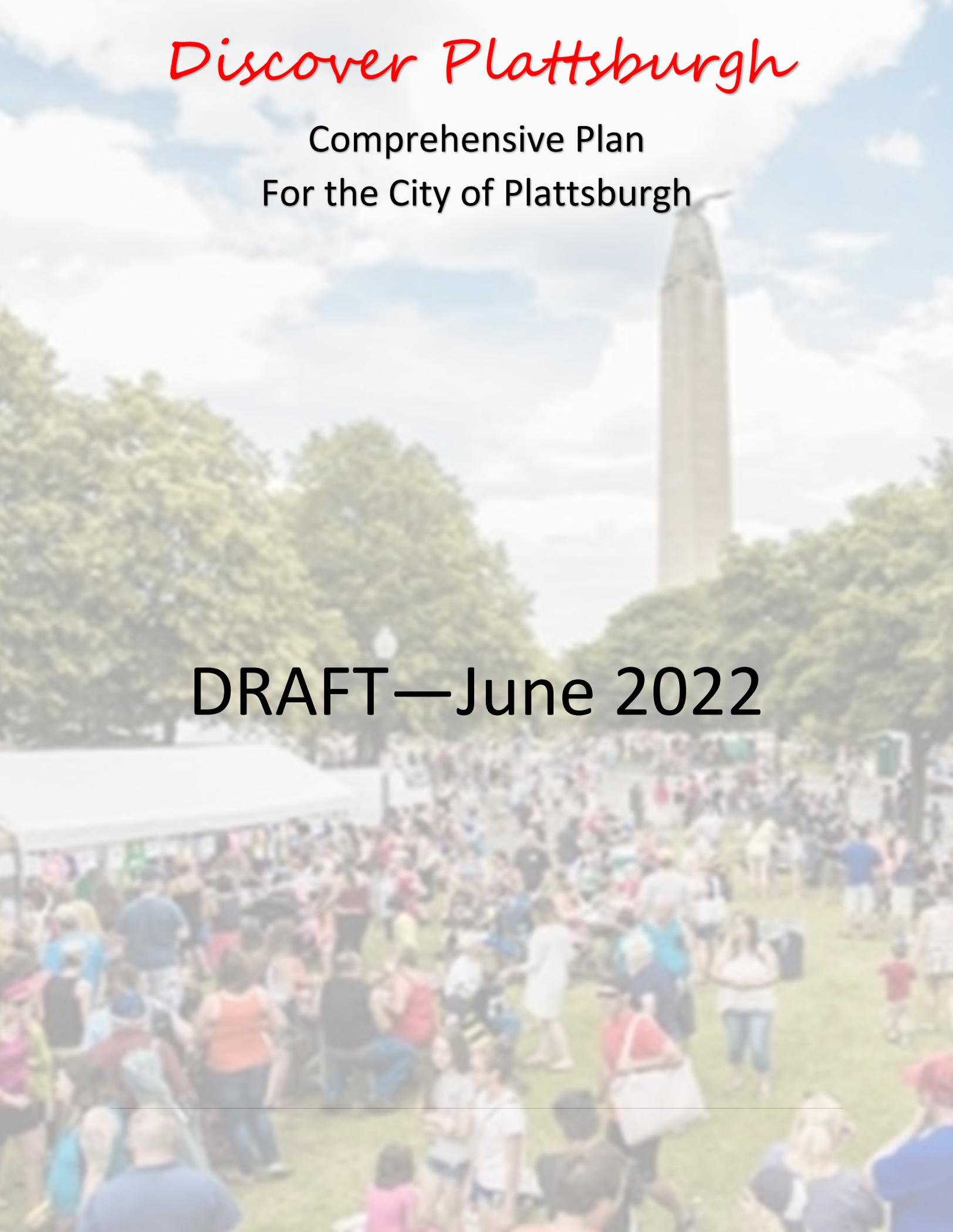


# *Discover Plattsburgh*

Comprehensive Plan  
For the City of Plattsburgh

DRAFT—June 2022



# Acknowledgements

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Ward 3 - Elizabeth Gibbs  
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This cover has been designed using resources from Flaticon.com

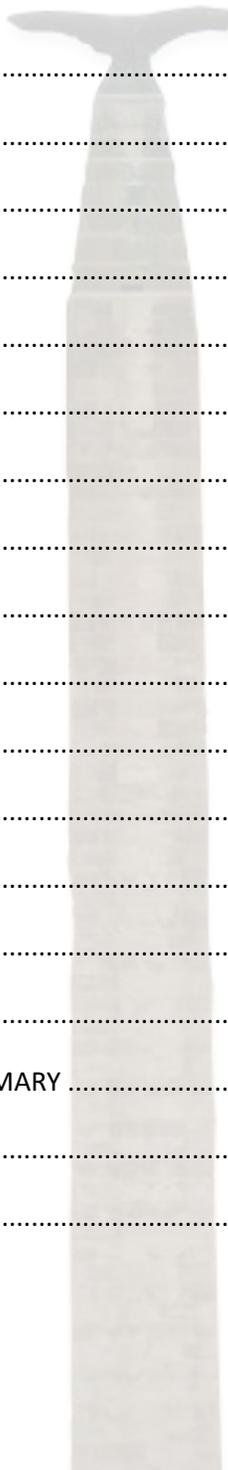


Department  
of State

*Discover Plattsburgh*

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS



FRAMEWORK .....	6
COMMUNITY SNAPSHOT .....	7
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT .....	11
COMMUNITY VISION.....	15
POLICY GUIDES.....	20
NATURAL RESOURCES.....	21
INFRASTRUCTURE & ACCESSIBILITY.....	26
COMMUNITY RESOURCES.....	33
RECREATION.....	39
ARTS & CULTURE.....	45
HISTORIC RESOURCES .....	50
HOUSING.....	55
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT .....	60
LAND USE & ZONING.....	67
CONCLUSION & IMPLEMENTATION.....	75
A: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY .....	81
B: INVENTORY & ANALYSIS .....	82
C: EXISTING LAND USE MAPS.....	83
APPENDICES	

# ACRONYMS

AARCH – Adirondack Architectural Heritage  
CCHA – Clinton County Historical Association  
CDO – Community Development Office  
CDRLF – Community Development Revolving Loan Fund  
CVES – Champlain Valley Education Services  
CVPH – Champlain Valley Public Hospital  
DOS – Department of State  
DPW – Department of Public Works  
DRI – Downtown Revitalization Initiative  
ESD – Empire State Development  
LUP – Land Use Policy  
LWRP – Local Waterfront Revitalization Program  
MGP – Manufactured Gas Plant  
NYS – New York State  
NYSEG – New York State Electric & Gas  
PMLD – Plattsburgh Municipal Lighting Department  
PAC – Project Advisory Committee  
PCSD – Plattsburgh City School District  
PFCM – Plattsburgh Farmer’s and Crafter’s Market  
PUD – Planned Unit Development  
SUP – Special Use Permit  
SRTG – Saranac River Trail Greenway  
SUNY – State University of New York  
WRRF – Water Resource Recovery Facility

This Comprehensive Plan, also known as the *Discover Plattsburgh Plan*, presents a long-term perspective and vision to guide decision making in the City of Plattsburgh for the next twenty years. It will provide the road map to ensure Plattsburgh continues to thrive as the heart of the North Country and as a city that adapts to the needs of its people while preserving its unique identity. This plan provides the story about who we are as a community, who we strive to be, and the road map to get there guided by the core characteristics of *sustainability, diversity, resiliency, and vibrancy*.

The City last took a hard look in the mirror and updated its Comprehensive Plan in 1999. The Discover Plattsburgh Plan has been developed to reflect the current needs, goals, and opportunities of the City. As Plattsburgh evolves, the community will continue to look ahead for opportunities to enhance the City's downtown and waterfront areas. These enhancements will be complemented by modern techniques and tools to effectively manage land use, zoning, and future development.

This plan will guide future land use and development in the city by fostering appropriate economic development, enhancing housing opportunities, incorporating equitable and

environmentally just planning practices, and conserving important public spaces and natural resources. The analysis and recommendations in this plan will provide the foundation for future zoning updates and other public investment strategies.

It also provides a set of goals, policies, and objectives for the future growth of the entire City. The plan also establishes a priority list for implementation, connects past plans and studies to future planning efforts, and provides a framework for decision making in matters involving land use, development, and zoning.

The City's 1999 Comprehensive Plan has been reviewed and, where appropriate, incorporated into this update. Several broad goals presented in the 1999 plan remain worthy of inclusion in this updated document including the strengthening of neighborhoods, the promotion of revitalization, the protection of natural resources, and the promotion of recreation and tourism. The vision for the City has evolved to be more inclusive and dynamic. It recognizes that a sustainable community must exhibit flexibility and be capable of responding swiftly and decisively to both opportunities and challenges. This has been made abundantly clear as the City continues to navigate the COVID-19 pandemic and the

massive disruptions it has caused to life in the City and beyond.

This updated Comprehensive Plan provides a more policy-oriented, long-range approach to advancing the community's goals. The plan provides guidance for urgently needed updates to the City's land use and development management systems including, in particular, its zoning ordinance and related sections of the City's code. This updated plan includes strategic recommendations to guide focused planning initiatives at the neighborhood scale. These recommendations address various functional aspects of City life including infrastructure, transportation, recreation, housing, arts and culture, and the management of natural resources.

Its framework is based on Plattsburgh's rich history of long-range planning efforts, community engagement, and best practices. It builds upon a foundation comprised of decades of visioning efforts by City staff, Mayors, Councilors, residents, business owners, and other community stakeholders.

These past efforts provided guidance during the development of this updated plan and shaped much of its content including, especially, coordination of future land use and zoning with our neighboring municipalities to foster regional vibrancy and growth.

As noted in the Town of Plattsburgh's current comprehensive plan, the Town's growth and development reflects a community that borders, and is an outgrowth of, the older center of historic settlement that is the City of Plattsburgh. The town's recent planning initiative provides a "smart growth" plan to address opportunities along the NYS Route 3 corridor and to combat the social, environmental, and fiscal impacts of sprawling development patterns. The City of Plattsburgh is committed to growing alongside our neighbors in a way that is both economically harmonious and sustainable to advance the success of the greater Plattsburgh region.

"When they hear the word "Plattsburgh," most people probably think of the City. Residents of the Town and City vote for different elected officials, pay taxes at different rates and have somewhat differing services. However, the communities function together and their futures are inextricably linked."

