



# ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

Charlemont, MA

**RKG**

Prepared by  
**RKG Associates**  
76 Canal Street  
Suite 401  
Boston, MA 02143  
617.847.8912

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## 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Charlemont is a small, rural town in Franklin County, Massachusetts that lies along the Mohawk Trail (Route 2), a scenic and well-traveled route traversing the state from east to west. Charlemont is also located along the Deerfield River providing an array of scenic, natural, and recreational benefits to the town. With its wealth of natural assets, Charlemont has become home to a variety of outdoor recreation and tourism-based businesses. The town has both a mountain and river which drives winter and summer recreation opportunities including skiing, fishing, kayaking, rafting/tubing, mountain biking, and hiking to name a few.

Having both the Deerfield River and Berkshire East Ski Area has created some dependence on these two attractions and businesses have come to rely on a combination of the seasonal tourism market, year-round residents, and through travelers on Route 2. As such, local businesses are centered around enterprises such as campgrounds, sporting goods, small restaurants, service stations, and multiple bed and breakfasts. In addition, there are businesses in town such as a convenience store, general store, as well as a few farms, event venues, construction contractors, garages, gravel pits, and home-based businesses that may benefit from recreation and tourism but are not otherwise reliant on them.

As a small town in the western part of the state, trends have been showing a continued slowing of population growth, an aging of the existing population, fewer family households with children, and a declining employment base. The town faces questions about the financial sustainability of providing local services such as maintaining a local elementary school in the face of a shrinking population and ever-increasing property taxes.



While this trend is not unique to Charlemont, it would benefit the town to attract more residents, employees, and businesses over time to spread costs out across more taxpayers, build up a stronger more resilient economic base, and bring jobs to the community. This economic development strategy is intended to provide a framework for looking at the economic challenges and opportunities and identifying ways the town, businesses, and residents can attract more year-round residents, visitors, and economic activity. The strategy provides data on the current demographic, economic, and land use conditions in Charlemont, an analysis of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats, and a set of goals and strategies for improving conditions in the town. The strategy is intended to have an early focus on what can move the needle on driving economic growth and attracting new investment while providing longer-term benefits to year-round residents so as to not lose sight that this is a community where people live and not just visit.

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## **CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES**

Charlemont is a unique community in terms of its small size, natural features, location, and the strength of its tourism-based economy. It is also the combination of these attributes that has led to a stagnation in population and economic opportunity as new residents are not being attracted to the town and the heavy focus on outdoor recreation has created some negative externalities for local residents. While many of the short-term strengths and weaknesses are focused on creating a place that attracts more visitors and spending, long-term the town also needs to consider the attributes that will nurture and grow



the sense of community and togetherness that seems to be slowly fading.

In the short-term, this strategy recommends the town focus on strengthening the tourism-based economy and investing in strategies that will bolster local businesses, create more jobs, attract and retain more spending, and address deficiencies in the current support system that comes with an economy heavily focused on visitation. However, in the mid- to longer-term the town should also consider how investments in infrastructure, buildings, attracting new businesses, and visitor spending can help address the goals of residents and the community as a whole. Throughout the planning process, input from many residents surfaced feelings that Charlemont had lost many of the spaces and places that enabled a sense of community. These were public and private gathering spaces where residents could come together to celebrate, strategize, talk and debate the opportunities and challenges of the day. As the town begins to enact some of the shorter-term strategies they should be done in a way that leverages an early intervention or investment with the goal of building long-term community benefits.



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## **STRATEGIES TO CONSIDER**

This economic development strategy puts forward a series of goals and strategies for the town to consider and implement moving forward. As part of the strategy section of the document, strategies are organized under six themes which help organize actions to address different parts of the town's economy. These broader goals and organizing themes include:

### **1. Create and Connect the Assets.**

This set of strategies focuses on the development of a connected network of natural features, pathways, and trails. Currently, Charlemont has some formal and informal trails which are used for different purposes and are on a mix of public and private lands. In the future, the town should partner with local property owners and a non-profit trails organization to formalize the trail network, map it, sign it, designate it for specific users, and market it.

### **2. Drive Visitation through Branding and Marketing.**

In the near-term, Charlemont could benefit from a broader marketing campaign that could help bring broader awareness to the wide range of outdoor recreation uses the town has today. Creating an infrastructure that includes a branded website, brochures, tourism-based digital app, and a small welcome center could all be packaged to drive visitation to businesses in town.

In the mid- to longer-term, marketing the town to outsiders could also create a draw for permanent residents to relocate to Charlemont to live and work. The attraction of rural, less expensive locations for residents who can work from home or might have a home-based business could help draw new residents and families to Charlemont to live year-round. This could have the spinoff effect of bringing new businesses and jobs to town and help create additional industry sectors to round out the town's local economy.

### **3. Invest in Infrastructure that Supports Economic Development.**

While tourism and outdoor recreation bring economic benefits to Charlemont, visitors also create challenges for a small town with limited capacity and infrastructure. This is particularly challenging in the summer months when river use is highest. Visitors have difficulty finding places to park, knowing where to access the river, find few public restroom options, not enough public gathering space, and not enough trash receptacles. The town and its partners should look for opportunities to address these issues going forward.

#### **4. Make Charlemont Center a Destination.**

Charlemont Center is the heart of the community. This is the economic center where most local businesses are located, but also where most of the civic functions of the community are as well. However, the Center looks and feels disconnected and in need of some investment to attract residents, visitors, and through traffic to come and spend money at the local businesses in the Center. Improvements could include things like additional streetscape and lighting, façade improvements to buildings, a centralized park for gathering and events with public parking, and signage/public art/gateway features to announce your arrival in the Center.

#### **5. Give Visitors a Reason and a Place to Stay.**

One of the missed opportunities in Charlemont is the lack of accommodations for visitors who might be looking to spend more than one day in town. As Charlemont continues to attract more visitation and if investments are made in marketing the town, the need for overnight accommodations is likely to grow. The town could offer a range of accommodations from basic campsites to high end luxury camping, to small boutique hotels each appealing to different clientele.

#### **6. Increase Local and Regional Capacity.**

As a small town, staff time and financial resources are limited to implement a strategy like this. It is unlikely the town can undertake all of the strategies in this plan on its own without the assistance of volunteers, business owners, property owners, and regional and state partners. The larger Deerfield River Regional Plan that is currently underway with the Franklin Regional Council of Governments (FRCOG) is an opportunity to look for partnerships with adjacent communities to see how resources could be shared and leveraged to the benefit of the larger region.

It is the intention of this strategy to look for ways to leverage the near-term strengths of the town's economy and its most attractive features to draw attention to Charlemont, bring people here, and market the town as not only a place to visit but a place to establish roots for both year-round residents and businesses. To ensure long-term fiscal and economic sustainability, Charlemont needs some modest growth to build up its tax base, fill its school, and have enough engaged citizens to volunteer for boards and be stewards of the community.

## 2. BASELINE CONDITIONS

The baseline conditions section provides selected socio-economic metrics for Charlemont, Massachusetts and surrounding labor market area (“LMA”) communities, as well as Franklin County. Metrics are presented to provide an overview of existing and projected demographic, economic, and real estate data to assist in identifying trends and market driven opportunities for consideration as part of a Charlemont Economic Development Strategy.

### DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

This section provides a demographic overview and trends for Charlemont, Franklin County, and the Buckland, MA LMA (Figure 1) where applicable.<sup>1</sup>

#### POPULATION

The total population of Charlemont is projected to remain stable over the 2021 to 2026 time period after displaying 7% growth from 2010 to 2021. Population declines are projected for residents aged 34 years or under, as well as those in pre-retirement years (ages 55 to 64). The group aged 35 to 54, typically in their peak earning and spending years, is projected to increase by 6.6% and those aged 65 and older by 14.8% (Table 1). By 2026, the population aged 65 and older in Charlemont is projected to represent 30% of the total population, an increase from 2021 when these residents comprised 26% of the population. This growth in older residents also brings the median age in Charlemont from 50.8 to 52.1 years. As residents continue to age in place and some new residents move to town, per capita income is projected to increase by 15.8% by 2026. While the increase appears large from a percentage standpoint, it equates to about \$36,500 per capita.

By comparison, the population of Franklin County is projected to decline nominally between 2021 and 2026. County population declines are projected for all age cohorts except for those aged 65 and older. This latter cohort is projected to increase (similar to Charlemont) by 14.6% and account for 26% of the countywide population by 2026. This is an increase of 22% from 2021. Franklin County’s median age is expected to increase slightly by 2026, from 47 to 47.5, remaining lower than in Charlemont. Per capita income is projected to grow by 12.3% to \$37,900 in 2026.

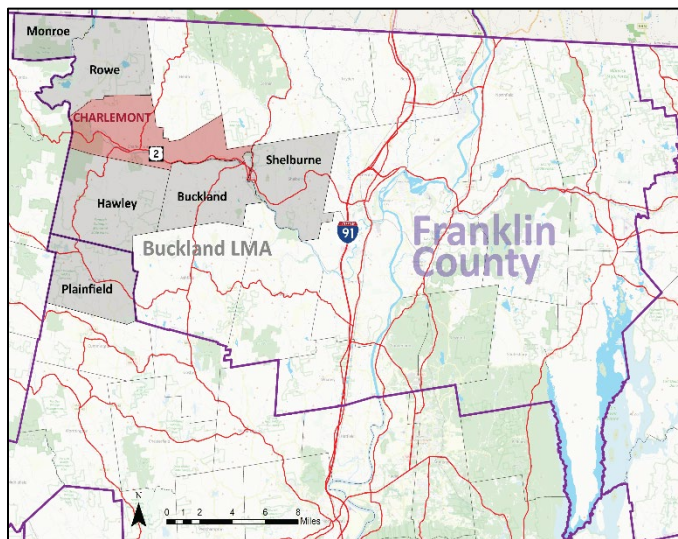


Figure 1 – Regional Positioning

<sup>1</sup> The Buckland, MA LMA includes the communities of Charlemont, Buckland, Hawley, Monroe, Plainfield (in Hampshire County), Rowe and Shelburne.

Similar patterns emerge for the remaining towns in the region with either nominal increases or nominal declines in total population. Younger cohorts are projected to increase marginally in some towns across the region. All communities within the Buckland LMA are projected to have populations with median ages exceeding 50 years by 2026. The projected per capita incomes (2026) exceed \$40,000 only in Plainfield and Shelburne.

**Table 1 – Selected Population Metrics**

Comparative Metrics	Franklin County, MA			%Δ 2021 - 2026	Charlemont, MA			%Δ 2021 - 2026
	2010	2021	2026		2010	2021	2026	
<b>Population</b>	<b>71,372</b>	<b>72,692</b>	<b>71,942</b>	<b>-1.0%</b>	<b>1,266</b>	<b>1,359</b>	<b>1,359</b>	<b>0.0%</b>
aged under 20	15,691	13,682	13,139	-4.0%	264	233	228	-2.1%
aged 20 to 34	11,899	12,865	12,308	-4.3%	179	225	181	-19.6%
aged 35 to 54	21,026	17,482	17,049	-2.5%	394	302	322	6.6%
aged 55 to 64	11,878	12,568	11,004	-12.4%	214	242	222	-8.3%
aged 65 and older	10,878	16,095	18,442	14.6%	215	358	411	14.8%
<b>Median Age</b>	<b>44.2</b>	<b>47.0</b>	<b>47.5</b>	<b>1.1%</b>	<b>46.3</b>	<b>50.8</b>	<b>52.1</b>	<b>2.6%</b>
<b>Per Capita Income</b>	<b>na</b>	<b>\$33,778</b>	<b>\$37,937</b>	<b>12.3%</b>	<b>na</b>	<b>\$31,488</b>	<b>\$36,464</b>	<b>15.8%</b>

Comparative Metrics	Buckland, MA			%Δ 2021 - 2026	Hawley, MA			%Δ 2021 - 2026
	2010	2021	2026		2010	2021	2026	
<b>Population</b>	<b>1,902</b>	<b>1,966</b>	<b>1,951</b>	<b>-0.8%</b>	<b>337</b>	<b>377</b>	<b>381</b>	<b>1.1%</b>
aged under 20	393	325	316	-2.8%	59	51	55	7.8%
aged 20 to 34	266	306	287	-6.2%	53	67	51	-23.9%
aged 35 to 54	577	474	459	-3.2%	94	84	90	7.1%
aged 55 to 64	346	342	295	-13.7%	57	74	65	-12.2%
aged 65 and older	320	519	594	14.5%	74	101	121	19.8%
<b>Median Age</b>	<b>46.5</b>	<b>50.7</b>	<b>51.5</b>	<b>1.6%</b>	<b>48.9</b>	<b>52.5</b>	<b>53.9</b>	<b>2.7%</b>
<b>Per Capita Income</b>	<b>na</b>	<b>\$32,646</b>	<b>\$37,008</b>	<b>13.4%</b>	<b>na</b>	<b>\$33,429</b>	<b>\$37,910</b>	<b>13.4%</b>

