

# Charlemont Economic Development Strategy

Public Meeting 2  
June 8, 2022

BISSELL BRIDGE





# Meeting #2

## Agenda:

- 6:35 – Project Introduction
- 6:40 – Presentation
- 7:00 – Q & A
- 7:15 – Station Activities

## Goals:

- Describe what we heard at the prior meeting.
- Share ideas on potential strategies.
- Gather feedback on strategy ideas.

## COMMUNITY MEETING CHARLEMONT ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

**WEDNESDAY, JUNE 8, 2022  
6:30PM-8PM**

**Hawlemont School Gymnasium  
10 School Street  
Charlemont**

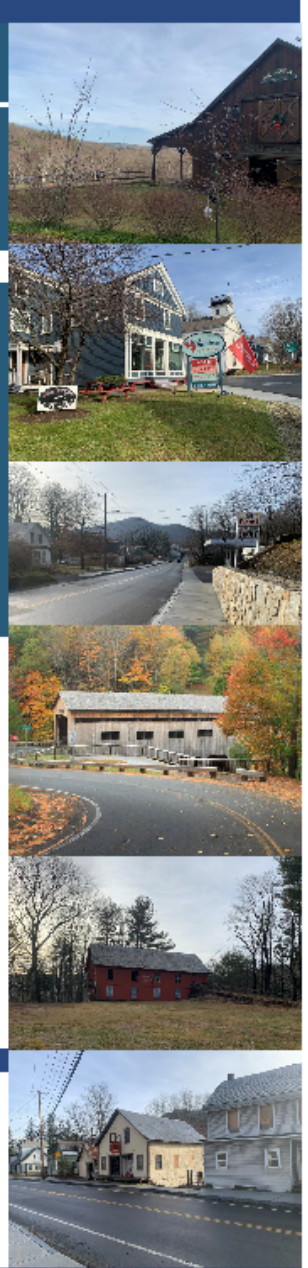
Join us again to learn more about the proposed strategies to help increase economic activity in Charlemont.

The meeting will include a presentation highlighting input from the first public meeting, case studies the town could emulate, and economic development strategies to help strengthen the town's local economy.



For more information contact:  
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or (413) 339-4335

**RKG**



# Town of Charlemont's Objectives for this Study:

“We would like to create an ‘economic strategy’ that gives us actionable items that guide us in ways to produce revenues for the town that complement the outdoor recreation that already exists, and we are known for.”

“In developing this strategy, we would like to have meetings with residents and businesses to get their input on the matter.”

# SWOT ANALYSIS

## **+** Strengths

- Dedicated volunteers
- Farms/Local food
- Broadband
- Fairgrounds
- Reputation with recreation
- Hawlemont (school, animals, recreation)
- Beehive Kiln
- Hawley Bog
- Headwater Cider
- Sidehill Yogurt
- Meadowsweet Farm

## **-** Weaknesses

- Lack of affordable housing
- Sewer district capacity
- Lodging
- Visitors don't come to downtown
- Buildings on Main Street need investment
- Communication to residents and visitors
- Town's website
- Declining school enrollment
- Fewer families living in town

## **+** Opportunities

- More outdoor recreation retailers
- Attract in more lodging options
- Attract a brew pub
- Need more arts/programming to couple with outdoor recreation
- Art in downtown and along river
- Create community spaces for gathering
- Bike trails
- Make downtown more walkable, interesting, beautiful
- Connect Fairgrounds to downtown and a trail system
- Visitor center in East Charlemont
- Market the town and region
- Bring town together around a common vision, set of goals, and actions

## **-** Threats

- School could close
- Lack of job growth and opportunity
- Loss of year-round housing and residents
- Lack of rural health care options

**CHALLENGE BEFORE US**

## IF WE DO NOT ACT...

- Population may continue to decline.
- Taxes may continue to rise.
- Local services & schools may continue struggling.
- Outdoor recreation and tourism may remain unorganized and unchecked.
- Surrounding towns may act sooner and capture demand.



