture, lighting, signage, and other visual elements to create a more welcoming and accessible environment. Streetscaping aims to improve the overall quality of life fostering community interaction, boosting local businesses, and promoting sustainable design. Some examples of streetscaping include the installation of trees, flower beds, benches, and decorative lighting along city streets, as well as the addition of bike lanes, widened sidewalks, and public art to improve walkability and aesthetic appeal.

## **Historical Assets**

The below information describes Chesterfield’s historical assets and their significance.

### *Keeseville Historic District (split with Town of Ausable)*

The Keeseville Historic District, listed on the National Register of Historic Places, contains over 140 historic structures in the Hamlet of Keeseville. The buildings, constructed as early as 1820, are concentrated around the Ausable River. The district includes a variety of industrial, commercial, and residential buildings, as well as the Stone Arch Bridge and pedestrian Suspension Bridge. The architectural styles present in the district includes Greek Revival, with rural vernacular adaptations of Federal, Gothic Revival, and Italianate architectural forms, with many structures built from local river sandstone. Most notable

structures in the district are the cluster of rare stone Classical Revival style commercial buildings and the Masonic Temple, which underscore the versatility of the Ausable River sandstone as a building material in the early nineteenth century.

*Poke-o-Moonshine Fire Observation Tower (split with Town of Lewis)*

The Poke-O-Moonshine Mountain Fire Observation Station is a historic fire lookout tower situated on Poke-O-Moonshine Mountain in Chesterfield. Established in 1917, the observation station includes a 40-foot-tall steel-frame lookout tower, a jeep trail extending from the mountain's base to a point below the summit, the remains of an observer's cabin possibly constructed by the Civilian Conservation Corps in 1930s. The lookout tower, a prefabricated structure manufactured by the Aermotor Windmill Company, served a critical function in forest fire detection and management, contributing significantly to local forestry and conservation efforts during its operational years. The site reflects the historical practices of early 20th-century fire lookouts, and the broader initiatives aimed at protecting New York's natural resources. The tower is currently listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

*Elkanah Watson House (Port Kent Hamlet)*

The Elkanah Watson House is a historic home located in the Port Kent. The structure was built around 1828, and it is notable for its Federal-style architecture and association with Elkanah Waston, who was an important early American businessman, agriculturalist, and writer. The Watson House is a significant landmark harkening back early American industry, agriculture and infrastructure, and it is currently listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

*Rembrandt Hall (Keeseville Hamlet)*

Rembrandt Hall, situated in the hamlet of Keeseville within Chesterfield is an important example of 19th-century architecture. Keeseville, an industrial hub during the 19th century, experienced significant economic growth due to its thriving ironworks and manufacturing industries, which led to the construction of prominent civic and cultural buildings, like Rembrandt Hall. As part of the Keeseville Historic District, which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places, Rembrandt Hall contributes to the preservation of the region's architectural and industrial heritage.

#### *Tomlinson House (Keeseville Hamlet)*

The Tomlinson House is another historic home located in the Keeseville Historic District. The ornate structure was built in 1846 and is also notable for its Federal-style architecture, signifying Chesterfields thriving ironwork and manufacturing economy of the time. The Tomlinson House is currently listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

#### *Anderson Falls Heritage Society*

The Anderson Falls Heritage Society is dedicated to preserving and promoting the history and heritage of the Anderson Falls area. The Society operates the Heritage House Museum, a historic building that showcases local history, including exhibits on early settlement, industry, and the significance of Anderson Falls itself. Through educational programs, community events, and guided tours, the museum serves as a hub for historical learning and cultural engagement. The Anderson Falls Heritage Society plays a key role in preserving the Town's historical landmarks while fostering a deeper appreciation of the community's past.

#### *North Star Underground Railroad Museum*

The North Star Underground Railroad Museum serves as a critical institution that emphasizes the region's significant role in the Underground Railroad, particularly through the Champlain Line, which was a vital route for freedom seekers escaping slavery to Canada. Established in 2011, the museum is dedicated to preserving and interpreting the narratives of local abolitionists and the support network they provided, highlighting the area's historical contributions to the fight against slavery. Through its exhibits, artifacts, and educational programs, the museum engages both the local community and visitors, raising awareness of this important chapter in American history while fostering a deeper understanding of the region's cultural heritage.

#### *Suspension Bridge (split with Town of Ausable)*

The Swing Bridge, located partially in the Town of Chesterfield and the Town of Ausable, is a historically significant structure spanning the Ausable River, known for its unique pedestrian access across the river and between the two townships. Beyond its practical function, the swing bridge holds cultural significance as a landmark reflecting the Town's heritage and connection to the region's waterways. The Swing Bridge is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

#### *Stone Arch Bridge (split with Town of Ausable)*

The Stone Arch Bridge, located on Main Street in the heart of Keeseville's business district, spans the Ausable River and features a single-span brick arch design typical of similar structures built in Europe. The bridge measures a total length of 108 feet, with a main span of 90 feet. Constructed in 1843, it is recognized as the only known example of a bridge built by Solomon Townsend, although little information exists about Townsend himself. He may have been related to Solomon Townsend (1746-1811), a notable captain of a merchant ship prior to the Revolutionary War who later became a businessman, blacksmith, and politician in New York. The Stone Arch Bridge has been designated as a national landmark since 1999 and underwent rehabilitation in 2000 to preserve its historical integrity and ensure safety.

#### *Double-Span Metal Pratt Truss Bridge (split with Town of Ausable)*

The Upper Bridge, located at the junction of River Street and Ausable Street in Keeseville, spans the Ausable River and features an ornamental trapezoidal portal bracing with Town lattice designs and decorative finials. Constructed in 1878, it is one of the earliest examples of this engineering style and holds historical significance due to its association with the Murray and Dougal Company of Milton, Pennsylvania. Founded in 1842, the company transitioned from sawmill operations to foundry work and briefly entered the bridge construction industry in response to the Great Depression of 1873, resulting in only a few structures, with the Upper Bridge being one of the last remaining. The bridge measures 217 feet in total length, including two spans of 107 feet, and is made of cast and wrought iron. It has been closed to vehicular traffic since 2008, highlighting its historical value and preservation challenges.

#### *Old State Highway Bridge (split with Town of Ausable)*

The Old State Highway Bridge, located four miles north of Keeseville along Highway 9, spans the Ausable River just south of the scenic Ausable Chasm. Constructed in 1895 by the Groton Bridge Company, the bridge is a notable example of a continuous pony truss design, which uniquely combines two pin-connected Pratt pony trusses into a single structure, deviating from conventional simple span configurations. This closed bridge is recognized for its historical significance, picturesque views of the chasm and surrounding rocky cliffs, and its engineering uniqueness as a pin-connected pony truss built around the turn of the century. After undergoing rehabilitation in 1975, the bridge served vehicular traffic until its closure in 2004, and it now accommodates only pedestrian use, reflecting both its historical value and the challenges of maintaining aging infrastructure.

### *Ausable Chasm Bridge (split with Town of Ausable)*

The Route 9 Bridge, constructed in 1925 by Burr M. Stark and engineered by C.C. MacCloskey, spans the upper portions of the Ausable Chasm and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places as of 1999. This bridge plays a crucial transportation role by connecting northern points such as Plattsburgh and Montreal with southern destinations like Albany and New York City, serving as the primary route before the construction of Interstate 87, completed in 1967. Prior to the current bridge, a railroad bridge facilitated crossings over the Ausable River/Chasm, linking Port Kent, NY, to Keeseville via the Peanut Railroad, which operated for a short period in the early 1900s. Today, remnants of the railroad bridge's foundation are still visible beneath the current Route 9 Bridge, highlighting the area's historical significance in regional transportation.

## Challenges & Opportunities

The Town of Chesterfield faces challenges in balancing historical preservation with modern functionality and economic utility. Chesterfield has historic buildings that need restoration. Upgrading these sites to comply with building codes, accessibility standards, or sustainability practices is expensive and may require specialized materials and labor to preserve historical authenticity.

To advance Chesterfield's history and placemaking goals, the Town can attract businesses into Town through community events, infrastructure development, and by highlighting the area's unique features and attractions. Attracting businesses in Town will help the local economy which can encourage investors to invest in their businesses through improvements, like façade work.

Another challenge for Chesterfield is the repairs to the Ausable River Street Bridge have not been made due to a combination of funding challenges and the municipal complexities associated with managing large infrastructure projects. The bridge has been assessed and identified as needing repairs, but those repairs were delayed. Essex County oversees the maintenance of the bridge, and like many local municipalities, it faces budget constraints and competing priorities for infrastructure funding. However, through the community survey and public engagement events for this process, Chesterfield community members have indicated repairs to the Ausable River Street Bridge are important too. Community support for these repairs provides the Town with leverage to revisit the project.

Given Chesterfield's unique scenic, historic and cultural offerings, the Town stands to benefit from creating a brand celebrating what makes it special. Weaving the Town's icons, landmarks, stories, and traditions can serve as a draw to visitors who appreciate Chesterfield's charm, which would support the local economy and bring newcomers to the area. A cohesive brand that represents the Town would also inspire a shared sense of pride

in events and public spaces that bring people together. A town brand can also be used to market Chesterfield on a larger, more regional scale. Carving out a space for Chesterfield in the attention economy by creating a custom town brand and partnering with the North Country Chamber of Commerce, ROOST, and other similar organizations would provide the Town with greater visibility, attracting visitors, new residents, investors, and more.

Streetscaping in Chesterfield offers a powerful way to celebrate the Town's history while creating a sense of place that connects residents and visitors to its unique character, especially in the Town's Hamlets. By incorporating elements like attractive pedestrian crossings, sidewalks, lighting, historic signage, public art, and interpretive plaques, the Town can tell its story along its streets and highlight its history and character in daily life. Especially in the Hamlet of Keeseville, small design details along the streets can act like subtle storytellers while activating the streetscape.

## History & Placemaking Recommendations

The CPC developed four (4) History & Placemaking recommendations:

- P1.** Promote adaptive reuse of the existing building stock with an emphasis on Chesterfield's local history and culture.
- P2.** Implement attractive and accessible streetscaping elements within the hamlets to encourage walkability and improve the streets' aesthetic appeal.
- P3.** Encourage maintenance of historic character and aesthetic of existing buildings.
- P4.** Coordinate with the Town of Ausable to repair or replace the Ausable River Street Bridge.

These recommendations are discussed in detail below.

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### **P1. Promote adaptive reuse of the existing building stock with an emphasis on Chesterfield's local history and culture.**

The Town boasts a rich history reflected in the Keeseville Historic District. This area showcases historic buildings and diverse architectural styles. Though Chesterfield has a team of hardworking and dedicated municipal staff they do not have planning staff, which makes it difficult to promote to focus resources on reuse of existing building stock. Leveraging community engagement, grant funding, the continued use of community volunteers partnering with the Town, as well as assistance of County planning resources will be an effective approach to promoting the adaptive reuse and preservation of its existing building stock.

Encouraging community engagement and local participation will foster a sense of collaboration among residents, which can be used to support projects. The Town or volunteer groups can solicit ideas on how to repurpose Chesterfields historic structures through community workshops and visioning events. Using these resources the Town can identify innovative solutions while raising awareness of the value of the Towns heritage.

Continuing and seeking new partnerships with organizations like Anderson Falls Heritage Society, the Keeseville Free Library, or Adirondack Architectural Heritage (AARCH) can help the Town tap into expertise, resources, and lesser-known funding opportunities. Grant programs from entities like the [New York State Council on the Arts \(NYSCA\)](#) or the [National Trust for Historic Preservation](#) can also provide essential financial support for adaptive reuse projects. Though the goals of the State's [NY Forward](#) program are broader than just adaptive reuse, funding may be available for eligible individual adaptive projects that align with community needs and greater downtown revitalization goals.

In addition, the Town can promote adaptive reuse through its statutory boards by encouraging investors to integrate Chesterfield's historical and cultural elements into their projects. The Town could offer temporary tax benefits or expedited permitting to investors who preserve the architectural integrity of historic structures while adapting them for a variety of uses.

## **P2. Implement attractive and accessible streetscaping elements within the hamlets to encourage walkability and improve the streets' aesthetic appeal.**

Chesterfield can enhance walkability and encourage community connection by implementing attractive, accessible streetscaping features throughout its hamlets. Pedestrian-friendly lighting could be installed with funding assistance from the U.S. DOT [Safe Streets and Roads for All](#) grant program, which promotes safe, inclusive community spaces. To ensure sidewalks are accessible, curb cuts can be designed and funded through the [Transportation Alternatives Program \(TAP\)](#), supporting projects that expand non-motorized transportation, encourage foot traffic and make sidewalks ADA-compliant.

Beautifying the hamlets with low-maintenance greenery that enhances local biodiversity can be funded through the [Urban and Community Forestry Program](#). Adding seating in popular locations, financed in part by [Community Development Block Grants \(CDBG\)](#), could provide welcoming places for people to rest, meet, and enjoy the surroundings, and activate nearby streetscapes.

Chesterfield could also expand existing and create new sponsorship opportunities that let local businesses contribute to enhancing the Town's character by installing public art and signage.

### **P3. Encourage maintenance of historic character and aesthetic of existing buildings.**

Chesterfield can promote historic character and aesthetics by developing a guide that outlines the significance of historical structures and encourages retention of historic aesthetics. Additionally, the Town can offer financial incentives, such as tax credits or grants from the [New York State Historic Preservation Tax Credit Program](#), to make these projects more financially viable for property owners. To supplement these efforts, Chesterfield could consider providing educational materials to raise awareness about the benefits of preservation, such as increased property values and tourism potential.

### **P4. Coordinate with the Town of Ausable to repair or replace the Ausable River Street Bridge.**

The Town of Chesterfield can coordinate with the Town of Ausable to repair or replace the Ausable River Street Bridge by establishing a collaborative framework that includes joint meetings or committees focused on the effort. This partnership could begin with both Towns conducting a comprehensive assessment of the bridge's current condition, identifying necessary repairs or replacement options, and discussing the implications for safety and accessibility. By sharing resources and expertise, both Towns can develop a unified approach that reflects the needs and concerns of both communities, ensuring that the project aligns with broader transportation and infrastructure goals.

Where applicable, Chesterfield should partner with Ausable to explore various funding sources, including state and federal grants, like those offered by the [New York State Department of Transportation or the Federal Highway Administration](#). The Towns should verify whether a joint application would increase chances of securing funding. In addition, Chesterfield, in partnership with Ausable, should engage the public through community meetings and workshops to gather input and further support for applicable projects.

## SECTION 5. HOUSING

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### Housing Overview

**GOAL:** Promote a balanced and sustainable mix of housing types that are accessible. Strategically locate new housing to complement existing and planned services, modes of transportation, recreational assets, and economic development.

The Town of Chesterfield is a proactive community in New York State, committed to sustainable growth and economic development. As a certified Pro-Housing Community, Chesterfield prioritizes expanding diverse and affordable housing options to support its residents and attract new growth. According to the 2022 American Community Survey, the Town of Chesterfield has experienced a steady increase in population over time, outperforming growth rates in both Essex and Clinton Counties. This consistent growth reflects Chesterfield's appeal as a place to live, largely due to its strategic location and natural resources.

Chesterfield's rising population has driven a demand for more housing, with the number of housing units expanding over time to meet these needs. Rental housing has shown the fastest growth among housing types, helping diversify the options available to residents. Rental costs in Chesterfield tend to be higher than in surrounding areas, with a median gross rent of \$1,109.

Household income affects housing affordability, tax contributions, and consumer spending in Chesterfield. As of 2022, the median household income in Chesterfield was \$70,506—slightly higher than the county median (\$68,090) but 90% of the statewide median (\$81,386). As for income distribution, 27% of Chesterfield households earn \$100,000 or more, while about 35% are below \$50,000. Dialing in closer by looking at income and housing tenure, the median income for home owners in Chesterfield is just under \$80,000 with 52% earning more than \$75,000, suggesting that home ownership in Town is relatively stable.

The housing and income situation for renters in the Town is different from homeowners in that the data signals less stability. The median income for renters is about \$48,000, with over 29% earning below \$35,000, making a range of housing options and affordability a key consideration.

According to 2022 data from the ACS, 77% of households that reside year-round in the Town

of Chesterfield own their homes. Single-family detached homes are the most prevalent housing type in Chesterfield, accounting for more than three-quarters of all housing units. About 15% of the Town's housing stock is made up of mobile homes, while the remaining 8% of the units are in multi-family structures. Compared to Essex County, the Town has a lower proportion of its housing in multi-family structures and a higher proportion in mobile homes.

A household includes any occupied housing unit, excluding group quarters. Household characteristics, such as total number and average size, impact demand for housing and services. Tracking these trends helps gauge overall demand. The number of and average size of households has been relatively stable over the last 20+ years for both the Town and County. However, a worrying trend for Chesterfield is the recent drop in the number of households during the same period the number of households increased in the County.

This may be indicative of the increase in second homeowners and the rise of the short-term rental market, which is a concern that community members have raised during public engagement and stakeholder group meetings.

As mentioned above, the housing stock is predominantly composed of single-family detached homes, which account for more than three-quarters of all units in the Town. However, with the majority of homes built before 1980, many of the Town's properties are older and require regular maintenance and capital investment to meet modern living standards. These upgrades include improvements to energy efficiency, structural systems, and interior renovations, ensuring that homes remain safe, comfortable, and appealing.

Developing and maintaining a high-quality and varied housing stock is essential for the Town's long-term sustainability and economic growth. Offering a range of housing types is crucial to supporting a well-rounded community as it enables residents from various backgrounds and income levels to find suitable homes in Chesterfield. Varied housing options help attract and retain employees for local businesses and relating to the Economic Vitality chapter of this plan, there are few residents who work in the Town.

When asked what type of housing should be prioritized over the next ten years, 56% of respondents expressed interest in prioritizing single-family housing, while 55% would like to see a mix of housing types for a variety of income levels prioritized. These preferences highlight the community's desire to maintain Chesterfield's unique character while expanding housing options to meet diverse needs. Respondents also commented on the need to clean neighborhood areas and address blighted properties.

## Challenges & Opportunities

Chesterfield faces challenges regarding its current housing landscape. The housing stock is predominantly composed of single-family detached homes, which limits options for households with varying needs and income levels. This lack of diversity restricts housing accessibility and affordability, particularly for lower-income renters. With low renter household incomes and relatively high median rent costs, many renters face difficulties in securing affordable housing options.

Despite these challenges, there are opportunities for Chesterfield to enhance community development through housing diversification. Expanding the variety of available housing types, such as multi-family units or affordable housing options, could attract a broader range of residents. This approach would increase accessibility, support a wider demographic, and potentially strengthen the local economy by expanding the tax base and encouraging local consumer spending.

Chesterfield faces a growing need for senior housing options due to its aging population. The current housing stock may not meet the accessibility and support requirements of older residents, potentially limiting their ability to age in place. This lack of suitable senior housing can lead to residents relocating to other areas, reducing social stability and local support networks.

The need for senior housing presents an opportunity for Chesterfield to expand its housing options to better serve an aging demographic. Developing senior-friendly housing, such as accessible single-level units or assisted living facilities, could help older residents remain in the community. By addressing the needs of an aging population, Chesterfield could strengthen community ties, enhance local services, and support economic growth through increased demand for healthcare, retail, and other support services.

Chesterfield's aging housing stock poses challenges as many homes require significant updates or renovations to meet modern standards. The high costs associated with new construction and upgrades can be prohibitive, limiting both the availability of quality housing and the ability of current residents to improve existing homes. This situation can deter new residents and make it difficult to retain current ones, especially in the Town's historic areas where preservation of certain architectural features is encouraged.