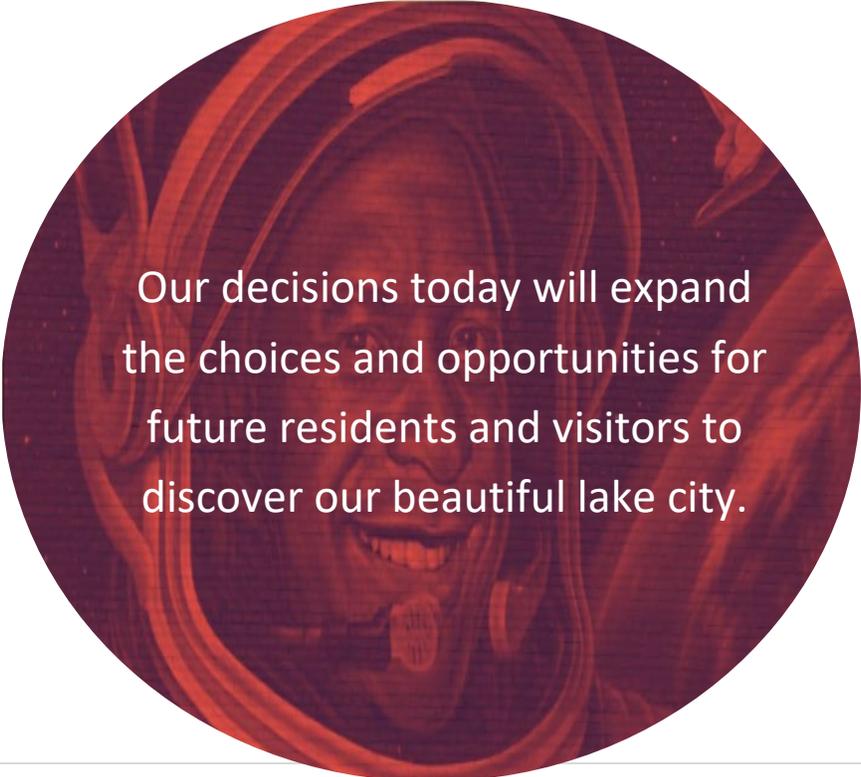
## Town of Plattsburgh Comprehensive Plan

Further, the City is in the process of finalizing its Local Waterfront Revitalization Program (LWRP) that was first drafted in 2016. The finalized LWRP will address current goals and key priority projects. It will also provide recommended modifications to the City's zoning ordinance and other local laws including a local consistency law to ensure projects in the waterfront area are consistent with the policies set forth in the LWRP.

The City conducted numerous workshops, visioning sessions, and surveys to engage the community and garner feedback for the Discover Plattsburgh Plan. This feedback was analyzed and summarized in the overall vision and policy objectives.

The *Community Vision* guides all elements of the Comprehensive Plan and defines key concepts including Plattsburgh's identity as a community and the principles by which future planning efforts shall be guided.

The vision statement was developed through the participation and input of residents and stakeholders invested in Plattsburgh's future and it represents the core values of our community.



Our decisions today will expand the choices and opportunities for future residents and visitors to discover our beautiful lake city.

The *Policy Guides* translate the community's vision into concrete policy objectives in core subject areas including natural resources, infrastructure and accessibility, community resources, arts and culture, historic resources, housing, recreation, and economic development. The goals and actions articulated within these interconnected land use subjects will guide decision making over the next few decades to move the City toward realizing its vision.

These tools are neither exhaustive nor static; they are expected to change over time to meet the evolving needs of our community.

The Comprehensive Plan's *Land Use & Zoning* recommendations provide guidance to foster smart growth by drawing upon the flexibility of form-based codes in applying design guidelines to support growth that is progressive, sustainable, and complementary to the community's historic character. These recommendations will help

# Policy Guides



NATURAL RESOURCES



HISTORIC RESOURCES



INFRASTRUCTURE  
& ACCESSIBILITY



HOUSING



COMMUNITY RESOURCES



RECREATION



ARTS & CULTURE



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

create active neighborhoods, preserve our natural resources, spur economic growth, and foster great spaces and great places. Areas of focus have been identified to guide the City's strategic and capital improvement planning. The recommendations within this

section will inform the City's subsequent zoning code update and align with the goals included in the City's LWRP.

Our holistic planning efforts of yesterday and today will help build a better tomorrow.





# FRAMEWORK

## Long-Range Planning Efforts



# COMMUNITY SNAPSHOT

Nestled into Lake Champlain's Cumberland Bay along the shores of the mighty Saranac River, the City of Plattsburgh has a natural sense of place in the center of a valley landscape between the Green Mountains to the east and the Adirondacks to the southwest. To the north, the Lake Champlain and Richelieu River valleys connect to Montreal and the St. Lawrence River Valley. Traveling south from Plattsburgh leads one along Lake Champlain, the Hudson River, and ultimately to New York Harbor. This binational U.S. – Canadian corridor places Plattsburgh in a beautiful, ideal location.

Plattsburgh was central in the conflict for control of North America more than two hundred years ago and maintained a role as a transportation hub as roads, railroads, ports, and piers were laid out across the cityscape. This transportation legacy, visible through the investments in Interstate 87, Plattsburgh International Airport, and rail and ferry access has been instrumental in maintaining the City's central role in the North Country.

The City of Plattsburgh is the largest city within Clinton County and serves as the county seat. It is a hub for commerce, education, transportation, housing, and

government for the region. Plattsburgh is home to students and families, and eagerly welcomes visitors. It showcases its history and culture through architecture, public art, and diverse community events. The City retains a walkable downtown framed by a variety of neighborhoods whose residents actively participate in local events and government.

## Land Use and Land Area

The City consists of just over 2,800 acres of land, or just under 4.5 square miles. Its downtown is anchored by government buildings and mixed-use development. Downtown Plattsburgh, located near the mouth of the Saranac River, is surrounded by residential uses and is interspersed with schools and community uses.

The largest land uses in the City are residences and apartments (comprising 33.8% of the City's total area), community services including government and school uses (23.4%), and commercial uses (12.1%). Just over 10% of parcels are classified as vacant and much of this vacant land lies within the former Plattsburgh Air Force Base. Notably, there are no agricultural uses within the City limits. Beyond the built environment, parks and natural areas make

up an important piece of the City's fabric despite occupying only 4.7% of its land area. Local waterways, including Lake Champlain and the Saranac River, are also integral to the City's landscape and identity.

## Population & Demographics

The City of Plattsburgh contains nearly one quarter (24.2%) of Clinton County's total population. The City's population has fluctuated over the past sixty years, experiencing a drop in the 1960s, and another decline following the closure of the Plattsburgh Air Force Base in the mid-1990s.

The City's current population, estimated at 19,841 residents in 2020, is relatively young. In 2018, the estimated median age was 29.4, compared to Clinton County's median age of 39.3. The presence of SUNY Plattsburgh within the City limits contributes to this disparity. The largest age group within the City are those aged 20-24 (19.2%), followed by 15-19 (13.1%), and 25-34 (12.1%). The local economy can be strengthened by attracting and retaining a reasonable percentage of this young population to remain as local residents and contribute both to the work force and to the vitality of the community.

The number of older adults in the City – 16% of residents are 65 or older – has grown since 2010 and parallels the statistics of Clinton County's population. The population of

school-aged residents (age 5-19) is estimated at 19.9%. Local school enrollments in the Plattsburgh City School District have declined in the past decade, likely a reflection of overall demographic trends in the City. The state university system has also been witnessing enrollment declines over the past decade. These declines are generally attributed to statewide demographic trends, which include a decline in the population of those aged 18-24.

13% of the City's population identifies as non-white, an increase from 6.6% in 2000, reflecting greater diversity than Clinton County overall in which 9.2% of residents identify as non-white. Additionally, 3.5% of City residents were estimated to be Hispanic or Latino, an increase from 2.1% in 2000.

The City recognizes the impact of prevailing demographic trends on the local community. An aging population and declining school enrollments will eventually lead to fiscal challenges and other troubles. These trends, however, can also serve as powerful motivation to pursue initiatives intended to reverse these trends by attracting younger generations to settle in the City. The increasing viability and acceptance of remote work bode well for the City's prospects in this regard.

Population stability and modest growth will be beneficial to the City, its institutional

partners, and employers including SUNY Plattsburgh, local schools, industry, health care institutions, and other stakeholders.

## Housing

Per the 2020 U.S. Census, the City's residents form 7,894 households, which occupy a large portion of the city's 8,864 housing units. The City has followed a national trend toward smaller average household sizes. Even if the population is not growing, this trend often translates into a modest increase in demand for housing as the number of households increase. Though the population has decreased slightly since 2000, both the number of households (+294) and the number of housing units (+854) have increased, which may have contributed to an observed increase in the housing vacancy rate.

Plattsburgh has a relatively large percentage of rental housing compared to owner-occupied housing, and the majority of housing options are in multi-unit structures. In recent years, new single-family attached units have been built in the northeastern section of the city adjacent to Lake Champlain on both sides of Margaret Street (NYS Route 9). The closure of the former Air Force base and the repurposing of its various facilities has brought about the largest increase in available housing units during the last few decades, encompassing

townhomes, apartments, and condominiums.

The availability and affordability of housing is critical to a community's quality of life. Housing costs both in the City and across the nation have risen substantially faster than incomes.

## Local Economy

The City's economy is driven by commerce, education, healthcare, and government, with a majority of workers being employed in the education, health care, and social assistance industries, followed by the retail trade. Currently, the City's largest employers are the Champlain Valley Physicians' Hospital (CVPH), Georgia Pacific, Bombardier, SUNY Plattsburgh, and Mold-Rite Plastics.

City residents are relatively well educated, with nearly 83% of individuals attaining greater than a high school education, compared to approximately 63% of County residents. Additionally, over 17% of City residents have a graduate degree or higher.

Contrarily, the median household income for City residents in 2018 was estimated to be \$45,696, lower than the \$55,178 estimated for Clinton County. As of 2018, 25.5% of City residents were estimated to be living in poverty and the estimated unemployment rate was 4.7%, comparable to the County's rate of 4.8%.

## Recreation

The City has an extensive system of parks and recreation, with nearly two dozen parks and additional facilities that include recreation centers, a beach, and two marinas. Improvements are continually being made to these assets. Much of Plattsburgh's outdoor recreation centers on its waterfront, which is further explored in the Local Waterfront Revitalization Program.

## Emerging Trends & Additional Considerations

Unforeseen events and technological advances will continue to impact our community in ways that are difficult to predict. The COVID-19 pandemic not only wrought havoc across the globe, it changed the way people work, how goods and services are procured, and the physical design of public spaces.

These trends include:

- Increased residential mobility due to advances in and wider acceptance of remote work.
- Changes to consumer activity including retail and service industries.
- Global warming and Plattsburgh's relatively advantageous geographic position that will insulate it from the worst effects of climate change.

- Local availability of renewable energy and the increased demand for these energy sources as the global transition to a greener economy accelerates.

Change is certain and the planning efforts necessary in order for the City to prepare itself for and to take advantage of opportunities as they're presented will be crucial to its continued success.

As an example, the ongoing implementation of the Saranac River Trail and the City's expansion of its wider trail system have put it in a great position to take advantage of increased public interest in outdoor recreation and sustainable transportation alternatives.

# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Community collaboration was vital to the process of developing the Comprehensive Plan. The plan's authors aspired to include the voices of as many members of the community as possible. Due to limitations imposed by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, digital resources were the predominant means of engagement and included videoconferencing, social media, and online surveys.

## Project Advisory Committee

A committee of individuals with varied backgrounds was established to guide the planning process. The committee included volunteer members of City boards, real estate developers, students from both SUNY Plattsburgh and the Plattsburgh City School District, elected officials, representatives of the City's business community, City staff, and other residents and community members.