**CALL TO ACTION**

## WHAT CAN WE DO....

- Organize around economic development, tourism, and recreation.
- Build local and regional capacity.
- Market the town and all its assets and opportunities.
- Continue to invest in Charlemont Center.
- Create support structure for tourism and recreation (lodging, restaurants, retail, housing, infrastructure, etc.)

## CALL TO ACTION

The market is here, we have to keep them here for longer and keep them coming back...

**101,549**

Charlemont Total Annual Visitors in 2021

**14-16k**

Crab Apple Whitewater expected in 2022

**40,000**

Tubing Companies expected in 2022 combined

**16,000**

Wells Provisions orders served in 6 months for 2021

# STRATEGY IDEAS

# 1 Local and Regional Capacity

- Form a Charlemont Economic Development Committee or a Business Organization to further develop and organize around economic development.
- Create a non-profit trails organization that can work to organize around outdoor recreation trail systems, mapping, maintenance, regulations, signage, and applying for grants.
- Create a local or a regional position in town government that would help organize the tourism-based economic development strategy, implement it, search for grants and funds, work with business owners, and generally add capacity to the town.
- Reconstitute the Deerfield River Commission but expanding representation to adjacent communities on the river.
- Engage with Franklin County Chamber of Commerce on regional strategies for tourism and economic development, including a regional lodging study.



# Local and Regional Capacity

## Case Study: Katahdin Collaborative, Maine

- Comprises 8 towns along Katahdin Woods and the Waters Scenic Byway in Northern Maine.
- Clearly stated regional mission to lift up communities, residents, and businesses through shared vision, goals, and actions.
- Working collaboratively with public, private, and non-profit organizations to solve problems.
- Focused on short-term wins toward a long-term vision.