Addressing the need for updated and new housing offers Chesterfield the chance to revitalize its housing market. Incentivizing new construction and renovation projects could attract new residents and investment, enhancing overall housing quality and supporting property values. Additionally, programs that assist homeowners with renovation costs could help preserve the character of the community while ensuring homes are safe, energy-efficient, and appealing to a broader range of residents.

Maintaining the condition of existing housing presents challenges in Chesterfield, as

residents noted that some properties have fallen into disrepair or are poorly managed. Community feedback from public engagement sessions emphasized a strong desire for improved property upkeep, however, the Town has limited authority over private property maintenance. This lack of jurisdiction restricts the Town's ability to directly enforce property standards, making it difficult to address community concerns about neglected properties.

Community pride building programs centered around home improvement initiatives, encouraging property upkeep, and addressing deferred maintenance can improve neighborhood aesthetics. While the Town's direct influence over private property is limited, it can explore initiatives to promote maintenance, such as providing resources or incentives for homeowners to invest in repairs. Additionally, community-led initiatives or partnerships with local organizations could help mobilize residents to support property improvement efforts, enhancing the overall appeal and livability of Chesterfield.

Updating zoning regulations offers Chesterfield the opportunity to promote housing diversity and affordability while still safeguarding community character. By allowing for greater flexibility in housing types—such as multi-family units, accessory dwellings, or mixed-use developments—the Town can promote more accessible housing options for a wider range of residents. Thoughtful zoning updates can encourage sustainable growth, attract new residents, and strengthen the community's economic and social vitality.

Chesterfield's housing market is impacted by a strong seasonal housing and renter market, which can lead to housing instability and reduced availability for year-round residents. Seasonal demand may drive up prices and prioritize short-term rentals, making it difficult for permanent residents to find affordable, stable housing options. This dynamic can strain the local housing market and create challenges for workforce retention and community continuity.

The seasonal housing market presents an opportunity for Chesterfield to strategically manage housing availability and affordability. To stabilize the housing market and enhance access to affordable housing for permanent residents, the Town can implement policies that address the balance between needs of year-round residents and the desire for short term rentals, like imposing limits on short-term rentals or providing incentives for long-term leases.

As a certified Pro-Housing Community, the Town of Chesterfield has significant opportunities to boost its economic growth and improve housing affordability. This designation as a Pro-Housing Community enhances access to state funding and grants for infrastructure and housing development. This status supports economic growth by attracting new residents, stimulating local businesses, and creating jobs. Pro-housing policies in Chesterfield also promote equitable housing options for various income levels. This aids in maintaining housing affordability and integrating sustainable, energy-efficient practices that strengthen long-term community resilience.

## Housing Recommendations

The CPC developed six (6) Housing recommendations:

- H1.** Conduct a housing study to understand the existing housing stock, future housing demands, and community supported housing types.
- H2.** Prepare a master plan for the underutilized land in the Commerce Park to identify best uses.
- H3.** Incentivize the renovation or new construction of diverse, attainable housing through a planning and zoning process aligning with Smart Growth.
- H4.** Promote the reuse of existing buildings and utilization of mixed-use development to increase opportunities to support growth and development, with a primary focus on the Hamlet of Keeseville.
- H5.** Identify strategies to mitigate Town blight and promote property beautification.
- H6.** Identify approaches to promote housing availability in the Town and state and regional funding opportunities for first time home buyers.

These recommendations are discussed in detail below.

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### **H1. Conduct a housing study to understand the existing housing stock, future housing demands, and community supported housing types.**

To conduct a comprehensive housing study in Chesterfield, the Town would first need to gather critical data on current housing conditions. This would include assessing occupancy rates, analyzing affordability metrics, and examining resident demographics. The Town can interpret this data to gain a clear understanding of the existing housing landscape to identify gaps in availability and affordability and establish a baseline for future planning efforts.

Public engagement will be a critical component of such a study. The Town should actively involve community members through public meetings, surveys, and focus groups to gather input on housing needs and preferences. This engagement will help ensure that the study reflects the perspectives and priorities of residents, thus ensuring public buy-in and support for any future planning initiatives. Feedback from residents will also provide insights into specific challenges they may be facing, which would contribute to a more accurate and well-rounded assessment of local needs.

Funding for a housing study can be pursued through several sources, including the [NYS Homes and Community Renewal \(HCR\)](#) and the [Community Development Block Grant \(CDBG\) program](#). The Town may also be able to leverage additional funding opportunities from the [NYS Energy Research and Development Authority \(NYSERDA\)](#) if the study incorporates goals related to energy efficiency or sustainable housing practices. Through grant funding, the Town can ensure that the housing study is adequately resourced and can

effectively inform future housing strategies and policies, without straining municipal budgets.

## **H2. Prepare a master plan for the underutilized land in the Commerce Park to identify best uses.**

The Chesterfield Commerce Park spans 102 acres and was developed in two phases. Phase I, completed in 2004, features nine lots, each ranging from three to five acres. Notably, four of these lots are Shovel-Ready certified by Empire State Development (ESD) and the Governor's Office of Regulatory Reform (GORR), meaning they are prepared for immediate development. There is also additional undeveloped space in Phase II, which will require further permitting from the agency before it can be subdivided. For the Phase I Shovel-Ready lots, roads and all essential utilities—including water, sewer, and underground electric and telephone lines—are already in place, making it easier for businesses to set up operations.

In the meantime, the Town should work toward understanding the best use for the space and prepare a master plan. To maximize the potential of Chesterfield Commerce Park, a comprehensive feasibility study is essential to assess site conditions and evaluate market potential. This study should provide critical insights into the park's strengths and weaknesses, identifying any necessary improvements to enhance its appeal to businesses or mixed-use housing developments. The study should also determine which development options, such as light manufacturing or mixed-use housing facilities, would be most beneficial for the area. The study will analyze market demand and trends to recommend the types of businesses that would thrive in Chesterfield Commerce Park. This analysis will enable the Town to strategically attract the right enterprises, fostering economic growth and creating job opportunities for residents.

Public and stakeholder engagement is essential for the development of feasibility study of Chesterfield Commerce Park, as it ensures that community perspectives and needs are considered in the planning process. Gathering input will provide valuable insight into local priorities and concerns. Public and stakeholder engagement will also enhance support for the future planning initiatives that emerge from the study.

To fund the feasibility study for Chesterfield Commerce Park, the Town can apply through the [Consolidated Funding Application \(CFA\)](#), which provides access to various state funding programs. The Town can also seek grants from Empire State Development to support economic growth initiatives. The Town may also consider the [CDBG](#) program, which funds local development projects.

## **H3. Incentivize the renovation or new construction of diverse, attainable housing through a planning and zoning process aligning with Smart Growth.**

The Town can implement flexible zoning regulations that allow for a variety of housing types, including multi-family units, accessory dwelling units, and mixed-use developments. For

example, the Town could offer zoning incentives like tax abatements, relaxed design standards, or offering density bonuses to developers who include affordable or diversified housing types. A density bonus is a zoning tool that allows developers to build more housing units per area in a specific district.

Financial incentives, such as tax abatements or grants for renovations, can also motivate property owners to improve the existing housing stock. These incentives can specifically target energy-efficient upgrades and sustainable building practices that directly align with Smart Growth goals. Partnering with organizations like HCR can expand funding opportunities through programs like the [Affordable Housing Corporation](#), which supports the development of affordable housing units.

#### **H4. Promote the reuse of existing buildings and utilization of mixed-use development to increase opportunities to support growth and development, with a primary focus on the Hamlet of Keeseville.**

Offering tax or development incentives and providing information on relevant grants for adaptive reuse projects can encourage property owners and interested developers to renovate underutilized structures, especially in the Town's budding downtown core: Keeseville. The Town can also leverage public-private partnerships and historic preservation tax credits to incentivize the restoration of properties within the Historic District.

#### **H5. Identify strategies to mitigate Town blight and promote property beautification.**

Engaging residents through workshops and outreach programs can raise awareness about the importance of property maintenance and enhance the sense of Town pride. It may be helpful to establish volunteer initiatives or continue partnering with [the Ausable Valley Grange](#), to organize community clean-up days or "adopt-a-lot" programs. The Town can also utilize community engagement to develop and offer non-binding design guidelines that guide residents on best practices for maintaining their properties. Resources like pamphlets and simple graphics are usually helpful. The Town can address blight while recognizing the financial constraints many property owners face by collaborating with nonprofits and local businesses to provide additional resources and support for beautification projects.

#### **H6. Identify approaches to promote housing availability in the Town and state and regional funding opportunities for first time home buyers.**

The Town of Chesterfield can enhance the promotion of its available housing stock by working with local real estate firms. In partnership, the Town can develop targeted marketing campaigns that showcase available properties and nearby historic, cultural, scenic, and recreational assets. Providing these agencies with comprehensive information about housing stocks or the abovementioned housing study will be pivotal in developing the right

marketing strategy.

In addition to real estate partnerships, Chesterfield can collaborate with regional organizations such as the [Adirondack Economic Development Corporation](#) and the [North Country Chamber of Commerce](#) to expand outreach efforts. Both of these organizations possess valuable marketing resources and networks that will be helpful in highlighting the Town's housing stock.

The Town can also create a dedicated section on its official website that features available housing listings, virtual tours, and neighborhood highlights. Some of these resources may already exist within local real estate agencies. The Town could partner with these agencies to add the housing highlights to the Town website. Alternatively, the Town could use this section on its site to direct people to real estate agency sites. The Town already utilizes social media platforms like Facebook and Instagram to share posts about local happenings and the Town can do the same with available properties, promoting Chesterfield as a great place to live.

Chesterfield can also consider implementing incentive programs, like grants or tax breaks for first-time homebuyers, to attract new residents and enhance its appeal as a relocation option. The Town should also regularly engage with local developers to promote new housing projects, expanding the variety of available housing options.

## SECTION 6. ECONOMIC VITALITY

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### Economic Vitality Overview

**GOAL:** Promote a pro-business environment offering diverse goods and services, employment opportunities, and revenue sources to the community in a manner compatible with the unique identity of Chesterfield.

The Town of Chesterfield's economy is closely intertwined with the broader North Country region, benefiting from a diverse array of industries that contribute to regional stability and growth. While hospitality and tourism play a significant role, the area is also bolstered by strengths in aerospace, agriculture, biotechnology, defense, energy, and transit equipment manufacturing. Health care further serves as a key economic sector, providing essential services and employment opportunities. Together, these industries create a dynamic economic landscape that supports Chesterfield and the North Country as a whole.

Chesterfield is about 15 miles from Plattsburgh, a major regional community and employment hub in Clinton County. Plattsburgh hosts a variety of key assets, including a regional medical center, a State University of New York (SUNY) campus, a concentration of transportation equipment and aerospace manufacturers, and other significant employers. These resources offer residents of Chesterfield access to employment, educational, and healthcare opportunities that contribute to the area's economic vitality.

Most residents of the Town of Chesterfield who are in the labor force work in Clinton County (49.4%) or in Essex County outside Chesterfield (14.1%). Over the years, Chesterfield has become a bedroom community for the greater region.

About 21% of the jobs held by Chesterfield residents, regardless of whether they're in the Town or not, are in the public sector. This includes jobs in local, state, and federal government as well as at public schools, colleges and universities. Other industries in which large percentages of Chesterfield residents work include health care and social assistance (18.5%), retail trade (13.2%), and manufacturing (9.7%).

Although the Town of Chesterfield lacks large employers, jobs in the Town are distributed across a wide range of industries. As of 2021, the most recent year for which data are available, Chesterfield had approximately 448 jobs within its boundaries, the same number it had in 2011. The manufacturing sector accounted for nearly 30% of the employment (Table 7), while administrative and waste management services made up 11%. Other leading employers in the Town included construction, personal and repair services, transportation

and warehousing, health care and social assistance, and accommodation and food services.

<b>Table 1. Employment by Industry, Town of Chesterfield</b>	
<b>Industry</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Manufacturing	27.8%
Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services	10.9%
Construction	8.6%
Personal and Repair Services	8.3%
Transportation and Warehousing	8.3%
Health Care and Social Assistance	7.1%
Government (Total)	7.1%
Accommodation and Food Services	5.9%
Retail Trade	4.3%
All Other Industries	11.6%
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, OnTheMap Application and LEHD Origin-Destination Employment Statistics. Data is as of 2021, the latest available.	

Despite lacking large employers, Chesterfield draws workers from a long distance. About 37% of individuals employed in the Town travel more than 50 miles to work. Approximately 19% of the jobs in Chesterfield are held by local residents, while 10.5% live elsewhere in Essex County, and 31% are held by individuals who live in Clinton County.

According to the 2023 Annual Assessment Rolls, the Town of Chesterfield has 49 commercial properties, excluding apartment buildings and mobile home parks. The largest number (28) are multi-use buildings such as downtown row buildings, converted residences, and small, single-story structures, followed by storage, warehouse, and distribution facilities (14). Overall, less than 1% of the Town's acreage is classified as commercial, mixed use, and industrial.

As part of a joint initiative between the Town of Chesterfield and the Essex County Industrial Development Agency (ECIDA), Chesterfield Commerce Park is a 100-acre park that features pre-permitted, shovel-ready lots for structures of up to 40,000 square feet. The site is located 3 miles from I-87 (Northway), and it offers municipal water and sewer, internet

access, fiber optics and 3-phase power. The ECIDA has been marketing Chesterfield Commerce Park, and one has sold.

The hamlet of Keeseville (an incorporated village until 2014) has a long history as Chesterfield's downtown center. While Keeseville has retained much of its historic character, there are limited shopping and dining opportunities. According to the results of the community survey and responses received during the comprehensive plan public engagement events, Town residents, property and business owners, and other stakeholders have expressed support for revitalizing the downtown, restoring underutilized and vacant buildings, and attracting new investment to the hamlet. A common concern among community members was a lack of a grocery store, places to eat, and spaces for gathering. Most residents indicated that they travel to Plattsburgh to do most of their regular shopping and dining. However, January 2025 marked the opening of Keeseville Grocery and Deli, a milestone in addressing the needs of the community.

As part of New York State's strategy to revitalize downtown areas and stimulate economic growth, the State launched the Downtown Revitalization Initiative (DRI) in 2016. The NY Forward Program started later, in 2022, to extend similar revitalization support to smaller and more rural communities. The DRI and NY Forward programs are designed to stimulate revitalization in municipalities across the state. The DRI focuses on transformative projects in urban centers, providing substantial funding to revitalize downtown areas and boost local economies. NY Forward complements this by assisting smaller and rural communities with strategic investments that enhance infrastructure, stimulate local business, and improve overall quality of life. The Town of Chesterfield is actively pursuing these opportunities to strengthen their downtown core and demonstrate their commitment to the community.

## Employment

To understand the employment realities of a community, it is necessary to analyze the employment rate of residents, the employment locations of residents, the number and types of jobs within the community, and where workers are traveling from. As of 2021, the total number of jobs within the Town of Chesterfield was 448. The vast majority of the 1,000 Chesterfield resident-held jobs (71.8%) are either in Clinton (49%) or Essex County (22.8%). The top five municipalities for employment of Town residents include the City of Plattsburgh (209), Town of Plattsburgh (134), Town of Chesterfield (87), Town of Ausable (73), and Town of North Elba (40). Figure 1, *Inflow/Outflow Analysis* provides a breakdown of the number of workers commuting into and out of Chesterfield, and the number of people who live and work in the Town.

Figure 1. Inflow/Outflow Analysis

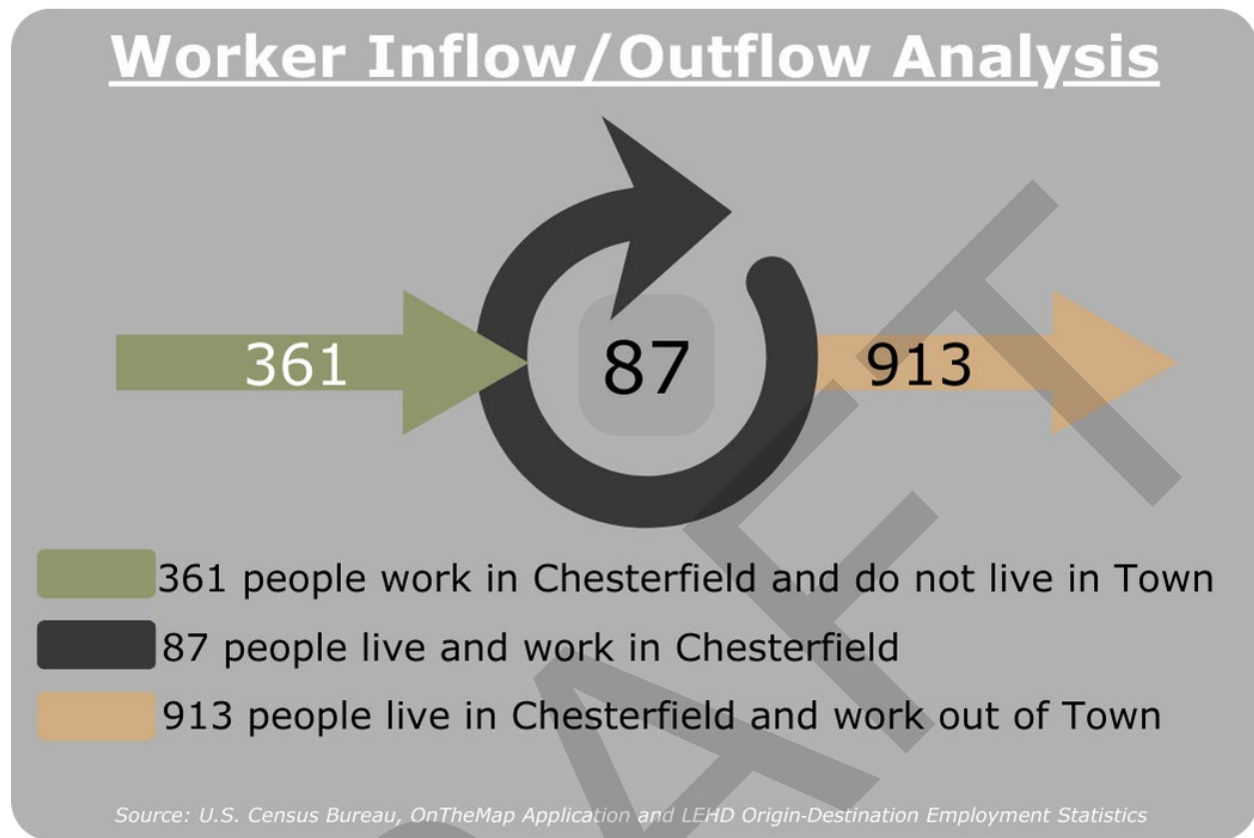
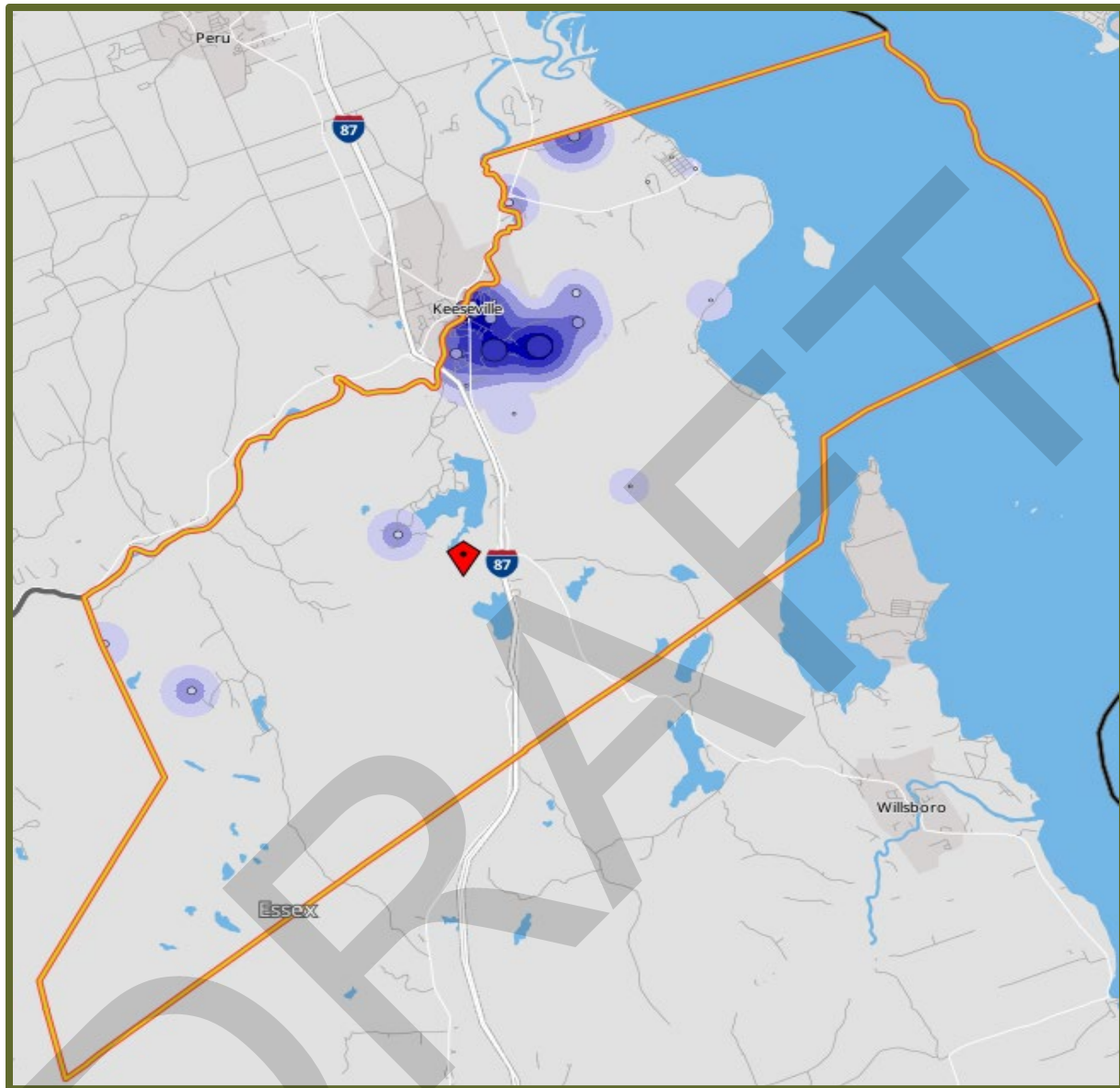


Figure 2. *Town Employment Density Map*, shows the location of all 448 jobs in Chesterfield, with darker colors representing areas with the highest employment density. As could be expected, most of the jobs and businesses are based within the Hamlet of Keeseville. Additional job nodes are found at Augur Lake, Trout Pond, in the north end of Town at Ausable Chasm, Port Kent, and on the northernmost border.