## Stakeholder Survey

In the fall of 2020, a stakeholder survey was conducted with neighborhood associations, local organizations, and other municipal, nonprofit, and business leaders. The goal of the survey was to identify the City's community assets, challenges, and opportunities. A total of 29 stakeholder

questionnaires were reviewed and considered in the development of this plan.

## Visioning Sessions

The City's Planning Board and its Common Council each held visioning sessions in September of 2020. These work sessions identified target areas for redevelopment and provided recommendations for future planning goals.

## Community Survey

The City also conducted an online survey from February through March of 2021 and publicized the survey on the City's website, through an email distribution list maintained by the City, in an article in the Plattsburgh Press Republican, and on social media. Thanks to the survey's broad dissemination, a total of 197 responses were received. The survey solicited input regarding what residents valued most about our community, their vision as to what type of development is most needed in the City, which services are needed in specific neighborhoods, and whether residents supported establishing design standards for future development. A comprehensive list of all survey results is included in Appendix C.

## Community Workshops

City staff and consultants held 6 community workshops via Zoom in March of 2021 for interested residents to discuss their concerns and priorities for each of the City's 6 wards. Additionally, a Zoom meeting was held in partnership with **Late Night for the Planet** – an interactive talk show hosted by SUNY Plattsburgh Environmental Studies students – that targeted the City's student population.



## Community Feedback

The draft Comprehensive Plan was presented to the project advisory committee (PAC) in January of 2022. Feedback from the various community engagement sessions was integral to the development of the Discover Plattsburgh Plan. Hundreds of residents described their concerns and aspirations for both their own neighborhoods and the greater Plattsburgh community. These thoughts and ideas informed the substance of the plan.

Common themes were identified and included a love of Lake Champlain and

support for increased waterfront access and utilization, the desire for well-maintained, comprehensive recreation spaces and programming, a need for a robust array of affordable housing options, and the ambition to integrate and retain SUNY students into the economy and community.

Individual neighborhoods identified acute needs and goals including historic preservation in Ward 1, greater access to community services in Ward 2, cultural and recreational programming in Wards 3 and 4, improved safety, connectivity, and walkability in Ward 5, and distinctive design guidelines in Ward 6. Overall, these public engagement sessions evinced a shared sense of affection for the City of Plattsburgh. The feedback received resonated with tones of optimism and excitement for Plattsburgh's future. Our community has spoken, and we have listened.





Wall Mural on the Cornerstone Bookstore located at the corner of Margaret and Court Streets.

What is your favorite thing about Plattsburgh?

the waterfront historic character the arts and culture the university

# FEEDBACK

 **Jeremiah Ward**

Ideally, each of our neighborhoods will have connections to other neighborhoods, mixed use activities, no more one-way streets, no more blighted buildings, affordable housing opportunities for all, express pride and curb appeal, less car dependence, and greater density replacing single family homes with multi-plexes.

 **Jacqueline Hallock**

People live on the Old Base because of the historic nature and feel of the buildings and trees. We need to protect and fix up these assets, including the beaches. I see people driving through and visiting here because of the history. This is what makes Ward 1 unique and we need to preserve what we have.

 **Doug Butdorf**

Consider: Zoning changes to eliminate the exclusivity of single-family homes in Ward 3-4. More 2-3-4 plexes would increase density.

 **Courtney M.**

Could there be a playground at Wilcox Dock?

 **Brianna Duncan**

Industrial uses are okay but they should be partnered with strong architectural design guidelines to enhance compatibility with the neighboring residential character.

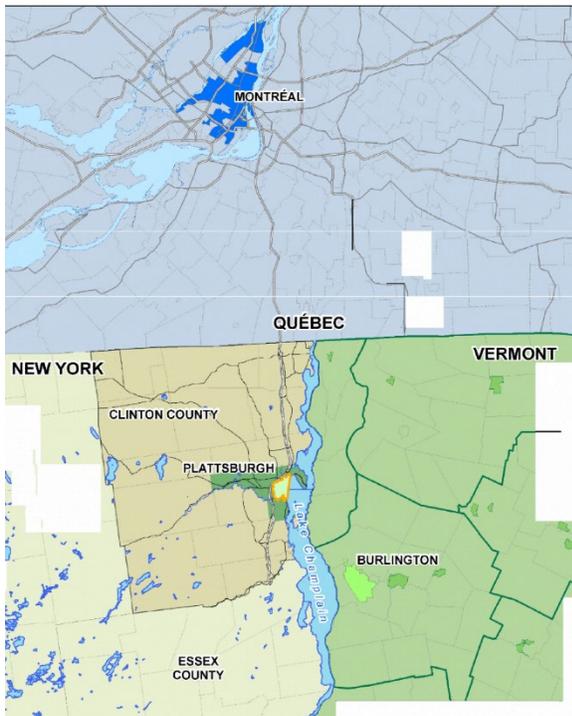
 **Jackie**

As the parent of a son with special needs, the absence of crossing lights at busy intersections is a hazard that reduces his ability to be independent.



## COMMUNITY VISION

As we look forward, Plattsburgh continues to build upon its role as an important and attractive destination on the economic corridor between Montréal and New York City. Host to internationally known industrial firms including Bombardier Transportation, International Paper, Mold-Rite, and IEC Holden along with a growing group of emerging technology companies, the community welcomes entrepreneurs and innovators large and small.



Plattsburgh enjoys a regionally renowned waterfront setting and serves as the educational, cultural, business, financial,

governmental, and medical services center of the western shore of the Lake Champlain Basin. Our expanding investments in downtown, the waterfront, and other key assets add to the value of the entire community. As a “micropolitan” community that includes the greater Plattsburgh area, we share in celebrations of our rich history and strong community roots with a drive toward economic development that continues to support a place where people want to visit, live, and do business.

As home to the State University of New York at Plattsburgh (SUNY), we are a welcoming community for new residents who may stay for an academic year or a lifetime. The City and SUNY share facilities for both indoor and outdoor recreation that permit enjoyment of our North Country setting in all seasons. We continue to expand public access to our natural and recreational amenities. We have embraced a renewed appreciation of the City’s frontage along the Saranac River as we expand our trail network. Our social network supports community unity, independent thinking, and respect for each other’s needs, goals, and aspirations.

As we continue to collaborate toward the diversification of sources and systems of

renewable energy, we become a more environmentally sustainable community. This collaboration will strengthen relationships both within the community and with partners lying beyond our borders. We will be part of the solution that will ensure a healthy planet for future generations. As an environmentally responsible community, we recognize the importance of supporting development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

Looking ahead, the City of Plattsburgh will continue to embrace diversity and support its institutions, businesses, cultural assets. We recognize the importance of our unique residential neighborhoods and embrace an expansion of the community's participation in the City's growing arts, entertainment, and cultural scene. We have room to grow if we plan wisely and can accommodate a balance of affordable and mixed-density housing along with single-family residences and homes for people with special needs.

Historically, the City has been a walkable community. While public transportation options are currently limited, trails will connect our neighborhoods and destinations as we evolve into a community less dependent on automobiles.

EMPIRE STATE TRAIL  
[HTTPS://EMPIRETRAIL.NY.GOV/ACTIVITIES/WALKING](https://empiretrail.ny.gov/activities/walking)



Our City's streets and existing trail system provide safe travel for those walking, cycling, and driving and for those utilizing public transit. Traffic calming measures will lower automobile speeds and clearly define the boundaries of automobile travel lanes, bike lanes, sidewalks, and shared-use paths. Our streets are well maintained and move traffic efficiently. And, while vehicular transport will remain their primary purpose, streets can also serve as a readily available venue for community gatherings and events as needs and opportunities evolve.

Our system of sidewalks is also well maintained and, while issues of accessibility remain in certain areas, they provide convenient pedestrian connectivity throughout the City. Our trail system has expanded public access to and enjoyment of the Saranac River, Lake Champlain, the City's two dozen parks, and other open spaces. The trails are easy to both find and follow on well-marked routes and user-friendly maps of all trails will soon be made available via a

smartphone app to supplement the existing system of signage. The trail system has and will continue to embrace designs that accommodate the needs of older residents and those with physical limitations.

Plattsburgh's system of parks provides places for both social interaction and enjoyment of peaceful, solitary reflection. The needs of our diverse population are and shall continue to be met with a wide variety of year-round recreational and social opportunities equitably dispersed throughout the city. Our parks and recreation facilities are able to adapt to changing needs and expanded youth programming will be a crucial component of their future success.

The City's natural processes are recognized and respected. Low-maintenance landscapes including trees, shrubs, and perennials provide attractive green relief from the built environment. Our investment in these resources yields measurable and substantial health benefits ranging from direct contact with nature and the enjoyment of a cleaner environment to varied opportunities for physical activity and social interaction. Whether providing a place for individuals to enjoy outdoor performances or simply offering a pleasant view to enjoy, our parks offer year-round opportunities for all ages, abilities, and interests.

Our zoning and development management systems facilitate completion of projects that add to our community's assets via an inclusive decision-making process that incorporates feedback from residents and other stakeholders. The context of the surrounding neighborhood is considered during the project review process and decisions are based on objective analysis utilizing recognized planning principles and methods that ensure approved projects are in the best interest of the community. The City's land use code integrates the principles of social, ecological, and economic sustainability to serve both current and future residents.

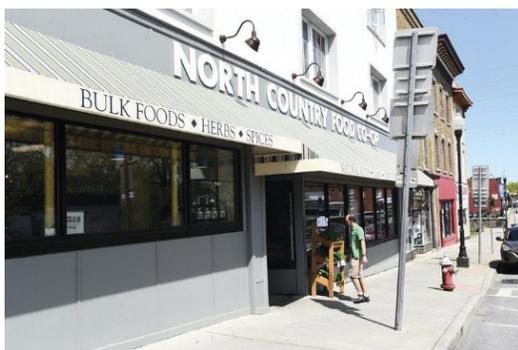
A diverse mix of market-based development is the foundation of a stable economy and includes large-scale projects, micro-enterprise development, and everything in between. Plattsburgh's historic pattern of mixed-use development is a tradition that is reinforced as adaptive re-use of older buildings sustains the community's historic feel while its economy evolves. Form-based zoning provisions support walkability, curb appeal, and fine-grained features that are part of our local tradition. They also possess the flexibility to foster the progress of innovative projects that serve as assets to the community.

Planning for equity means planning for the just and fair inclusion of all members of a community so that all may participate, prosper, and reach their full potential into a society in which all can participate, prosper, and reach their full potential. From the methods used by planners working with community members to create a shared vision for their neighborhoods to advocating for policies that connect people to opportunities at the local, state, and federal levels, planning for equity is planning for all.

As space in the City is limited, Infill development will be increasingly important. Infill development will include, where appropriate, greater housing density coupled with the preservation of existing residences to help maintain the quality and supply of affordable housing.

We will make additional efforts to foster both current and future neighborhood businesses by supporting a walkable community and providing easy access to necessities including, but not limited to,

NORTH COUNTRY  
FOOD CO-OP



child care, food shops, drug stores, and other convenience shopping. The community's expectations for new development projects are to be defined in advance thereby reducing uncertainty and costly delays.

Tsi ietsenhtha (JEE YEH JEN TA)  
ART INSTALLATION



Our City's leadership will work diligently with those local business owners wishing to expand their operations and City staff will support and guide project sponsors through the development process.