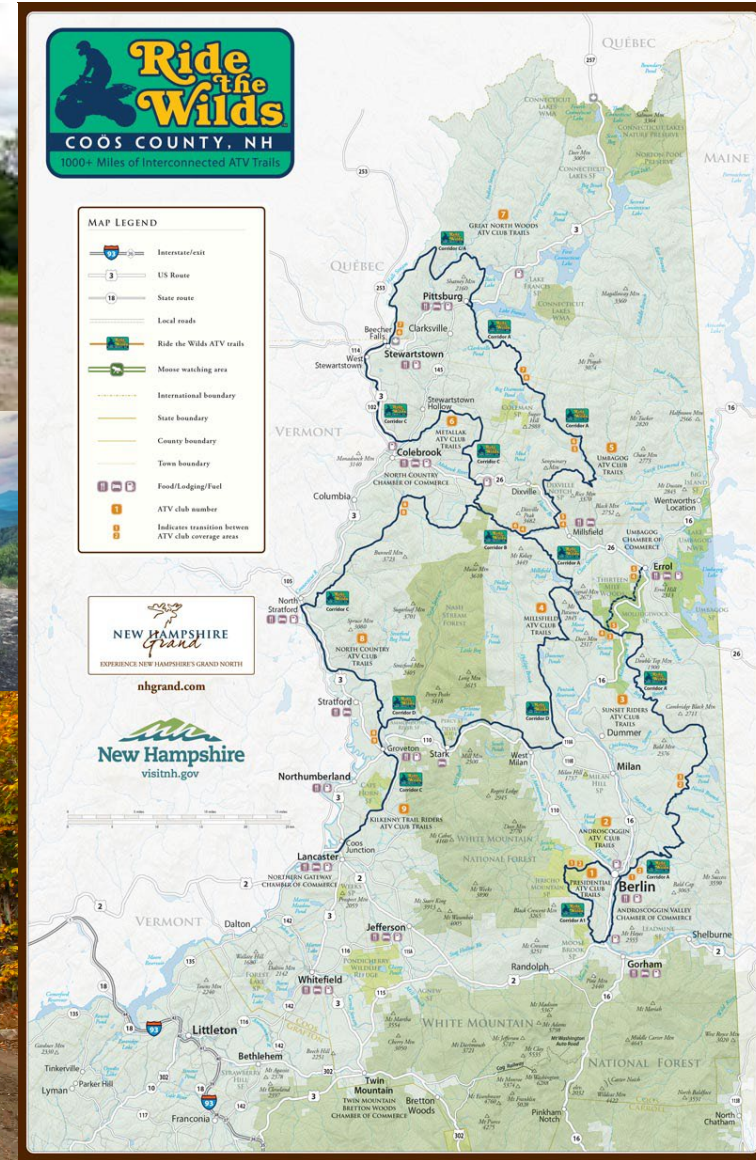
## 2 Creating and Connecting the Assets

- Create a Trails Master Plan that maps all existing trails, identifies missing connections, and puts forward a set of uses for each trail/network.
- Create a system of connected mountain bike trails and actively promote/advertise them.
- Create system of formalized snow mobile trails and actively promote/advertise them.
- Create system of formalized and groomed cross-country skiing and snowshoeing trails and promote/advertise them.
- Consider creating geocaching locations in Charlemont along the connected trails network.

# Creating and Connecting the Assets

## Case Study: Coos County, New Hampshire

- Formalized in 2013, Ride the Wilds offers over 1,000 miles of trails.
- Primarily geared toward off-road recreational vehicles.
- System was built and is maintained by a group of 11 non-profits and funding comes from a mix of fundraisers, grants, and some registration fees from the NH Trails Bureau.
- Businesses along trail offer tours, rentals, food, drinks, and there are several lodging options along the way.
- *“The town of Gorham, 2,600 people, may double or triple its population on summer weekends.”*



### 3 Brand and Market to Drive Visitation

- Create a branding package for the town around outdoor recreation and ecotourism.
- Convert the Old Brick Schoolhouse to a tourist and information center, maybe for whole Deerfield River Corridor.
- Create a Charlemont or a Deerfield River tourism-based app that people can use on their phones to find restaurants, shops, gas, lodging, groceries, etc.
- Create a Charlemont or a Deerfield River tourism website that promotes the town, its assets, and businesses, lodging options, parking, directions, etc.
- Develop 3-4 signature events per year that can be used to market Charlemont, businesses, outdoor recreation opportunities to the public



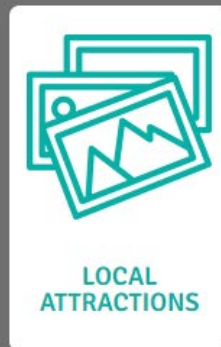
# Brand and Market to Drive Visitation

## Case Study: Big Stone Gap, Virginia

- Rural town of over 5,000 residents in the mountains of Virginia.
- Local industries closed, and in 1990s local leaders partnered with regional organizations to focus on ecotourism.
- Offer kayaking, fishing, disc golf, hiking, biking, etc.
- Host over 35 local events each year for locals and visitors alike.
- Worked with regional financing agency to create property improvement fund.
- Turned an old school into a visitor center and local history museum.



### THINGS TO DO



LOCAL  
ATTRACTIONS



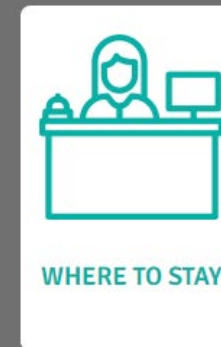
PARKS & TRAILS



WHERE TO EAT



WHERE TO SHOP



WHERE TO STAY



OUTDOOR  
RECREATION



# 4

## Infrastructure to Support Tourism and Growth

- Create additional parking, restrooms, and picnic facilities at places like Shunpike, Zoar Picnic Area, and Charlemont Park n Ride.
- Work with Sewer District to evaluate current capacity and ways to manage that capacity/free up capacity. Possibly complete Inflow and Infiltration study to determine if there are issues with the system.
- Improve, add to, and publicize public access points to the river. Consider the creation of a public access point at a future public park next to Hawlemont School.
- Explore the feasibility of a shuttle bus or circulator route to take visitors around Charlemont.