Figure 2. Town Employment Density Map



U.S. Census Bureau, OnTheMap Application and LEHD Origin-Destination Employment Statistics

The unemployment rate in Chesterfield for persons 16 years and over was 7.2% as of the 2022 ACS 5-year estimate; approximately 3% above nationwide and statewide figures. An additional 41.3% of the workforce is not considered to be within the labor force. Taken together, these figures compute to 51.7% of the Chesterfield labor force actively employed as of 2022.

## Tourism

Tourism is a major economic driver in Essex County. According to the report *Economic Impact of Visitors in New York 2022: Adirondacks Focus*, visitors spent \$818.2 million in Essex County in 2022, exceeding 2019 (pre-pandemic) levels by 61%. Tourism generated \$192.0 million in direct labor income and \$300.3 million including indirect and induced impacts. It also produced 5,092 jobs; more than 37% of the employment in Essex County was sustained by visitors.

One of the most significant tourism generators in this area is Ausable Chasm, located just north of Keeseville. Known as “the Grand Canyon of the Adirondacks,” Ausable Chasm is a privately-owned natural attraction that has been welcoming visitors for more than 150 years. It offers five miles of walking trails that are open year-round, a riverwalk, rafting tours, opportunities for rock climbing and rappelling, and a fully guided Adventure Trail that combines hiking and climbing; it also has an on-site campground. Ausable Chasm attracts more than 100,000 people annually.

Additional attractions in Chesterfield include the Wickham Marsh Wildlife Management Area in Port Kent, an excellent location for birding, hiking, and snowshoeing, and trails to the summit of Trembleau Mountain, where hikers are rewarded with views of Lake Champlain and the High Peaks. There is a state boat launch on Lake Champlain at Port Douglass. The Town also has state-owned lands, part of the Taylor Pond State Forest, that offer public access for a wide range of outdoor recreational activities. Seasonal RV campgrounds include Ausable Chasm Campground and Port Kent Campsite, each located within their respective hamlets.

Lastly, another attraction is the growing agritourism industry along Chesterfield’s Mace Chasm Corridor. This unique sector is playing a transformative role in boosting the Town’s economy and establishing it as a rural destination. Small businesses and farms on Mace Chasm Road are creating a cooperative ecosystem that is attractive to tourists seeking authentic rural experiences. For instance, farm-to-table events, harvest festivals, and other experiences draw families, food enthusiasts, and eco-conscious travelers. This not only generates revenue but also increases visibility for the Town as a vibrant destination that values sustainable agriculture and community involvement. See Section 9, *Agriculture* of this plan for more information on Chesterfield’s growing agritourism sector.

## Challenges & Opportunities

Chesterfield's economy faces challenges due to its seasonal nature, which creates fluctuations in revenue and impacts business stability. The region's economic activity is in part dependent on tourism and agriculture, both of which peak in warmer months and decline during the off-season. This cyclical pattern results in months of high economic activity followed by slower periods, making it difficult for local businesses to maintain consistent revenue streams throughout the year. As a result, many businesses may struggle with cash flow and are forced to find ways to stay viable through slower months.

Capturing these seasonal economic trends is particularly challenging when it comes to data collection and analysis. Conventional data sets often do not account for the significant economic swings that Chesterfield experiences, as they are based on annual or quarterly data that can overlook monthly fluctuations. This lack of granular data makes it difficult for businesses and local government alike to plan effectively for both peak and off-peak seasons. Without a clear understanding of these patterns, it becomes challenging to create targeted support systems or policies to help businesses weather the slower months.

For businesses along Front Street and Mace Chasm Road and throughout Chesterfield, managing the highs and lows of seasonal revenue is essential for economic survival. Diversifying their offerings, developing partnerships, and participating in tourism and agritourism initiatives that attract year-round visitors will help these businesses to better adapt to seasonal fluctuations.

Chesterfield also faces the complex challenge of overcoming its status as a "bedroom community," where most residents live but do not work locally, instead commuting to jobs in surrounding towns or cities. With a small proportion of residents actually employed within the Town, Chesterfield experiences limited local spending during typical business hours, leading to decreased activity in local shops, services, and restaurants, especially during weekdays. This can make it difficult for businesses to thrive on local patronage alone, amplifying the need to attract visitors and tourists to sustain the economy.

Adding to this challenge is the fact that while many residents leave Town for work, Chesterfield still sees an influx of people traveling from other areas for employment within its borders. These individuals contribute to local business, but without the sense of long-term investment that resident workers might bring, the Town misses out on some potential economic benefits, such as increased demand for housing, schools, and services. Unfortunately, this dynamic reinforces Chesterfield's status as a bedroom community.

Chesterfield has a promising opportunity to revitalize its economy by enhancing its downtown area and restoring underutilized sites, especially in Keeseville. Community support for these improvements reflects a shared vision for a thriving downtown that serves as a hub for social, cultural, and economic activities. Resorting and repurposing vacant or

underutilized properties will create attractive spaces for mixed use opportunities that appeal to both residents and visitors. Additionally, these developments could attract new residents looking to settle in the North Country who value the convenience and character of a budding downtown.

According to the Work Area Profile Analysis, Keeseville already serves as a focal point for commerce and employment in the area, and by building upon this cluster of jobs, Chesterfield can attract a wider range of industries and services. This growth could create jobs closer to home for residents who currently commute out of Town, reducing travel expenses and keeping more income circulating locally. Additionally, a more diverse job market could attract skilled workers and young professionals, who might otherwise overlook Chesterfield, to settle in the area.

The Chesterfield Commerce Park also represents a key opportunity to catalyze economic growth and strengthen the Town's business landscape. With one lot already sold, the park is positioned to attract diverse developments seeking efficient, cost-effective setups and close proximity to I-87 for seamless access to regional markets. The site's shovel-ready status and modern infrastructure reduce development time and costs.

Chesterfield's natural assets, like Lake Champlain, the Adirondack Mountains, and the Ausable River, along with historic Keeseville, make it an appealing destination for visitors seeking both outdoor activities and small-town history. These assets provide a solid foundation for boosting local tourism, which can help Chesterfield's economy by increasing spending on local businesses.

Lastly, Chesterfield's growing agritourism industry offers a great opportunity to attract residents and visitors by highlighting the Town's rich heritage and scenic landscapes. Chesterfield can draw people who want to connect with its agricultural roots and enjoy the area's natural beauty by promoting local farms and agritourism experiences. This influx of visitors can boost the local economy and inspire new businesses to open in vacant storefronts in the Keeseville hamlet. As these potential new enterprises—like cafes, markets, and specialty shops—emerge to support agritourism, they can help revitalize the community, making Keeseville a lively destination that celebrates its agricultural heritage while supporting sustainable economic growth.

## Economic Vitality Recommendations

The CPC developed eight (8) Economic Vitality recommendations:

- E1.** Develop strategies and provide information to promote Town-wide economic growth and development.
- E2.** Identify approaches for sustaining small businesses, promoting expansion, and

attracting new businesses.

**E3.** Support commercial business start-up in the Town of Chesterfield.

**E4.** Continue to strengthen and expand partnerships with local, regional, and state agencies to support economic and business growth.

**E5.** Work with Lake Champlain Transportation Company to determine a mutually beneficial future for their private beach, small marina, and former ferry dock.

**E6.** Collaborate with local and regional partners to facilitate festivals and events during all seasons.

**E7.** Connect businesses with resources for growth and development.

**E8.** Develop an effective marketing strategy to promote the Town.

These recommendations are discussed in detail below.

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### **E1. Develop strategies and provide information to promote Town-wide economic growth and development.**

Having the Town promote economic growth, and development is vital to ensuring the economic vitality of the community. Chesterfield could adopt several strategic approaches and utilize their existing resources effectively. The Town can collaborate with regional organizations like the Adirondack North Country Association (ANCA) or Essex County Industrial Development Agency (IDA) to tap into their expertise and resources for economic planning, grant writing, and business support programs. Chesterfield can also collaborate with ROOST to help promote and enhance its agritourism economy and market its recreational and scenic offerings to attract visitors and prospective businesses. ROOST could also provide guidance on sustainable tourism practices, ensuring that as visitor numbers grow, the Town maintains its environmental integrity and rural character. ROOST's research and data analysis capabilities could also help Chesterfield understand tourism trends to assist the Town in optimizing tourism's economic benefits. Partnering with these organizations can provide Chesterfield with access to resources and technical assistance that might be difficult to develop internally.

The Town can also dedicate a digital resource hub on the official Town website to centralize information on businesses incentives, grants, and training programs to increase accessibility to the Town's economic profile current trends through online resources. Creating a volunteer economic advisory committee can also help promote growth and development in Town. The Committee can be tasked with identifying opportunities, new resources, and community involvement.

Promoting Town assets like the Mace Chasm Corridor for agritourism and the variety of outdoor recreational and scenic opportunities through digital marketing and in partnership with organizations will attract visitors and stimulate growth and development within Town without straining municipal staff and resources.

## **E2. Identify approaches for sustaining small businesses, promoting expansion, and attracting new businesses.**

Having reliable broadband access is essential for the modern business landscape and supporting existing businesses in the Town of Chesterfield. Expanding internet access will make Chesterfield more attractive, not only to prospective residents, but also businesses, including technology based, remote businesses, and smaller businesses seeking to keep up with new technologies like tap-to-pay: a newer and frequently used method of payment. Reliable internet access also supports businesses who wish to curate a steady online presence to expand their customer base, and ultimately, revenue.

The Town can also partner with organizations to attract and increase tourism around Front Street, the Mace Chasm Corridor, and the Town's various scenic resources. Strategies to attract visitors and increased participation of residents could include developing nature trails, historical tours, or cultural festivals. If there are already similar events in place, the Town would stand to benefit from greater outreach and publicity of those events, specifically by utilizing organizations like ROOST.

The Town can also streamline permitting processes to simplify the methods for setting up a new business or expanding an existing business in the Town. Streamlining timeframes (to the Town's discretion) would support the overarching goal of creating an accessible pro-business environment for newcomers.

As for other incentives, the Town can offer property or income tax breaks or lower cost utilities to help a new or expanding business invest in itself and the community for a set number of years. However, the Town should require documents like a pro-forma or business plan and operating forecast to determine whether it is feasible and equitable for the Town to offer a tax break or utilities at a lower cost.

## **E3. Support commercial business start-up in the Town of Chesterfield.**

Securing Town-wide access to reliable broadband is a great way to provide support for new businesses looking to setup shop in Town. Broadband aside, the Town can foster commercial business start-ups by addressing needs critical to a new business, like funding, infrastructure, and education. Partnering with local and regional organizations, particularly the Essex County Industrial Development Agency (IDA), can expand access to micro-grants or low-interest loans. The IDA can provide various forms of assistance, including loan programs and grants, which lessen the financial burdens budding businesses sometimes face. The IDA's network of regional organizations and experts can also be helpful to new businesses by connecting local entrepreneurs with professionals that provide startup assistance. In addition, the Town can offer temporary tax abatements based on increased property valuation for new businesses or information and resources on accessing funding opportunities.

#### **E4. Continue to strengthen and expand partnerships with local, regional, and state agencies to support economic and business growth.**

There are a few agencies or organizations the Town can further engage with to support economic and business growth. For example, the Essex County IDA, The Adirondack Economic Development Corporation (AEDC), the North Country Chamber of Commerce, local colleges, the Adirondack Park Agency (APA), NYSDEC, NYSDOS, and Empire State Development (ESD).

To deepen collaboration with the [Essex County IDA](#), the Town could partner on joint business support initiatives, such as co-hosted business development workshops or start-up grant programs. Establishing regular communication with the IDA will also help Chesterfield stay informed about available financial assistance, tax incentives, and infrastructure grants that can be promoted to local businesses. Chesterfield can also invite IDA representatives to Town meetings to discuss programs and other opportunities for new businesses and general economic development.

The [AEDC](#) offers comprehensive business development services, like specialized training programs, small business loans, and financial education resources. The Town or designated representatives can collaborate with the AEDC to host workshops tailored for local entrepreneurs and direct them to AEDC's small business financing programs. The Town can also consider developing a local business incubator or mentorship program in partnership with the AEDC to provide critical support for start-ups and facilitate the expansion of existing businesses in Chesterfield.

The [North Country Chamber of Commerce](#) provides critical resources to support business growth in the Adirondack region, like Essex County, including networking opportunities, business advocacy and outreach, and tourism promotion services. Chesterfield can engage with the Chamber as an active member to enhance the Town's presence within the regional business community and utilize the Chamber's marketing channels to promote local businesses. The Chamber can also connect Chesterfield employers to a skilled workforce market through their workforce development programs.

Chesterfield can engage with NYSDOS and ESD programs to gain access to state-level grants, like the Downtown Revitalization Initiative (DRI), NY Forward and New York Main Street grants. These initiatives can fund improvements to Chesterfield's public spaces, storefronts, and infrastructure. Chesterfield, in partnership with the County, can utilize assistance that ESD and the DOS provide to apply for these downtown revitalization grants. ESD's [Small Business Development Centers](#) (SBDCs) also offer resources and guidance for entrepreneurs. Chesterfield can promote these resources through local events or by promoting them through a dedicated digital resource hub on the Town's official website.

The Town can also strengthen collaboration with agencies like the Adirondack Park Agency (APA) and NYSDEC. The APA manages environmental conservation efforts within the Adirondacks, while the NYSDEC manages a broad range of environmental efforts across the state. Chesterfield can utilize the APA's and DEC's resources to leverage the variety of natural and scenic assets in Town and drive eco-tourism and expand outdoor recreational

opportunities. The Town could work with the APA and DEC to assist with the Town's efforts in increasing access to Trembleau Mountain.

**E5. Work with Lake Champlain Transportation Company to determine a mutually beneficial future for their private beach, small marina, and former ferry dock.**

Working with the Lake Champlain Transportation Company (LCTC) can benefit both the LCTC and Chesterfield by transforming underutilized assets into community resources that can bolster local tourism, expand recreational opportunities, and support economic activity. For example, improving the lakefront area will attract more residents and visitors, utilize untapped recreational activities, generate revenue through local business and tourism, and promote environmental stewardship. Overall, collaborating with the LCTC helps the Town move toward its goals for economic vitality and peak LCTC's interest as this will maximize the value of their property and business.

The Town can take steps toward expanding collaboration with LCTC to identify challenges and opportunities for the property. Once the Town understands LCTC's plans for the property, the Town can begin discussing potential ideas that are driven by community support. Together, the Town and LCTC can pursue a mutually beneficial solution for the future of Port Kent and LCTC properties.

**E6. Collaborate with local and regional partners to facilitate festivals and events during all seasons.**

The Town of Chesterfield can develop and promote year-round festivals and events, similar to events previously prepared with AdkAction and Bike NY, by partnering with local and regional organizations like ROOST and the North Country Chamber of Commerce. Chesterfield can leverage their marketing support and business sponsorships to expand outreach and potentially secure funding for events. Local businesses, artisans, and farms can be involved as vendors or sponsors, creating an event where local food, crafts, and products are featured.

The Town can also engage Champlain Valley Educational Services, local youth organizations, and environmental groups to diversify partnerships and increase attendance at events while utilizing community participation. Seasonal, family-friendly activities, like winter festivals or summer sports tournaments, can attract all age groups, while events like guided nature tours or conservation workshops promote eco-tourism, environmental stewardship, and community connectedness. Chesterfield can also collaborate with volunteers or Essex County Public Transportation on transportation solutions to provide safe and convenient transportation to nearby events.

**E7. Connect businesses with resources for growth and development.**

The Town can form a volunteer economic advisory committee to identify resources that

businesses can use to achieve sustainable economic growth and development. As resources are identified, the Town can add them to a dedicated digital resource repository located on their website. Resources can include information on businesses incentives, grants, and training programs to increase accessibility to online resources. This can become a digital hub for learning about new opportunities and strategies aimed at business growth and development for new or matured businesses. The [ECIDA](#) has many resources located on their website. The Town can increase visibility for and accessibility to these resources by promoting them on the official Town website, social media platforms, and informational brochures.

#### **E8. Develop an effective marketing strategy to promote the Town.**

The Town of Chesterfield can develop an effective marketing strategy centralized around Chesterfield's unique attractions, community events, and natural resources. This strategy should include a comprehensive branding initiative that highlights Chesterfield's rich history, outdoor recreational opportunities, and local businesses. Collaborating with regional tourism organizations such as the Adirondack Regional Tourism Council, the North Country Chamber of Commerce, and ROOST can amplify Chesterfield's marketing efforts. These partnerships can provide insights into regional trends and access to broader promotional networks, enabling the Town to reach potential visitors more effectively. Additionally, leveraging social media platforms and community engagement initiatives will help create a vibrant online presence that showcases Chesterfield's offerings and engages both residents and visitors.

Establishing a marketing strategy is crucial for Chesterfield as it can significantly enhance economic development by attracting tourists and new residents, which in turn supports local businesses. By promoting seasonal festivals, recreational activities, and local events, the Town can create a sense of community pride and encourage participation from residents and visitors alike.