Our community continues to make history as we share our most compelling stories from the past. We recognize the importance of indigenous peoples' history and strive to advance the understanding of that history through various means.

The City's current land use patterns can be traced to its early settlement. The story of Plattsburgh includes thrilling international intrigue, towering figures from the War of 1812, and the complex legacy of the former Plattsburgh Air Force Base. The maelstrom created by the Battle of Plattsburgh in 1814 stands in stark contrast to the City's modern, tranquil setting. The history of the Lake Champlain Basin is intertwined with that of the City and contains innumerable noteworthy events.

Drawing upon the knowledge of local historians, we celebrate the events and forces that shaped our City. By linking the distant and not-so-distant past with the daily experience of our modern City, we foster a sense of community. An understanding of Plattsburgh's rich history is essential to a comprehension of our identity. Our cultural attractions will be engaging, inclusive, and interactive. Our community will host both grassroots, neighborhood-scaled activities and larger regional attractions and will celebrate who we are now as much as who we once were.





## POLICY GUIDES

The City of Plattsburgh has developed the following policy guides for Natural Resources, Infrastructure and Accessibility, Community Resources, Recreation, Arts & Culture, Historic Resources, Housing, and Economic Development. The policies will guide development in the Lake City for the next 20+ years. The core characteristics of sustainability, diversity, resilience, and vibrancy are applied to all elements of the City's policies.

### CORE CHARACTERISTICS:

**SUSTAINABLE**  
CITY

meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs

**DIVERSE**  
CITY

celebrate our diverse cultural history and pave the way for an inclusive social economy

**RESILIENT**  
CITY

promote sustainable development that fosters a strong infrastructure network for years to come

**VIBRANT**  
CITY

build upon our rich history and cultural heritage through community events and placemaking strategies



## NATURAL RESOURCES

### policy vision.

Plattsburgh is pursuing a more sustainable future. Often called the Lake City, this moniker highlights the critical role that natural forces have played in our history. As we diversify our sources and systems of renewable energy, we will collaborate to realize a more environmentally sustainable community. This collaboration will strengthen relationships both within the community and with partners beyond our borders. Plattsburgh will thus become more resilient.

While the most damaging and disruptive effects of climate change are likely to be felt elsewhere during the next few decades, we are far from immune to their consequences. We will plan for and adapt to future conditions through thoughtful investment and education.

Given the City's extensive shoreline, planning for storm events, flood damage prevention, and enhanced storm water management planning will be of particular importance. Enhancement of the City's overall resilience to the impacts of a warming planet will both safeguard our quality of life and ensure long-term economic stability.

### policy summary.

Plattsburgh is facing environmental challenges ranging from its aging infrastructure to the increasingly variable water quality of the Saranac River and Lake Champlain and these challenges require local and regional coordination to effectively address. The specter of climate change looms over all other concerns.

The City will need to engage in a variety of environmental partnerships, programs, and policy initiatives addressing the protection of water resources, land conservation, and climate change preparedness. As the most urbanized area within the western half of the Lake Champlain Basin, it will be of critical importance to conduct enhancements to our local green infrastructure and to cooperate regionally with partners sharing our watershed. Within the City, the relatively undeveloped upper reaches of the Saranac River corridor and similarly underdeveloped stretches of Lake Champlain shoreline present the greatest set of opportunities to conserve open space resources.

One of the City's most important assets is its proximity to and connections with our bucolic hinterlands and the Adirondack Mountains beyond. Maintaining a visceral

connection to these distinctive landscapes through the preservation of natural habitats and open spaces within the City, if only on a small scale, is of crucial importance.

Additionally, these natural resources are part of the City's brand as a part of the Adirondack Coast. As noted in the LWRP, water-related and water-dependent uses

are essential to a balanced approach to waterfront conservation and development.

Our natural resources have played an important role in the City's past and will continue to shape our future. Conserving these resources for posterity must be a focus of our community.





## POLICY STRATEGY

### OBJECTIVE:

Improve and protect the quality of Lake Champlain, the Saranac River, and the City's watersheds, natural areas, and open spaces.

### ACTIONS:

- Identify and create an inventory of the City's various natural resources and their current condition.
- Adopt measurable objectives and track performance of key environmental indicators for these resources.
- Develop best management practices for stormwater management and identify stressed watersheds suitable for the implementation of enhanced water quality treatment utilizing green infrastructure.
- A continued partnership with the Lake Champlain Basin Program to protect the lake via invasive species management and community education initiatives.
- Complete a water quality plan detailing the policies and operations of the City's stormwater and sanitary sewer management systems and identifying necessary capital improvements to those systems.
- Evaluate the City's infrastructure to identify those suitable for retrofitting with green stormwater infrastructure to slow, treat, and/or redirect stormwater runoff.
- Collaborate with local nonprofits, research organizations, private property owners, and surrounding communities to create cleaner waters.
- Protect those areas prone to flooding and fluvial erosion and mitigate risks to life, property, and public infrastructure.
- Develop a local tree ordinance and tree guide to ensure proper care, maintenance, and growth of our arboreal stock.
- Implement watershed management plans for identified waterways.

**OBJECTIVE:**

Support alternative modes of transportation including strategies for bicycles, pedestrians, public transit, etc.

**ACTIONS:**

- Coordinate updated land use policies and long-term regional transportation planning to facilitate improvements to pedestrian, bicycle, and vehicular infrastructure to reduce dependency on vehicular transport and mitigate traffic congestion.
- Continue to develop and implement land use policies that reflect and support Complete Streets planning principles.
- Support efforts to increase connectivity and access to our city's natural spaces.
- Implement additional bicycle infrastructure based on the Bike Friendly Plattsburgh plan and ongoing community feedback.
- Promote smart growth principles in land-use policies.

**OBJECTIVE:**

**Foster the efficient use of natural resources (e.g., water conservation).**

**ACTIONS:**

- Implement land use tools that increase protection of natural assets.
- Identify areas suitable for future growth and implement improvements to water and sewer infrastructure necessary to accommodate that growth.
- Support a reduction in impervious surfaces throughout the City via appropriate ordinances, incentives, and investments.
- Support and incentivize the inclusion of green infrastructure in new development projects.

**OBJECTIVE:**

**Promote adaptation to climate change in municipal and private infrastructure including strategies related to land use and public education and engagement.**

**ACTIONS:**

- Encourage land use policies that incentivize the incorporation of sustainable designs, materials, and practices into projects involving the rehabilitation of historic assets and those involving new construction.
- Evaluate the capacity of municipal infrastructure to meet the demands created by the increasingly severe impacts of climate change.
- Pursue strategic opportunities to site solar arrays on City property including rooftops, landfills, and suitable open spaces.
- Continue to participate in the NYS Climate Smart Communities program.
- Support and expand public education efforts to protect and improve the quality of Plattsburgh's natural resources.
- Modify ordinances to ensure building design is appropriate to Plattsburgh's climate and extant environmental hazards.
- Decrease dependence on fossil fuels by supporting increased energy efficiency and the production of renewable energy.
- Implement policies that support distributed energy generation technologies and other emerging technologies that can increase resilience and reduce consumption of fossil fuels.
- Support the transition to an electric vehicle fleet for all City departments and incentivize the use of electric vehicles by the community via installation of additional electric vehicle (EV) charging stations.
- Establish a sustainable business program which provides information, education, and incentives to make business practices more sustainable.
- Evaluate municipal water use and develop recommendations to reduce operational excess.

**OBJECTIVE:**

**Promote the development of local food systems.**

**ACTIONS:**

- Explore opportunities to develop and expand local food systems, including zoning and policies that support vertical farming, community gardens, and urban farms.
- Explore opportunities to develop or strengthen community gardens in City neighborhoods and parks.

**OBJECTIVE:**

**Minimize the generation and impacts of solid waste including strategies to promote recycling and composting or anaerobic digestion of organic materials.**

**ACTIONS:**

- Reduce the carbon footprint and greenhouse gas emissions of biosolids.
- Expand our ability to manage other organic wastes such as food and paper.
- Implementation of a City-wide composting and organics program.
- Provide sustainable long-term (20+ years) biosolids management that accounts for existing and reasonably anticipated future regulations, policies, and economic drivers.

## INFRASTRUCTURE & ACCESSIBILITY

## policy vision.

Whether you are looking to move to the City of Plattsburgh, start a life after college, open a new business, or visit for the weekend, the City is serviced by a full range of utilities and support systems including municipal water, sewer, stormwater, and electricity. The City is committed to providing high-quality services, improving its green infrastructure policies, and planning for a sustainable future that meets the needs of the community and region.

## policy summary.

A robust and reliable system of infrastructure is essential to realizing the City's economic potential and we will commit the resources necessary to ensure that system remains capable of accommodating the demands of a vibrant and growing municipality.

The City is proud to utilize 100% renewable energy and continues to improve policies intended to create a sustainable and environmentally friendly system that supports the needs of its residents, businesses, and visitors. Continued maintenance, mapping, and evaluation of the existing system and its capacities will inform the City's Capital Improvement Plan

and ensure adequate planning for our future needs including an improved multi-modal transportation network, a municipal broadband network, Complete Streets, and the development of green infrastructure.

The City is served by an extensive transportation network that includes local, county and state roads as well as rail, air, bus, and ferry transportation. The City is committed to maintaining its existing roadways and transportation connections and to the ongoing identification of improvements that will enhance safety, usability, climate smart initiatives, and inclusivity that aligns with the policies of Complete Streets and other best practices including Vision Zero.

In addition, the Community is supported by a diverse park system, walking trails, and publicly accessible areas along Lake Champlain, and the Saranac River that provide abundant recreation opportunities for residents and visitors. The City will continue to collaborate with our partners at the federal, state, and local levels to maintain and expand these assets. The City is committed to maintaining our current trail network and will continue to develop new trail systems. Maintenance of public infrastructure places a considerable burden on the City's finances. Targeted reinvestment and an expanded tax base will ensure that burden does not become too heavy to bear.

**Complete Streets** is an approach to planning, designing and building streets that enables safe access for all users, including pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists and transit riders of all ages and abilities. A complete street may include: sidewalks, bike lanes, frequent and safe crosswalks, median islands, accessible pedestrian signals, curb extensions, narrower travel lanes, roundabouts, and more.



<https://smartgrowthamerica.org/program/national-complete-streets-coalition/publications/what-are-complete-streets/>

Vision Zero is a traffic safety strategy used to eliminate fatalities and severe injuries among all road users, and to ensure safe, healthy, equitable mobility for all. The Vision Zero approach recognizes that people will sometimes make mistakes, and promotes design to ensure those inevitable mistakes result in ZERO severe injuries or fatalities.



## POLICY STRATEGY

### OBJECTIVE:

**Consistently pursue funding for water, sewer and other essential infrastructure projects as a sound planning objective since these investments not only address immediate needs but can be leveraged to fund future projects and advance other community goals.**

### ACTIONS:

- Advance the City's current water main replacement plan and prioritize replacement of water mains that present potential public health concerns.
- Determine priorities for sewer line upgrades/relining to address capacity needs and problems related to infiltration and inflow.
- Identify sustainable long-term solutions for bio-solids produced by the Water Resource Recovery Facility (WRRF) as future regulatory requirements may present additional challenges

### OBJECTIVE:

**Embrace a multimodal, Complete Streets approach and encourage alternatives to decrease automobile dependency and promote environmental sustainability.**

### ACTIONS:

- Redesign our roadways to include public spaces and placemaking elements that encourage community gatherings.
- Provide an adequate public parking supply for both short-term and long-term parking needs.
- Expand the connection and collaboration between the City and SUNY's students, faculty, and administration by improving the physical connections between SUNY's campus, downtown, the waterfront, and other key destinations.