# 5

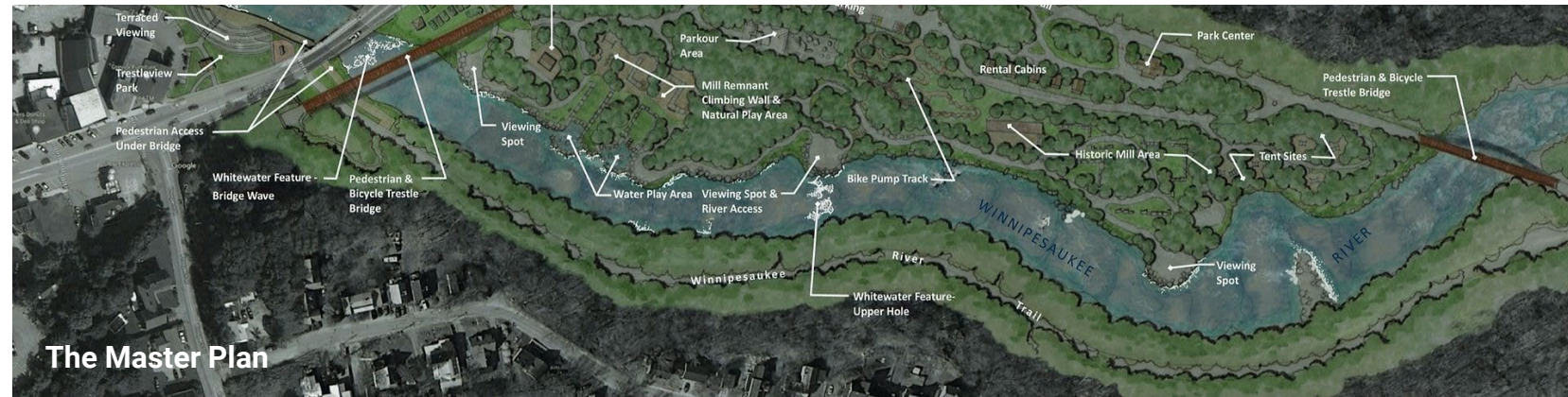
## Make the Center a Destination

- Create parking and a public park/gathering space next to Hawlemont School and possible connect it to private land behind Great Outdoors.
- Create a façade improvement program for buildings in the Center, this could be as simple as volunteers painting and making small improvements.
- Design and implement a gateway and business signage program in the Center to help people understand where they are and what businesses are in the Center.
- Invest in the continuation of streetscape and public space improvements along Route 2 such as additional landscaping and lighting.
- Encourage or incentivize new businesses to locate in the Center that align with the recreation tourism economy like a bike shop, repair store, kayak store, fly fishing shop, ski shop, etc.

# Make the Center a Destination

## Case Study: Franklin, New Hampshire

- Winnepesaukee River passes through middle to the city.
- As industry left, city needed a way to revitalize downtown area.
- In 2015, plans were developed for a whitewater park and a riverfront park/spectating area.
- When finished, the park will consist of 13 acres, with an adjacent 21 conserved acres, and three whitewater features.
- Projected to bring in over 150,000 visitors each year.
- Also renovated older building that now has café, outdoor retailer, and brewery.



The Master Plan

## 6 Give Visitors a Reason and a Place to Stay

- Purchase the former Charlemont Inn to create a new boutique hotel in the Center.
- Conduct a regional hotel/accommodations study to gauge feasibility of adding more rooms or lodging options.
- Assess the feasibility of leasing the Fairgrounds to a camping or glamping company to provide additional higher end accommodations for visitors.
- Review zoning to allow and/or reduce barriers to campgrounds and other unique forms of lodging.



# Give Visitors a Reason and a Place to Stay

## Case Study: Northern Outdoors, The Forks, Maine

- Began as a rafting and river guide business in late 1970s on Kennebec River.
- Built main lodge in early 1980s. Can host weddings and large events.
- Added snowmobiling as a wintertime draw for visitors in 1980s and continued to add different lodging options through early 2000's.
- Added Kennebec Brewery in 1996.
- Connected ATV trails in 2008.
- Began hosting largest adventure race in US in 2012.
- Hosts over 20,000 guests annually.