## SECTION 7. TRANSPORTATION, MOBILITY & ACCESS

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### Transportation, Mobility & Access Overview

**GOAL:** Provide safe, convenient, and efficient transportation opportunities for people and goods that harmonize with the Town's communities, recreational and scenic assets, and economic clusters.

Transportation corridors play a crucial role in the development and accessibility of Chesterfield. The Town's strategic location near the Ausable River, Lake Champlain, and major thoroughfares such as I-87 (Northway) and US Route 9, along with the decommissioned Amtrak rail line infrastructure, offers numerous opportunities for residents and visitors to access the Town. These transportation assets not only facilitate travel and commerce but also enhance Chesterfield's appeal as a destination for tourism and recreation, contributing to its economic growth and community connectivity.

#### Vehicular Mobility

The Town of Chesterfield is mainly reliant on cars for transportation, as most activities require private vehicle use due to limited public transit options. I-87 (Northway) a key interstate highway, connects Albany to the Canadian border, passing through several counties, including Essex. Chesterfield can be easily accessed via Exit 33, located at the intersection of NY Route 22 and US Route 9, which is a primary access point for travelers from the north accessing Lake Placid and the High Peaks area. Another entry point is Exit 34 in the Town of Ausable, which leads to Pleasant Street and Main Street in Ausable.

In addition to the Northway, US Route 9 runs through the town, offering local access. NYS Route 373 connects the Hamlet of Port Kent to Ausable Chasm and US Route 9, while NY Route 22 runs alongside US Route 9 for most of its route through Chesterfield, splitting off at Exit 33 to link with the Town of Willsboro. This network of roads facilitates travel within and beyond Chesterfield, ensuring residents and visitors can navigate the area effectively. This road networks are crucial for Chesterfield residents as many travel outside Town to Peru and Plattsburgh to meet essential needs.

#### Transit Options

The principal transit provider for the community is Clinton County Transit with a stop at Adirondack Hardware within the Hamlet of Keeseville in Chesterfield. This route runs five (5) times per day during the week and connects Keeseville to both Plattsburgh and Ausable Forks. It travels along US Route 9 and NYS Route 9N with stops at the Villa Motel in Ausable,

Tops Market in Ausable Forks, and Clinton Community College and Clinton County Government Center in Plattsburgh.

The Essex County Public Transportation (ECPT) also provides regularly schedules bus service in towns and throughout the county. Connections can be made in Ausable Forks and Keeseville to Clinton County public transit buses. The Champlain North Route provides transportation to Elizabethtown, Keeseville, Chesterfield, Willsboro, and Essex.

While there was once seasonal access to passenger rail and Lake Champlain ferry service within the Town of Chesterfield, these amenities are now located to the south at the Essex Ferry and Westport Train Station and to the north in Plattsburgh. Plattsburgh also possesses the sole international airport north of Albany and east of Watertown in New York State. The Plattsburgh International Airport provides access to primarily east coast destinations. The Adirondack Regional Airport is in Saranac Lake and provides daily commercial flights. The Amtrak station in Plattsburgh connects the region north to Montreal and south to New York City and Buffalo and all points beyond.

## Bicycle and Pedestrian Mobility

US Route 9 and NY Route 22 are part of the Empire State Bike Trail, but Chesterfield currently lacks adequate bicycle infrastructure. While there is limited provision for cyclists, the Town has a network of sidewalks that offer safe walking paths along key streets such as Front Street, Main Street, Clinton Street, Vine Street, Kent Street, and Beach Street. These sidewalks also provide a connection across the Ausable River to the Town of Ausable. These denser locations of Chesterfield are a prime location for the Town to implement Complete Streets elements.

Complete Streets is a transportation planning approach that ensures roadways are designed and operated to accommodate all users, regardless of age, ability, or mode of transportation. In New York State, this concept promotes the integration of features such as bike lanes, pedestrian pathways, accessible transit stops, and safer crossings, aiming to create a more inclusive, sustainable, and efficient transportation network for communities.

## Challenges & Opportunities

In Chesterfield, implementing a Complete Streets initiative presents both significant challenges and opportunities. One challenge is the need for a forward-thinking approach to infrastructure planning, as many existing roads may require upgrades to meet Complete Streets standards. However, adopting this policy can open numerous funding opportunities at both the state and federal levels, making it financially feasible to improve transportation infrastructure.

Complete Streets can enhance mobility in Chesterfield's hamlet areas, namely Keeseville, and promote local businesses by increasing foot traffic by providing safe and convenient access for all users. Simply adding sidewalks consistent with Complete Streets initiatives can increase access to Town assets, like the Riverfront Park on Mill Street. The initiative can also link to the Chesterfield Bike Loop project, creating a cohesive network that encourages active transportation. Additionally, the development of a master plan can serve as a guiding document, ensuring that future Town development and improvements align with the goals of the Complete Streets policy.

The New York State Department of Transportation emphasizes that Complete Streets contribute to a cleaner and greener transportation system, helping reduce traffic congestion and air pollution while promoting health benefits associated with active forms of transportation. A 2015 study by Smart Growth America found that completed Complete Streets projects generally improved safety, increased biking and walking, and showed varied impacts on automobile traffic depending on project goals. By addressing these challenges and seizing the opportunities, Chesterfield can create a more accessible community.

Streetscaping offers a transformative opportunity for Chesterfield by enhancing the Town's attractiveness and inviting atmosphere. Creating visually appealing and well-connected streetscape can draw more visitors and potential new residents and increase foot traffic that supports local businesses. Streetscaping upgrades in the hamlet of Keeseville have been noted many times throughout the community survey and at public engagement events and are seen as beneficial for both the local economy and the overall quality of life. Improved streetscapes not only attract new businesses but also help retain existing ones by making the area more appealing to shoppers and residents alike.

Community members have also expressed a desire for additional parking in Town, citing parking amenities are limited or far away from their destinations. Increasing parking near local assets and businesses may be beneficial for the Town as it would provide additional space for residents and visitors. Efficient parking layouts reduce traffic congestion and associated emissions by minimizing the time spent searching for spaces, while also supporting economic development by encouraging foot traffic to businesses in Town. Thoughtfully designed parking can optimize land use, enhance safety, and can support the Town's sustainability efforts by incorporating features like green spaces, pedestrian zones, EV charging stations, and eco-friendly infrastructure.

The Port Kent Amtrak station represents an opportunity for revitalization in Chesterfield, as the station is currently closed. This infrastructure, with its rich history, reflects past economic shifts and stands as a reminder of the Town's potential for renewal. The Town can initiate a unified effort to improve public transportation by collaborating with neighboring municipalities to expand access to the North Country and beyond. This would benefit local businesses and the community at large, attracting tourists and bolstering strong, local commerce. There is considerable community support for this initiative, indicating a willingness among residents to engage in discussions about transit improvements. By leveraging these opportunities and engaging community input, Chesterfield has the potential to transform the Port Kent Amtrak station.



*Port Kent Amtrak Station.*

In Chesterfield, noise from truck traffic on Front Street poses a challenge to the Hamlet's overall attractiveness and quality of life. The constant noise from large vehicles can make an area feel less desirable to residents and visitors, exacerbating concerns about safety and livability. In Chesterfield, this challenge presents an opportunity for infrastructure improvement. A comprehensive traffic study could identify traffic patterns, assess the impact of heavy vehicles, and explore noise mitigation solutions. By gathering data for future planning, such a study could lead to traffic calming measures, improved signage, and maybe a slight rerouting of heavy vehicles by diverting their routes from the arch bridge to the State owned bridge, ultimately enhancing residents' quality of life and making Chesterfield more appealing to new residents and businesses.

As for regional transit, Essex County Public Transportation (ECPT) provides limited transit services in Chesterfield, including stops in Keeseville and connections to larger hubs like Lake Placid via the "Mountain Valley Shuttle." However, the service struggles with challenges such as limited coverage, workforce shortages, and low ridership, leaving some residents without sufficient access to essential services and employment. Many routes require advance reservations, impacting those in outlying areas. Despite these issues, ECPT is gathering residents' feedback to identify potential route expansions and improve service as staffing allows. If successful, these enhancements could increase ridership and improve accessibility.

## Transportation, Mobility & Access Recommendations

The CPC developed five (5) Transportation, Mobility & Access recommendations:

**T1.** Adopt a Complete Streets policy to promote accessibility and safer access Town-wide.

**T2.** Develop a Bicycle, Pedestrian, and Trails Connectivity Plan.

**T3.** Collaborate with regional partners to consider expanding access to regional transit option(s).

**T4.** Work with Amtrak and local and regional officials to assess the viability of reactivating the Port Kent Amtrak Station.

**T5.** Prepare a traffic study in partnership with Essex County.

These recommendations are discussed in detail below.

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### **T1. Adopt a Complete Streets policy to promote accessibility and safer access Town-wide.**

#### *Complete Streets Policy*

To adopt a Complete Streets policy in Chesterfield based on the Smart Growth America Complete Streets Framework, the Town should start by organizing outreach efforts to engage residents and stakeholders in discussions about transportation needs and preferences. Given Chesterfield's good working relationship, proximity, and shared community cohesiveness with the Town of Ausable, the Town should consider a joint Complete Streets Policy with the Town of Ausable. These engagement initiatives can be used to collect community feedback on current challenges and desired improvements to Chesterfield's transportation options.

Utilizing community input and feedback on current challenges, the Town can establish clear goals and objectives, focusing on enhancing safety, accessibility, and mobility while addressing environmental sustainability and economic vitality. These goals and objectives will serve as the basis for standards that reflect best practices for Complete Streets, tailored to Chesterfield's unique context. The standards typically include safe and convenient ADA access for sidewalks, safe crosswalks, and public transit facilities. The policy should also be aligned with any other land use plans to ensure efficient land use and a cohesive approach to transportation and community development.

Meeting with stakeholders like [Essex County Public Transportation \(ECPT\)](#) and other local groups will help the Town gain insights for tailoring the process to specific community needs, and they may be able to help provide resources for implementing the policy. The Town should

also look to establish a framework for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of such a policy, as it may evolve over time with community development.

### *Hamlet Guidelines*

Using the public process above, the Town of Chesterfield should also develop specific complete streets strategies to be deployed in the Town's hamlets. For example, the Town can upgrade the Hamlet of Keeseville's streetscape to be ADA compliant and active, while providing safer and more convenient bicycle and pedestrian connections.

To upgrade Keeseville's streetscape for ADA compliance and active transportation, Chesterfield can install accessible sidewalks, curb ramps, and crosswalks with safety signals, as well as dedicated bike lanes for safer pedestrian and bicycle connections. Enhancements like benches, lighting, and wayfinding signage will make the area more welcoming and accessible. Funding options include the [Transportation Alternatives Program \(TAP\)](#) for ADA and pedestrian infrastructure, [Safe Streets and Roads for All \(SS4A\)](#) for safety improvements, and the [Community Development Block Grant \(CDBG\)](#) for broader streetscape enhancements. The State's [NY Forward program](#) could significantly support Keeseville's streetscape upgrades by funding ADA-compliant features, pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure, and streetscape enhancements utilizing a community planning approach.

### *Transportation Amenities*

As part of these guidelines, Chesterfield can also revitalize transportation amenities. Chesterfield can enhance existing transit stops, improve signage, and develop pedestrian-friendly pathways, especially in key areas like Port Kent and Keeseville. Installing sheltered bus stops with benches and clear route information would improve comfort for residents, visitors, and commuters. The Town can also enhance walkability by implementing sidewalks, lighting, and crosswalks in more trafficked areas to make pedestrian travel safer and more accessible. Bicycle-friendly infrastructure, like racks and pump stations, could be added to support bike commuting and tourism, particularly along routes that connect to the proposed Chesterfield Bike Loop. Additionally, updating wayfinding signage to highlight town landmarks, trailheads, and public transit options would create a cohesive, user-friendly network of transportation amenities.

### *Connective Streetscaping*

In addition, the Town should implement streetscaping elements that connect to existing and planned trails (like the Chesterfield Bike Loop) to support increased connectivity. Community engagement should be used to gather input on preferred streetscaping features such as landscaping, benches, bike racks, and wayfinding signage that will promote these connections. Once community input is captured and documented, the Town can include this as part of the policy and as part of a larger connective plan (see recommendation T2. below) that incorporates streetscaping elements along major connective nodes and near

trailheads, ensuring alignment with the aesthetics and functionality of the area. This should also include safety measures, such as clearly marked crosswalks and dedicated bike lanes, to facilitate safe transitions between existing and proposed streets and trails, like the proposed bike loop. The Town should look to pursue funding opportunities and collaborate with local organizations to implement the streetscaping elements. Funding sources can include federal, state, and local and regional grants like:

- [Transportation Alternatives Program \(TAP\)](#)
- [Recreational Trails Program \(RTP\)](#)
- [New York State Department of Transportation \(NYSDOT\)](#)
- [Environmental Protection Fund \(EPF\)](#)
- [North Country Regional Economic Development Council \(NCREDC\)](#)
- [Community Development Block Grants \(CDBG\)](#)

Grant funding sources aside, the Town could establish public private partnerships with local businesses or developers that are interested in funding local streetscape improvements. For new developments, the Town can encourage streetscaping elements during project reviews at the Town boards.

## **T2. Develop a Bicycle, Pedestrian, and Trails Connectivity Plan.**

Developing a Bicycle, Pedestrian, and Trails Connectivity Plan is essential for complementing the complete streets policy. This plan helps ensure that complete streets strategies focus on higher-traffic areas while maintaining the town's character and linking the hamlet areas with the rest of the Town through effective connectivity planning.

The development of this plan should start with establishing the plan's purpose and objectives, with community and stakeholder input serving as its foundation. Using the already prepared assessment from the Complete Streets policy process, the Town can identify gaps in bicycle, pedestrian, and trail infrastructure that need improvement.

Once the gaps or areas for improvement are identified, detailed design guidelines can be developed. The plan should also identify locations for new or expanded multiuse paths, bike lanes, and signage connecting key destinations and proposed projects like the Chesterfield Bike Loop. Design factors like community needs, safety improvements, cost-effectiveness, and potential funding sources will help guide these projects to implementation.

The plan should also establish implementation strategies outlining timeframes, responsibilities, and potential partners and funding sources. Once the preliminary draft plan is developed it should be shared with the public, revised based on community feedback, and eventually adopted.

**T3. Collaborate with regional partners to consider expanding access to regional transit option(s).**

Chesterfield can collaborate with Essex County, nearby towns, and organizations like the Adirondack North Country Association (ANCA), to explore expanded transit solutions. Given the limited Essex County Public Transportation (ECPT) coverage and workforce shortages, a shared effort with neighboring communities can help reduce operational costs and create more comprehensive routes. Chesterfield and its partners could consider options such as a shared shuttle service connecting key areas or an on-demand transit service that uses local drivers for flexible coverage. Involving regional employers and transportation organizations would also help ensure that services align with community needs, such as work commutes, medical visits, and essential shopping trips. Public feedback and grant opportunities through [New York State's Public Transportation Modernization Program](#) should be pursued to make transit more accessible and sustainable for Chesterfield and the broader area.

**T4. Work with Amtrak and local and regional officials to assess the viability of reactivating the Port Kent Amtrak Station.**

Chesterfield can collaborate with Amtrak, New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT), and regional partners like Essex County and the Adirondack North Country Association to explore reactivating the Port Kent Amtrak Station. Together these entities can evaluate whether reinstating the station aligns with regional transit needs by jointly assessing ridership demand, regional transportation trends, and potential economic benefits. Chesterfield should support the discussions by conducting a feasibility study and a community survey to gauge community interest and potential benefits from increased tourism traffic. If results show viable demand, Chesterfield can work with Amtrak and state officials to explore funding sources, like federal transit grants, to assist with necessary infrastructure updates and ongoing operational support.

**T5. Prepare a traffic study in partnership with Essex County.**

To prepare a traffic study, Chesterfield can collaborate with Essex County to assess local traffic patterns, road safety, parking options and amenities, and congestion points, especially in high-traffic areas like Front Street in Keeseville. To start, the Town should work with the Essex County Planning Agency to outline key data requirements, like vehicle counts, travel times, and pedestrian traffic flow. Essex County can support Chesterfield in identifying specific intersections or streets that require improvements and may also provide access to specialized data collection equipment. Together, the County and Town can pursue funding options, like the [NYSDOT Local Government Assistance Program](#) or the [Safe Streets and Roads for All \(SS4A\) grants](#), to cover study costs and develop strategies.

## SECTION 8. PARKS, RECREATION & OPEN SPACE

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### Parks, Recreation & Open Space Overview

**GOAL:** Enhance Town parks, recreational assets, and access to scenic resources for all people. Link these resources to key economic clusters and neighborhoods.

Parks, recreation, and open spaces are vital to enhancing the well-being of individuals and communities. These communal hubs foster social interactions and cultivate a strong sense of belonging among residents. With accessible parks, sports facilities, and cultural spaces, individuals are encouraged to engage in physical activities, promoting healthier lifestyles and lowering the risk of lifestyle-related illnesses.

Beyond their physical benefits, parks significantly contribute to mental health by providing tranquil environments that alleviate stress and promote relaxation. Additionally, their positive economic impact cannot be overlooked; parks attract visitors and support local businesses, highlighting their multifaceted role in creating healthier, happier, and more vibrant communities. Investing in these spaces is essential for nurturing both individual well-being and community vitality.

In the Town of Chesterfield, the management of municipal parks and recreational areas usually falls under the purview of the Town Board and various local committees. The Town is responsible for overseeing the maintenance and improvement of the public parks, for example the recent upgrades to Veteran's Park are thanks to the Town's community efforts and donations.

Chesterfield's parks, outdoor recreation facilities, and conserved open spaces contribute substantially to the character of the Town and the lives of its residents. Parks and open spaces provide a host of



*Ausable River, captured from the Stone Arch Bridge*

ecosystem services – stormwater runoff management, air and water filtration, plant, and animal habitat – in addition to promoting public health with opportunities for active and passive recreation. Chesterfield’s parks and outdoor recreation resources include a mix of municipal parks, State parklands, and private recreation.

## Municipal Parks

### *Veteran’s Park*

Located in downtown Keeseville features historical plaques, benches, and a large statue in honor of Veterans. In the past, the Town held a tribute for local veterans with custom-made military dog tags. The tags are sold for fundraising and put on display at Veterans Park.

### *Anderson Falls Park*

Recently revitalized by dedicated and active community members, this park offers views of Anderson Falls; a 10-foot-high waterfall, the Stone Arch Bridge, and the pedestrian swing bridge.

### *Jaycee Park*

Located in Keeseville, this park is home to various community events. In the past it hosted the Keeseville Field Day and Parade with various food trucks, vendors, games and activities. This park also features baseball, soccer, and softball fields, and a roller skate /skateboard park. It is currently being expanded to provide additional playing fields and walking paths. The park is jointly managed by the Youth League, Town of Chesterfield and Town of Ausable Joint Committee.

### *Watson Square Park*

Situated in Port Kent, this park features a playground, gazebo, basketball court, tennis court, and picturesque views of Lake Champlain.

### *Port Douglass Beach*

Located on County Route 16, this quiet beach features picnic tables, parking, restroom facilities, and a swimming area when staffed. Immediately adjacent is a NYSDEC boat launch that is handicap accessible.



*Veteran’s Park, Source: Community Survey*

## State Park Lands

### *Trembleau Mountain*

Located in the Town of Chesterfield, Trembleau Mountain is a peak (highest is 994 ft.) known for its rewarding views and hiking trails. This park is over 1000 acres and includes 4000 ft. of frontage on Lake Champlain and major vistas of the Lake, Vermont's Green Mountains and the High Peaks of NY from atop its three peaks. The mountain offers a range of outdoor activities, including wildlife observation and serves as an attraction for nature and hiking enthusiasts. Its stunning landscapes and rich natural environment make Trembleau Mountain a destination for both locals and visitors exploring Chesterfield.