- Provide and maintain safe traffic controls including crosswalks, signage, and traffic lights for a multi-modal transportation system that meets or exceeds the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act.
- In collaboration with Clinton County, increase the availability and awareness of public transportation by encouraging increased ridership through the identification of improved bus routes, maps, signage, and shelters.
- Develop a zoning code that embraces a “15-minute” neighborhood concept reflecting the ability to participate in all aspects of City life within a small geographic radius.
- Develop a Capital Improvement Plan to consciously identify and budget for future infrastructure needs.
- Identify needed traffic control improvements within the Capital

**A “15-minute neighborhood” is a neighborhood in which you can access all of your most basic, day-to-day needs within a 15-minute walk of your home. Walkable communities provide a variety of economic and social benefits that ensure vibrant, complete communities.**

Improvement Plan including, but not limited to, improvements to the Green

- Provide enhanced wayfinding and interpretive signage as well as online mapping to provide motorists and pedestrians with readily available, comprehensive information.
- Implement the Bike Friendly Plattsburgh plan and continue creating alternative transportation opportunities including bike and pedestrian linkages to and between the Terry Gordon Recreational Path (part of the Empire State Trail), the Saranac River Trail, the Karen Fleury bike path, the Heritage Trail, and others.

Street/Bridge Street intersection, the North Margaret Street/Cumberland Avenue intersection, and the Cornelia Street/Broad Street intersection.

- Update the zoning code to include additional landscaping and natural design elements for all projects requiring site plan review.
- Develop and update maintenance plans that take advantage of new technologies and equipment. Plattsburgh’s harsh winters can present challenges for both pedestrians and those responsible for winter maintenance.
- Develop and implement a digital parking supply database and management system that will track supply and demand to ensure an adequate parking

supply for residents, businesses, and visitors.

- Provide adequate solid waste collection and disposal based on current methods and standards while implementing

sustainable practices when and where appropriate.

- Ensure adequate water, wastewater, and stormwater management systems and plan proactively for the future needs of these systems.

**OBJECTIVE:**

**Preserve and design our park system to be inclusive and encourage use by people of all ages and abilities**

**ACTIONS:**

- To the greatest extent practicable, protect and preserve the natural environment when reviewing and designing new sites and infrastructure.
- Preserve public access to our waterfront by providing public parks, beaches, docks, and boating opportunities.
- Expand, improve, and interconnect the regional trail network (Saranac River Trail, Empire State Trail, etc.) including trailheads, safety enhancements at crossings and intersections, open sight lines, site lighting, and wayfinding signage.
- Collaborate with the Saranac River Trail Greenway (SRTG) board to implement the 2016 SRTG feasibility study and identify one new grant opportunity every year that will enhance active transportation opportunities within the city.
- Conduct a phased implementation of the recommendations included in the 2010 evaluation of the City’s buildings and infrastructure for compliance with the ADA.

**OBJECTIVE:**

**Encourage the use of alternative energies and climate smart practices and continue to provide 100% green renewable energy to all City of Plattsburgh ratepayers.**

**ACTION:**

- Continue to provide EV charging stations at key locations throughout the City and expand the system where appropriate to ensure future needs are met.

**OBJECTIVE:**

**Achieve universal broadband coverage for all residents, businesses, employment centers, educational institutions, and service organizations.**

**ACTION:**

- Collaborate with federal and state agencies to expand broadband access and the integration of other high speed data infrastructure to support Plattsburgh’s ongoing development as a technology hub of northern New York State.



## COMMUNITY RESOURCES

### policy vision.

The City is committed to providing community resources of the highest quality to ensure public safety and resilience. We will continue to provide and support superior emergency services, strive to make health care more accessible, support systems and programs that allow our residents to comfortably age in place, champion our local and regional educational institutions, and facilitate opportunities for community engagement in all areas of common concern.

The City of Plattsburgh operates, among other enterprises, a Police Department, Fire Department, the Plattsburgh Municipal Lighting Department (PMLD), the Plattsburgh Public Library, and a WRRF treating liquid and solid wastes. Each of these operations possess a team of highly trained professionals that provide first-class emergency services to the people they serve.

The expansion of information gathering, processing, and sharing is expected to continue with advances in computer/device

hardware, applications/software, and interconnected networks/the internet. The City's workforce will take appropriate steps to maintain and improve its capacity to manage information effectively to and utilize these tools.

Plattsburgh's historic City Hall will continue to serve as the physical base of municipal operations, a repository for critical records, and a valuable resource for information about the City, its history, and its people.

### policy summary.

The City is proud to be the home of the University of Vermont's Champlain Valley Physicians Hospital (CVPH), the Hudson Headwaters Health Network, and numerous other medical centers and senior living facilities that provide superior health care to our residents. Further supporting a healthy community is the Plattsburgh Farmers' & Crafters' Market (PFCM) that operates seasonally and hosts weekly markets and special events on the City's beautiful waterfront.

The Plattsburgh City School District, Champlain Valley Educational Services (CVES), and SUNY's Plattsburgh campus form the foundation of the City's educational system and we are proud of the diligence and professionalism consistently displayed by that system's educators and administrators as they prepare our children for the future.

The City supports this progressive education system, an inclusive and accessible health care system, and a system of infrastructure designed to promote public safety and health.



## POLICY STRATEGY

### OBJECTIVE:

**Strengthen the relationship between educational institutions and the city.**

### ACTIONS:

- Formalize the partnership between SUNY and the City via a codification of respective responsibilities toward the goal of increased integration, awareness, and collaboration.
- Establish renewed and/or expanded partnerships with the Plattsburgh City School District (PCSD), Clinton County Community College, and CVES.
- Support “Safe Routes to School” initiatives and projects.
- Develop a safe and comprehensive bicycle network to connect students safely to school.
- Support continuing education of municipal staff and board members to ensure community representatives are utilizing current best practices.
- Support and promote the Plattsburgh Public Library’s initiatives and programming to increase its visibility and membership.
- Support the development of additional childcare centers and at-home daycare to increase access to these services.
- Involve K-12 students, college students, and school/university staff in planning and community development efforts.
- Plan for cooperative City and SUNY events, also known as Town & Gown events, hosted both on and off campus (e.g., music or theatre events hosted at Harborside).
- Develop and expand the budget for continued education and training of municipal staff and board members.

**OBJECTIVE:**

**Recognize innovations in technology to ensure Plattsburgh is a “smart city” that is efficient, resilient, sustainable, and which works well for all its residents.**

**ACTIONS:**

- Consider and implement improvements that will increase efficiency of parking and traffic management.
- Evaluate potential cost-saving advances for City services such as smart street lighting.
- Evaluate other “smart city” opportunities that are appropriate for Plattsburgh.
- Recognize the cyber-security risks inherent in advanced communication networks and secure services sufficient to manage and protect the City’s information technology (IT) infrastructure.

**OBJECTIVE:**

**Foster inclusivity and prioritize the safety of residents and visitors.**

**ACTIONS:**

- Continue to improve safety standard of pedestrian infrastructure including implementation of Complete Streets principles where applicable.
- Provide accurate and clear messaging regarding public safety on all social media platforms and the City’s website.
- Open sight lines and improve lighting in public spaces for a safer and more welcoming environment.
- Continue to maintain transparency and inclusivity in planning and governing by continuing to live stream and record public meetings.
- Continue to foster workgroups and community led initiatives that address

emergency services and other common concerns.

- Enter into further shared service agreements with neighboring municipalities when operational efficiencies can be realized and levels of services can be bolstered by doing so.
- Maintain certifications and trainings for paid and volunteer staff to ensure the highest levels of professionalism.
- Develop a “Community Watch” portal on the City website to capture and respond to Community member issues.
- Continue to support the City of Plattsburgh Police Department

Community Service Center on Margaret St offering resources for safety and health related services.

- Promote public safety events on social media and the City’s website.
- Maintain a database of current staff certifications and create a plan and accompanying budget to address required continuing education and training for emergency service staff and volunteers.
- Coordinate with the police and fire departments to hold at least 1 public safety workshop or course open to the public each year.

#### **OBJECTIVE:**

**Support a healthy community through education, outreach, and continued collaboration with community partners**

#### **ACTIONS:**

- Increase access to health care services within the city.
- Support the posting of comprehensive information documenting available community health and education programs and resources on the City’s website and those of its community partners.
- Continue to collaborate with the Clinton County Health Department to support the implementation of healthy community policies and practices including the Clinton County Health Improvement Plan.
- Promote and support awareness of the importance of good mental health and

increase access to mental health services.

- Increase access to fresh and healthy foods by promoting and supporting co-ops, farmers' markets, and local artisans.
- Increase access to social services via an inclusive and active transportation network.

- Collaborate with local health care service providers to identify gaps in service and plan for future community needs.
- Continue to support and enhance the PFCM.



## RECREATION

### policy

#### vision.

Located in the heart of the Adirondack Coast, the City of Plattsburgh is situated among a wealth of natural resources that provide opportunities for year-round recreation that include launching a canoe at Wilcox Dock, sledding at Fox Hill, and a thousand others. The City is committed to building upon its existing park and trail systems to create unique spaces and places that are inclusive and engaging. We will continue to promote our parks and trails through placemaking efforts, programming, and events and will endeavor to create community-led opportunities for recreation. We will continue to partner with New York State to enhance the Empire State Trail and develop our own expanded network of bicycle infrastructure. Finally, we will continue to protect our parks, waterfront, and trails as public spaces through conservation, investment, and continued maintenance so residents and visitors may continue to enjoy all that the Lake City has to offer.

### policy

#### summary.

The City has developed an extensive recreation system encompassing a wide range of facilities including small historic parks, large community parks with various amenities, ballfields, waterfront trails, and two marinas. Each of the City's twenty-two (22) parks offers a different experience. The stars of the City's park system include our waterfront monument parks, the U.S. Oval, Melissa Penfield Park, and the Plattsburgh Municipal Beach.

MacDonough Monument, a towering obelisk erected in the first decades of the twentieth century to honor a hero of the War of 1812, is the central feature of MacDonough Park which occupies the western bank of the Saranac River as it flows through downtown. Samuel Champlain Monument Park and the U.S. Oval are steeped in history and provide opportunities for both recreation and historical reflection.

Melissa Penfield Park is equipped with lighted baseball and football fields, varied

playground equipment, a skate park, a community garden, walking trails, and a dog park.