Comparative Metrics	Monroe, MA			%Δ 2021 - 2026	Plainfield, MA			%Δ 2021 - 2026
	2010	2021	2026		2010	2021	2026	
<b>Population</b>	<b>121</b>	<b>126</b>	<b>125</b>	<b>-0.8%</b>	<b>648</b>	<b>645</b>	<b>646</b>	<b>0.2%</b>
aged under 20	28	26	23	-11.5%	144	121	122	0.8%
aged 20 to 34	22	18	16	-11.1%	74	84	80	-4.8%
aged 35 to 54	37	26	29	11.5%	189	146	134	-8.2%
aged 55 to 64	13	20	20	0.0%	134	113	99	-12.4%
aged 65 and older	21	33	36	9.1%	107	181	211	16.6%
<b>Median Age</b>	<b>42.8</b>	<b>49.6</b>	<b>51.3</b>	<b>3.4%</b>	<b>48.3</b>	<b>52.0</b>	<b>53.2</b>	<b>2.3%</b>
<b>Per Capita Income</b>	<b>na</b>	<b>\$29,812</b>	<b>\$35,142</b>	<b>17.9%</b>	<b>na</b>	<b>\$34,832</b>	<b>\$40,904</b>	<b>17.4%</b>

Comparative Metrics	Rowe, MA			%Δ 2021 - 2026	Shelburne, MA			%Δ 2021 - 2026
	2010	2021	2026		2010	2021	2026	
<b>Population</b>	<b>393</b>	<b>409</b>	<b>405</b>	<b>-1.0%</b>	<b>1,893</b>	<b>1,944</b>	<b>1,931</b>	<b>-0.7%</b>
aged under 20	85	82	75	-8.5%	370	289	291	0.7%
aged 20 to 34	36	64	53	-17.2%	278	345	303	-12.2%
aged 35 to 54	100	89	96	7.9%	517	420	433	3.1%
aged 55 to 64	74	67	63	-6.0%	358	327	264	-19.3%
aged 65 and older	98	103	116	12.6%	370	563	640	13.7%
<b>Median Age</b>	<b>50.8</b>	<b>49.1</b>	<b>50.7</b>	<b>3.3%</b>	<b>48.2</b>	<b>51.3</b>	<b>52.2</b>	<b>1.8%</b>
<b>Per Capita Income</b>	<b>na</b>	<b>\$29,821</b>	<b>\$35,217</b>	<b>18.1%</b>	<b>na</b>	<b>\$39,881</b>	<b>\$45,066</b>	<b>13.0%</b>

Source : US Census, American Community Survey (ACS), ESRI and RKG (2022)  
na - data unavailable

**Implications** – The generally stable population throughout, coupled with declines in those in their family and household formation years (ages 20 to 34) and those in their peak earning and spending years (ages 35 to 54) presents challenges for expanding and/or diversifying employment



opportunities, as reflected in an overall stagnant or declining labor force. At the same time, the overall projected growth in those aged 65 and older may present opportunities for development of new housing choices for these residents who may be looking to downsize and perhaps considering smaller housing units or assisted living facilities as viable options. Smaller housing options as part of a downtown revitalization project could appeal to both younger and older generations looking for maintenance free housing options within walking distance to amenities like restaurants, a grocery, or convenience retail. This projected trend may present an additional opportunity for expansion in the health and/or personal care service sectors of the economy.

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## **HOUSEHOLDS AND INCOME**

Charlemont is projected to have 746 housing units by 2026, more than in 2021 and 2010. The 2021 to 2026 projected rate of growth is 1.5%, compared to 1.2% for Franklin County (Table 2). Hawley is projected for the largest growth in the region (at 2.2%). All other communities are projected for a lower rate of growth than Charlemont. There has been some new construction and renovation activity in Charlemont over recent years. According to the town's permit data, 4 residential permits were approved for new single family home construction and 9 for substantial remodeling work from 2017 to 2021. The town's assessor database reveals that 17 buildings have been built since 2010, 12 of which are single family homes.

All areas within the region are predominantly comprised of owner-occupied units, ranging from 66% in Shelburne to 91% in Plainfield. In Charlemont, 81% of all occupied housing units are owner-occupied while 19% are renter-occupied. This is higher than Franklin County which is currently 72% owner-occupied. The number of owner-occupied housing units is projected to remain stable or increase marginally across all locations, while the number of renter-occupied units is projected to decrease everywhere. This decrease is projected to be 5.8% in Charlemont and 5.4% in Franklin County. This projection may, in part, reflect the town's limited existing rental housing stock.

The number of vacant or seasonal housing units is also projected to increase for all locations which includes a 7.2% increase in Charlemont and a 19.1% increase in Franklin County. While increases in seasonal homes may be an indication of a burgeoning or strengthening tourism market, this trend can also remove housing options for year-round residents who may be working in the same industries the town is looking to support. Balancing the need for affordable year-round housing and supporting seasonal residents is important to having an economically viable and sustainable tourism-based economy.

The portion of households earning less than \$75,000 is expected to decline across the region, with the exception of Hawley where households earning between \$25,000 and \$49,999 are projected to grow by 10.7%. Conversely, all areas are projected to realize growth in households earning \$75,000 or more, except Plainfield, which is projected to see an 18.8% decline in households earning \$150,000 or more. Households earning \$150,000 or more is expected to comprise anywhere from 8% (Monroe) to 19% (Plainfield – despite the aforementioned decrease) of all

households in 2026. This group is expected to hold a 9% share of all households in Charlemont by 2026, which is an increase of 7% from 2021.

Median household incomes are projected to rise by 11.8% in Charlemont, representing an increase of \$6,630 to \$62,978 by 2026. Increases are expected across the region as well, ranging from an 8.1% increase in Franklin County to 15.6% in Rowe. The average projected change for all areas is \$6,411 with Charlemont exceeding this by approximately 3%. The projected dollar increase in Charlemont exceeds that of Shelburne, Buckland, and Franklin County (Figure 2). Despite the projected growth for all communities, none exceed \$70,000 in median household income by 2026.

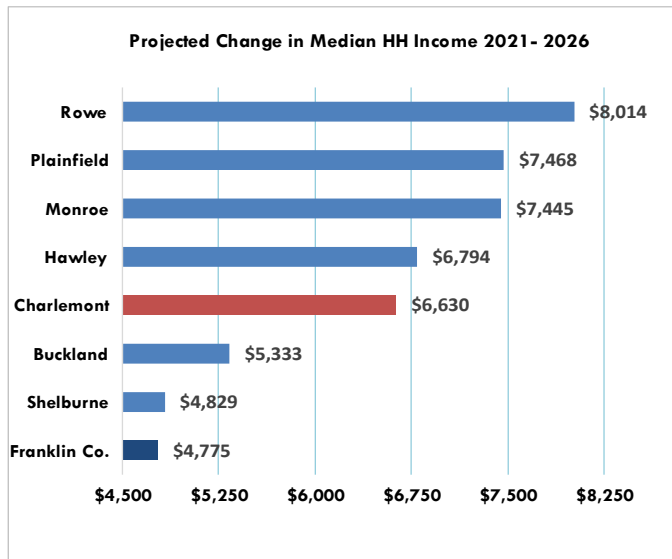


Figure 2 – Projected Change in Median Household Income

**Table 2 – Selected Housing and Household Metrics**

Comparative Metrics	Franklin County, MA			%Δ 2021 - 2026	Charlemont, MA			%Δ 2021 - 2026
	2010	2021	2026		2010	2021	2026	
<b>Housing</b>								
<b>Total Units</b>	<b>33,758</b>	<b>34,780</b>	<b>35,192</b>	<b>1.2%</b>	<b>681</b>	<b>735</b>	<b>746</b>	<b>1.5%</b>
Owner-Occupied	20,987	21,970	22,220	1.1%	410	489	499	2.0%
Renter-Occupied	9,475	9,324	8,820	-5.4%	151	121	114	-5.8%
Vacant or Seasonal	3,296	3,486	4,152	19.1%	120	125	134	7.2%
<b>Average Household Size</b>	<b>2.29</b>	<b>2.27</b>	<b>2.27</b>	<b>0.0%</b>	<b>2.25</b>	<b>2.20</b>	<b>2.19</b>	<b>-0.5%</b>
<b>Households by Income</b>	<b>30,462</b>	<b>31,294</b>	<b>31,040</b>	<b>-0.8%</b>	<b>561</b>	<b>610</b>	<b>613</b>	<b>0.5%</b>
< \$25,000	7,166	6,221	5,486	-11.8%	114	116	98	-15.5%
\$25,000 to \$49,999	8,050	6,336	5,861	-7.5%	143	147	145	-1.4%
\$50,000 to \$74,999	6,190	6,654	6,429	-3.4%	119	123	105	-14.6%
\$75,000 to \$149,999	7,714	8,572	9,012	5.1%	175	183	211	15.3%
\$150,000 and >	1,342	3,511	4,252	21.1%	10	41	55	34.1%
<b>Median Household Income</b>	<i>na</i>	<b>\$59,062</b>	<b>\$63,837</b>	<b>8.1%</b>	<i>na</i>	<b>\$56,348</b>	<b>\$62,978</b>	<b>11.8%</b>
<b>Owner Median Value</b>	<i>na</i>	<b>\$272,628</b>	<b>\$411,775</b>	<b>51.0%</b>	<i>na</i>	<b>\$294,697</b>	<b>\$480,242</b>	<b>63.0%</b>
<b>Owner Average Value</b>	<i>na</i>	<b>\$352,218</b>	<b>\$501,900</b>	<b>42.5%</b>	<i>na</i>	<b>\$429,969</b>	<b>\$633,517</b>	<b>47.3%</b>

Comparative Metrics	Buckland, MA			%Δ 2021 - 2026	Hawley, MA			%Δ 2021 - 2026
	2010	2021	2026		2010	2021	2026	
<b>Housing</b>								
<b>Total Units</b>	<b>888</b>	<b>924</b>	<b>935</b>	<b>1.2%</b>	<b>198</b>	<b>223</b>	<b>228</b>	<b>2.2%</b>
Owner-Occupied	632	675	688	1.9%	116	120	123	2.5%
Renter-Occupied	191	184	167	-9.2%	12	25	24	-4.0%
Vacant or Seasonal	65	65	80	23.1%	70	78	81	3.8%
<b>Average Household Size</b>	<b>2.30</b>	<b>2.28</b>	<b>2.27</b>	<b>-0.4%</b>	<b>2.42</b>	<b>2.53</b>	<b>2.52</b>	<b>-0.4%</b>
<b>Households by Income</b>	<b>823</b>	<b>859</b>	<b>855</b>	<b>-0.5%</b>	<b>128</b>	<b>145</b>	<b>147</b>	<b>1.4%</b>
< \$25,000	186	166	152	-8.4%	22	26	21	-19.2%
\$25,000 to \$49,999	229	169	145	-14.2%	23	28	31	10.7%
\$50,000 to \$74,999	118	208	198	-4.8%	27	34	27	-20.6%
\$75,000 to \$149,999	241	252	279	10.7%	40	47	53	12.8%
\$150,000 and >	20	64	81	26.6%	16	10	14	40.0%
<b>Median Household Income</b>	<i>na</i>	<b>\$58,642</b>	<b>\$63,975</b>	<b>9.1%</b>	<i>na</i>	<b>\$60,886</b>	<b>\$67,680</b>	<b>11.2%</b>
<b>Owner Median Value</b>	<i>na</i>	<b>\$306,790</b>	<b>\$459,916</b>	<b>49.9%</b>	<i>na</i>	<b>\$353,846</b>	<b>\$687,500</b>	<b>94.3%</b>
<b>Owner Average Value</b>	<i>na</i>	<b>\$362,741</b>	<b>\$491,824</b>	<b>35.6%</b>	<i>na</i>	<b>\$527,869</b>	<b>\$723,156</b>	<b>37.0%</b>