### *Wickham Marsh Wildlife Management Area*

This park serves three key purposes: wildlife management, wildlife habitat management, and wildlife-dependent recreation. The area covers 862 acres and is located in the northern portion of the Town. Land purchases for this management area began in 1950 and have grown over time with the final acquisition being in 1970. Featured activities include hiking, cross country skiing, freshwater fishing, hunting, and trapping. The area is open year-round and has free admission.

### *Schuyler Island*

This island is the eastern most component of the Town in Lake Champlain. It spans 123 acres and was acquired by New York State in 1967. Schuyler Island is part of the Adirondack Preserve and has a view of the Green Mountains and the City of Burlington, Vermont. Visitors can camp on the island without permits or reservations. Its south shore offers protection from high winds and waves and is frequently used as an anchorage for boaters.

### *Poke-O-Moonshine State Land*

Poke-O-Moonshine is situated on the border of the Towns of Chesterfield and Lewis and only a few miles from Interstate 87. The Mountain has a peak of 2,180 feet with a fire tower and provides panoramic views of Lake Champlain, the High Peaks Wilderness, and the Jay Range. Activities offered here include hiking, birding, rock climbing, camping, and snowshoeing in the winter.

## Private/Other Recreational Opportunities

### *Port Kent Beach*

Situated three miles east of the Ausable Chasm and located at the end of Route 373, this beach is privately owned but frequently used by the public and offers views of Lake Champlain and Vermont's Green Mountains.

### *Harmony Golf Club*

This is a scenic, 14-hole public golf course known for its stunning views and well-maintained greens. The club offers a welcoming atmosphere for golfers of all skill levels, featuring various amenities such as a pro shop, practice facilities, and a clubhouse for dining and social events. Harmony Golf Club serves as a popular destination for both residents and visitors looking to enjoy a round of golf.

### *Chesterfield Fish and Game Club*

The club is a local organization that promotes outdoor recreational activities, conservation, and responsible wildlife management in the Town. The club offers various programs and events, including hunting, fishing, and educational workshops. The Game and Fish Club serves as a valuable community resource for outdoor enthusiasts in the area as it focuses on preserving the natural environment and enhancing outdoor experiences.

### *Ausable Chasm Recreation Area*

Established in 1870, Ausable Chasm is a privately owned natural wonder that invites visitors to explore its breathtaking landscapes. Guests can traverse nature trails to enjoy scenic vistas and stunning waterfalls for the price of admission. The area offers a range of activities, including lantern tours, rock climbing, camping, raft float tours, tubing, and rappelling. Notable landmarks within the chasm include Rainbow Falls, Column Rock, Elephant's Head, Hyde's Cave, and Mystic Gorge, making it a must-visit destination for outdoor enthusiasts.

## Natural Recreational and Open Space Resources

### *Lake Champlain*

The Lake is situated to the east of the Town and offers various recreational opportunities to visitors and residents of the Town. Lake Champlain is a popular paddling destination for canoes, flat water, and sea kayaks. Bass fishing is another major recreational activity on the lake and was ranked among the Top 5 in Bassmaster's best bass lakes in the northeast.

### *Augur Lake*

This private lake is located a few miles south of Keeseville and features a distinct tranquil lakeside neighborhood. The Lake offers recreational opportunities such as swimming, fishing, kayaking, and hiking along scenic trails.

### *Ausable River*

The Ausable River flows through the Town of Chesterfield, offering a stunning backdrop for outdoor activities and scenic views. Renowned for its excellent fishing opportunities, the river attracts anglers seeking trout and other species, while its calm waters are ideal for

kayaking and canoeing. With picturesque landscapes and abundant wildlife, the Ausable River serves as a vital natural resource for recreation and enjoyment in the community.

## Challenges & Opportunities

A significant challenge in expanding recreational areas, specifically in Port Kent, is the private ownership by the Lake Champlain Transportation Company (LCTC). This private ownership limits the Town's control over land use, making it difficult to develop public amenities or expand access to waterfront areas. The challenge lies in negotiating potential partnerships or agreements with LCTC to allow for recreational improvements while respecting private property rights. Additionally, the need for funding and resources to develop, maintain, and monitor expanded recreational areas poses an added complexity, especially given the Town's with limited resources.

Despite these challenges, Chesterfield community members have expressed support for enhancing recreational areas at Port Kent. In the community survey responses and at public engagement events, residents have indicated a desire for cleaner beaches and greater access to swimming facilities. This community backing could be leveraged in seeking grant funding or public-private partnerships to improve and maintain these areas. Expanding recreational options along the Lake Champlain waterfront aligns well with regional tourism goals and could attract visitors, boosting the local economy and creating seasonal jobs.

While providing safe access to the Ausable River in the hamlet of Keeseville would increase opportunities for wading and fishing, safety presents a substantial challenge. Ensuring public safety along river access points and preventing accidents could require significant resources and risk management strategies, as liability concerns are a potential issue for the Town. Installing protective infrastructure, such as handrails, clear signage, and designated entry points, will be necessary in order to minimize risks. The costs associated with safety measures and ongoing maintenance could also strain the Town's budget, making it essential to explore funding options and partnerships, perhaps with NYSDEC to support the development of safe access points.

However, there is strong community support for enhancing access to the Ausable River, as it would allow residents and visitors to engage more deeply with one of Chesterfield's most scenic natural resources. Safe wading and fishing areas along the river could boost tourism by attracting outdoor enthusiasts to the region, and given its intended proximity to Keeseville's downtown, this would support local businesses and promote economic growth. The river is also an excellent educational resource, offering opportunities for community-led environmental education programs and conservation efforts. Chesterfield could develop safe, accessible river areas that enrich community life, promote environmental stewardship,

and create new recreational opportunities by partnering with the Ausable River Association and seeking grants for recreation and conservation.

During public engagement events, community members have highlighted the potential of a bike loop in the Town. The Chesterfield Bike Loop (CBL) has the potential to transform local recreation and transportation by promoting active, healthy lifestyles and increasing accessibility throughout the Town. A bike loop would connect directly to the NYS Empire State Trail on Front Street, creating a continuous route for cyclists traveling into and through Chesterfield. By linking Keeseville, the Mace Chasm Corridor, and the Town's hamlets, the loop could also enhance access to local businesses, making it easier for residents and visitors to explore local shops, restaurants, and attractions by bike. The proposed bike loop also offers an exciting opportunity to host events, such as bike tours or triathlons, drawing participants and spectators who would contribute to the Town's economy and increase its visibility as a destination for outdoor recreation.

BikeADK is an Adirondack owned and operated bicycle company from Saranac Lake. The organization creates and supports charity driven events, trail networks and bike routes, and has become a recognized brand in the Adirondack region. BikeADK curates 'Bike the Barns' which is a fall bicycling tour featuring farms stops. The draw to the tour is not only the group-style active recreation or the local brews and food, but its ability to tell the unique agricultural story of the Lake Champlain Valley and its rewarding landscapes. The Bike the Barns tour has previously started and ended at the Ausable Brewing company on Mace Chasm Road but is not a permanent site for the Bike the Barns event.

The Town has a great opportunity to create and formalize the CBL and work with BikeADK to utilize the Bike Loop for events like Bike the Barns. In turn, this would help publicize and draw attention to the Bike Loop and enhance its draw as a regional attraction. Having events utilize the Bike Loop would not only enhance Chesterfield's regional presence but have a synergistic effect that would bolster the local economy, most notably in the Keeseville's downtown area and the agritourism industry along the Mace Chasm corridor.

The bike loop could incorporate green infrastructure, such as rain gardens and permeable pavement, which would not only improve stormwater management but also create a visually appealing, environmentally friendly space. Nature information signs along the route would encourage environmental education and appreciation for Chesterfield's natural surroundings, further enriching the experience for cyclists and promoting sustainable tourism.

Establishing the CBL would require careful planning and funding to ensure safe, well-designed infrastructure, especially if it is connected to the Empire State Trail. Budget constraints could pose a challenge for a project of this scale, necessitating grants or funding partnerships with state and local organizations. Additionally, coordination with New York

State agencies, Keeseville, and local property owners would be necessary to secure right-of-way access and ensure alignment with regional trail standards.

Chesterfield's unique assets like the Ausable River, Augur Lake, Trembleau Mountain, and the potential Bike Loop (to name a few) can be strategically marketed to boost its visibility as a tourist destination. The Town can enhance its presence across digital platforms, reaching outdoor enthusiasts and promoting activities like hiking, fishing, and cycling by partnering with ROOST. This collaboration would attract more visitors, support local businesses, strengthen Chesterfield's local economy, and promote environmental stewardship, opening the Town to future recreational opportunities.

A management plan for Trembleau Mountain is currently underway, presenting an opportunity to establish a cohesive trail marking system that could be expanded Town wide. Integrating trail markers would enhance visitor experience, promote safe navigation, and create a unified branding for Chesterfield's recreational spaces. Partnering with the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) on this initiative would not only strengthen ties with state conservation efforts but also provide additional resources and expertise, benefiting both the management of Trembleau Mountain and the broader recreational goals of the Town.

## Parks, Recreation & Open Space Recommendations

The CPC developed six (6) Parks, Recreation and Open Space recommendations:

- R1.** Prepare a preliminary design concept and route for the Chesterfield Bike Loop developed with community input.
- R2.** Expand upon Port Kent's existing assets by enhancing recreational facilities.
- R3.** Develop a marketing plan in conjunction with ROOST to increase recreational tourism within the Town of Chesterfield.
- R4.** Provide safe access to the Ausable River for fishing in the Hamlet of Keeseville.
- R5.** Partner with the NYSDEC to assist the development of the Trembleau Management Plan.
- R6.** Identify potential collaborators like CATS, Lake Champlain Land Trust, or ADK Land Trust, to create a comprehensive trailway map and identify locations for trail markers.

These recommendations are discussed in detail below.

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**R1. Prepare a preliminary design concept and route for the Chesterfield Bike Loop developed with community input.**

To develop a preliminary design concept and route for the CBL, the Town can begin by organizing community input sessions to gather residents' and visitors feedback on initial paths, safety concerns, and desired amenities. The Town could then work with planning and design professionals to draft a conceptual route that aligns with these community priorities while maximizing access to scenic and cultural sites, as well as linking to the NYS Empire State Trail along Front Street.

To ensure inclusive participation, Chesterfield might consider multiple channels for feedback—such as public workshops, online surveys, and focus groups—to reach a broad range of residents. Once initial concepts are developed, the Town could display draft maps and a proposed design at community centers or through virtual platforms, inviting further public review.

The Town should also identify any regulatory agencies that might have jurisdiction over the proposed bike routes. Ensuing buy-in from the relevant agencies will be critical and can be used to garner support from organizations that can help to support the project.

## **R2. Expand upon Port Kent's existing assets by enhancing recreational facilities.**

The Town should begin by engaging in discussions with LCTC to identify areas where public recreational facilities, such as improved beach access, picnic areas, and boat launches, might be added with shared benefits in mind. Offering to collaborate on maintenance or enhancements could create mutually beneficial arrangements, addressing both the Town's interests in recreation and LCTC's operational priorities. To offset any financial burden on the Town or LCTC's resources, the Town and LCTC, and perhaps even the County might consider submitting joint applications for grants focused on enhancing waterfront access. Some grant programs include:

- [New York State Department of State \(NYSDOS\) Local Waterfront Revitalization Program \(LWRP\)](#)
- [New York State Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation \(OPRHP\)](#)
- [Consolidated Funding Application \(CFA\)](#)
- [Community Development Block Grants \(CDBG\)](#)
- [Lake Champlain Basin Program \(LCBP\)](#)

Through public engagement, the Town can also gauge community needs and preferences and present these findings to LCTC and other stakeholders as a foundation for cooperative planning. The Town should use public engagement as the basis for other park improvement initiatives, too.

### **R3. Develop a marketing plan in conjunction with ROOST to increase recreational tourism within the Town of Chesterfield.**

Chesterfield can partner with the ROOST to develop a targeted marketing plan aimed at increasing tourism by showcasing the Town's unique outdoor and cultural assets. This plan could highlight attractions like Port Kent's waterfront, the scenic Ausable River, Trembleau Mountain trails, and Chesterfield's access to other well-known assets that are appealing to visitors seeking outdoor recreation and relaxation. The plan could also highlight Keeseville as an emerging downtown center and the growing agritourism sector along Mace Chasm. Together, ROOST and Chesterfield could use digital campaigns, social media, and local tourism networks to boost visibility, promoting the Town as a charming, scenic destination for hiking, fishing, cycling, and cultural events. With ROOST's expertise in destination marketing, this collaborative plan would effectively connect Chesterfield's offerings with broader tourism trends and attract more visitors.

### **R4. Provide safe access to the Ausable River for fishing in the Hamlet of Keeseville.**

To provide safe access to the Ausable River, Chesterfield can begin by conducting a thorough assessment of existing access points and identify areas that require safety improvements. Engaging with community members and local stakeholders during this assessment will ensure that their concerns and suggestions are also considered. Once potential access points are identified, the Town can develop a plan that includes installing safety features such as railings, signage, and designated entry areas to guide users and reduce risks. Chesterfield should also consider partnering with organizations like the NYSDEC to secure technical assistance and potential funding for these enhancements. Promoting awareness through educational materials and public outreach can encourage responsible use of the river while fostering a sense of community and environmental stewardship.

### **R5. Partner with the NYSDEC to assist the development of the Trembleau Management Plan.**

Partnering with the NYSDEC for the Trembleau Management Plan offers significant benefits for Chesterfield, especially in relation to trail marking community engagement, and environmental stewardship. NYSDEC's expertise will ensure that proposed trail systems and recreational facilities are sustainable and safe, enhancing accessibility for residents and visitors alike. Collaborating with NYSDEC can open Chesterfield to funding opportunities that may be necessary to implement these initiatives. Working with NYSDEC also strengthens the Town's relationships with state agencies, demonstrating its commitment to preserving natural resources while promoting outdoor recreation in the Trembleau Mountain area.

**R6. Identify potential collaborators like CATS, Lake Champlain Land Trust, or ADK Land Trust, to create a comprehensive trailway map and identify locations for trail markers.**

To create a comprehensive Trailways map and identify locations for trail markers, the Town of Chesterfield can begin by researching and compiling a list of potential collaborators, such as the Champlain Area Trails (CATS), Lake Champlain Land Trust, and Adirondack Mountain Club (ADK) Land Trust, focusing on organizations that share similar goals in promoting outdoor recreation and conservation. Next, the Town can reach out to these organizations to gauge their interest levels in collaborating on the project and begin outlining the benefits of a unified trail system for the community and the potential for increased visibility for their efforts. Following this initial outreach, the Town can organize a planning meeting to discuss project objectives, share resources, and identify key locations for trails and markers, ensuring that the map reflects both existing trails and proposed connections. Through these partnerships, Chesterfield can effectively develop a comprehensive Trailways map that enhances recreational opportunities, meets the community's needs, all while strengthening community ties with local conservation organizations.

## SECTION 9. AGRICULTURE

### Agriculture Overview

**GOAL:** Promote the long-term sustainability of local agriculture. Recognize agriculture as a vital component of Chesterfield's economy and character.

The Town of Chesterfield's landscape and historic settlement patterns have been influenced by its agricultural history. Due to the Adirondack region's challenging terrain and climate, early settlers primarily engaged in subsistence farming practices. The regions' short growing seasons and rocky soils limited crop diversity, leaving many farms to rely on hearty vegetables and hay for livestock feed. In the 1890s, early settlers formed these self-sustaining agricultural colonies. Though the area has changed, the settlement's historic and cultural impact remains.

Over time, new generations of farmers emerged and shaped Chesterfield's agricultural scene. The region now supports small-scale, sustainable farms, such as those along the Mace Chasm Corridor, that emphasize local produce and community-supported agriculture (CSA) initiatives. Organizations like the Open Space Institute (OSI) have helped preserve farmland and supported new farmers through programs like lease-to-own opportunities,



*North Country Creamery Farm; Source: Ashlee Kleinhammer*

which have become crucial to sustaining agriculture in Chesterfield and keeping land in productive use for future generations

While agriculture remains an important sector in the Town's economy, it also preserves rural viewsheds that are important to Town identity and character, and it influences ecosystems that support plant and animal life. Eco-friendly farmland practices can provide watershed protection and wildlife habitat such as meadows and pastures, which are vital to species requiring open areas for feeding and breeding. Local and regional visitors to Chesterfields agricultural sector benefit from access to locally grown products, knowing that support for such businesses helps bolster employment and investment in the community.

### Agricultural Districts

An Agricultural District is a land area identified through New York's Agricultural Districts Law (Article 25-AA) to help protect current and future farmland from non-agricultural development by reducing competition for limited land resources and helping to prevent local laws that would inhibit farming and raise farm taxes. In an agricultural district, the NY Commissioner of Agriculture is authorized to review local comprehensive plans, legislation, and regulations, and approve or disapprove them according to whether they unreasonably restrict or regulate farm operations within an agricultural district. The Commissioner also reviews any purchase by a municipal or state agency of active farmland larger than one acre, or any land over 10 acres within an agriculture district, to assess the potential impacts on local agricultural resources. Agricultural Districts are developed when interested landowners, who collectively own at least 500 acres of land, request formation of such a district. Farmers and rural land owners enrolled in a state-certified Agricultural District receive important "right-to-farm" protections.

According to the Agricultural Resources map below, in 2024, roughly 5,255 acres ( $\pm 11\%$ ) of the Town are within the NYS Agricultural District, and about 1,202 acres ( $\pm 2\%$ ) of that land is classified as Agricultural Land Use. The Agricultural District and actual agricultural land uses are concentrated along Mace Chasm Road.

### Essex County Farmland Protection and Food System Plan

Essex County's Farmland Protection and Food System Plan offers a strategic framework for sustainable growth across the county's food system. The plan, adopted in 2022 emphasizes a holistic approach to farmland protection by addressing interconnected areas, including regenerative agriculture, economic viability, community engagement, and access to local food. The Plan includes specific action steps, farmland maps for targeted preservation, and metrics to track progress. It also coordinates multiple organizations in aligned roles to support a sustainable farming future. Endorsed by the County Board of Supervisors, this Plan

guides policymakers and serves as a resource for funding applications by aligning county efforts with local needs and long-term goals. Moreover, the plan identifies supporting and coordinating agritourism (and culinary tourism) as a strategy to increase the viability of local farm and food businesses. Lastly, the plan calls for improving connections between the food economy and Essex County's overall tourism program.