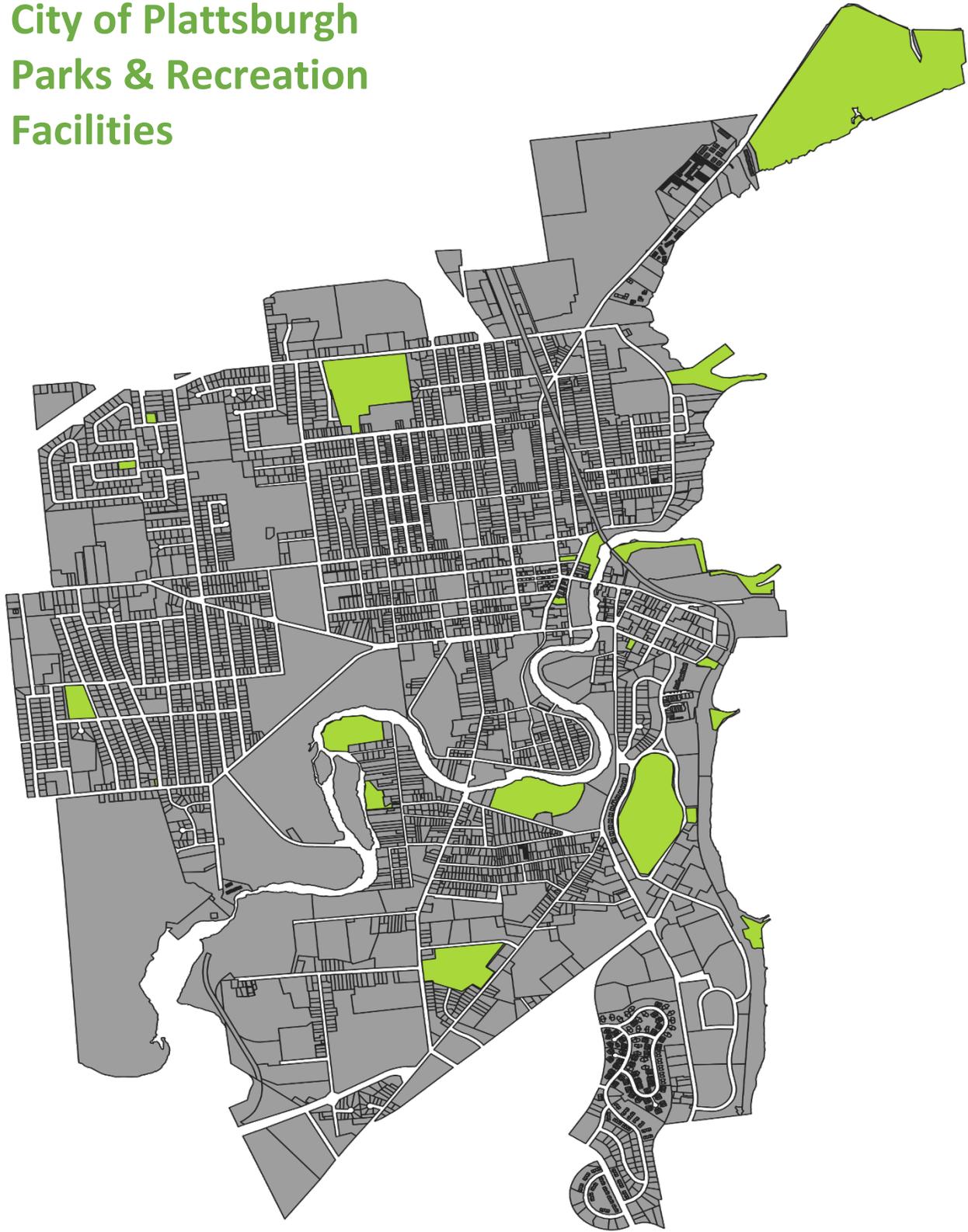
The City's beach complex on the shores of beautiful Lake Champlain provides opportunities for bathing and recreation that include one of the longest freshwater beaches in the eastern United States, views of both the Adirondack and Green Mountains, a Heritage Trail, and boardwalk. Our marinas offer a variety of options for safe and accessible storage of watercraft and serve as the venue for a series of professional fishing tournaments that recur annually and draw large numbers of visitors to the City.

In addition to an extensive park system, the City maintains just over six (6) miles multi-use trails that connect the community along the waterfront, throughout our downtown,

and beyond. The Empire State Trail offers beautiful views as it traverses the City along its longitudinal axis via the Terry Gordon Recreation Path, the streets of the central business district, and U.S. Route 9. The SRTG, a twenty-six (26) mile regional trail that follows the Saranac River through numerous communities, is currently under expansion within the City and further phases of expansion are under consideration.

While the City has traditionally offered robust recreational programming via the operation of the City's Recreation Center and the Crete Memorial Civic Center, recent efforts have focused on a collaborative approach to programming that utilizes the expertise of community partners like the Plattsburgh YMCA and other organizations specializing in recreation.

# City of Plattsburgh Parks & Recreation Facilities





## POLICY STRATEGY

### OBJECTIVE:

**Revitalize existing open space, recreation systems, and park infrastructure.**

### ACTIONS:

- Develop a City Parks and Recreation Master Plan to inventory and assess existing resources and identify any gaps or areas of need.
- Develop and pursue innovative long-term funding mechanisms for the maintenance, operation, renovation, and acquisition of open spaces and recreational assets.
- Complete deferred maintenance projects in City parks and recreational facilities.
- Design, fund, and construct improvements to our beach complex based on the Plattsburgh City Beach Implementation Plan completed in August 2021.
- Encourage and foster stewardship of recreational spaces through the cultivation of active volunteer programs.
- Secure long-term financial and staffing resources to manage, acquire, renovate, operate, and maintain our recreational assets.

### OBJECTIVE:

**Ensure robust year-round recreational programming and high-utilization of parks and recreation facilities.**

### ACTIONS:

- Engage our neighbors and regional partners in collaborative efforts to expand affordable programming options.
- Provide a variety of year-round opportunities for recreation and work to distribute resources equitably throughout the city.

- Maintain neighborhood pocket parks and small playgrounds within safe walking distance in residential areas.
- Encourage and promote the dynamic and flexible use of existing open spaces.
- Increase opportunities for enjoyment of the waterfront and consider the following:
  - Installation of a whitewater course on the Saranac River.
  - Expansion of kayak/canoe/paddling access to the Saranac River, Lake Champlain, and Scotion Creek.
  - Improve fishing access via dredging and/or other alterations to Wilcox Dock, the Harborside boat launch, and the Green Street boat launch.
- Improve the City's basketball courts, tennis courts, hockey rink, playgrounds, and public restrooms.
- Expand the Penfield skate park and install more durable features.
- Identify heavily trafficked areas and evaluate the viability of installing splash pads to complement the pad recently installed in the Betty Little Arts Park.
- Design and construct new dog parks throughout the City's public spaces.
- Identify advantageous spaces and programming for festivals and large special events including outdoor musical performances, etc.
- Promote and provide additional winter recreational programming such as snowshoe trails, ice-skating, cross-country skiing, a community-wide sledding events, and annual snowman building contests.

**OBJECTIVE:**

**Invest in beautification of parks and open spaces.**

**ACTIONS:**

- Support public art as an essential component of open space design.
- Create vibrant recreational spaces that represent the unique character of the neighborhood in which they are located.

- Partner with community organizations and agencies to develop an “Adopt-a-Park” program to encourage community ownership of and responsibility for general cleanliness, beautification, and awareness of maintenance needs.
- Expand urban forestry and the provision of shaded rest areas in public spaces (parks, streets, etc.).

#### OBJECTIVE:

Ensure park systems are integrated, accessible, and meet the needs of each neighborhood and the overall community.

#### ACTIONS:

- Improve vehicular and pedestrian access to both Sailor’s Point Park and Centennial Rotary Park.
- Identify an appropriate location for and develop a multi-generational park with various amenities in the underserved Ward 5.
- Link the City’s recreational trail system to other regional trailways.
- Provide and promote a balanced recreation system that offers a variety of recreational opportunities to residents of all ages and abilities.
- Identify other underserved areas within the City and prioritize the acquisition of open space in those locations.
- Prioritize renovation and investment in heavily-used recreational facilities and in areas of the City with the highest need.

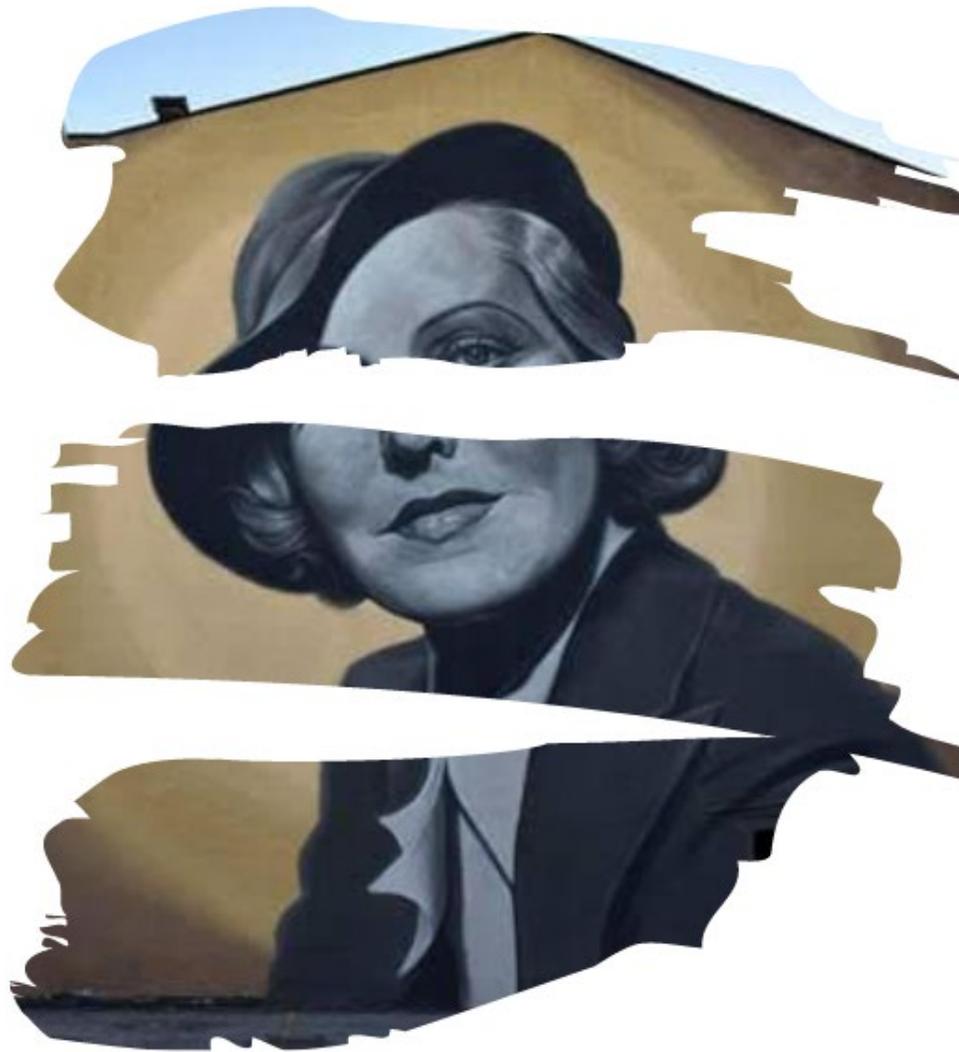


## ARTS & CULTURE

### policy vision.

The City is committed to providing opportunities for public art (murals, sculptures, painted infrastructure, street murals, etc.), workshops, live music and theatre performances, arts and crafts fairs, festivals, parades, interpretive displays, historic and heritage trails, and other artistic endeavors that enrich the lives of the people who reside in and visit our City.