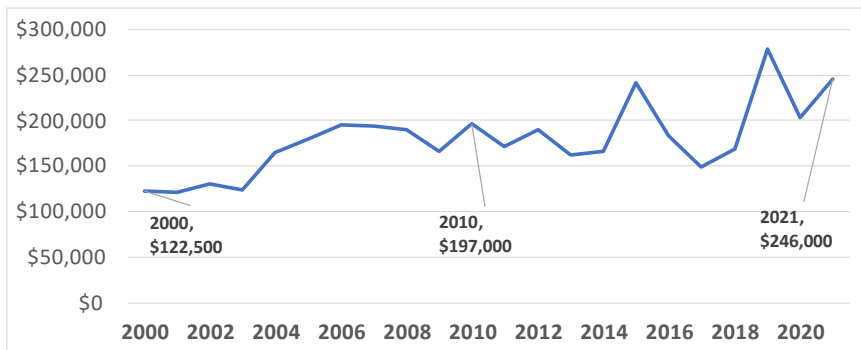
Comparative Metrics	Monroe, MA			%Δ 2021 - 2026	Plainfield, MA			%Δ 2021 - 2026
	2010	2021	2026		2010	2021	2026	
<b>Housing</b>								
<b>Total Units</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>1.3%</b>	<b>329</b>	<b>329</b>	<b>330</b>	<b>0.3%</b>
Owner-Occupied	47	47	47	0.0%	237	240	242	0.8%
Renter-Occupied	10	13	12	-7.7%	32	27	25	-7.4%
Vacant or Seasonal	20	20	21	5.0%	60	62	63	1.6%
<b>Average Household Size</b>	<b>2.12</b>	<b>2.10</b>	<b>2.08</b>	<b>-1.0%</b>	<b>2.40</b>	<b>2.41</b>	<b>2.41</b>	<b>0.0%</b>
<b>Households by Income</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>-1.7%</b>	<b>269</b>	<b>267</b>	<b>267</b>	<b>0.0%</b>
< \$25,000	18	12	10	-16.7%	49	44	35	-20.5%
\$25,000 to \$49,999	18	17	15	-11.8%	62	64	61	-4.7%
\$50,000 to \$74,999	21	11	10	-9.1%	57	60	53	-11.7%
\$75,000 to \$149,999	0	17	19	11.8%	85	60	66	10.0%
\$150,000 and >	0	3	5	66.7%	16	64	52	-18.8%
<b>Median Household Income</b>	<i>na</i>	<b>\$ 51,540</b>	<b>\$ 58,985</b>	<b>14.4%</b>	<i>na</i>	<b>\$58,068</b>	<b>\$65,536</b>	<b>12.9%</b>
<b>Owner Median Value</b>	<i>na</i>	<b>\$ 266,667</b>	<b>\$ 433,333</b>	<b>62.5%</b>	<i>na</i>	<b>\$330,612</b>	<b>\$536,697</b>	<b>62.3%</b>
<b>Owner Average Value</b>	<i>na</i>	<b>\$ 339,130</b>	<b>\$ 545,833</b>	<b>61.0%</b>	<i>na</i>	<b>\$438,646</b>	<b>\$640,393</b>	<b>46.0%</b>

Comparative Metrics	Rowe, MA			%Δ 2021 - 2026	Shelburne, MA			%Δ 2021 - 2026
	2010	2021	2026		2010	2021	2026	
<b>Housing</b>								
<b>Total Units</b>	<b>227</b>	<b>237</b>	<b>239</b>	<b>0.8%</b>	<b>931</b>	<b>962</b>	<b>972</b>	<b>1.0%</b>
Owner-Occupied	146	137	139	1.5%	538	571	580	1.6%
Renter-Occupied	21	39	36	-7.7%	311	312	298	-4.5%
Vacant or Seasonal	60	61	64	4.9%	82	79	94	19.0%
<b>Average Household Size</b>	<b>2.35</b>	<b>2.32</b>	<b>2.31</b>	<b>-0.4%</b>	<b>2.18</b>	<b>2.15</b>	<b>2.15</b>	<b>0.0%</b>
<b>Households by Income</b>	<b>167</b>	<b>176</b>	<b>175</b>	<b>-0.6%</b>	<b>849</b>	<b>883</b>	<b>878</b>	<b>-0.6%</b>
< \$25,000	24	36	30	-16.7%	164	176	151	-14.2%
\$25,000 to \$49,999	63	50	45	-10.0%	178	144	137	-4.9%
\$50,000 to \$74,999	42	31	28	-9.7%	156	193	190	-1.6%
\$75,000 to \$149,999	35	49	58	18.4%	297	265	272	2.6%
\$150,000 and >	3	11	15	36.4%	54	105	128	21.9%
<b>Median Household Income</b>	<i>na</i>	<b>\$51,374</b>	<b>\$59,388</b>	<b>15.6%</b>	<i>na</i>	<b>\$63,234</b>	<b>\$68,063</b>	<b>7.6%</b>
<b>Owner Median Value</b>	<i>na</i>	<b>\$264,706</b>	<b>\$434,884</b>	<b>64.3%</b>	<i>na</i>	<b>\$366,794</b>	<b>\$518,750</b>	<b>41.4%</b>
<b>Owner Average Value</b>	<i>na</i>	<b>\$336,581</b>	<b>\$552,536</b>	<b>64.2%</b>	<i>na</i>	<b>\$536,427</b>	<b>\$727,026</b>	<b>35.5%</b>

Source : US Census, American Community Survey (ACS), ESRI and RKG (2022)

na - data unavailable

Real estate market data from the Warren Group reveals median sales prices have continued to increase over the past 20 years in Charlemont. The median sales price for single-family homes in Charlemont was \$246,000 in 2021, a \$123,500 increase (101%) from the year 2000 and a \$49,000 increase (25%) from 2010.



**Figure 3 – Charlemont Median Sales Price**

Similarly, the median sales price has increased for all other communities within the LMA over the past 5 years (where data is available). The communities of Charlemont, Buckland, Hawley, Plainfield, and Rowe saw median sales prices for single-family homes rise by an average of 43.3% since 2016 (data is unavailable for Monroe and Shelburne). Charlemont’s 34.1% increase during this time is second only to Plainfield, where the median price is now more than double what it was in 2016. Charlemont’s median price in 2021 trailed behind Plainfield (\$402,500), Buckland (\$259,500), and Hawley (\$257,500) but was ahead of Rowe (\$180,000). Most towns within the region have seen prices continue to rise since 2019, suggesting regional home values have not been adversely affected by the pandemic. This increase in value could be attributed in part to market pressure catching up to the region as values continue to rise with relatively little new development and decreasing inventory levels (homes available on the market) across the state. These increases could also reflect more out of town buyers entering the local market, as remote work options are allowing greater flexibility in home locations for a portion of the workforce. Data to support this has not been released yet and it will be important to keep an eye on the housing stock classified as seasonal use.

**Table 3 - Regional Sales Statistics (2016-2021)**

	2016 Median Sales Price	2021 Median Sales Price	% Change
Plainfield	\$194,782	\$402,500	106.6%
<b>Charlemont</b>	<b>\$183,500</b>	<b>\$246,000</b>	<b>34.1%</b>
Rowe	\$139,000	\$180,000	29.5%
Buckland	\$205,000	\$259,500	26.6%
Hawley	\$215,000	\$257,500	19.8%
Monroe	na		
Shelburne	na		

Source: The Warren Group, 2022  
na - data unavailable

**Implications** – There is nominal housing unit growth projected throughout the region, not exceeding 2.5% for any one location. The projected growth rate for owner-occupied housing units is 2% or less across the region, except for in Hawley (2.5%). The lack of projected growth in owner housing could limit opportunities for first-time homeowners, suggesting that available units may



primarily reflect turnover as opposed to new construction, as supported by the town's assessor and building permit data which shows limited recent residential construction activity. The continued increase in housing prices raises concerns over affordability. The declining renter housing market may also limit options for newly formed (or downsizing) households preferring to rent rather than own.

## ECONOMIC CONDITIONS

This section presents a discussion of economic indicators including trends in the labor force, employment, and unemployment rates over the latest 13-month period.<sup>2</sup> Also, as offered by EMSI, a leading private sector provider of employment data, changes in projected employment (2020 – 2030) by industry sector, is presented for Charlemont and Franklin County, with a distinction between wage employment and self-employment.

### LABOR FORCE AND UNEMPLOYMENT

As the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic have continued to ebb and flow, recovery over the past year has not been universal to all areas and to all industry sectors. Labor force participation has exhibited stagnation or some decline in many areas, which, in part, may be contributory to recent declines in the unemployment rate. If individuals are no longer actively seeking work, they are no longer considered unemployed and therefore are not included in the labor force. The following trends were exhibited for the December 2020 to December 2021 time period:

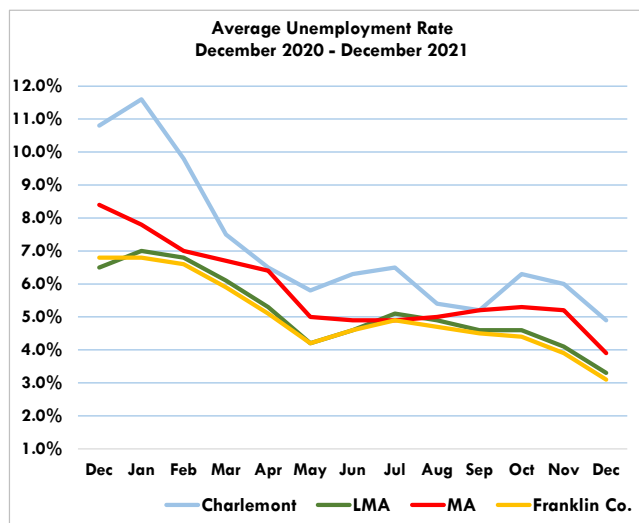
- **Charlemont** – the town's labor force declined by 3.7%, from 673 people in December of 2020 to 648 in December of 2021 (a decline of 25 people). The monthly average number of people in the labor force was 651. During this period, Charlemont's labor force declined from an 18.9% representation of the Buckland LMA to an 18.3% representation. Actual employment in Charlemont over the same 13-month period increased from 600 people in December of 2020 to 616 in December of 2021.
- **Buckland LMA** – the labor market area's labor force declined by 0.7%, from 3,568 people in December of 2020 to 3,542 persons in December of 2021, (a 26 person decline). The average monthly labor force was 3,553 people. Despite this decline in the labor force, its representation of the Franklin County labor force changed from 8.8% to 8.9%. Actual employment in the Buckland LMA over the same 13-month period increased from 3,337 to 3,426 people (an 89 person increase) during this same period.
- **Franklin County** – the labor force declined by 0.9%, from 40,370 people in December of 2020 to 40,000 people in December of 2021 (a 370 person decline) and averaged 40,069

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<sup>2</sup> Data from the Massachusetts Division of Unemployment Assistance for December 2020 through December 2021.

monthly. Actual employment in Franklin County over the same 13-month period increased from 37,625 to 38,780 people (a 1,115 person increase).

While the previously noted changes in the labor force and employment may be modest in absolute terms, they nonetheless are contributory to a decline in the unemployment rate (Figure 4). Since December 2020, the unemployment rates for all geography levels (with Massachusetts included as a general reference) have declined to below 4% (the typical threshold for full employment), with the exception of Charlemont. The town’s unemployment rate was 4.9% as of December 2021, well below the 10.8% rate observed in December 2020. A similar pattern is noticed across all geographies, but Charlemont exhibited the greatest decline in unemployment, which is not surprising given the town’s high concentration of employment within the Arts, Entertainment and Recreation industry, an industry sector that typically saw higher levels of unemployment during the early stages of the pandemic.



**Figure 4 – Comparative Unemployment Rates**

**Implications** – Diminishing unemployment rates as a result of stable to declining labor force coupled with improvements in actual employment levels may suggest that existing employers within Charlemont and the surrounding communities face a limited pool for new employment.

## EMPLOYMENT BY INDUSTRY SECTOR

Table 3 presents a comparison of selected employment metrics for Charlemont, by 2-digit NAICS sector, distinguishing between wage employment and self-employment, noting the following:

- Many industry sectors are not present in Charlemont, and the estimates are either suppressed or fewer than 10 in several others. Nonetheless, total employment in Charlemont is projected to increase by 3.1% over the 2020 to 2030 period. This includes a projected growth of 7.9% in wage employment as offset by a 4.7% decline in self-employment. By 2030, the wage employment base is projected to account for nearly 65% of total employment, up slightly from 62% in 2020.
- The average annual pay for wage employment was reported as \$38,956 in 2020. The average pay exceeded \$65,000 annually for both the Educational Services and Government sectors.

- The average pay for self-employed individuals was reported as \$33,914 annually, approximately 89% that of the wage employment group.
- The largest employment sector in Charlemont (total employment) is the Arts, Entertainment and Recreation sector (NAICS 71). This industry accounts for 35% of the total 2020 employment and is projected to represent 44% in 2030.