## Small Farm Culture

As noted above, most of the agricultural land use within the Town is clustered around Mace Chasm Road. This area has become locally known as the Mace Chasm Corridor and is the foundation of Chesterfield's burgeoning agritourism industry. The active farms proximate to this corridor are:

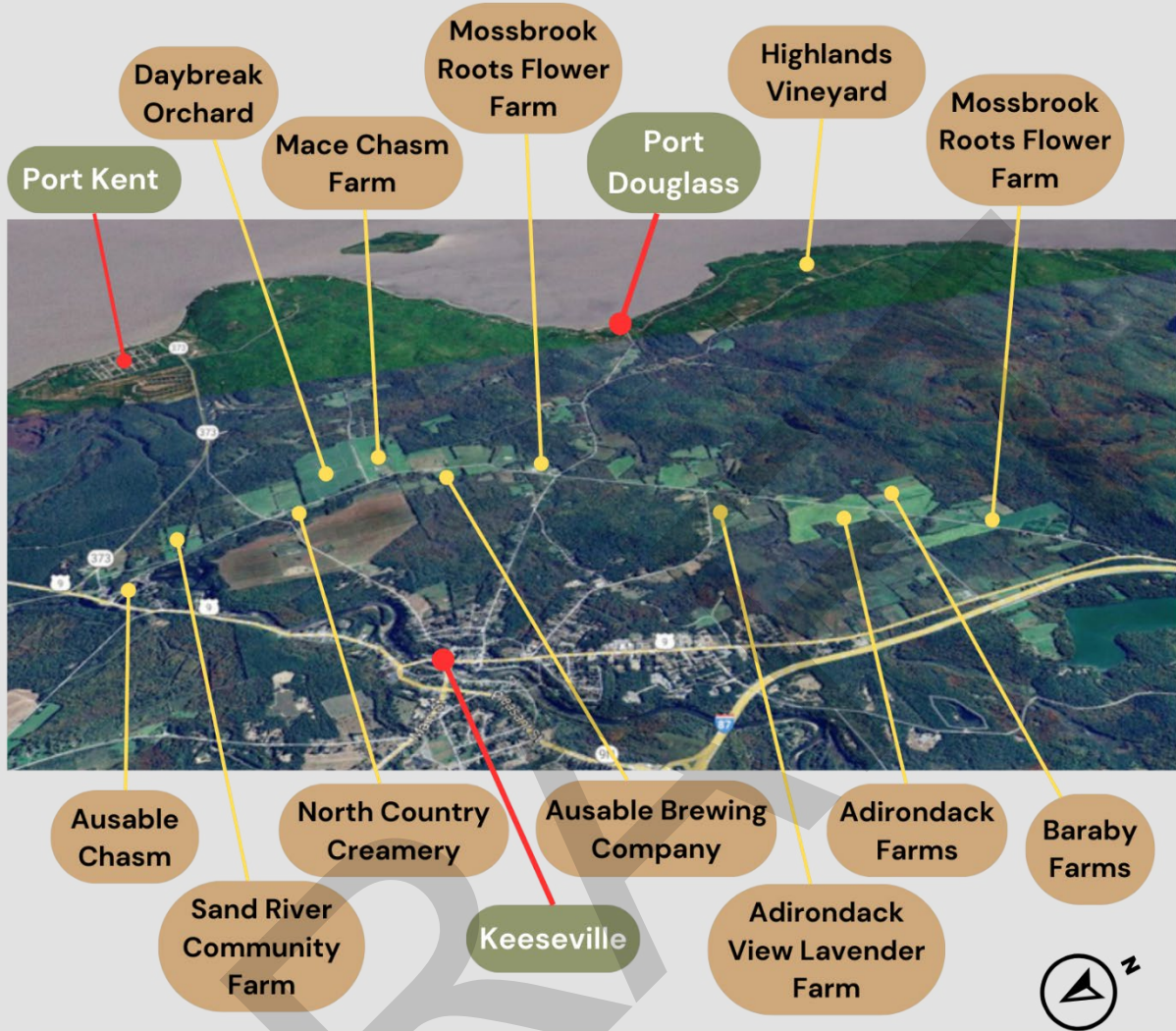
- North Country Creamery: a dairy with an on-farm store that produces and sells farmstead cheeses, yogurts, and raw milk from cows that are 100% grassfed;
- Ausable Brewing Company: a farm based 'nanobrewery featuring a variety of high-quality ales, lagers, and sodas;
- Mossbrook Roots Flower Farm: a farm growing an array of fresh flowers and herbs and operates a farm gift shop;
- Mace Chasm Farm: a livestock and poultry farm that sells its products year-round through its farm store and at farmers markets;
- Baraby Farms: is a diversified agricultural operation offering a variety of products, including eggs, beef, pork, and goat milk products.
- Sand River Community Farm: is a community-focused farm offering food as a gift, events, and gatherings to foster connection and mutual support.

Not located along the Mace Chasm Corridor, but also notable:

- Highlands Estate Vineyards: though not located a family-owned and operated winery.
- Adirondack View Lavender: a 13-acre diversified farm is home to over 2,000 lavender plants and continues to grow. The farm welcome visitors for U-pick lavender on weekends, offers a charming farm store, and provides a picturesque venue for events.

Orchards within the Town include:

- Sullivan Orchards
- Daybreak Orchards



## Mace Chasm Road Agricultural Corridor

*Satellite Imagery: Google Earth Pro, October 3, 2023*

### Larger-Scale Farming

In addition to the small farm culture, there is a larger-scale farm presence in the Town. Adirondack Farms is a family-owned dairy farm headquartered in Clinton County. The farm operates across four different locations within the county. Through their operations, the farm has also produced milk to supply approximately 1.5 million people annually, supplied electricity to 400 homes, and held partnerships with 196 local businesses.<sup>i</sup> Though headquartered in Clinton County, the company holds approximately 515 acres of land within the Town of Chesterfield.<sup>ii</sup> Ensuring both small-scale and larger-scale farming operations can be successful will be important moving forward with each focusing on their respective niche markets while also employing environmentally sound farming practices.

## Agritourism

Agritourism integrates agriculture and tourism by providing access to farms and their products. The appeal of agritourism is that it offers experiences that showcase farming and production processes. Activities like guided farm tours, pick-your-own produce options, vineyard tastings, seasonal festivals, and educational workshops are typical features of agritourism industries. This sector enhances farm income, supports local economies, and strengthens rural community ties by engaging the public with agriculture. The Essex County Farmland Protection and Food System Plan (2022) asserts that visits to farms and farmers markets are “rarely final destinations for tourists. Rather, agricultural and food system amenities are stops along the way that add to the overall quality of visitor experiences: good food, beautiful scenery, brewery and winery tours, corn mazes, events, and more, all adding to memorable experiences... Visitors come to enjoy outdoor activities, relax, and eat, so Essex County’s food system – including restaurants, bars, and stores – figures prominently in visitor experiences.”

The economic benefits of agritourism extend beyond individual farms. As visitors flock to Chesterfield for unique agricultural experiences, they contribute to the local economy through spending on accommodations, dining, and shopping in the area. This influx of tourists supports small businesses and creates jobs, thereby enhancing overall community vitality. Moreover, agritourism initiatives and small farm culture align with broader efforts in Essex County to protect farmland and promote sustainable food systems, reinforcing the importance of local agriculture in the region’s economic and social fabric.

## Challenges & Opportunities

There are a range of opportunities available to the Town that can leverage its unique landscape and community-focused initiatives. With its rich history of farming, Chesterfield has seen a shift towards sustainable practices, which opens avenues for new farmers and agribusinesses. There are opportunities for small-scale operations, such as organic vegetable farming and community-supported agriculture (CSA), which align with the growing demand for local produce. The local emphasis on sustainability allows farmers to participate in programs designed to enhance farm viability and support community health, like New York’s [Farm-to-School initiative](#) which connects local farms with schools to provide fresh food to students.

Chesterfield can benefit from various funding and support programs aimed at agricultural development. Specifically, the [Northern New York Agricultural Development Program](#) provide resources and technical assistance to farmers, focusing on improving business practices and exploring value-added opportunities. These initiatives not only help existing farms thrive but also attract new farmers into the agricultural sector.

The Essex County Farmland Protection and Food System Plan also presents multiple opportunities for the Town by providing a strategic framework for sustainable agricultural practices and overall community development. The plan recognizes the interconnectedness of the food system and aims to protect key farmland in Town while promoting economic vitality for local farms. The plan highlights specific action items the Town can implement to enhance its agricultural output, create local jobs, and improve access to homegrown foods.

The plan also addresses long term challenges facing the general agricultural community and challenges facing farm and food businesses. In the long term, availability of farmland has decreased and data signals that this trend will continue. National and State level land use changes have also disrupted agricultural practices, and according to the Farmland Protection and Food System Plan, Essex County has one of the lowest amounts of land in agriculture of any county in NY. While land use changes in Essex County are very modest, the County had previously identified farmland to be protected. Over time those to-be-protected parcels of agricultural land became ‘rural residential’ and ‘vacant’, though only few of them have been paved over. This is likely due to demographic challenges of population decline and a lack of young people.

Climate change poses another long-term challenge for food system stability in the Town of Chesterfield by affecting crop yields and livestock health. Rising temperatures and erratic weather patterns lead to more frequent droughts, floods, and unpredictable growing seasons, which disrupt traditional farming schedules and reduce yields. Also concerning, new pests and diseases, thriving in warmer conditions, pose risks to crops and livestock, increasing costs for farmers who must adapt to these threats. Climate-related shifts also impact soil quality and water resources, which are obviously essential for crop and livestock production, making it harder for communities to maintain consistent food supplies and threatening both Chesterfields agritourism industry and food security.

Like many other industries, seasonal patterns of tourism pose a challenge to maintaining a business in the long run, especially places that have a disproportionate dependence on tourism. This can be significantly challenging for the budding agritourism industry. One primary issue is income variability; farms and local businesses often experience higher revenue during peak months but struggle during off-season periods, which can complicate financial planning and overall sustainability. Maintaining year-round operations can also become difficult, as the demand for seasonal activities limited to specific months, leaving many agritourism sites underutilized during the off-season. Additionally, seasonal hiring can present challenges, as workers may seek more stable employment, leading to labor shortages during peak periods and staffing inefficiencies throughout the rest of the year. As a result, the agritourism sector in Chesterfield may need to diversify their offerings and collaborate with other local businesses to attract visitors in the off-season.

The Mace Chasm Corridor has become a hub for agritourism that is primarily driven by a collection of small farms and businesses offering unique and locally produced goods and

interactive experiences. Agritourism activities in this area, including farm tours, events, and seasonal product sales, appeal to tourists interested in learning about sustainable agriculture and tasting fresh, locally made products.

Expanded collaboration between local farms on Mace Chasm Corridor, especially during the off seasons, presents an opportunity for the Town and allows the Corridor to offer a diversified experience, attracting both day visitors and long-term tourists. This approach not only enhances the local economy by supporting small-scale agriculture but also creates an all season, community-oriented brand for Chesterfield, positioning it as a destination for agritourism within the region.

Adirondack Harvest is a program under Cornell Cooperative Extension, dedicated to strengthening the Adirondack region's local food systems by linking farmers, consumers, and businesses. The program has promoted sustainable agriculture and expanded access to locally sourced foods through the Adirondack Harvest Festival, food guides, and collaborative marketing efforts. With the opportunity for expanded collaboration between businesses along Mace Chasm Corridor, and the outreach options offered by Adirondack Harvest, the Town stands to significantly benefit from their growing agritourism industry. And while this expanding industry provides greater economic security for the Town, it also underscores why agriculture is the foundation of Chesterfield, and how it can help lead the community into the future.

## Agriculture Recommendations

The CPC developed three (3) Agriculture recommendations:

- A1.** Adopt and promote practices outlined in the Essex County Farmland Protection Plan by identifying priority areas for agricultural conservation and connecting land owners to existing resources, programs, and organizations.
- A2.** Bolster agriculture's place in Chesterfield's economy by supporting farmers markets, farm stands, and other opportunities to connect the community and region with local agricultural businesses, through programs like Adirondack Harvest.
- A3.** Encourage the creation of an Agricultural Committee, overseen by the Town and in unison with relevant partner organizations, to advocate for the protection and productive use of agricultural lands and to serve in an advisory capacity to the Town on agricultural land use and development.

These recommendations are discussed in detail below.

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**A1. Adopt and promote practices outlined in the Essex County Farmland Protection Plan by identifying priority areas for agricultural conservation and connecting land owners to existing resources, programs, and organizations.**

To identify areas and parcels for agricultural conservation it is prudent to identify and analyze soil quality, current land use, water resources, and the relevant agricultural history. GIS mapping tools like the [USDA Soil Mapper](#), [soil or farmland quality assessments](#), and community feedback will be pivotal in pinpointing lands that are highly productive or hold strategic value for future farming. Conservation easements and land trusts can then be used to protect these areas from development. Prioritizing these lands is crucial for sustaining local food systems, protecting biodiversity, preserving rural character, and ensuring economic vitality. Overall, this helps ensure that productive farmland in the Town remains available for future generations while supporting environmental health and the local economies.

Connecting landowners to resources, programs, and organizations like Adirondack Harvest would facilitate access to funding, technical support, and training, helping them adopt sustainable and economically viable farming practices. These connections could help farmers reduce operational costs, improve resilience to climate challenges, and enhance profitability. Additionally, by strengthening local food systems and increasing land stewardship, Chesterfield could expand agritourism, access to food, and further sustainable rural development.

**A2. Bolster agriculture's place in Chesterfield's economy by supporting farmers markets, farm stands, and other opportunities to connect the community and region with local agricultural businesses, through programs like Adirondack Harvest.**

The Town of Chesterfield can leverage support from Adirondack Harvest to strengthen connections between the community, the region, and local agricultural businesses by using it as a central platform for promoting local farms, brewers, orchards, vineyards and their products. Adirondack Harvest's resources, such as food guides and event promotion, make it easier for residents and visitors to discover local farms, seasonal produce, and agritourism opportunities in Chesterfield. By participating in Adirondack Harvest's initiatives—like the Adirondack Harvest Festival or the Adirondack Cuisine Trails—the Town's farms can gain visibility, attracting tourists and community members alike to engage with local food producers.

Adirondack Harvest also supports networking and collaboration among farmers, restaurants, and regional food businesses, which can lead to new partnerships and more integrated local food offerings. This type of collaborative marketing helps build a reputation for the Town as a destination for fresh, sustainable products and farm-to-table experiences. With Adirondack Harvest's backing, the Town can also engage residents in educational workshops, farm tours along Mace Chasm, and local food events that highlight the importance of supporting local agriculture.

For the immediate future, it may be prudent to begin encouraging cross-business collaboration in agritourism events along the Mace Chasm Corridor to enhance appeal to the area. Also developing branding and marketing strategies for agritourism can emphasize a connection to local culture and the unique experiences that set the destination apart from the region.

**A3. Encourage the creation of an Agricultural Committee, overseen by the Town and in unison with relevant partner organizations, to advocate for the protection and productive use of agricultural lands and to serve in an advisory capacity to the Town on agricultural land use and development.**

The Agricultural Committee, with oversight by the Town, can be responsible for collaborating with partner organizations, guiding agricultural policy, and advocating for the sustainable use of all farmlands in the Town. This committee can ensure agricultural priorities are represented in Town planning, advising on zoning, land use, and conservation efforts tailored to the community needs. By having a committee focused on the agricultural community, the Town can ensure farming interests, and specific issues like soil quality, promoting local food systems, and balancing development with agricultural protection.

An Agricultural Committee can include local farmers, landowners, agricultural experts, and representatives from other organizations. The Committee can hold regular or as needed meetings, public workshops, and community outreach to highlight hot topics, and educate residents on the importance of agriculture in Chesterfield. The Committee can also partner with regional and state agricultural agencies or organizations to secure additional resources to implement best practices and advocate for policy that meets the local needs of farmers and the community at large.

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<sup>i</sup> <https://adirondackfarms.net/>

<sup>ii</sup> <https://www.co.essex.ny.us/2024TentativeRolls.asp>

## SECTION 10. SUSTAINABILITY & RESILIENCY

### Sustainability & Resiliency Overview

**GOAL:** Safeguard natural resources and community assets through resiliency measures, hazard mitigation, preservation and restoration of ecosystems, and water quality protection.

Sustainability broadly refers to a community's capacity to thrive over the long term. For Chesterfield, this entails implementing practices that meet present needs without jeopardizing the ability of future generations to meet theirs. Like Smart Growth, sustainability encompasses four key dimensions: environmental, economic, equity, and energy. Achieving a sustainable and resilient community requires a careful balance of these interconnected dimensions.

Resilience is the capacity of a community to endure adversity, disruptions, or shocks and to recover swiftly from setbacks. Building resilience requires proactive planning, effective resource management, strong social support, and adaptive strategies. This quality is increasingly vital as communities face the growing challenges posed by climate change and



*Keeseville Community Garden, Source: Community Survey*

other complex issues. The Town of Chesterfield is committed to ensuring a sustainable and resilient community for new generations into the future.

## Natural features

### *Topography*

Topography plays a key role in the development of Chesterfield, with elevation changes from the valley floor to the western and Trembleau sections. Elevation impacts site layout, stormwater drainage, and land suitability for development. Areas with steep slopes are ecologically sensitive and often unsuitable for development; 23.78% of Chesterfield has slopes greater than 15%, and 2.03% exceeds 30%. The southwestern part of the Town features the steepest slopes, including Poke-O-Moonshine Mountain at 2,162 feet and Trembleau Mountain at 988 feet, located near Port Douglass and Port Kent.

### *Water Resources*

The Town of Chesterfield features several important waterbodies that enhance its natural beauty and ecological health. These resources support diverse wildlife and are vital for the community's water supply, agriculture, and recreation. Effective management and conservation of these waterbodies are essential for the Town's environmental health and sustainability.

Lake Champlain, the sixth largest freshwater lake in the U.S., is located east of Chesterfield along Port Kent and Port Douglass. It serves as a popular recreational destination for the Town, featuring one state-run boat launch in Port Douglas and a private marina with a boat launch in Port Kent.

The Ausable River flows 94 miles through the Adirondacks, emptying into Lake Champlain and forming the northwestern border of Chesterfield. It is fed by over 70 streams, including major tributaries like the Chubb River and Black Brook. The main branch features gorges and waterfalls at Ausable Chasm, with walls reaching 175 feet, while the east and west branches converge at Ausable Forks.

Augur Lake, located south of Keeseville, covers 377 surface acres and has a maximum depth of 21 feet. It hosts a diverse range of fish species but faces challenges from the invasive Eurasian water milfoil and salt contamination from I-87 (Northway) ice melt and stormwater runoff. As of 2009, Augur Lake and Butternut Pond are listed as Priority Waterbodies.

Butternut Pond is located just south of Augur Lake and west of the Adirondack Northway. Butternut Pond is about 162 acres in size and is technically classified as a lake. The Pond also serves as a water supply for existing residents of the Town of Chesterfield.

## Wetlands

Wetlands are areas saturated by surface or groundwater for varying periods, providing essential ecological benefits such as flood protection and habitat for diverse plant and animal species. In Chesterfield, wetlands account for 5,098.2 acres (9.90%) of the land, with 2,466.2 acres (4.79%) classified as Adirondack Park Agency (APA) Regulated Wetlands. These areas are identified in yellow and blue on Map 6 and include freshwater forested/shrub wetlands and riverine types, surrounding water bodies like the Ausable River, Augur Lake, and Butternut Pond. A significant wetland area, Wickham Marsh, located in the northern part of the Town, encompasses over 800 acres managed by the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) for various recreational and scientific uses, including wildlife observation, fishing, and hiking. Another large wetland area is found north of Keeseville along Mud Brook.

## Climate Change

Climate change impacts New York State in diverse ways, with certain effects more prominent in specific regions. However, as temperatures continue to rise, climate extremes are expected to reach across all areas. According to the [New York State Climate Impacts Assessment](#), the Champlain Valley Region is changing.

Average temperatures are expected to rise in all seasons across every region of New York State, with northern areas like the Champlain Valley likely to see some of the most significant changes. Annually, temperatures in this region are projected to increase by 4.6°F to 6.7°F by the 2050s and by 6.1°F to 10.8°F by the 2080s, relative to the 1981–2010 average. Additionally, the number of extremely cold days in this region is anticipated to decrease.

Lake Champlain, once freezing over nearly every year, has seen more ice-free winters in recent decades, freezing completely only three times since 2007. This can be problematic as less ice cover can impact ecosystems by disrupting food systems and changing the amount of dissolved oxygen in the water.