We will continue to highlight these assets and work with local and regional partners including to provide cultural enrichment for people of all ages.



### policy

## summary.

Arts and culture continue to play a vital role in the growth of a vibrant downtown with a unique sense of place that the City of Plattsburgh is proud to support and celebrate.

The City of Plattsburgh supports its talented community of local artists and rich cultural heritage by encouraging the development of public art installations, planning regional events, supporting a local farmers market, and promoting collaborative efforts with, among others, the Clinton County Historical Association, Strand Center for the Arts, Plattsburgh State University and Outside Art: A Plattsburgh Public Art Project.

The City celebrates its compelling history, diverse culture, and growing arts scene

through annual events including the Battle of Plattsburgh commemoration and parade, Mayor's Cup regatta, Fourth of July celebration and fireworks, our Holiday Parade, and other festivities. First Friday Plattsburgh, a more recent innovation, showcases the City's art, music, and food scene once each month throughout the year. We are also committed to telling the story of our City through interpretive panels, wayfinding, historic markers, and interactive installations that highlight our storied past.

"Arts and culture" was identified by the community as one of the "best things" about Plattsburgh and the City has embraced creative strategies that support economic, social, and artistic endeavors intended to ensure a vibrant and colorful future!

# fun in the





## POLICY STRATEGY

### OBJECTIVE:

**Continue to celebrate local arts, culture, and entertainment by embracing creativity as a public asset.**

### ACTIONS:

- Continue to collaborate with the Strand Center for the Arts to build upon community programming, events, and festivals within the “arts corridor”.
- Build upon relations with SUNY Plattsburgh to bring student art and programming into downtown.
- Support community led events and festivals and encourage the occasional closure of streets to vehicular traffic in favor of utilization as a community gathering space for markets, celebrations, and other events.
- Continue to provide support for murals, interpretive panels, sculptures, and other public art.
- Create a “Community Development in the Arts” annual line item in the City’s budget for public art projects including programming at the Betty Little Arts Park and other public art installations.
- Utilize social media and the City’s website to promote local arts, cultural events, and programming.
- Create a “Discover Art” working group to review proposed public art projects and provide informed recommendations to elected officials.
- Develop grant funding for businesses occupying mixed-use spaces downtown that provide resources and workspace to artists.
- Continue to build upon the results of the Marketing, Branding, and Signage project funded by the NYS Downtown Revitalization Initiative (DRI).

**OBJECTIVE:**

**Support the use of City parks, the beach, and other public venues for community events and live performances.**

**ACTIONS:**

- Create attractive public spaces through events and activities like farmers' markets and festivals.
- Create a central "community notice board" within downtown and online for event promotion.
- Develop an application to support and promote "tactical urbanism" and other community led initiatives.
- Support and develop programming and public art displays within the Betty Little Arts Park.
- Further develop the arts corridor connecting the City's waterfront to the SUNY campus.
- Encourage mixed-use spaces like incubators and live/work lofts.
- Build upon signature events and festivals like the Mayor's Cup, Battle of Plattsburgh, and Holiday Parade that celebrate our cultural heritage.
- Create an easy-to-follow online permitting process for community event planning.
- Study the feasibility of a pedestrian mall on Clinton Street.
- Update the zoning code to include a requirement that pedestrian and placemaking designs be considered when improving and constructing new infrastructure.
- Renovate and reinvigorate the Bridge Street vendor stalls to bolster public visibility and use.
- Promote the use of sidewalks by businesses for marketing and events.



## HISTORIC RESOURCES

### policy vision.

Our community continues to make history as we share the most compelling stories from our past. We recognize the importance of the region's Native American heritage and celebrate the City's role in military history as both a battlefield and, for nearly two centuries, as a base of operations for multiple branches of the U.S. armed forces. Our status as a waterfront community and all the attendant advantages compelled generations of settlers and residents to hazard their lives and fortunes to construct the framework for the City that exists today. We will continue to honor those who came before us through education, preservation, and heritage tourism. Our story will stand the test of time.



### policy summary.

This City's historical assets include four (4) areas listed on the National Register of Historic Districts, a number of other eligible districts, numerous individually listed properties, and a long and complex military legacy. As we turn to the future, the preservation and promotion of these assets will remain integral to the City's economic vitality and sustainability.



Although several of Plattsburgh's older neighborhoods and many of its aged structures enjoy various levels of protection from forms and methods of development that would compromise their status as exemplars of a bygone era, other areas of the City remain to be studied and considered

for preservation. Interestingly, the City's registered historic districts are predominantly residential in character while the oldest section of the City, its downtown commercial core, is not a registered district, though it is listed as eligible for listing. While past conservation efforts have accomplished much, a comprehensive inventory and analysis of Plattsburgh's neighborhoods and buildings will allow for the effects of future development projects to be viewed in the context of both the immediate vicinity and the City as a whole.

The creation of education initiatives to stress the importance of preserving our historic assets to both current and potential residents and property owners will be crucial to the success of these efforts. Appreciation of the past and an understanding of the value it adds to our present are imperative if the pressures of the modern world are to be prevented from compromising the most cherished elements of our history. The implements with which this conflict will be waged include detailed design guidelines

for developers and policymakers, continuing education programs for City staff and board members to equip them with the latest tools and tactics, expanded opportunities for public engagement with our past via the installation of new interpretive signage, and extensive repositories of information detailing the City's various assets and the significance they hold in our common history.





## POLICY STRATEGY

### OBJECTIVE:

**Identify, document, designate, and preserve Plattsburgh's historic resources, including individual structures, neighborhoods, parks, cemeteries, and archaeological resources.**

### ACTIONS:

- Conduct an architectural survey of Plattsburgh's neighborhoods to identify potentially significant resources.
- Prepare annual reports detailing preservation activities undertaken within the City and relevant projects reviewed by the City's Zoning and Planning Boards.
- Preserve public views of iconic historical structures, buildings, natural features, and scenic vistas including Plattsburgh Bay.

### OBJECTIVE:

**Stabilize and enhance historically significant areas of the City by securing public and private investment in existing structures and by ensuring compatible infill development.**

### ACTIONS:

- Establish and adopt design guidelines for the downtown.
- Develop a historic preservation fund for City-owned historic & architectural resources.
- Create an educational campaign to assist with the redevelopment and rehabilitation of properties within historic districts.
- Administer grant and/or low interest loan programs to assist property owners with costs associated with historic preservation and rehabilitation.

- Explore the viability of a tax abatement program for owners of historic properties to make investment more attractive.

**OBJECTIVE:**

**Promote tourism and recreational opportunities that incorporate our historic and architectural resources.**

**ACTIONS:**

- Educate and engage the public about Plattsburgh’s unique heritage.
- Expand our interpretive signage program and establish themed walking, biking, and cruising routes both within the City and throughout the region covering subjects such as natural history, military history, and Native American history.
- Promote the development and use of an interactive map that highlights the City’s historic resources and promotes the themed transportation routes above.
- Install historic street signs or toppers to distinguish historic districts.

**OBJECTIVE:**

**Promote historic preservation as a key strategy for economic and community development.**

**ACTIONS:**

- Strengthen existing history-based community events and develop new events focused on lesser-known aspects of our history.
- Promote and support businesses that provide services or products which highlight Plattsburgh’s brand as a historically significant destination (tour guides, etc.).
- Work closely with community partners, including the Clinton County Historical Association (CCHA), the Clinton County Historian’s Office, and Adirondack Architectural Heritage (AARCH) to develop a broad-based information campaign to educate the public of the importance of historic preservation.

- Ensure public infrastructure improvements in historic districts enhance their distinct characteristics via the implementation of clearly defined design and review standards for these districts.
- Assess the suitability of new construction techniques, products, and materials for use on historic structures.
- Revise the historic site review standards prescribed by the City's zoning ordinance to ensure uniformity of review when subject projects come before the Planning Board.
- Establish a zoning protocol for administrative review of minor, in-kind alterations to registered historic buildings and buildings located within registered historic districts to simplify the building maintenance and improvement processes.



## HOUSING

### policy vision.

Safe, affordable, and accessible housing is essential for family stability, social and economic well-being, and mental and physical health. Plattsburgh endeavors to create a sustainable built environment by providing for the preservation of existing housing units. We aspire to create vibrant and attractive residential neighborhoods by partnering with others to create new housing in areas where a need has been identified. We take pride in our diverse community and encourage the construction of housing that meets the financial, physical, and spatial needs of homeowners, renters, and families of all income levels.

### policy summary.

The City fosters housing policies that are environmentally just. In recognition of the human right to adequate housing, the City supports access to adequate housing and strong protections for residents to ensure everyone has access to safe and affordable housing. We strive to retain residents, particularly SUNY students, and to prevent community displacement by ensuring a robust supply of varied housing types to meet the City's diverse demand. Meeting that demand necessitates support of a variety of housing options so that every resident has the opportunity to live in a decent and affordable home. While we have an ample supply of architecturally significant and historic buildings, maintaining those structures is an expensive proposition and requires navigation of complex regulations. These burdens create stresses on the supply of available housing.



## POLICY STRATEGY

### OBJECTIVE:

Preserve existing housing units and promote safety and maintenance standards without jeopardizing affordability.

### ACTIONS:

- Partner with SUNY Plattsburgh to monitor trends, including complaints from both students and other members of the community, involving student rental housing.
- Discourage the demolition of sound, existing housing unless the demolition will result in a net increase in the City's stock of affordable housing.
- Promote improvements to and continued maintenance of existing units to ensure long term habitation and safety.
- Implement appropriate regulations to ensure housing supply is not converted to de facto commercial use through short-term rentals.
- Where appropriate, modify zoning regulations to simplify the approval process for construction of accessory dwelling units. Application of this simplified process to properties within historic districts should be given due consideration.

### OBJECTIVE:

Enact policies to expand housing affordability.

### ACTIONS:

- Collaborate with the Plattsburgh Housing Authority to explore public housing models that integrate renters of variable income levels to subsidize costs.

- Offer density bonuses for new developments that incorporate a

specified percentage of affordable housing units.

**OBJECTIVE:**

**Strengthen protections for vulnerable populations and promote equity in housing.**

**ACTIONS:**

- Pursue funding to enact a Right to Counsel Program to expand tenant access to legal representation during eviction proceedings.
- Promote residential stability by implementing a Just-Cause Eviction Policy to limit the grounds upon which a landlord may bring an eviction case against a tenant.
- Expand Plattsburgh’s Rental Registry program to include all rentals within the City.
- Partner with professional community agencies to provide tenant and landlord education on all issues of concern to both groups.

**OBJECTIVE:**

**Promote healthy neighborhoods.**

**ACTIONS:**

- Identify appropriate locations for neighborhood infrastructure including transit, convenience, childcare, and other services, and pursue funding opportunities to expand such infrastructure.
- Promote sustainable land use patterns that integrate housing and transportation options to increase use of transportation modes other than personal vehicles.
- Partner with local property management firms and real estate agencies to track housing costs.