**Table 4 – Selected Employment Metrics for Charlemont, MA**

NAICS Sector (2-digit)	NAICS Description	Wage Employment - Charlemont, MA				Self Employment - Charlemont, MA			
		2020 Jobs	2030 Jobs	% Δ	2020 Avg \$	2020 Jobs	2030 Jobs	% Δ	2020 Avg \$
11	Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	0	0	na	\$0	0	0	na	\$0
21	Mining, Quarrying, Oil and Gas	0	0	na	\$0	0	0	na	\$0
22	Utilities	0	0	na	\$0	0	0	na	\$0
23	Construction	<10	<10	na	na	22	20	-7.4%	\$49,266
31	Manufacturing	0	0	na	\$0	0	0	na	\$0
42	Wholesale Trade	0	0	na	\$0	0	0	na	\$0
44	Retail Trade	25	24	-4.7%	\$31,646	<10	<10	na	na
48	Transportation and Warehousing	<10	<10	na	na	20	23	14.7%	\$33,933
51	Information	0	0	na	\$0	0	0	na	\$0
52	Finance and Insurance	<10	<10	na	na	0	0	na	\$0
53	Real Estate	0	0	na	\$0	0	0	na	\$0
54	Professional Services	0	0	na	\$0	42	49	16.0%	\$33,957
55	Management of Companies / Enterprises	0	0	na	\$0	0	0	na	\$0
56	Administrative and Support	0	0	na	\$0	0	0	na	\$0
61	Educational Services	37	34	-6.3%	\$67,536	<10	0	na	na
62	Health Care and Social Assistance	0	0	na	\$0	0	0	na	\$0
71	Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	126	172	35.9%	\$23,939	21	19	-12.8%	\$21,373
72	Accommodation and Food Services	25	<10	na	\$24,032	<10	<10	na	na
81	Other Services (ex. Public Administration)	12	<10	na	\$28,171	44	32	-28.6%	\$31,527
90	Government	20	20	0.0%	\$69,838	0	0	na	na
99	Other Unclassified	0	0	na	\$0	0	0	na	na
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>261</b>	<b>282</b>	<b>7.9%</b>	<b>\$38,056</b>	<b>161</b>	<b>154</b>	<b>-4.7%</b>	<b>\$33,914</b>

Source : EMSI and RKG (2022)

above the average

above the average

na - data unavailable or suppressed

Table 4 presents selected employment metrics for Franklin County, noting the following:

- Wage employment is projected to increase by 0.1% with many industry sectors projected to realize a decline in employment. Self-employment is projected to increase by 11.9%, by nearly 1,500 jobs. As a result, nearly all of the projected growth in Franklin County is among the self-employed. By 2030, the self-employed will account for 36% of total county employment (similar to Charlemont).
- The average annual pay for wage employment in Franklin County was reported as \$58,606 in 2020, 1.5 times that of Charlemont. Numerous industry sectors surpassed this average. Average annual pay for the Utilities and Management sectors exceeded \$100,000.
- The average annual pay for self-employed individuals in Franklin County was \$29,639 in 2020, roughly 87% that of the self-employed in Charlemont.

- Slightly more than one-half of the wage employment is concentrated in the Government, Health Care and Manufacturing sectors in Franklin County in 2020 and 2030 (projected).

**Table 5 – Selected Employment Metrics for Franklin County**

NAICS Sector (2-digit)	NAICS Description	Wage Employment - Franklin County				Self Employment - Franklin County			
		2020 Jobs	2030 Jobs	% Δ	2020 Avg \$	2020 Jobs	2030 Jobs	% Δ	2020 Avg \$
11	Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	833	1,199	44.0%	\$42,439	803	813	1.3%	\$20,575
21	Mining, Quarrying, Oil and Gas	14	18	28.1%	\$70,492	0	0	na	na
22	Utilities	44	44	0.8%	\$167,794	14	17	24.6%	\$27,088
23	Construction	1,100	1,182	7.5%	\$77,506	1,279	1,335	4.4%	\$50,083
31	Manufacturing	3,479	3,463	-0.5%	\$69,040	384	499	30.2%	\$32,917
42	Wholesale Trade	460	466	1.2%	\$68,065	161	185	14.7%	\$36,973
44	Retail Trade	2,660	2,349	-11.7%	\$42,028	1,067	1,203	12.7%	\$20,056
48	Transportation and Warehousing	735	564	-23.2%	\$62,230	838	1,238	47.6%	\$21,727
51	Information	226	209	-7.4%	\$72,912	219	239	8.8%	\$19,605
52	Finance and Insurance	404	313	-22.5%	\$83,000	531	639	20.4%	\$35,750
53	Real Estate	114	94	-17.9%	\$45,911	819	931	13.6%	\$45,785
54	Professional Services	565	668	18.3%	\$72,461	1,520	1,599	5.2%	\$36,566
55	Management of Companies / Enterprises	616	645	4.6%	\$129,373	17	22	29.1%	\$52,945
56	Administrative and Support	595	528	-11.3%	\$53,438	697	739	6.0%	\$25,436
61	Educational Services	1,540	1,528	-0.8%	\$64,540	552	551	-0.2%	\$12,790
62	Health Care and Social Assistance	4,366	5,221	19.6%	\$49,361	873	879	0.7%	\$35,776
71	Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	441	467	5.7%	\$28,642	1,243	1,393	12.0%	\$11,216
72	Accommodation and Food Services	1,455	984	-32.4%	\$23,755	461	541	17.3%	\$33,042
81	Other Services (ex. Public Administration)	848	707	-16.6%	\$29,918	1,151	1,304	13.3%	\$28,436
90	Government	5,040	4,901	-2.8%	\$68,122	0	0	na	na
99	Other Unclassified	0	0	na	\$0	0	0	na	na
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>25,534</b>	<b>25,548</b>	<b>0.1%</b>	<b>\$58,606</b>	<b>12,630</b>	<b>14,127</b>	<b>11.9%</b>	<b>\$29,639</b>

Source : EMSI and RKG (2022)

above the average

above the average

na - data unavailable or suppressed

Table 6 presents selected employment metrics for Franklin County, noting the following:

- The number of working age Charlemont residents actively engaged in the workforce declined by 20% between 2015 and 2020. This is both a result of the decline in overall population and the continued increase in older adults who are likely not engaged in the workforce any longer.
- Increases in employed residents occurred in some higher paying industry sectors such as finance and insurance and professional, scientific, and management services. This could point to the potential for residents to relocate here for remote work purposes, particularly now with townwide broadband in place. Data is not yet available to fully assess the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on movership rates and hybrid or fully remote work schedules, but Charlemont may benefit to some degree from these shifts in where people live and how they work.
- The declines in resident employment across the industry sectors of Retail and Arts/Entertainment/Recreation suggest local businesses in these sectors may be importing more workers from outside Charlemont. This data may suggest an opportunity for workforce housing in Charlemont geared toward households earning lower incomes who may not be able to otherwise afford Charlemont housing costs.



**Table 6 – Employment Sectors of Working Age Charlemont Residents**

NAICS Description	Charlemont Resident Employment		
	2015 Jobs	2020 Jobs	% Δ
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining	14	14	0.0%
Construction	36	31	-13.9%
Manufacturing	49	44	-10.2%
Wholesale trade	0	0	0.0%
Retail trade	35	36	2.9%
Transportation and warehousing, and utilities	54	22	-59.3%
Information	10	4	-60.0%
Finance and insurance, and real estate and rental and leasing	18	25	38.9%
Professional, scientific, and management, and administrative and waste management services	13	32	146.2%
Educational services, and health care and social assistance	176	143	-18.8%
Arts, entertainment, and recreation, and accommodation and food services	59	52	-11.9%
Other services, except public administration	41	13	-68.3%
Public administration	16	0	-100.0%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>521</b>	<b>416</b>	<b>-20.2%</b>

Source: 2011-2015 and 2016-2020 American Community Survey (ACS)

**Implications** – Projected wage employment growth in Charlemont is mostly a reflection of growth in the Arts, Entertainment and Recreation sector. Average wages are less than \$25,000 in this sector. Projected wage employment growth is generally negligible across the board in Franklin County with the exceptions of the Agriculture, Mining and Health Care sectors, where growth is expected to be strong. On the other hand, self-employment growth in Franklin County is projected to be nearly 12% and spread across a diversity of industry sectors. Much of this self-employment could be home-based. In either event, opportunities may be present (or should be explored) for these entrepreneurs to locate (or relocate) their business operations to Charlemont should such facilities become available.

## TOURISM-BASED ECONOMY

The majority of Charlemont’s businesses and jobs are geared toward supporting a tourism-based economy. According to employment data in 2020, nearly half of all full-time jobs in Charlemont fell within the Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation industry sector. Between 2020 and 2030, jobs in this sector are projected to increase by 36% showing the concentration in the sector and potential for growth. Visitation to Charlemont, primarily for outdoor recreation opportunities, is fueling this growth as evidenced by the numbers of visitors coming to Charlemont in recent years.

Visitation data from Franklin County shows a total of 101,550 annual visitors to Charlemont in 2021 and 113,570 in 2020. The pandemic certainly impacted tourism activities to a certain degree but are expected to have a strong bounce back in 2022. Of the visitors to Charlemont in 2021, 55% originated from the Boston area with another 30% coming from cities such as Hartford and New Haven in Connecticut, and New York City. Nearly 70% of all trips to Charlemont, regardless of origin, occurred between Friday and Sunday. The town and the Franklin County region are not currently destinations for long-term visitation. Data from Franklin County shows 75% of all trips were day trips (60%) or one-night visits (15%).

The seasonality of the tourism economy in Charlemont is very clear when looking at the data. Figure 7 shows the highest months for visitation in Charlemont are January-February for ski season, and June-August for activities in and on the Deerfield River.

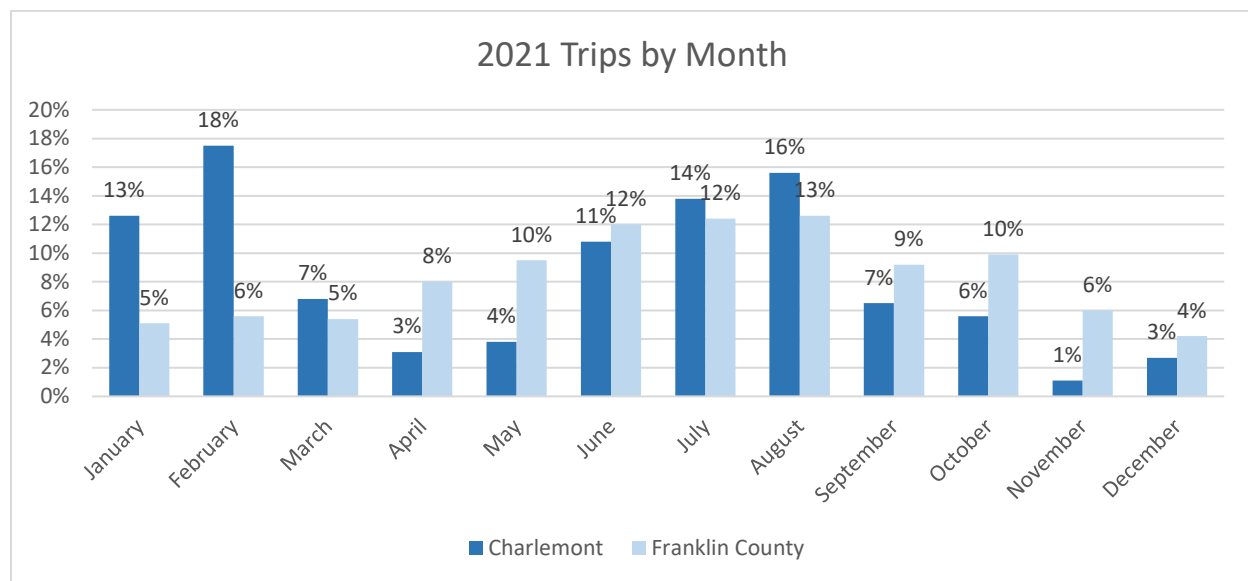


Figure 7 – 2021 Visitation by Month

The tourism-based businesses and the activities they offer in Charlemont are also reinforcing the seasonality of the economy. With the presence of Berkshire East, winter visitation remains high driven by skiers visiting the mountain. In 2020, it was estimated Berkshire East had about 180,000 visitor trips. Not all were during ski season or coming to the facility for ski activities, but it is likely a majority were. During the spring and summer months, activities like tubing on the Deerfield, kayaking, and fly fishing drive visitation numbers up. In 2020, Zoar Outdoor and Hyytinen Hollow Tubes brought in over 66,000 visitor trips for river-based activities. Crab Apple Whitewater brought in about 10,000 visitor trips in 2021.<sup>3</sup>

While the tourism and visitation from those who live outside Charlemont has created some negative impacts for the town and its residents, visitors are supporting local businesses. Tourism and experience-based businesses are benefitting directly from visitors coming to take part in their activities, but there are other businesses in town that benefit from spin-off activity like food and beverage purchases, gas, and other tangible goods being purchased. Although the intent of this economic development strategy is to provide for a balance of benefits to Charlemont's businesses and residents, the existing strength of the tourism-based economy should be leveraged to drive larger, longer-term positive impacts for the town as a whole.

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<sup>3</sup> Data from Franklin County was provided through third party smart phone apps that track origin/destination for trips to Charlemont from other locations. Local business visitation data was provided through phone interviews with those respective businesses. Data was not available for some businesses every year.

## RETAIL MARKET ANALYSIS

As RKG understands, there is currently no specific retail development, or location, proposed for new retail development in Charlemont, MA. As such, the focus of this retail market analysis is to offer more generalized information regarding consumer (household) spending demand, retail sales and estimates of sales leakage across a broad sector of retail stores and/or merchandise lines. All retail markets experience some degree of sales leakage, or the difference between local spending demand and realized sales. Some retail sectors, depending on location, price points, competition and other factors may be net importers of sales activity – meaning that sales exceed local demand. Others may be net exporters – meaning that local demand exceeds local sales. RKG opted to measure the demand and sales for a 1- to 5-mile radius about 157 Main Street in Charlemont, MA (Figure 8).