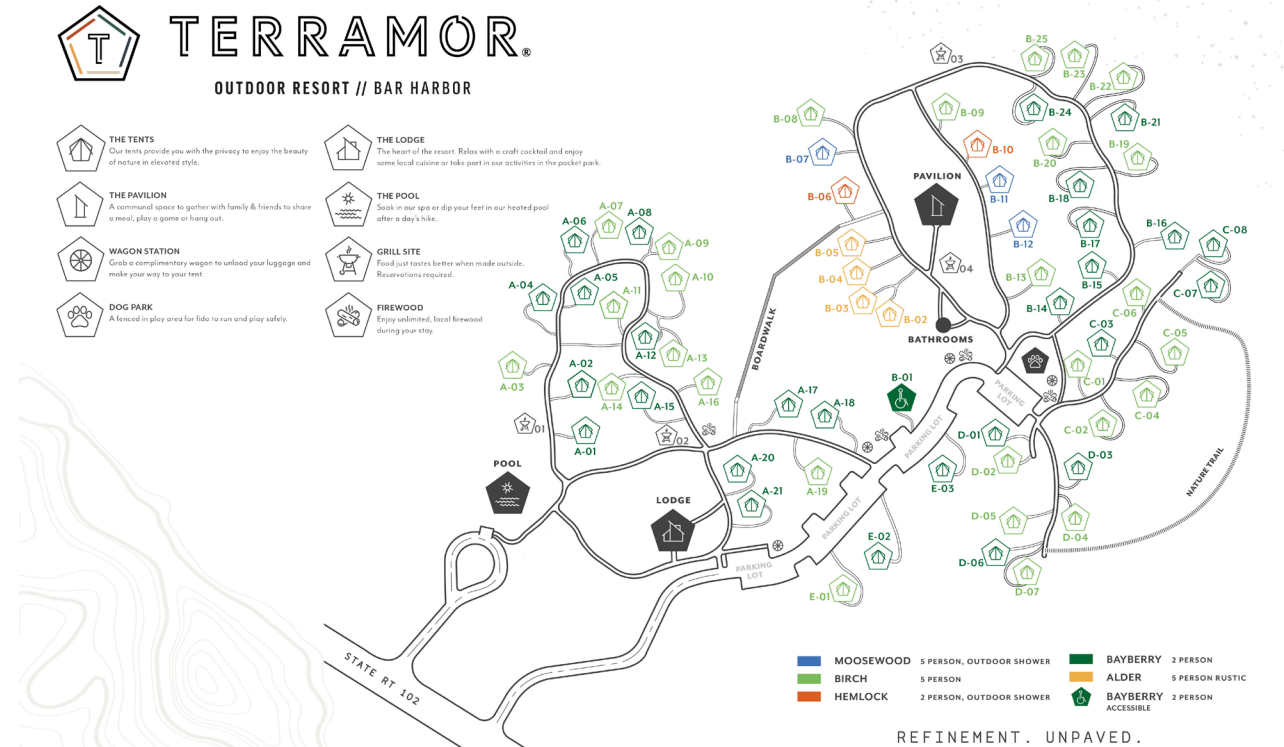




# Give Visitors a Reason and a Place to Stay

## Case Study: Terramor, Bar Harbor, Maine

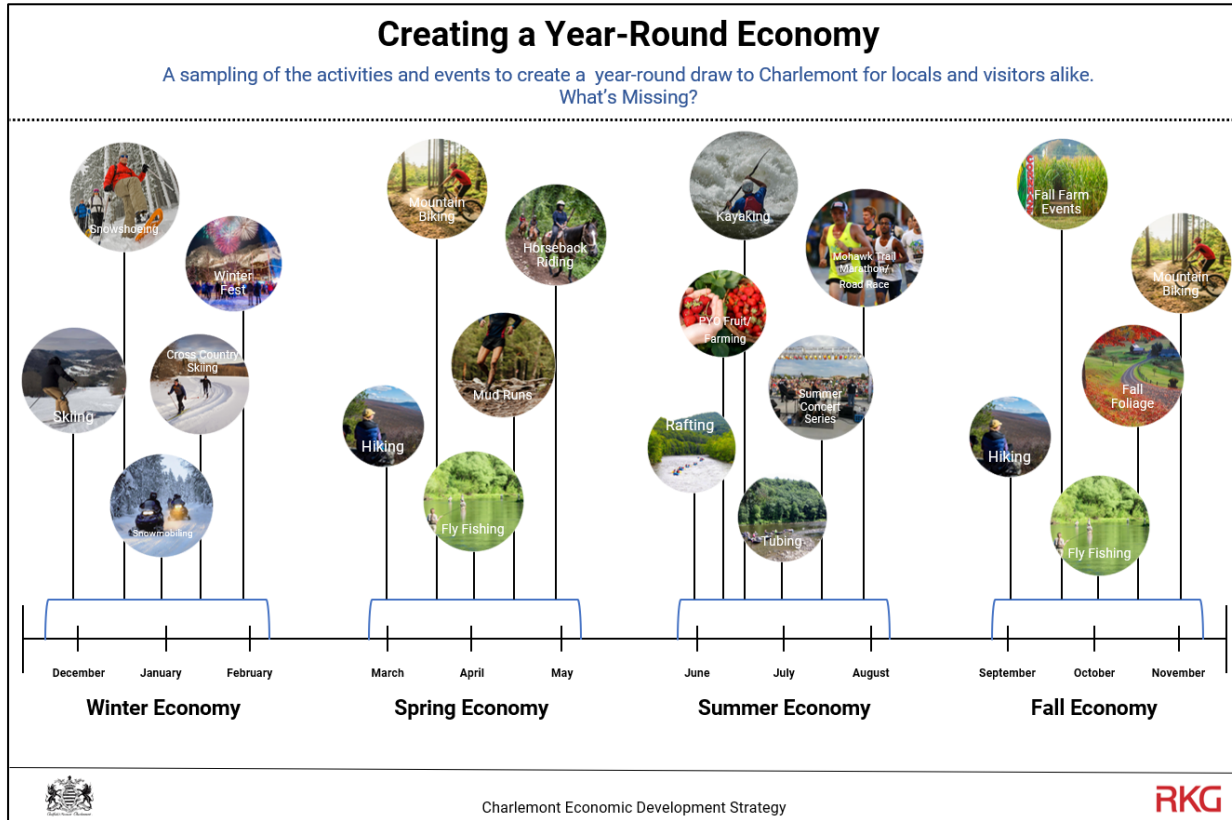
- 64 wood-frame tents that can accommodate 2-5 people, a luxury camping experience.
- Lodge at center of resort has a bar/restaurant.
- Dog park, heated space with pool, outdoor grills, unlimited firewood.
- Tents have electricity and WiFi.
- Currently estimating rates of \$500-\$625/night.
- Taking advantage of Bar Harbor's explosive growth in visitation and tight lodging market. This offers a very unique experience to the traditional hotel/motel.



# Questions or Comments

# Meeting #2 - Stations

## Station #1 Year-Round Economy



## Stations #2-7 Strategy Idea Feedback

CHARLEMONT ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY  
**DRAFT STRATEGIES**

Please use the dots to indicate your level of agreement with the following strategy ideas.

### Local and Regional Capacity

Strategy	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Disagree	This is a Priority
Form a Charlemont Economic Development Committee or a Business Organization to further develop and organize around economic development.				
Create a non-profit trails organization that can work to organize around outdoor recreation trail systems, mapping, maintenance, regulations, signage, and applying for grants.				
Create a local or a regional position in town government that would help organize the tourism-based economic development strategy, implement it, search for grants and funds, work with business owners, and generally add capacity to the town.				
Consider reconstituting the Deerfield River Commission, but expanding representation to adjacent communities on the river.				
Work with Franklin County Community Development Corporation to look for opportunities to develop/redevelop a property for housing or mixed-use, geared toward affordable rents or for sale prices.				
Engage with Franklin County Chamber of Commerce on regional strategies for tourism and economic development, including a regional lodging study.				

Charlemont Economic Development Strategy **RKG**

# Thank You!