Warmer temperatures will reduce snow and ice, with winter precipitation expected to increase by 6% to 21% by the 2050s and 16% to 31% by the 2080s, compared to the 1981–2010 average. However, more of this will fall as rain instead of snow. Total precipitation is projected to increase between 4% and 12% by the 2050s and between 7% and 14% by the 2080s relative to the 1981–2010 average. This precipitation could increasingly come from heavy storms, which can lead to flooding. In recent years, heavy rains caused Lake Champlain to dramatically rise above historical averages. High water levels can erode shorelines, damage docks and piers, flood shorefront properties, restrict ferry access, and harm wildlife habitats like nesting sites for shoreline species.

The region also hosts numerous family-owned farms that produce dairy and beef cattle, sheep, apples, and various vegetables. Warmer spring temperatures are causing crops to mature earlier, increasing the risk of damage from late spring frosts. Additionally, as summer temperatures rise, dairy farms may face increased heat stress in cows.

## Essex County Hazard Mitigation Plan

The [Essex County Hazard Mitigation Plan](#) identifies and reduces risks from natural hazards like floods, storms, and wildfires. Developed with local stakeholder input, it assesses potential hazards and their impacts on communities and infrastructure. The plan outlines specific mitigation strategies, such as infrastructure improvements and public education, while emphasizing community involvement to address local priorities. It also identifies funding opportunities for projects and establishes a process for regular updates to maintain its effectiveness in enhancing the county's resilience to natural disasters.

## Available Climate Programs

### *New York State*

New York State is committed to addressing climate change through a comprehensive strategy that encompasses policy development, community engagement, and environmental stewardship. The state has implemented initiatives aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions, promoting renewable energy, and enhancing community resilience. By fostering collaboration among state agencies, local governments, and community organizations, New York seeks to create a sustainable and equitable future while protecting environmental resources for generations to come.

### *Climate Leadership and Community Protection (Climate Act)*

The [Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act](#) (CLCPA), enacted in New York State in 2019, establishes ambitious targets for greenhouse gas emissions reduction, aiming for a 40% decrease from 1990 levels by 2030 and an 85% reduction by 2050, ultimately seeking net-zero emissions by 2050. The Act mandates that 70% of New York's electricity come from renewable sources by 2030 and calls for a 30% reduction in energy consumption through increased energy efficiency. It emphasizes environmental justice, requiring that at least 35% of the benefits of climate investments be directed to disadvantaged communities. Additionally, the CLCPA addresses climate adaptation and resilience, establishing a Climate Action Council responsible for developing a scoping plan to achieve these goals. The Act promotes collaborative efforts across various sectors and encourages the consideration of carbon pricing mechanisms to support the transition to a clean energy economy, positioning New York as a leader in climate action and sustainable development.

### Climate Smart Communities

Launched in 2009, the New York State [Climate Smart Communities \(CSC\) program](#) is a collaboration of six state agencies aimed at encouraging local communities to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and adapt to climate change. The participating agencies include the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC), New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA), Department of Public Service, Department of State, Department of Transportation, Department of Health, and New York Power Authority (NYPA), with the DEC serving as the primary oversight agency. Participating communities commit to a framework of ten action strategies that include reducing energy use, transitioning to clean energy, promoting sustainable land use, and enhancing community resilience.

Achieving Climate Smart Communities (CSC) certification provides municipalities with various benefits, including cost savings, ecological restoration, and climate change adaptation, all of which enhance public health and environmental quality. Certification promotes energy efficiency and independence, boosting a community's sustainability and resilience. Additionally, CSC-certified communities receive improved scores on state grant applications, state recognition for their leadership, and access to a network of certified communities, along with valuable resources and expert guidance. Moreover, CSC status may be recognized by rating agencies like Moody's as evidence of Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) compliance.

To become a Certified Climate Smart Community, a municipality must adopt the basic CSC pledge and document various actions for climate change mitigation and adaptation. The CSC program offers a structured approach for implementing these initiatives and recognizes achievements with a three-tiered rating system: bronze, silver, and gold (gold not yet available).

### NYSDEC Office of Climate Change

The [NYSDEC Office of Climate Change](#) is committed to combating climate change through its OCC, which implements state climate policies, particularly those outlined in the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act (CLCPA). The OCC conducts research and analysis on climate impacts, offers technical assistance to governments and communities, and promotes public engagement and education on climate issues. It administers funding opportunities for renewable energy and resilience projects while collaborating with various stakeholders to enhance climate action efforts. Additionally, the office emphasizes climate adaptation strategies to protect communities from climate-related challenges, positioning NYSDEC as a leader in advancing New York's response to climate change.

## Challenges & Opportunities

The CSC program offers Chesterfield a pathway to secure funding and resources that can enhance its sustainability efforts. By participating in this initiative, the Town can access State and Federal grants aimed at supporting climate adaptation and mitigation projects. The program also aligns with the Town's smart growth goals by encouraging sustainable development practices that can lead to long-term economic and environmental benefits. Engaging in this initiative also positions Chesterfield as a leader in climate action, potentially attracting new partnerships and investments that can further support sustainable community development.

As climate research indicates that the region will experience hotter days, the strain on existing energy infrastructure may increase, potentially leading to shortages or outages during peak demand. While Chesterfield currently lacks resources for residents looking to retrofit their homes for energy conservation, this absence presents challenges in preparing for future climate impacts. Without support for retrofitting, residents may face high upfront costs, deterring participation in energy conservation efforts and hindering the Town's ability to address rising energy demands effectively.

The Town could enhance energy efficiency, reduce overall consumption, and lower utility costs for residents by providing resources, like information on State and Federal grant opportunities or other funding and incentive opportunities, on their official government website.

Chesterfield faces challenges related to its topography and runoff, which carry harmful chemicals into natural water resources, leading to pollution and complicating stormwater management. However, there is an opportunity to promote sustainable practices that minimize the use of environmentally harmful substances. By encouraging best management strategies, implementing green infrastructure, and overall environmental stewardship the Town can reduce harmful runoff and improve water quality.

Implementing green infrastructure to complement gray infrastructure presents an opportunity to reduce strain on municipal resources while benefiting community budgets. This approach can be low maintenance and contribute to environmental stewardship by promoting awareness of sustainable practices. Additionally, green infrastructure enhances community pride and beautifies public spaces.

Regarding the portion of the Ausable River in Chesterfield, addressing streambank stabilization presents both a significant challenge and an opportunity for Chesterfield. The ongoing erosion and habitat degradation threaten local ecosystems and infrastructure. However, by collaborating with organizations such as the Ausable River Association, the Town can leverage state and federal resources to implement effective stabilization projects.

These initiatives could not only restore the river's health but also enhance water quality and reduce flooding risks.

The Town also faces environmental challenges specific to its water quality. Through the community survey and the public workshops, and stakeholder meetings community members indicated a growing concern for water quality Town-wide, and specifically for Augur Lake and Butternut Pond. Augur Lake faces environmental challenges related to septic system discharges. The presence of older and unmaintained septic systems on properties surrounding the lake can contribute to water quality degradation, leading to increased nutrient loading and potential contamination. Some residents may lack awareness of the impacts these systems can have on the environment, resulting in insufficient maintenance and heightened risks to the lake's ecosystem.

Chesterfield has the opportunity to improve water quality at Augur Lake by raising awareness about the importance of properly maintaining septic systems. Educational programs can inform residents about the environmental impacts of unmaintained systems and promote best practices for wastewater management or require septic system testing to ensure it is functioning properly.

For Augur Lake and Butternut Pond, the Town has repeatedly raised awareness about the States roadway salt usage on Interstate 87 and the negative environmental impacts on water quality. Despite the Town's efforts to raise awareness about these negative environmental impacts Augur Lake and Butternut Pond continue to experience water quality challenges due to increased salinity and nutrient loading. However, Chesterfield has an opportunity to strengthen its water quality protection goals by collaborating with the State and environmental organizations to better manage Route 9 and I-87 (Northway), promote alternative de-icing methods, and expand educational initiatives.

The use of fertilizers and pesticides in agricultural practices poses significant challenges for protecting natural resources in Chesterfield. While these chemicals can enhance crop yields and protect against pests, their runoff can contaminate nearby water bodies, leading to degraded water quality. Improper application or overuse of these substances can result in soil degradation and negatively impact biodiversity, creating a complex dilemma for farmers who rely on these products for productivity.

Chesterfield has the opportunity to partner with Essex County to adopt more sustainable agricultural practices that minimize reliance on fertilizers and pesticides. By implementing integrated pest management (IPM) strategies and promoting organic farming methods, local farmers can reduce chemical usage while maintaining healthy crops. Collaborating with Essex County to provide education and resources on best practices for fertilizer application can help mitigate runoff and protect water quality in nearby water bodies.

There is an old tank farm located in Chesterfield, near the hamlet of Port Kent. This tank farm was previously used by the Holly Oil Company and consisted of multiple underground

storage tanks that stored petroleum products. The site has faced environmental scrutiny due to past leaks and contamination. This presents a significant environmental challenge for Chesterfield due to the potential for soil and water contamination from past petroleum leaks. By addressing the contamination from the old tank farm in Port Kent, Chesterfield can improve public health and promote sustainable land use. While this site poses a challenge for Chesterfield, it also presents an opportunity for the Town to collaborate with environmental agencies and utilize state resources for site assessment and cleanup. Lastly, the remediation of this site could render it usable for new development within Town.

## Sustainability & Resiliency Recommendations

The CPC developed nine (9) Sustainability and Resiliency recommendations:

- S1.** Implement strategies that would certify the Town as a Climate Smart Community.
- S2.** Provide resources and assistance to residents looking to retrofit homes for energy conservation and connect them to relevant organizations or agencies.
- S3.** Require septic system testing during transfer of property ownership.
- S4.** Provide information and resources that encourage septic system maintenance, timely replacement, and routine testing.
- S5.** Encourage responsible use of fertilizers and pesticides (including manure) to protect natural resources.
- S6.** Develop a plan for the former Port Douglass tank farm to identify remediation (if necessary) and best possible future land uses.
- S7.** Utilize green infrastructure to supplement existing grey infrastructure and to offset strain on stormwater systems that may arise from new development.
- S8.** Address streambank stabilization within the Hamlet of Keeseville.
- S9.** Collaborate with regional organizations, environmental groups, and state agencies to survey and catalog invasive species, and develop an invasive species management plan.

These recommendations are discussed in detail below.

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### **S1. Implement strategies that would certify the Town as a Climate Smart Community.**

First the Town should adopt the [Climate Smart Communities \(CSC\) pledge](#). The Town should then conduct a greenhouse gas emissions inventory and create a climate action plan that

addresses local vulnerabilities and identifies adaptation strategies to serve as the basis for [future CSC actions](#).

**S2. Provide resources and assistance to residents looking to retrofit homes for energy conservation and connect them to relevant organizations or agencies.**

Chesterfield can encourage energy conservation by offering resources on its Town website for residents interested in home retrofitting. This could include guides on energy-efficient upgrades like insulation, appliances, and solar energy. Additionally, the Town can create a section with links to organizations such as the [New York State Energy Research and Development Authority \(NYSERDA\)](#), which provides resources and incentives for homeowners.

**S3. Require septic system testing during transfer of property ownership.**

Chesterfield can implement a policy requiring septic system testing during property ownership transfers to protect public health and the environment. This policy could mandate that sellers provide documentation of a recent septic system inspection prior to finalizing a property sale. To facilitate this, the Town could work with Essex County to integrate septic testing requirements into the property deed filing process. By doing so, the County Clerk's office would only accept property deeds accompanied by proof of septic system compliance.

To establish this policy, Chesterfield would need to develop local regulations outlining the specific testing requirements, acceptable testing entities, and any penalties for non-compliance. Collaborating with the county's health department can provide access to resources and expertise, ensuring the policy is effective and enforceable.

**S4. Provide information and resources that encourage septic system maintenance, timely replacement, and routine testing.**

Chesterfield can enhance community awareness about septic system maintenance by providing comprehensive information and resources on its Town website and social media platforms. This could include guidelines on regular maintenance practices, the importance of timely replacement, and recommendations for routine testing to prevent system failures. The Town could also create links to relevant organizations, such as the New York State Department of Health and Essex County's health department, which offer resources and support for homeowners regarding septic system care.

**S5. Encourage responsible use of fertilizers and pesticides (including manure) to protect natural resources.**

Chesterfield can promote responsible use by creating and deploying educational campaigns that inform residents about best practices for application, timing, and environmental impacts. This could involve providing guidelines on selecting eco-friendly products and implementing strategies to minimize runoff into local water bodies. Collaborating with Essex County can enhance these efforts, as the county can assist in disseminating resources, offering workshops, and facilitating access to expert advice on sustainable agricultural practices. Together, they can create a community-wide initiative that encourages responsible fertilizer and pesticide use, safeguarding water quality and promoting environmental stewardship. The Town should also direct residents to review information and materials prepared by NYSDEC, especially the [Lawn Fertilizer Law](#), and the [Essex County Soil and Water Conservation District, Crop Cover Program](#).

**S6. Develop a plan for the former Port Douglass tank farm to identify remediation (if necessary) and best possible future land uses.**

To develop a plan for the former Holly Oil Company site in Port Douglass, which supplied jet fuel to the former Plattsburgh Air Force Base, the State must complete their environmental remediation studies for the site. The Town should also encourage the owner to pay the back taxes or have the County begin foreclosure proceedings. To begin developing a plan for the site, the Town can engage the community to explore potential future land uses that align with local interests and sustainable development goals, like the creation of clustered housing development. The public engagement phase can occur concurrently with the remediation phase as community engagement may spark an early interest in the project that can be leveraged through implementation.

**S7. Utilize green infrastructure to supplement existing grey infrastructure and to offset strain on stormwater systems that may arise from new development.**

Chesterfield can effectively utilize green infrastructure, such as rain gardens, permeable pavements, vegetated bio swales and roadside ditches to supplement existing grey infrastructure and alleviate pressure on stormwater systems. By implementing green infrastructure, the Town can enhance natural water absorption and reduce runoff, leading to improved water quality and decreased flooding risks. Green infrastructure also provides aesthetic (and sometimes recreational) benefits and can enhance the Town's placemaking efforts. Some funding sources for green infrastructure include:

- [New York State Department of Environmental Conservation \(DEC\)](#)

- [New York State Environmental Protection Fund](#)

Though the State's Downtown Revitalization Initiative and NY Forward programs are focused on downtown revitalization, green infrastructure can be proposed through these programs. The Town should consider applying for funding through these programs.

#### **S8. Address streambank stabilization within the Hamlet of Keeseville.**

Chesterfield can initiate a comprehensive assessment of the streambanks along the Ausable River, identifying areas most prone to erosion. Collaborating with environmental agencies such as the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) and the Essex County Soil and Water Conservation District, the Town can implement effective stabilization techniques, such as bioengineering methods that use natural materials like native vegetation and coir logs to reinforce banks. Additionally, the Town can engage community stakeholders in restoration efforts and potentially areas for public access. Securing funding through the State's [Climate Smart Communities Grants](#), [Water Quality Improvement Program](#) or [FEMA's Hazard Mitigation Grant Program](#) can provide necessary resources for these initiatives.

#### **S9. Collaborate with regional organizations, environmental groups, and state agencies to survey and catalog invasive species, and develop an invasive species management plan.**

Chesterfield should begin addressing and managing invasive species within the Town by partnering with seeking partnerships with regional organizations, environmental groups, and NYS to survey and catalog invasive species throughout the Town.

[The Adirondack Park Invasive Plant Program \(APIPP\)](#), is a key resource for invasive species education, mapping, and removal efforts. Similarly, the [Lake Champlain Basin Program \(LCBP\)](#) provides funding, resources, and expertise to address aquatic invasive species within the Lake Champlain watershed. Additional regional partners include [Champlain Area Trails \(CATS\)](#), which focuses on land conservation and habitat preservation, and the [Adirondack Mountain Club \(ADK\)](#), which supports invasive species removal and public education initiatives. [The Adirondack Chapter of The Nature Conservancy \(TNC\)](#) offers expertise in biodiversity protection and invasive species mitigation strategies.

At the state level, the DEC provides critical support through its [Invasive Species Unit](#) and various funding opportunities. Tools such as [iMapInvasives New York](#) enable municipalities to track and manage invasive species data. [The New York Invasive Species Research Institute \(NYISRI\)](#) connects communities with cutting-edge research and technical resources, while the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation

(OPRHP) helps manage invasive species in public parks and offers educational resources. Collaborative networks like the Adirondack Council and the North Country Invasive Species Partnership (NCISP) can further Chesterfield's efforts by advocating for policies and providing outreach and control resources. Together, these organizations can offer the Town a comprehensive framework to catalog and address invasive species effectively and sustainably.

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## SECTION 11. TELECOMMUNICATIONS

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### Telecommunications

**GOAL:** Expand and enhance telecommunication access and infrastructure throughout the Town to improve quality of life, emergency response, support of local businesses, and the overall visitor experience.

Telecommunications generally refers to information transmission between places using electronic systems and devices. Commonly used telecommunication devices include the telephone, cellphones, internet, radio, television. And the infrastructure for telecommunications includes fiber-optic cables, copper cables (though outdated), cellular towers, Wi-Fi, data centers, and satellites.

Adequate telecommunication networks are essential to support the Town's growth. It enables organizations to interact efficiently with clients, partners, and teams across various locations through tools like phone calls, emails, video conferencing, and instant messaging. High-speed internet allows businesses to manage data, process transactions, and collaborate on projects in real time, regardless of geographic distance. Additionally, telecommunication supports key business functions such as cloud computing, e-commerce, and customer service platforms, all of which depend on fast and reliable data transmission. By ensuring continuous communication and access to information, telecommunication enhances productivity, streamlines operations, and fosters improved customer engagement, making it indispensable for business success.

Though telecommunications are heavily relied upon for daily life, it is not always dependable or even available in some locations. Chesterfield, like many rural areas in the Adirondack region of New York faces limited access to telecommunications. Early on in this comprehensive plan process and during the public engagement events, a large number of community members expressed a concern for the lack of overall coverage and a fervent desire for adequate telecommunication services.

## Challenges & Opportunities

Chesterfield's location in the Adirondack Park poses significant obstacles to telecommunications infrastructure development. The area's rural and rugged terrain and dense forests can block signals and make it difficult to install necessary infrastructure, like cell towers and broadband lines. Additionally, Chesterfield's remote location and relatively small population density make it less appealing for large telecom companies to invest in costly projects like fiber-optic cable installations or 5G networks. The Town's small population reduces the financial incentive for telecommunications providers to expand their networks. For telecom companies, fewer potential customers result in a lower return on investment, making Chesterfield a lower priority for telecom companies looking to maximize profits in areas with more customers.

Unlike more densely populated areas, rural areas, like Chesterfield often face limited competition among telecom providers. With a small pool of companies vying for a customer base, there is less pressure on telecom providers to invest in their infrastructure and improve coverage. In addition, the lack of competition between companies can lead to slower internet speeds and higher prices.

Like many rural areas, Chesterfield faces (what is known as) the digital divide, where rural communities are often left behind in access to modern telecommunications services. This gap is driven by a mix of economic, technological, and infrastructural challenges, and it affects Chesterfield's ability to stay connected with the digital world at the same level as more densely populated areas.

While Chesterfield's physical setting and relatively small population are challenges to securing adequate telecommunication services, there are opportunities for the Town. State and Federal funding opportunities are available to support the enhancement of telecommunications infrastructure in rural areas.

New York State's [ConnectAll](#) initiative is a statewide program launched to expand broadband access, affordability, and equity, building on previous efforts like the 2015 New NY Broadband Program. Announced in 2022, the ConnectAll initiative focuses on delivering high-speed internet to underserved and unserved communities by investing \$1 billion in public and private infrastructure projects. The initiative includes efforts to build out fiber-optic networks, reduce digital disparities, and provide affordable internet options, particularly for low-income households. ConnectAll aims to ensure that all New Yorkers have access to reliable, high-speed internet to support education, healthcare, and economic development. The Adirondack Park Agency's jurisdiction must also be considered as part of the approval process for expanding access to broadband. The Adirondack Planning Forum identified Essex County as a project area in the ConnectAll program

Additionally, there are other initiatives available on a federal level, like the FCC’s Rural Digital Opportunity Fund (RDOF) and the USDA’s ReConnect Program.