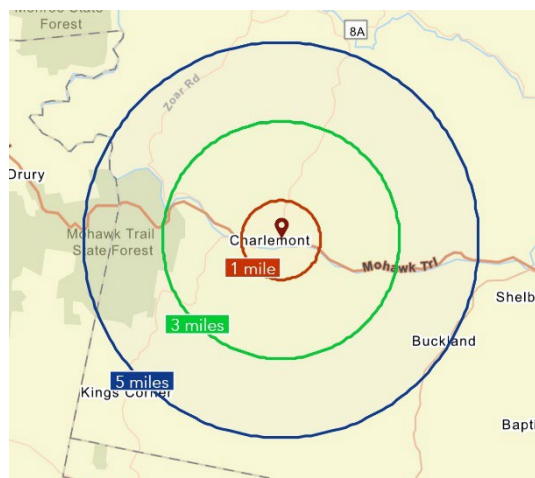


Figure 8 – Retail Radii – Charlemont, MA

To the extent that any particular retail sector is an importer of sales, this could suggest a destination draw for that sector and the potential for additional development to build on that destination draw. For example, a cluster of apparel and accessory shops could attract customers from outside of the immediate region and an increase in these stores could further foster that regional draw. Conversely, to the extent that any one retail sector is an exporter of sales suggests additional opportunities for new stores to re-capture some portion of that sales leakage, or at a minimum for existing retailers to fine-tune their product lines, merchandising or other operational policies to re-capture some share of that sales leakage and increase their overall market penetration.

Table 7 presents estimates of per household spending demand and estimates of sales leakage (either imported or exported) at the selected mileage radii, noting the following:

- **1-Mile Radius** – there are approximately 152 households within this radius with an average spending demand of \$20,051 per household – or \$3.04 million in total. All retail sectors are net exporters of sales (\$2.90 million).
- **1- to 3-Mile Radius** – there are an additional 359 households within this radius with an average spending demand of \$22,022 per household – or \$7.91 million in total. All retail sectors are net exporters of sales (\$7.73 million).



- **3- to 5-Mile Radius** – there are another 586 households within this radius with an average spending demand of \$26,553 per household – or \$15.56 million in total. All retail sectors are net exporters of sales (\$13.75 million).

**Table 7 – Selected Retail Metrics at Selected Radii – Charlemont, MA**

Retail Demand and Sales Analysis - Selected Radii for Charlemont, MA	NAICS Code	1 - Mile Radius		1 - to 3 - Mile Radius		3 - to 5 - Mile Radius	
		Demand/HH	(Export) /Import	Demand/HH	(Export) /Import	Demand/HH	(Export) /Import
		\$20,051	(\$2,900,265)	\$22,022	(\$7,729,766)	\$26,553	(\$13,750,126)
Furniture & Home Furnishings Stores	442	\$718	(\$109,114)	\$788	(\$283,044)	\$951	(\$557,174)
Electronics & Appliance Stores	443	\$1,083	(\$164,579)	\$1,189	(\$426,919)	\$1,434	(\$840,120)
Bldg Materials, Garden Equip. & Supply Stores	444	\$1,850	(\$281,231)	\$2,032	(\$729,513)	\$2,450	(\$1,243,408)
Food & Beverage Stores	445	\$5,092	(\$773,939)	\$5,592	(\$2,007,601)	\$6,742	(\$3,214,030)
Health & Personal Care Stores	446,4461	\$1,779	(\$270,464)	\$1,954	(\$701,585)	\$2,356	(\$1,380,565)
Clothing & Clothing Accessories Stores	448	\$1,707	(\$259,458)	\$1,875	(\$673,038)	\$2,261	(\$1,324,925)
Sporting Goods, Hobby, Book & Music Stores	451	\$943	(\$143,344)	\$1,036	(\$371,834)	\$1,249	(\$731,960)
General Merchandise Stores	452	\$3,114	(\$473,257)	\$3,420	(\$1,227,631)	\$4,123	(\$2,416,298)
Miscellaneous Store Retailers	453	\$1,074	(\$163,291)	\$1,180	(\$423,578)	\$1,422	(\$278,681)
Food Services & Drinking Places	722	\$2,691	(\$261,588)	\$2,956	(\$885,023)	\$3,565	(\$1,762,965)

Source: ESRI, Dun & Bradstreet and RKG (2022)

Table 8 offers a more granular analysis of the total 5-mile radius, with 1,097 households and an aggregate demand of \$26.51 million (or \$24,169 per household). Sales were reported for a handful of retail sectors, totaling \$2.14 million, indicating that overall, there remains \$24.38 million in net sales leakage. While it is possible that actual retail sales could be somewhat higher, as they may not be reported in some instances due to data suppression, there would nonetheless remain a substantial dollar volume of sales leakage.

As noted, within the 5-mile radius there are approximately 1,097 households and the population is estimated at nearly 2,500 people – both typically below the desired locational metrics (densities) to attract regional or national chain development. With a large stretch of the Mohawk Trail running directly through the town, opportunities may exist for local entrepreneurial retailing, particularly among those sectors, such as dining and drinking, which would also serve the seasonal tourism and recreational population influxes (similar to Wells Provisions).

An on the ground tour of the town revealed existing retail options to be limited. There are several fast-casual restaurants and liquor stores as well as a variety of boutique independent retail options (including a general store, a hardware store, a sporting goods store, and an antique store). The Mohawk Trail is an asset, boosting the town’s retail potential by providing a steady volume of people passing through the area seasonally. The town’s recreational destinations that already attract visitors (Berkshire East, the Warfield House, Zoar Outdoor, and Crab Apple Whitewater, among others) further boost the retail potential in town. The initial success of Wells Provisions proves that independent entrepreneurial retail options can succeed as not only a place for those passing through the area to stop along their journey but as a regional draw for residents from surrounding towns.

Figure 9 presents RKG's estimates of potential supportable development (in terms of SF) for additional retail. Three scenarios are considered whereby 35%, 50% and 65% of the estimated total 5-mile radius sales leakage is re-captured through new stores and shops, noting:

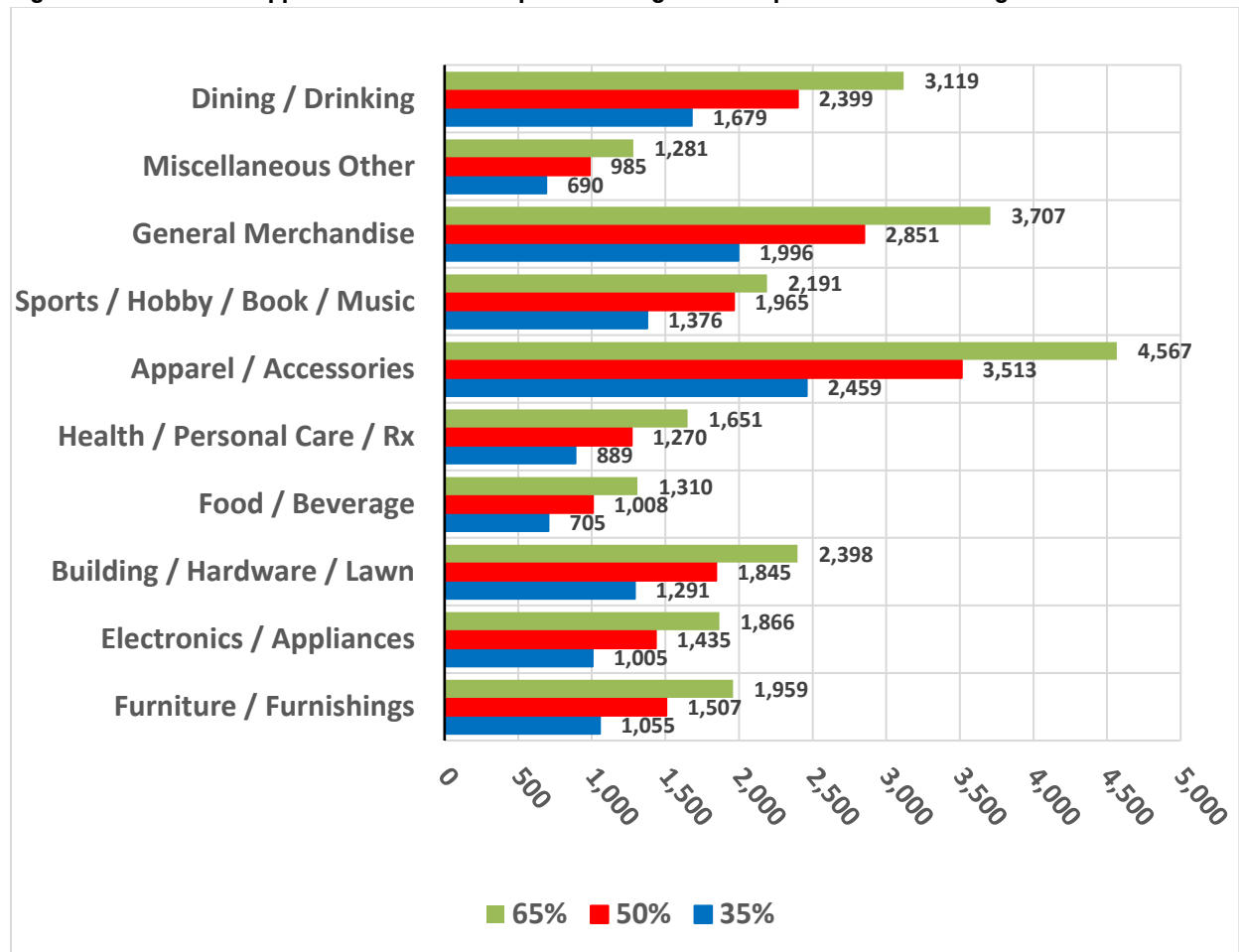
- **35% Re-Capture** – the total estimated supportable SF equates to 13,145 SF across multiple retail store types and/or merchandise lines, including nearly 1,680 SF for dining and drinking as well as 1,380 SF for sporting goods – both of which could serve the resident and seasonal consumers.
- **50% Re-Capture** – the total estimated supportable SF equates to 18,778 SF across multiple retail store types and/or merchandise lines, including nearly 2,400 SF for dining and drinking as well as 1,965 SF for sporting goods – both of which could serve the resident and seasonal consumers.
- **65% Re-Capture** – the total estimated supportable SF equates to 24,048 SF across multiple retail store types and/or merchandise lines, including nearly 3,120 SF for dining and drinking as well as 2,190 SF for sporting goods – both of which could serve the resident and seasonal consumers.

**Table 8 – Spending Demand, Sales and Sales Leakage (detailed) Total 5-Mile Radius – Charlemont, MA**

Retail Demand and Sales Analysis - Selected Radii for Charlemont, MA	NAICS Code	TOTAL 5-Mile Radius			
		Demand/HH	Total Demand	Total Sales	(Export) /Import
		<b>\$24,169</b>	<b>\$26,513,895</b>	<b>\$2,133,736</b>	<b>(\$24,380,156)</b>
<b>Furniture &amp; Home Furnishings Stores</b>	<b>442</b>	<b>\$865</b>	<b>\$949,333</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>(\$949,332)</b>
Furniture Stores	4421	\$451	\$494,578	\$0	(\$494,578)
Home Furnishings Stores	4422	\$415	\$454,754	\$0	(\$454,754)
<b>Electronics &amp; Appliance Stores</b>	<b>443</b>	<b>\$1,305</b>	<b>\$1,431,618</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>(\$1,431,618)</b>
<b>Bldg Materials, Garden Equip. &amp; Supply Stores</b>	<b>444</b>	<b>\$2,230</b>	<b>\$2,446,397</b>	<b>\$192,246</b>	<b>(\$2,254,151)</b>
Bldg Material & Supplies Dealers	4441	\$2,047	\$2,245,170	\$0	(\$2,245,170)
Lawn & Garden Equip & Supply Stores	4442	\$183	\$201,227	\$0	(\$201,227)
<b>Food &amp; Beverage Stores</b>	<b>445</b>	<b>\$6,137</b>	<b>\$6,732,490</b>	<b>\$736,920</b>	<b>(\$5,995,570)</b>
Grocery Stores	4451	\$5,280	\$5,791,706	\$0	(\$5,791,706)
Specialty Food Stores	4452	\$228	\$250,455	\$0	(\$250,455)
Beer, Wine & Liquor Stores	4453	\$629	\$690,329	\$0	(\$690,329)
<b>Health &amp; Personal Care Stores</b>	<b>446,4461</b>	<b>\$2,145</b>	<b>\$2,352,614</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>(\$2,352,614)</b>
<b>Clothing &amp; Clothing Accessories Stores</b>	<b>448</b>	<b>\$2,058</b>	<b>\$2,257,423</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>(\$2,257,421)</b>
Clothing Stores	4481	\$1,464	\$1,606,205	\$0	(\$1,606,205)
Shoe Stores	4482	\$248	\$271,683	\$0	(\$271,683)
Jewelry, Luggage & Leather Goods Stores	4483	\$346	\$379,533	\$0	(\$379,533)
<b>Sporting Goods, Hobby, Book &amp; Music Stores</b>	<b>451</b>	<b>\$1,137</b>	<b>\$1,247,139</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>(\$1,247,138)</b>
Sporting Goods/Hobby/Musical Instr Stores	4511	\$1,000	\$1,097,278	\$0	(\$1,097,278)
Book, Periodical & Music Stores	4512	\$137	\$149,860	\$0	(\$149,860)
<b>General Merchandise Stores</b>	<b>452</b>	<b>\$3,753</b>	<b>\$4,117,185</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>(\$4,117,186)</b>
Department Stores Excluding Leased Depts.	4521	\$2,624	\$2,878,485	\$0	(\$2,878,485)
Other General Merchandise Stores	4529	\$1,129	\$1,238,701	\$0	(\$1,238,701)
<b>Miscellaneous Store Retailers</b>	<b>453</b>	<b>\$1,295</b>	<b>\$1,420,407</b>	<b>\$554,857</b>	<b>(\$865,550)</b>
Florists	4531	\$89	\$98,025	\$0	(\$98,025)
Office Supplies, Stationery & Gift Stores	4532	\$397	\$435,127	\$23,661	(\$411,466)
Used Merchandise Stores	4533	\$86	\$93,959	\$0	(\$93,959)
Other Miscellaneous Store Retailers	4539	\$723	\$793,297	\$531,196	(\$262,101)
<b>Food Services &amp; Drinking Places</b>	<b>722</b>	<b>\$3,245</b>	<b>\$3,559,289</b>	<b>\$649,713</b>	<b>(\$2,909,576)</b>
Restaurants	7221	\$2,977	\$3,265,460	\$435,199	(\$2,830,261)
Special Food Services	7223	\$113	\$123,770	\$0	(\$123,770)
Drinking Places - Alcoholic Beverages	7224	\$155	\$170,060	\$0	(\$170,060)