The [FCC’s Rural Digital Opportunity Fund \(RDOF\)](#) is a federal initiative designed to expand high-speed broadband internet access to rural and underserved areas across the United States. Launched in 2020, RDOF allocates \$20.4 billion over ten years to incentivize telecommunications providers to build infrastructure and offer broadband services in areas that currently lack adequate connectivity. The program focuses on closing the digital divide by targeting regions where internet speeds are below 25 Mbps. RDOF funding is distributed through a competitive auction process, encouraging providers to deliver faster, more reliable internet to rural communities at affordable prices.

The USDA’s [ReConnect Program](#), established in 2018, is a federal initiative designed to expand high-speed broadband access in rural areas across the United States. The program offers loans and grants to internet service providers, cooperatives, tribal entities, and local governments to support the construction, improvement, or acquisition of broadband infrastructure in underserved rural communities. Targeting areas with insufficient internet speeds (defined as less than 100 Mbps download and 20 Mbps upload), the ReConnect Program aims to enhance economic development, education, healthcare, and overall quality of life in rural regions. It is a key component of the USDA’s strategy to reduce the digital divide and promote long-term growth in rural America.

Collaboration with telecom providers is another opportunity the Town can utilize to incentivize the expansion of telecommunication coverage. One strategy could be to offer tax incentives, such as property tax reductions or exemptions, which would make investments in network expansion more attractive. Additionally, reducing permitting fees and streamlining approval processes for cellular infrastructure projects can facilitate quicker deployments, which would encourage providers to prioritize service improvements in the Town. Chesterfield could also consider leasing Town-owned land or infrastructure—such as water towers, municipal buildings, or other suitable locations—to cellular providers at competitive rates, thus maximizing the utilization of Town assets while minimizing costs for providers. Establishing public-private partnerships would also enable the Town to assist in identifying optimal tower locations.

The Town can also explore innovative and alternative solutions such as small cell technology and distributed antenna systems (DAS) to enhance cellular service while reducing the need for large tower installations. These technologies offer effective alternatives for improving coverage and capacity in areas where traditional cell towers may be impractical due to geographical constraints or community concerns. By collaborating with cellular providers to implement these solutions, the Town can address connectivity issues, particularly in the hamlets and the Town’s more rural areas, without compromising the naturally aesthetic landscape.

Small cell technology involves deploying a network of compact, low-powered antennas that can be mounted on existing infrastructure, such as streetlights, utility poles, or buildings, to enhance cellular coverage. Operating within a limited range, these small cells are ideal for increasing capacity in high-traffic areas or urban settings where mobile data demand is significant. By strategically placing small cells throughout Chesterfield, the Town can effectively fill any coverage gaps, improve network reliability, and support the growing demand for mobile data without the need for constructing large, obtrusive towers.

Distributed Antenna Systems (DAS) are another viable solution to enhance cellular service in Town. DAS consists of a network of multiple antennas connected to a central source that distributes the cellular signal throughout a designated area. This system is particularly useful in buildings, and other large spaces where conventional cell towers may struggle to provide adequate coverage. By implementing DAS, Chesterfield can improve service quality in specific locations, ensuring reliable access to cellular networks for residents and visitors alike. Both small cell technology and DAS present practical, community-friendly options for the Town to enhance its cellular infrastructure, ultimately fostering better connectivity and supporting economic growth in the region.

Another opportunity for the Town could be Starlink, which is a satellite internet service developed by SpaceX that aims to provide high-speed internet access, particularly in remote and underserved areas, through a constellation of low Earth orbit satellites. This service offers fast download speeds of up to 200 Mbps and low latency, making it an attractive solution for rural communities like Chesterfield, where traditional broadband options may be limited or unavailable. In addition, satellite phones operate using satellite technology to facilitate communication, enabling users to connect in regions with minimal or no cellular coverage. This capability is especially vital for emergency situations and for residents living in hard-to-reach locations. By promoting the adoption of Starlink and satellite phone services, the Town of Chesterfield can significantly improve telecommunications coverage, thereby fostering economic development, enhancing educational opportunities, and ensuring effective communication for all residents, regardless of their geographic location.

Lastly, intergovernmental collaboration can also be an option for Chesterfield to expand telecommunication connections. The Town can partner with the Town of Ausable or Essex County to seek telecommunication infrastructure improvements. By pooling resources and funding, the Towns can negotiate better deals with service providers and implement shared infrastructure projects, such as co-locating small cell technology or distributed antenna systems. Leveraging shared grant opportunities and state or federal funding programs can further reduce individual financial burdens, while also ensuring that improvements in telecommunications infrastructure benefit a larger number of residents across the region.

## Telecommunications Recommendations

The CPC developed four (4) Telecommunications recommendations:

- C1.** Coordinate with local, regional, and state-wide public and private partners to provide adequate internet service for all dwellings and businesses throughout Chesterfield.
- C2.** Coordinate with local, regional, and state-wide public and private partners to provide adequate cellular coverage throughout the Town.
- C3.** Work with local and regional emergency responders and cellular service providers to improve public safety by advancing location accuracy.
- C4.** Identify opportunities for free public Wi-Fi in the Keeseville downtown area.

These recommendations are discussed in detail below.

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### **C1. Coordinate with local, regional, and state-wide public and private partners to provide adequate internet service for all dwellings and businesses throughout Chesterfield.**

To begin securing adequate internet access the Town should identify the location and conditions of existing telecommunication infrastructure and underserved areas to detect gaps in connectivity. The Town should then initiate discussions with local and regional internet providers to better understand the providers' perceived barriers to service expansion.

Once the internet service gaps, opportunity areas, and barriers to internet access are identified, the Town can coordinate with Essex County to become involved with [ConnectAll initiative](#) to access funding and support. Also, in partnership with Essex County, the Town can apply for federal funding for internet access through programs like the FCC's Rural Digital Opportunity Fund (RDOF) or the USDA's ReConnect Program. For cost-effective internet deployment, the Town can consider partnering with National Grid or NYS Electric and Gas to use their existing physical infrastructure.

The Town could identify engaged community members to form a task force to begin these efforts in identifying and cataloging gaps in internet access and engaging with service providers to identify barriers to expansion of internet coverage.

Chesterfield can also coordinate with the [Adirondack Association of Towns and Villages \(AATV\)](#), which is a membership organization that represents the 101 towns and villages within the Park. The AATV is committed to ensuring protection of the Adirondack Park, while ensuring sustainable economic opportunities and the well being of residents and visitors.

Per the [AATV's 2024 Legislative Agenda](#), expanding cellular and broadband throughout the Adirondacks is atop of the list of priority policies for 2024. The AATV recognizes the significant gaps in cell and broadband coverage and how these gaps have long jeopardized the health and safety of, and limited economic and educational opportunities for people in the Adirondack Region. Given the AATV's concern and commitment to remedying the lack cell and broadband in the region, Town of Chesterfield should work with the organization to close the remaining coverage gaps in Town.

## **C2. Coordinate with local, regional, and state-wide public and private partners to provide adequate cellular coverage throughout the Town.**

Like securing adequate internet access, the Town can follow similar steps to secure adequate cellular coverage. Beginning with a cellular coverage assessment and collecting feedback from community members to identify dead-zones will highlight opportunity areas. Following this, the Town can engage cellular providers to better understand the limitations of expanding cellular coverage. Depending on the types of limitations the Town can partner with the local utility provider to piggyback off existing infrastructure or consider alternative coverage solutions like a small cell network or Distributed Antenna Systems. In addition, the Town can potentially leverage support from the State. Though the focus of the ConnectAll initiative is broadband connection, the program may also provide support for cellular connectivity in underserved areas. As mentioned above, the Town should also work with the County to seek funding through federal initiatives such as the FCC's Rural Digital Opportunity Fund (RDOF) and USDA's ReConnect Program. These programs offer grants and loans specifically aimed at supporting the development of rural telecommunications infrastructure, including cellular network expansion.

## **C3. Work with local and regional emergency responders and cellular service providers to improve public safety by advancing location accuracy.**

Adequate and expanded cellular coverage in the Town is a prerequisite for improving location accuracy for public safety. Once cellular coverage in high-risk and underserved areas is established, the Town can work with cellular providers to implement advanced location-based services. Additionally, the Town can establish communication protocols between local emergency services and integrate Geographic Information Systems (GIS) with cellular data to improve response times and location identification.

The Town can also work with the AATV on this particular topic. According to the [AATV's 2024 Legislative Agenda](#), priority policy number four (4) is establishing a plan for improved emergency services throughout the Adirondack Park. The AATV recognizes that the population of the Adirondack Park is aging and will require more emergency services. The

AATV outlines strategies for our State Legislature to address this in their 2024 agenda. The Town should work with AATV to highlight emergency response gaps and identify them as a public safety and health issue so that specific strategies can be identified and potentially backed by the AATV.

#### **C4. Identify opportunities for free public Wi-Fi in the Keeseville downtown area.**

The Town should consider collaborating with the Keeseville Free Library to extend Wi-Fi coverage along front street, and eventually covering the entire downtown area. There are funding opportunities available for extending Wi-Fi coverage. The Town can partner with a nonprofit or adopt an ad supported Wi-Fi model where users engage with sponsored content for free access. In addition, the FCC's Emergency Connectivity Fund and the USDA's Rural Utilities Service also offer funding opportunities for rural areas to gain internet access in public spaces.

## Section 12. Governance

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### Governance Overview

Towns are municipal units responsible for addressing the practical and essential needs of the residents. In Chesterfield, those community needs include a variety of functions. The Town of Chesterfield works to provide these services efficiently and in a fiscally responsible manner to meet the community's needs.

Local government functions in Chesterfield are carried out and directed from Chesterfield Town Hall, located at 1 Vine Street, Keeseville. The Town Hall, which also houses the Justice Court, is open to the public for assistance with a variety of needs and functions.

### Highway Department

The Town of Chesterfield is served by the Town Highway Department, which is responsible for the maintenance of about 100 miles of Town-owned roads and infrastructure, including snow removal and road repairs. The Highway Department also updates Town residents on topics like parking updates and regulations through the Town's official website.

### Transfer Station

Residents can dispose of waste and recyclables at the Town-operated transfer station, located at 81 Augur Lake Road. The station charges by weight, and residents must purchase tickets for disposal. Recently, composting is available to the Town, free of charge. The Transfer Station also provides information and updates to residents through the Town's official website.

### Water Services

The Town has a Water Department, led by the Water Superintendent. The Town manages its water supply and services through multiple water districts, each responsible for a specific area within the Town. Among these, the Port Kent Water District and Chesterfield Water District provide water to residents and monitor water quality, publishing regular reports on testing outcomes and any detected contaminants. However, in 2014, around the time when the village of Keeseville dissolved, Chesterfield faced challenges with budgeting and oversight in the management of these districts, as identified in an [audit by the New York State Comptroller](#). The audit highlighted issues in record accuracy and financial management, recommending enhanced internal controls to ensure the sustainable operation of water services.

## Sewer

The APA designated Keeseville hamlet is the only area of Town served by municipal sewer service. The Chesterfield Sewer District, along with the Ausable Sewer District, combine to account for the former Village of Keeseville Sewer District. The sewage treatment plant is located along the Ausable River within the Town of Ausable and services both municipal districts. The sewer district is the responsibility of the Town of Ausable.

## Public Safety Services

The Town of Chesterfield does not have a dedicated police force. Like other smaller communities, the Town relies on NYS police and the Essex County Sheriff's Office for law enforcement, including responding to incidents and maintaining public safety across the Town.

## Court Services

Chesterfield Town Court is located at 1 Vine Street, Keeseville. The Court handles local legal matters.

## Emergency Medical Services

Ambulance service is provided by the Keeseville Fire Department Rescue Squad and the Fire Department contracts with Champlain Valley Physicians Hospital to supplement the Keeseville ambulance services. All emergency 911 calls are made to Clinton County Emergency Services.

## Parks & Recreation

The Town of Chesterfield does not have a dedicated parks and recreation department. Management of parks within the Town is a joint effort with the Town of Chesterfield and Town of Ausable. The management of parks and recreational areas falls under the purview of the Town Boards and various local committees. Community involvement and local organizations also often contribute to recreational activities and the upkeep of these areas.

## Code Enforcement

The Town's Code Officer is an appointed part-time official who is currently shared between Chesterfield and Ausable and is responsible for enforcing the Town's building law and zoning codes.

## Fire

Fire response in the Town of Chesterfield is handled by the [Ausable-Chesterfield-Keeseville Joint Fire District](#), located just across the river in the Town of Ausable. The Fire District is a local organization that has one station located at 8 Pleasant St, Town of Ausable, and is currently staffed with 48 volunteer firefighters.



*Keeseville Fire Department Trucks, Source: Community Survey*

## Schools

Residents of the Town of Chesterfield, NY, send their children to schools within the Ausable Valley Central School District. This district serves students from pre-kindergarten through 12th grade and includes several schools such as Ausable Valley High School, Ausable Valley Middle School, and Keeseville Elementary School.

## Library

The Keeseville Free Library serves the Town of Chesterfield. The library offers a range of resources, including access to physical and digital collections, educational programs, foreign language learning resources, and community events. The library also provides computer and internet access. The library is governed by a Board of Trustees and adheres to the standards set by the New York State Education Department, ensuring compliance with public library regulations and best practices.



*Keeseville Free Library, Source: Community Survey*

## Board & Committees

### *Town Board*

Chesterfield has a five-member Town Board, which serves as the primary governing body of the town. The Town Board is responsible for making decisions on local laws, budgets, and policies that affect the community. It typically consists of a Supervisor and several Council members who are elected by the residents. The Board meets regularly to discuss Town issues, manage Town services, and oversee various departments.

### *Zoning*

The Town of Chesterfield's Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) is a five-member board responsible for reviewing and deciding on requests for variances, special permits, and appeals concerning the Town's zoning laws. The ZBA operates within the framework of local zoning regulations to ensure that any exceptions granted are consistent with the overall goals of land use and community planning.

### *Planning Board*

The Town is also served by a five-member Planning Board, which is responsible for reviewing land use and development proposals, including site plans and subdivisions, to ensure compliance with local zoning laws and the Town's comprehensive plan. The Town also has an approved Local Land Use Program with the APA.

### *Board of Assessment Review*

The Board of Assessment Review (BAR) is responsible for hearing appeals from property owners who believe their property assessments are inaccurate. This board provides a formal process for taxpayers to contest their assessments before the local government, ensuring fairness and equity in property taxation. The BAR reviews evidence presented by both the property owners and the assessor's office, ultimately making decisions on whether to uphold, modify, or overturn the assessed values.

### *Utilities*

Electricity in Chesterfield is provided by New York State Electric and Gas (NYSEG).

## Challenges & Opportunities

Updating zoning regulations to align with the Town of Chesterfield's comprehensive plan presents a significant opportunity for several reasons. Updated zoning can enhance land use efficiency and encourage sustainable development. Chesterfield can promote responsible growth that supports local businesses, preserves natural resources, and protects the unique character of the Town by ensuring that zoning reflects the community's vision. This alignment can also simplify the approval process for new developments, making it easier for property owners and developers to navigate regulations.

A volunteer-only fire department can present significant challenges for a community like Chesterfield, particularly in terms of staffing, response times, and training. One of the primary issues is the reliance on a limited pool of volunteers, which can fluctuate based on individual availability and commitment. This variability can lead to insufficient personnel during emergencies, especially during peak times when multiple incidents occur simultaneously.

Similarly, relying on state and county law enforcement in the Town of Chesterfield can present several challenges. One primary concern is the potential for delayed response times, particularly in emergencies. When law enforcement is located outside the community, officers may take longer to arrive at incidents, which can compromise public safety.

## Governance Recommendations

The CPC developed four (4) Governance recommendations:

- G1.** Update the Town Zoning to be consistent with the Comprehensive Plan.
- G2.** Encourage the integration of sustainable practices.
- G3.** Continue to strengthen relationships and collaboration with neighboring municipalities.
- G4.** Diversify funding sources for local projects.

These recommendations are discussed in detail below.

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### **G1. Update the Town Zoning to be consistent with the Comprehensive Plan.**

To update its zoning regulations, the Town of Chesterfield would need to follow a structured process as outlined by New York State law, specifically under *Town Law § 263*, which requires a comprehensive review and public participation. Initially, the Town would assess its current zoning map and regulations to identify inconsistencies with the comprehensive plan. This assessment should involve community input through public hearings and workshops to gather feedback from residents, stakeholders, and local businesses. Once the draft of the revised zoning regulations is prepared, it must be reviewed by the Town planning board and then presented to the Town Board for approval. The updated zoning should align with the Town's goals for development, land use, and community character. After the board's approval, a final public hearing is necessary before the new regulations can be adopted.

## **G2. Encourage the integration of sustainable practices.**

Encourage the integration of sustainability into governance by developing policies that promote environmental stewardship, resource conservation, and green infrastructure initiatives. As projects appear before the Town's boards, the Town can strongly encourage proposed projects to integrate elements like, green infrastructure or energy efficient materials.

## **G3. Continue to strengthen relationships and collaboration with neighboring municipalities.**

Town representatives can approach neighboring municipalities and suggest forming partnerships to address shared challenges, such as transportation, infrastructure, and economic development. Collaborative efforts can lead to more efficient use of resources and enhanced service delivery. Chesterfield collaborates with the Town of Ausable on an ongoing basis and should continue to build upon this collaborative relationship as well others.

## **G4. Diversify funding sources for local projects.**

Propose strategies for diversifying funding sources, such as applying for state and federal grants, creating public-private partnerships, or establishing local improvement districts to finance community projects without solely relying on municipal budgets. As the Town begins to discuss or even implement projects, grant sources can be identified and catalogued in a digital repository made available through the Town's official website.

## Section 13. Implementation

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### Implementation Overview

This plan is the culmination of considerable effort by the Town of Chesterfield and the respective Boards, Town staff, CPC members, volunteers, residents, business owners, and engaged citizens. An active implementation process will be necessary for the plan to have a lasting impact. Working with a range of public, private, and nonprofit implementation partners, the Town can accomplish the recommended actions and continue striving toward its vision. Following the adoption of this Comprehensive Plan the first step in the implementation process is to evaluate the Town's zoning code for consistency with the plan and update the zoning to be consistent with the Comprehensive Plan, if necessary.

### Implementation Recommendations

The following recommendations are actions to be completed immediately following the adoption of the Comprehensive Plan Update.

- I1. Review, evaluate, and amend the Town's zoning ordinances (Town of Chesterfield Zoning Ordinance and Zoning Law of the Hamlet of Keeseville) and subdivision regulations to ensure consistency with this Comprehensive Plan.**
- I2. Continue to provide support or training opportunities for Planning Board and Zoning Board of Appeals members to keep up to date on current planning and zoning practices and laws and meet the minimum four-hour training requirement pursuant to Town Law §271.**
- I3. Continue enforcing land use regulations.**
- I4. Establish a core of community volunteers to help address and implement the recommendations of this comprehensive plan.**
- I5. Identify existing or previous committees to assist the Town in preparing an annual Comprehensive Plan Recommendation Oversight Report utilizing the framework in the implementation table to track the implementation status of the recommendations in this plan.**

**I6. Identify locations for future development and ensure adherence to Smart Growth Principles.**

**I7. Review the Comprehensive Plan every 5 years.**

### Recommendation Table

The recommendation table represents the recommendations throughout this Comprehensive Plan. The recommendations were developed using input from community members, stakeholders, and the CPC. The table identifies potential partners to assist in implementation. Potential funding sources are also listed to support implementation.