Source: ESRI, Dun & Bradstreet and RKG (2022)

**Figure 9 – Estimated Supportable SF of Development through a Re-Capture of Sales Leakage**



**Implications** – There is substantial sales leakage within the selected 5-mile radius in Charlemont, across all retail sectors. While the market is not typically strong enough to warrant regional or national chain store development (unless unique and destination driven) there are opportunities for local and home-based entrepreneurial stores. These are particularly relevant for local and close to home shopping and convenience items, including both dining and drinking, as well as sports and recreation related, both serving the local population base and the seasonal tourism and recreational consumer.

## LAND USE AND ZONING CONTEXT

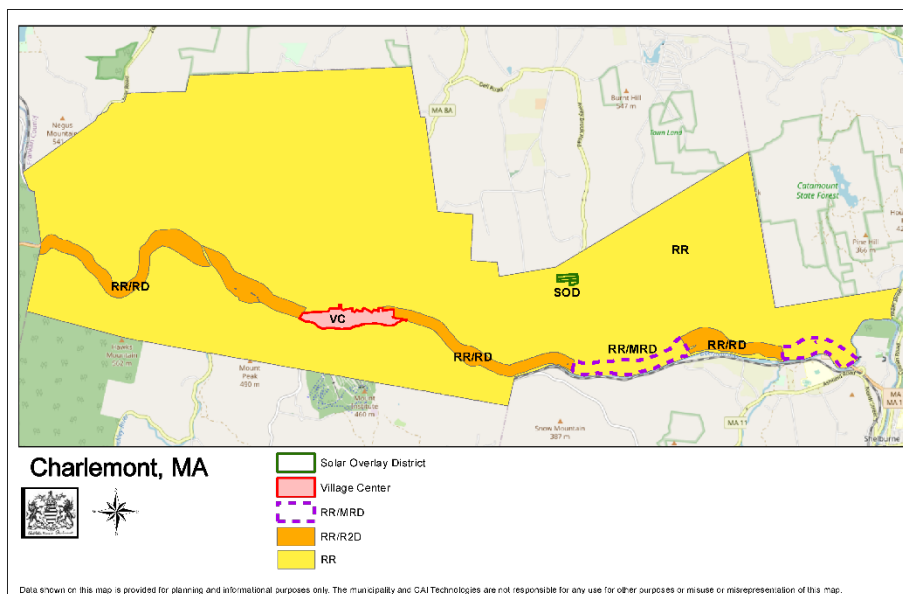
This section presents a discussion of current zoning and land use patterns within Charlemont. Zoning laws regulate how communities plan for real estate development and are intended to protect the interests of the community as it pertains to land use.

### ZONING

According to the Town of Charlemont Zoning Bylaws approved in 2020, there are 6 districts outlined below and pictured in Figure 10:

1. Village Center (VC)
2. Rural Residential District (RR)
3. Rural Residential/Marijuana Retail District (RR/MRD)
4. Floodplain Overlay District (as shown on the official National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) Flood Insurance Rate Map (FIRM) dated July 2, 1980.
5. Solar Overlay District
6. Rural Residential/Route 2 District (RR/R2D)

The Village Center and Rural Residential/Route 2 districts surround the Mohawk Trail and are specifically outlined to maintain the character of this scenic route as well as the historic village in the center of town. Greater densities are allowed within the bylaws in the Village Center District, as this is the area with the highest concentration of existing retail and restaurant



**Figure 10 - Zoning Map**

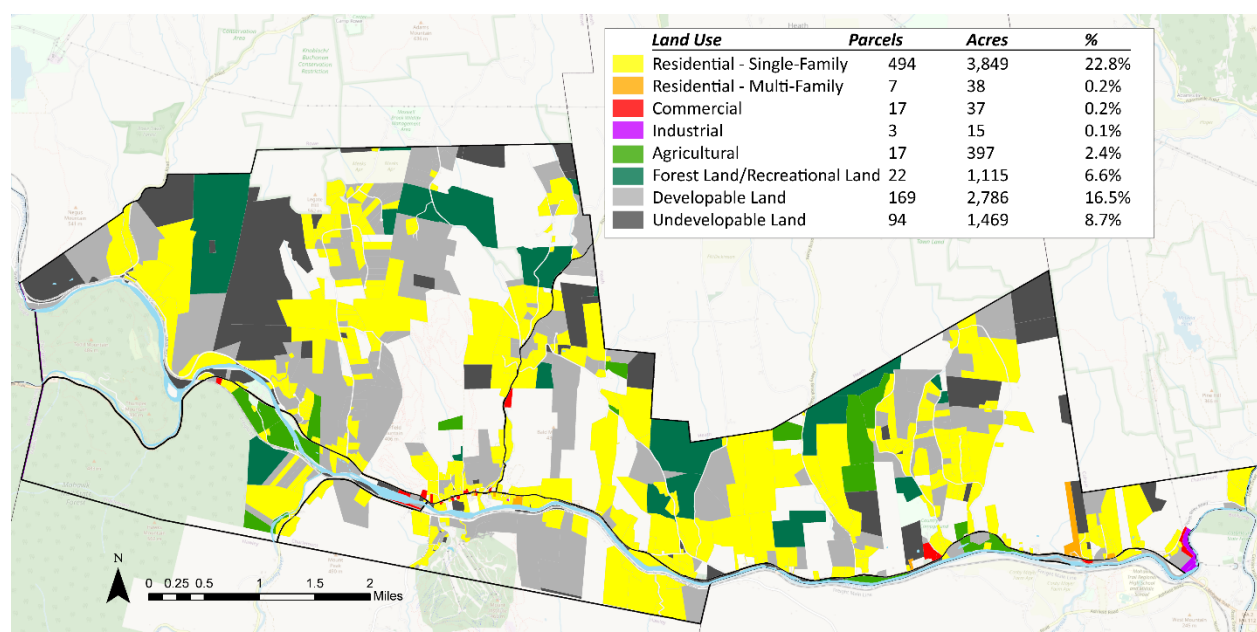
businesses. The Rural Residential District encompasses the largest area and is outlined to maintain the town's existing pattern of rural residential development, while preserving the town's natural assets (fields, forests, hillsides, and scenic views). Various marijuana-related uses have been added to the town's zoning bylaws as this industry continues to expand throughout the state. These uses are either not allowed or subject to a Special Permit throughout the various districts, with a specific district created with the intention of accommodating these commercial establishments along two sections of

the Mohawk Trail that are already commercially developed (the Rural Residential/Marijuana Retail District).

Single-family and two-family residences are allowed by right in all zones while larger residential structures require a Special Permit, according to the current version of the town’s bylaws. Commercial and industrial businesses/facilities are either not allowed by right or subject to a Special Permit depending on the specific use and district. Specific agricultural, forestry, and recreational uses are allowed throughout the various districts with stricter requirements in the Village Center District.

## LAND USE

While the zoning map presented above is intended to guide development activity, the land use map displayed in Figure 11 below provides a visual representation of actual real estate uses throughout the town. <sup>4</sup>



**Figure 11 - Land Use Map**

Residential buildings occupy the most land throughout Charlemont, accounting for 23% of all land in town. Single-family residential uses cover 494 parcels and 3,849 acres, while multi-family uses cover 7 parcels and 38 acres. The multi-family parcels are all adjacent to Route 2/the Mohawk Trail. Commercial and industrial uses do not occupy much space in town. They combine to cover 20 parcels over 75 acres (0.4% of the town’s land). Agricultural uses currently account for 2.4% of the town’s land, with 17 parcels covering just under 400 acres. There is still a large amount of developable vacant land across Charlemont, as reported by parcels with a land use code of 130,131,

<sup>4</sup> Data from digital parcel and assessor records created and/or standardized by MassGIS (the Commonwealth’s Office of Geographic Information)



or 390. The vast majority of these vacant parcels (166 of the 169 parcels and 2,760 of the 2,786 acres) have a land use code of 130, signifying the parcel is vacant land within a residential zone.

**Implications** – The town’s zoning bylaws are quite friendly when it comes to attracting residential development. With over 2,700 acres of vacant land within residential zones across the town, there is an avenue for expanding Charlemont’s resident base if builder attention can be garnered.

## KEY FINDINGS

Charlemont has a generally stable and aging population coupled with an overall stagnant or declining labor force. This presents challenges for expanding and/or diversifying the town’s employment opportunities and housing stock. While demographic trends will likely need to shift to attract additional residential development, there are options to serve the town’s current needs with an eye towards the future. Smaller housing options as part of a downtown revitalization project could appeal to the town’s older residents looking for maintenance free housing options. This type of housing stock could also attract younger generations into the future, particularly if located within walking distance to amenities like restaurants, grocery, or convenience retail. As currently outlined, the town’s zoning bylaws should allow for future residential growth with few hindrances. There is currently a large amount of developable land available in town should opportunities to build more housing arise.

Charlemont’s economy is heavily focused on the Arts, Entertainment and Recreation sector, which has average wages of less than \$25,000. The town could look to diversify their economy through expansion of other regionally strong industries. Growth is expected to be strong in the Agriculture and Health Care sectors across Franklin County. Charlemont’s large quantity of available land and aging population could translate to a larger capture of expected employment growth in both of these industries. Expansion could also be feasible in the Retail sector, as there is substantial sales leakage within a 5-mile radius of Charlemont, across all retail sectors. The market is not typically strong enough to warrant regional or national chain store development (unless unique and destination driven) but there are opportunities for local and home-based entrepreneurial stores.

While the tourism-based economy provides jobs and benefits to the town today, there should be attempts to find ways to leverage these strengths to grow other job and industry sectors. For example, if the town increased marketing to draw more attention to itself in the short-term it could increase its visibility to individuals and businesses looking to locate in a small town with natural features and a low cost of living. This could spark home-based businesses and entrepreneurs to look at Charlemont as a place for longer-term growth.

### 3. SWOT ANALYSIS

Before discussing ways the town can leverage its strengths and address opportunities in the future it is important to understand what those strengths and opportunities are and what weaknesses to address and pitfalls to avoid. As part of the economic development strategy process, an exercise known as a S.W.O.T. analysis was conducted to identify Charlemont's Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats. Strengths and Weaknesses are intended to focus on today's positive and negative attributes while Opportunities and Threats are intended to be forward looking and identify items to leverage or address in the future. To assist with this exercise, members of the public were asked to list their ideas in each of the four areas during the first public meeting. This information was coupled with observations of the consultant to create the S.W.O.T. analysis.

#### STRENGTHS

The following strengths were identified for Charlemont through the planning process. These are intended to represent positive attributes of the community, attractions, and elements residents see as unique offerings in the town and nearby communities.

- Dedicated Volunteers
- Farms and Local Food
- Broadband Access
- Fairgrounds
- Reputation with Outdoor Recreation
- Hawlemont School (school building, animals, recreation)

#### WEAKNESSES

The following weaknesses were identified for Charlemont through the planning process. These are intended to represent challenges and issues the town faces today that may be inhibiting economic growth, businesses and job attraction, or resident satisfaction.

- Lack of Affordable Housing
- Limited Sewer District Capacity
- Lack of Lodging
- Visitors not Stopping in the Downtown
- Buildings on Main Street Need Investment
- Communication to Residents and Visitors
- Town's Website Could be Improved
- Declining School Enrollment
- Fewer Families Living in Town

## OPPORTUNITIES

The following opportunities were identified for Charlemont through the planning process. These are intended to represent aspirations, possibilities, and future attractions to improve the community for both residents and visitors over time.

- More Outdoor Recreation Retailers
- Attract 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, Goals, and Actions

## THREATS

The following threats were identified for Charlemont through the planning process. These are intended to represent future issues or challenges the community may face and things they may want to try to plan for.

- School Could Close
- Lack of Job Growth and Opportunity
- Loss of Year-Round Housing and Residents
- Lack of Rural Health Care Options

## 4. STRATEGIES AND CASE STUDIES

Charlemont is a unique community in terms of its small size, its natural features, its location, and the strength of its tourism-based economy. It is also the combination of these attributes that has led to a stagnation in population and economic opportunity as new residents are not being attracted to the town and the heavy focus on outdoor recreation has created some negative externalities for local residents. While many of the short-term strengths and weaknesses are focused on creating a place that attracts more visitors and spending, long-term the town also needs to consider the attributes that will nurture and grow the sense of community and togetherness that seems to be slowly fading.

In the short-term, this strategy recommends the Town focus on strengthening the tourism-based economy and investing in strategies that will bolster local businesses, create more jobs, attract and retain more spending, and address deficiencies in the current support system that comes with an economy heavily focused on visitation. However, in the mid- to longer-term the town should also consider how investments in infrastructure, buildings, attracting new businesses, and visitor spending can help address the goals of residents and the community as a whole. Throughout the planning process, input from many residents surfaced feelings that Charlemont had lost many of the spaces and places that enabled a sense of community. These were public and private gathering spaces where residents could come together to celebrate, strategize, talk and debate the opportunities and challenges of the day. As the town begins to enact some of the shorter-term strategies they should be done in a way that leverages an early intervention or investment with the goal of building long-term community benefits. A few examples of how this goal could play out over time might include:

1. If a new publicly owned parking lot and park facility is created next to Hawlemont School, the design of that facility should accommodate a surface parking lot large enough to provide parking to both residents and visitors coming to the Downtown and to the river. At the same time, the park facility should accommodate public gathering spaces for summer concerts, a farmers' market, play space for children, publicly accessible and handicap accessible river access, and more. There was also a strong desire to use this space to provide public access to the river and potentially a town beach concept. Balancing the parking needs to accommodate downtown businesses with the desires of local residents for outdoor gathering space will be critical to moving this concept forward. The design of this space should include a public process that engages local residents, so the design is not dominated by the needs of a single constituency.
2. If the town were to purchase the former Charlemont Inn building and property and create a land disposition process, there could be an opportunity to create much needed private lodging opportunities in the Downtown but also encourage space for dining and drinking. Residents expressed the importance of the former Charlemont Inn as a gathering space for residents to socialize and discuss opportunities and challenges in an

informal setting. While the building would be owned and operated by a private entity, the design of the space could help resurrect a lost community gathering space.

3. If the town chooses to invest in a local or regional marketing campaign, revamped website, and social media presence to attract more visitors and tourism-based businesses, there may also be an opportunity to leverage the marketing campaign to draw more year-round residents and families to Charlemont. The community offers a lower cost of living, beautiful natural amenities, outdoor recreation, and has community broadband to enable working for home. Charlemont, like many other rural towns across the country, could benefit from home-based businesses and fostering local entrepreneurship leading to new start up spaces and jobs over time. This could help Charlemont build out other sectors of the local economy that do not depend solely on the success of bringing people in from the outside.

These are just a few examples of how short-term investments could be leveraged to create longer-term benefits for the residents who live in Charlemont and are concerned about their community only becoming a place for others to enjoy.

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## **STRATEGIES**

The following details the strategies Charlemont should consider as it creates its annual actions and economic development business plans for the next 10 years. These recommendations represent a culmination of the outreach efforts, the consultant's empirical research, feedback from local and regional implementation partners, and input from Town staff, local leadership, and residents. The strategies have been organized under six themes which help address the town's economic development goals and include:

### **1. Create and Connect the Assets.**

This set of strategies focuses on the development of a connected network of natural features, pathways, and trails. Currently, Charlemont has some formal and informal trails which are used for different purposes and are on a mix of public and private lands. In the future, the town should partner with local property owners and a non-profit trails organization to formalize the trail network, map it, sign it, designate it for specific users, and market it. Some plans have already been articulated for a connected system of mountain bike trails, but there are other user groups that could also benefit from the outdoor trails year-round. These could include hikers and leaf peppers, trail runners, snowmobilers, snowshoers, cross-country skiers, horseback riders, and more. Other unique uses such as geocaching, trail or mud running races, foraging, or even disc golf all benefit from a connected network of marked trails. The Town should consider which trails are appropriate for motorized vehicles such as snowmobiles or ATVs (if any) and which might serve passive recreation users to avoid conflicts or injury. While this network would serve as an attraction for visitors to Charlemont and the broader region,

residents would also benefit from the wide array of outdoor recreation and trail uses in town.

## **2. Drive Visitation through Branding and Marketing.**

In the near-term, Charlemont could benefit from a broader marketing campaign that could help bring broader awareness to the wide range of outdoor recreation uses the town has today. Creating an infrastructure that includes a branded website, brochures, tourism-based digital app, and a small welcome center could all be packaged to drive visitation to businesses in town. The town and its partners could also work on creating a few signature events each year, maybe one per season, which would benefit both visitors and residents. The Fairgrounds could continue to serve as a location for hosting large town events as has been done in the past. If a new park space is constructed in the town center along the river, there could also be events there drawing residents and visitors to businesses in the center.

In the mid- to longer-term, marketing the town to outsiders could also create a draw for permanent residents to relocate to Charlemont to live and work. The attraction of rural, less expensive locations for residents who can work from home or might have a home-based business could help draw new residents and families to Charlemont to live year-round. This could have the spinoff effect of bringing new businesses and jobs to town and help create additional industry sectors to round out the town's local economy. As new residents and employees come to Charlemont, they bring with them additional household or daily spending which could then drive support for bringing some daily service businesses back to town like a small pharmacy, medical clinic, or small local grocery store/food co-op.

## **3. Invest in Infrastructure that Supports Economic Development.**

While tourism and outdoor recreation bring economic benefits to Charlemont, visitors also create challenges for a small town with limited capacity and infrastructure. This is particularly challenging in the summer months when river use is highest. Visitors have difficulty finding places to park, knowing where to access the river, find few public restroom options, not enough public gathering space, and not enough trash receptacles. The result is visual and environmental impacts to spaces along the river and at times unsafe conditions on and around the river itself. It is unlikely Charlemont can solve these challenges on its own and should look to partner with adjacent communities and state agencies to ensure public use of the river is safe, accessible, and environmentally sustainable so this asset can be enjoyed by residents and visitors for decades to come.

## **4. Make Charlemont Center a Destination.**

Charlemont Center is the heart of the community. This is the economic center where most local businesses are located, but also where most of the civic functions of the community are as well. With Route 2 running down the middle, the center sees its fair share of visitors and pass through traffic, but the key in the future will be encouraging



more people to stop. While some improvements have been made along the roadway, additional improvements to the look and feel of the center should be made to create a sense of arrival and excitement. A new park space next to Hawlemont School that includes a centralized parking lot would help create a gathering space for the community as well as parking to serve the businesses in the Center. With no on-street parking in the center, it is difficult for those unfamiliar with the area to locate parking and walk to destinations along the river or in the Center quickly and easily. This centralized space could also support temporary uses like food trucks on weekends to provide additional food options to residents and visitors.

Investments in the upkeep and maintenance of buildings in the Center would also help create a sense of arrival. Façade improvements, public art, small sculptures, murals, lighting, and more would make both the walk and drive along Route 2 more interesting and enticing for residents and visitors alike. These improvements would also help bring more spending to our local businesses to ensure they remain viable and sustained for the long term. The Center could also serve as an excellent location for promoting housing for those who want to live and work in Charlemont as well as smaller units for the growing older adult population. Although sewer service is currently a challenge in the Center, adding some new housing would place customers within walking distance to local businesses, close proximity to the river, and walking distance to the school for children.

Lastly, the proximity of the Center to the Fairgrounds is an asset the town could consider from both a marketing standpoint and a connectivity standpoint. In previous years the Fairgrounds held some larger festivals such as Reggae Fest which drew hundreds of guests over a weekend. The Fairgrounds could be reactivated to serve both larger events on a weekend as well as a place for residents to enjoy for smaller events like car shows, flea markets, or just using the track as a place to walk and gather. Some investments will be needed in the buildings and stands at the Fairgrounds to ensure they are maintained and safe. The Town may also wish to consider the Fairgrounds as a point of interest if wayfinding signage is created for the larger town center area.

## **5. Give Visitors a Reason and a Place to Stay.**

One of the missed opportunities in Charlemont is the lack of accommodations for visitors who might be looking to spend more than one day in town. As Charlemont continues to attract more visitation and if investments are made in marketing the town, the need for overnight accommodations is likely to grow. The town could offer a range of accommodations from basic campsites to high end luxury camping, to small boutique hotels each appealing to different clientele. Throughout the process, the loss of the former Charlemont Inn was front and center with references to the important role the space played for community gathering and socialization to serving overnight visitors right in the town center. Bringing this space back is a priority for the community and would provide benefits to both residents and visitors alike.

## 6. Increase Local and Regional Capacity.

As a small town, staff time and financial resources are limited to implement a strategy like this. It is unlikely the town can undertake all of the strategies in this plan on its own without the assistance of volunteers, business owners, property owners, and regional and state partners. The larger Deerfield River Regional Plan that is currently underway with the Franklin Regional Council of Governments (FRCOG) is an opportunity to look for partnerships with adjacent communities to see how resources could be shared and leveraged to the benefit of the larger region. This should not preclude coordinated volunteer efforts locally in Charlemont to create marketing material and content. Other strategies are more Charlemont-specific and are better implemented locally. To create a more robust economy with both short- and long-term benefits for residents, it will require everyone in town to play a role from volunteering time and ideas, to donating materials, to being deliberate about supporting local businesses as much as possible.

This section is followed by the full implementation table which includes all strategies, an indication of who (the entity) might lead and support the strategy, and a timeframe for when the strategy should be implemented. Strategies highlighted in **bold** are ones that residents noted as high priorities during the second public meeting.

**CREATE AND CONNECT THE ASSETS**

Strategies	Lead	Partners	1-3 Years	4-6 Years	7-10 Years
<b>Create a Trails Master Plan that maps all existing trails, identifies missing connections, and puts forward a set of uses for each trail/network. Map all formal and informal trail networks, determine what they can/should be used for, and ensure they are available on digital apps for users.</b>	Trails Organization	Town, Property Owners, Adjacent Towns, FRCOG			
<b>Create a system of connected mountain bike trails and actively promote/advertise them.</b>	Trails Organization	Town, Property Owners, Berkshire East			
Create system of formalized snow mobile trails and actively promote/ advertise them.	Trails Organization	Town, Property Owners, Berkshire East			
Create system of formalized and groomed cross-country skiing and snowshoeing trails and promote/advertise them.	Trails Organization	Town, Property Owners, Berkshire East			
<b>Consider creating geocaching locations in Charlemont along the connected trails network.</b>	Geocaching enthusiasts	Town, Trails Organization			
Allow/encourage horseback riding on trails where appropriate.	Trails Organization	Town			

This graphic represents the possible ways Charlemont could begin to leverage outdoor recreation, tourism, and support from local residents to create a year-round economy. The different events could cater to both visitors and residents, create signature attractions, and create signature events that could bring the community together. These are just some of the many ideas the Town could market to those looking to live, open a business, or visit Charlemont.

## Creating a Year-Round Economy in Charlemont





## CASE STUDY: OUTDOOR RECREATION

### Ride the Wilds Coos County, NH



*Comprehensive trail system of over 1,000 miles to boost tourism and act as an economic engine*

The Northeast's largest interconnected ATV trail system (and among the largest networks of Off-Highway Recreational Vehicle (OHRV) trail systems in the country), which delivers 1,000+ miles of trails across Coos County, New Hampshire. Dedicated in June 2013, Ride the Wilds offers three seasons of ATV riding and access to interconnected trails that can be explored for a day or more, with opportunities to stop and stay along the way (camping and "glamping").

The trail system offers more than a dozen start and stop points. This system was exclusively constructed and is maintained by 11 not-for-profit clubs. These clubs perform countless hours of volunteer work to construct, maintain, and patrol the trails. Funding comes from a mix of club fundraisers, grants, and a portion of registration fees in the form of grants from the New Hampshire Trails Bureau. No tax dollars are available or used for this economic initiative – it is completely self-funded.

There is no fee to use these trails. A number of businesses located along the trail system provide a complete rental package for a day of riding enjoyment, including the ATV, instruction and all required safety equipment. Many also offer guided tours.

*"The tiny town of Gorham is home base for most visiting enthusiasts. The population barely crested 2,600 people in the most recent census. On a popular riding weekend early in the summer, it easily feels like the number of people in Gorham has doubled, if not tripled. Hotels, motels, restaurants, gas stations, convenience stores, and of course powersports facilities are all swarmed with off-road machines and the people who have come to the area to enjoy them."*

**DRIVE VISITATION THROUGH BRANDING AND MARKETING**

Strategies	Lead	Partners	1-3 Years	4-6 Years	7-10 Years
<b>Create a branding package for the town around outdoor recreation and ecotourism.</b>	Town	Businesses			
Utilize the Old Brick Schoolhouse as a location to provide information on Charlemont or whole Deerfield River Corridor.	Town	Deerfield River Commission			
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.	Deerfield River Commission	Town, Adjacent Towns, Businesses, Chamber			
<b>Create a Charlemont or a Deerfield River tourism website that promotes the town, its assets, and businesses, lodging options, parking, directions, etc.</b>	Deerfield River Commission	Town, Adjacent Towns, FRCOG, Chamber, Businesses			
<b>Develop 3-4 signature events per year that can be used to market Charlemont, businesses, outdoor recreation opportunities to the public.</b>	Town	Businesses, Residents			
Work with the business community to create and market unique vacation packages and itineraries that highlight Charlemont businesses, maybe even cross-promotions with other nearby communities and their businesses.	Businesses	Franklin County Chamber, Adjacent Towns, Chamber			



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Create a plan for Destination Management so as the town/region becomes more successful implementing outdoor recreation, the town does not lose control over the local culture, safety, traffic, development, etc.	Deerfield River Commission	Town, Businesses, Residents, State Agencies			
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**INVEST IN INFRASTRUCTURE THAT SUPPORTS ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

Strategies	Lead	Partners	1-3 Years	4-6 Years	7-10 Years
<b>Create additional parking, restrooms, and picnic facilities at places like Shunpike, Zoar Picnic Area, and Charlemont Park “n” Ride.</b>	Deerfield River Commission, Town	Adjacent Towns, MassDOT, State Agencies, FRCOG			
<b>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.</b>	Sewer District	Town			
<b>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.</b>	Town, Deerfield River Commission	State Agencies			
Create signage and wayfinding on the riverbanks with locations of safe pull offs, public access, and safety messages.	Town	Deerfield River Commission			
Create a river access and safety brochure for all those who enter the river.	Town, Deerfield River Commission				
Consider approaching the state about the construction of a public safety building and river rescue facility in Charlemont. This could be a regional facility with its location on Route 2 and could bring jobs and an anchor redevelopment to the Center area.	Town, Deerfield River Commission, Adjacent Towns				

**MAKE CHARLEMONT CENTER A DESTINATION**

Strategies	Lead	Partners	1-3 Years	4-6 Years	7-10 Years
<b>Create parking and a public park/gathering space next to Hawlemont School.</b>	Town	School, Residents			
Create a façade improvement program for buildings in the Center, this could be as simple as volunteers painting and making small improvements.	Town	Property Owners			
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.	Town	MassDOT, Businesses, Property Owners			
<b>Invest in the continuation of streetscape and public space improvements along Route 2 such as additional landscaping and lighting.</b>	MassDOT	Town, Businesses, Property Owners			
<b>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.</b>	Town	Chamber			
Create safe pedestrian/bike pathway from Fairgrounds down to the Center.	Town	MassDOT			
Integrate electric vehicle charging stations in downtown to encourage people to stop and charge but also explore downtown area.	Town	Property Owners, Businesses			

CASE STUDY: MAKE THE CENTER A DESTINATION

**Mill City Park  
Franklin, NH**



*New England's first whitewater park, connecting the community to the river while driving economic development in a transitioning economy*

Both the Winnepesaukee and Pemigewasset pass through the city of Franklin, New Hampshire, forming the Merrimack where they join. The river served an industrial role for a long time in Franklin, powering a variety of mills for over a century. Now that the mills have been long shuttered, a new recreational use is emerging.

Plans for a whitewater park, where kayakers and other water enthusiasts can test their paddling skills, have been in development since 2015. The goal is to use the city's natural assets as a driver for economic growth and demographic change. Mill City Park will benefit Franklin, by reinvigorating the downtown and bolstering funding for schools and roads. The idea was inspired by the whitewater parks in Colorado, which have turned into vibrant places to gather. The first push started with the renovation of the Buell Block on Central Street, which now houses the Franklin Cafe, Outdoor New England (an outdoor gear store on the banks of the Winnepesaukee river), and the Vulgar Brewing Company. Permitting, fundraising and public support took time to build. The whitewater park is about halfway through construction as of March 2022. One whitewater wave is operational, and construction is complete on an amphitheater for spectators (pictured). A new information kiosk and parking lot have also been built. The plan involves the construction of two additional waves, one of which will be for surfers. When Mill City Park is complete, it is expected to bring over 150,000 visitors to Franklin each year. The project has garnered support from the Northern New England Chapter of the American Planners Association, winning their regional planners award and the Northern New England Project of the Year award in 2019.

Mill City Park is built on Franklin City-owned land and will be free and open to the public. The whitewater park will help revitalize Franklin by bringing tourists into town, which will attract businesses. A study done by the State of New Hampshire shows that "for every two people using the water park, eight to ten people will come to watch". By creating a downtown center more appealing to tourists and young professionals, Franklin hopes to pull itself out of its decades-long slump. The progress of these plans has already acted as a catalyst for more development, with the redevelopment of a nearby mill building (Stevens mill building) to cater to a new demographic.

When finished, the park will consist of 13 acres, with an adjacent 21 conserved acres, and three whitewater features.

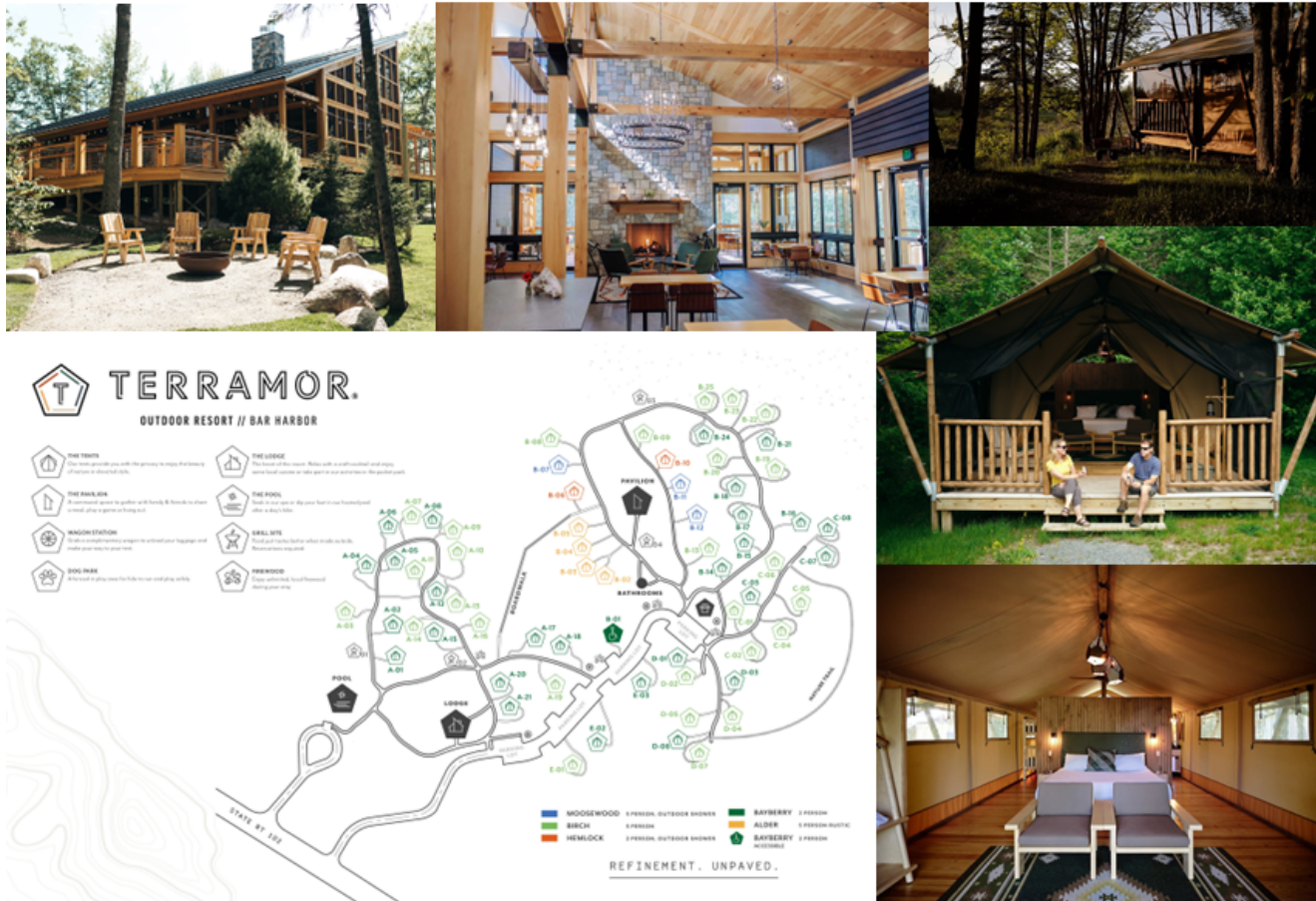
**GIVE VISITORS A REASON AND A PLACE TO STAY**

Strategies	Lead	Partners	1-3 Years	4-6 Years	7-10 Years
Consider purchasing the former Charlemont Inn to create a new boutique hotel in the Center.	Town	Residents			
Conduct a regional hotel/accommodations study to gauge feasibility of adding more rooms or lodging options.	FRCOG, Chamber	Town, Businesses			
Review zoning to allow and/or reduce barriers to campgrounds and other unique forms of lodging.	Town	FRCOG			



CASE STUDY: GIVE VISITORS A REASON AND A PLACE TO STAY

**Terramor Outdoor Resort**  
**Bar Harbor, ME**



*A designer hideaway in the woods*

Terramor is an outdoor resort open seasonally from May to October with 64 wood-frame tents that can accommodate 2-5 people for a luxury camping experience. A lodge is at the center of the resort, with a bar/restaurant and pocket park. The resort also has a pavilion communal space for gathering to share meals, play games, or hang out. There is a dog park, a spa with a heated pool, several grill sites, and unlimited firewood for guests. It has garnered recognition in the hospitality industry, recently being recognized as the 'Best New Brand Launch' in the 17th Annual Hospitality Design Awards.

There are 5 different tent styles. Tents all have electricity and WiFi and are designed to accommodate Maine's weather, with both an overhead fan, Pendleton blankets and heaters available. All tents have screened windows and porches to keep nature outside and comfort in. Prices range from \$508 - \$625 / night, equaling the potential for an estimated \$36,000 in revenue per night (accommodations revenue only, and assuming all tents are sold out). With additional revenue streams coming from the restaurant/bar and event rentals, this resort offers significant revenue potential.

Parking is limited to designated parking areas, which eliminates vehicles driving up to individual sites. By not having vehicles at sites, it allows guests to enjoy their own private fire experiences or simply take in the beautiful night's sky with limited light pollution.



CASE STUDY: GIVE VISITORS A REASON AND A PLACE TO STAY

Northern Outdoors  
The Forks, ME



Four season adventure resort in Maine's wilderness

The adventure resort caters to river rafting and snowmobile visitors. It includes a main lodge, full-service restaurant and the popular Kennebec River Brewery. Accommodations include an assortment of 1 – 4+ bedroom private cabins and a riverside campground. Amenities include a swimming pool, giant outdoor hot tub, game areas, free WiFi in the main lodge, and backyard access to Maine's best whitewater rivers and extensive trails for hiking, snowmobiling, and ATVing. The timber frame lodge is a grand, spacious building great for weddings, family reunions, college reunions, company parties, and other group events. Host to 20,000 guests annually.

Northern Outdoors Timeline of Major Events

- 1976 – First rafting trip ever on the Kennebec and Penobscot rivers
- 1978 – First rafting trip ever on the Dead River
- 1981 – Jim Yearwood, now part owner, joined Northern Outdoors as river guide
- 1983 – Built main lodge in The Forks and changed name to Northern Outdoors
- 1983 – Russell Walters, now part owner, joined Northern Outdoors as a kayak instructor
- 1983 – Added snowmobiling to become year-round resort with year-round staff
- 1996–2000 – Added more cabins to the resort
- 1996 – Co-owner Jim Yearwood founded Kennebec River Brewery
- 2002 – Opened Kennebec River Campground
- 2008 – Connected ATV trail direct to the main lodge
- 2012 – Hosted Untamed Adventure Race in June, the largest adventure race in the U.S.
- 2016 – Celebrated 40 years of river running
- 2019 – Established Katahdin Adventure Base Camp at Big Moose Inn Cabins & Campground

**INCREASE LOCAL AND REGIONAL CAPACITY**

Strategies	Lead	Partners	1-3 Years	4-6 Years	7-10 Years
Form a Charlemont Economic Development Committee or a Business Organization to further develop and organize around economic development.	Businesses and/or Town				
Create a non-profit trails organization that can work to organize around outdoor recreation trail systems, mapping, maintenance, regulations, signage, and applying for grants.	Trails Organization	Town			
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.	Town in Concert with Adjacent Communities				
Reconstitute the Deerfield River Commission but expand representation to adjacent communities on the river.	Deerfield River Commission	Town, Adjacent Towns, State Agencies			
Leverage capacity, knowledge, and funding of FRCOG to help implement recommendations of this strategy.	FRCOG	Town			
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.	Franklin County CDC	Town, Property Owners			