- Apply for grant funding to expand first-time homebuyer programs and other
- Consider environmental justice when planning for new housing.

forms of financial assistance to prospective homeowners.

**OBJECTIVE:**

**Grow the supply of housing within the city.**

**ACTIONS:**

- Explore options for offering tax incentives to real estate developers as a tool to increase housing supply.
- Explore the acquisition of real property and seek funding sources to facilitate the expansion of public housing.
- Modify the City’s zoning ordinance to encourage infill development by permitting, where appropriate, projects that increase housing density.
- Remove zoning and administrative constraints that restrict the construction of new housing.

**OBJECTIVE:**

**Foster a housing stock that meets the diverse needs of residents across all phases of life.**

**ACTIONS:**

- Conduct a comprehensive housing study to determine the community’s housing needs.
- Foster aging in place by providing a range of housing options to suit residents at various stages of life.
- Provide a diverse housing supply including single-family homes, multi-family homes, duplexes, and alternative housing such as container homes and cottage courts.
- Consider secondary units (“in-law” or “granny units”) where there is neighborhood support.

- Meet the housing needs of vulnerable populations including low-income, elderly, and disabled persons.
- Diversify housing types within neighborhoods to prevent economic segregation.
- Provide a range of housing options and support services for residents with special needs.
- Encourage the remodeling of existing family housing as an alternative to the

conversion of this housing to smaller units.

- Ensure that economic growth is accommodated while limiting substantial, adverse impacts to the character of existing neighborhoods.
- Where appropriate, include incentives in neighborhood redevelopment plans that encourage the inclusion of service and amenities such as childcare, medical services, and stores offering fresh produce.

<https://missingmiddlehousing.com/>





## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

### policy vision.

Plattsburgh continues to build upon its role as an important and attractive destination on the economic corridor between Montréal and New York City. Host to internationally known industrial firms including Bombardier Transportation, International Paper, Mold-Rite, and IEC Holden along with a growing group of emerging technology companies, the community welcomes entrepreneurs and innovators large and small.

We will make additional efforts to foster both current and future neighborhood businesses by supporting a walkable community and easy access to necessities including, but not limited to, child care, food shops, drug stores, and other convenience shopping. The community's expectations for new development projects will be defined in advance thereby reducing uncertainty and costly delays.

### policy summary.

Our waterfront remains an underutilized asset deserving of increased investment and marketing. A comprehensive development strategy is necessary to ensure the waterfront and the City's many other assets all contribute to the realization of a larger vision for the City's long term success. It is imperative that this strategy include effective marketing of these assets to audiences both at home and abroad. Consultation and coordination with local and regional partners who stand to benefit from these efforts will remain a crucial component the City's strategy for development.

Business and workforce development are key to any development strategy. Our elected officials and departmental staff will work diligently with those seeking to start or grow businesses in Plattsburgh and we will streamline the development process via the removal of unnecessary regulatory and administrative barriers. Partnerships with educational institutions and expanded

marketing efforts will serve to increase Plattsburgh's attractiveness to both employees and employers.

The City's geographic constraints necessitate a focus on infill development and we will encourage a focus on increased density of development by promoting its benefits and making appropriate adjustments to local ordinances.

Although we are home to a major university, retaining the student population after

graduation has proved difficult and that "brain drain" has created a lack of diversity and an undereducated workforce that limits the City's attractiveness to potential employers.

Despite our role as a regional economic center, high poverty levels have placed a strain on our local economy. Finding ways to expand our existing industries and attract new business will be key to revitalizing the City's economy.





## POLICY STRATEGY

### OBJECTIVE:

**Highlight our waterfront as a key component of economic growth for recreation tourism.**

### ACTIONS:

- Explore public-private partnerships that align with Plattsburgh's goal to increase utilization of our waterfront.
- Expand marketing efforts promoting the City's beach and marinas as key waterfront destinations
- Plan for the implementation of additional recreational assets, such as a whitewater rafting course, along our waterfront.
- Continue to explore and fund aesthetic, odor, and sound mitigation at the City's WRRF to increase the attractiveness of further investment in the Harborside area.
- Pursue compatible development and other recreation resources in the Harborside area based on the Harborside Master Plan.
- Implement a phased approach to development of the City's beach based on the 2016 Beach Feasibility Study and the 2021 Beach Implementation Plan.
- Create a long term, multi-phased plan to implement the goals and policies of the City's LWRP.

**OBJECTIVE:**

**Strategically target development opportunities that will grow our tax and employment bases.**

**ACTIONS:**

- Track key economic indicators and issue periodic reports to inform elected officials, staff, and the public as to the City's economic performance.
- Create a comprehensive economic development strategy detailing the City's economic strengths and weaknesses, identifying key business sectors to target for recruitment, retention, and expansion, and recognizing technical assistance and workforce development tools needed for implementation of that strategy.
- Evaluate the condition of existing infrastructure in priority areas (e.g., downtown and transit corridors) to ensure that employment and housing growth can be supported.
- Offer development incentives in the form of density bonuses and other methods to accomplish land use goals.

**OBJECTIVE:**

**Effectively market the City's assets.**

**ACTIONS:**

- Develop a City-wide marketing and communications strategy to promote the City more broadly.
- Develop an interactive website that promotes our local assets and highlights "things to do" in Plattsburgh.
- Continue and expand upon the downtown branding efforts already underway as part of the DRI.
- Create and support educational and tourism programs that promote historic and cultural resources.
- Develop gateway signage for the City's primary transit corridors.
- Leverage arts and culture as a key feature of Plattsburgh's identity.

**OBJECTIVE:**

**Build connections with local and regional partners.**

**ACTIONS:**

- Continue to actively participate in discussions involving issues of regional importance including land use, housing, transportation, economic development, community facilities and services, social justice, climate change, and economic and environmental resiliency.
- Coordinate with the Town of Plattsburgh on the development of our shared transit corridors.
- Identify specific opportunities to build and leverage partnerships with the region's creative economy and institutions of higher education.
- Work with local school districts and colleges to better connect students with local job opportunities via the development of a centralized internship and job portal.
- Continue to foster relationships with our municipal neighbors to plan, vision, and provide shared services that ensure a regional approach to economic development.

**OBJECTIVE:**

**Invest in infrastructure improvements to support desired future land uses and connect Plattsburgh's existing assets.**

**ACTIONS:**

- Connect the Harborside area to downtown through improvements to vehicular and pedestrian infrastructure.
- Maintain and invest in our multimodal transportation system to support future economic growth and expanded opportunities for recreation.
- Seek funding for and implement overdue improvements to the City's aged water and sewer infrastructure that are crucial to the City's economic performance and growth.

**OBJECTIVE:**

**Support the attraction, retention, and improvement of our local workforce and businesses.**

**ACTIONS:**

- Provide diverse housing options for employees across all income levels.
- Support workforce development and job-readiness programs for both new entrants into the workforce and those looking to transition to new career opportunities.
- Market and administer the City's Community Development Revolving Loan Fund (CDRLF) to provide low-cost financing to those wishing to start or grow local businesses.
- Create programs that encourage the reuse, redevelopment, and rehabilitation of buildings within downtown by communicating both the benefits of said projects and the funding available to accomplish them.
- Support the formation of a renewed Downtown Business Association.
- Evaluate the special assessment district levy model as it relates to the continued maintenance of downtown's public parking supply.
- Expand possibilities for live/work spaces (i.e., residential living spaces that include integrated creative work space).
- Expand the number and quality of spaces available for childcare services in residential areas.

**OBJECTIVE:**

**Encourage infill development City-wide to prevent unnecessary sprawl and create dense, walkable neighborhoods.**

**ACTIONS:**

- Identify those areas where existing infrastructure will support increased housing density and commercial development and determine which of those areas are in need of one or both.
- Remove barriers and disincentives to the construction of both new housing capacity and mixed-use development and encourage infill/redevelopment of underutilized sites.
- Conduct a City-wide parking study to determine whether the off-street parking requirements currently prescribed by the City's zoning ordinance reflect observed demand and, where significant discrepancies are found to exist, recommend changes to the ordinance.
- Evaluate local ordinances and recommend changes necessary to accommodate the evolving needs and characteristics of commercial and industrial workplaces.
- Amend the City's zoning ordinance to increase the density of development, promote a more flexible land use policy, and remove procedural and administrative hurdles, where appropriate, to facilitate a streamlined development process that aligns with the goals outlined in this Comprehensive Plan.
- Evaluate the development potential of vacant, City-owned properties within our municipal boundaries.
- Explore and establish design standards for infill development.
- Bolster neighborhood vitality via support for temporary/transient businesses where appropriate (e.g., food trucks, farmers markets, etc.) and the gig economy.



# LAND USE & ZONING

## ZONING STRATEGY

It will be increasingly important to leverage the City's unique character, history, and waterfront setting as valuable assets in the drive to revitalize our community. Those assets and the vision and diligence of Plattsburgh's citizenry are the foundation upon which the City's future will be built.

The Discover Plattsburgh Plan analyzes existing zoning conditions and anticipates future land use needs. While this plan includes land use recommendations intended to guide the City's future development, those recommendations are not a substitute for a thorough and thoughtful zoning ordinance. They can, however, inform and inspire updates to that ordinance that are necessary to realize the ambitious goals set forth in this plan. Encouraging and facilitating strategically planned growth through the implementation of a zoning code that reflects modern planning principles will help Plattsburgh capitalize on economic opportunities, safeguard the health of our natural and built environments, and create vibrant, thriving neighborhoods.

The land use goals described in this section are based upon the above policy guides and the principles of resilience, sustainability, diversity, and vibrancy.

### 15-Minute Neighborhoods

As the City continues to evolve, it will be increasingly important to encourage and preserve complete neighborhoods. A 15-minute neighborhood promotes mixed land uses and walkability with the intent of allowing residents to access, within a reasonable walking distance, various services that support their everyday needs. Historically, this pattern of neighborhood development was widespread in small cities like Plattsburgh.

A complete neighborhood is built by fostering land use, zoning, and transportation policies that promote a diverse mix of housing, streetscape improvements to facilitate safe, multi-modal transportation, and incentives for local businesses to spur economic growth. The City is committed to implementing policies that increase the availability and affordability of housing, to identifying

infrastructure improvements needed to facilitate active transportation, and to updating its zoning ordinance to allow for expanded flexibility in land use. Permitting flexible uses and increased density, where appropriate, will enable neighborhoods to accommodate more diversity and growth while still preserving their character. Modest, incremental, infill development will expand the housing supply without significantly impacting the existing scale and pattern of development. The allowances of mixed land uses will also encourage the establishment of small, service based commercial enterprises in residential areas that will provide valuable amenities to nearby properties.

While the benefits of a flexible land use policy (LUP) are manifold, that policy must also be sensitive to the context and character of the neighborhoods to which it is applied. The development of design guidelines to accompany and supplement the City's LUP will promote improvements and enhance the aesthetic qualities of the City in these areas while maintaining the unique character of each area.

While opportunities for expansion within the City's municipal boundaries are limited (excepting the newly annexed Rugar Street property), numerous opportunities for infill development exist throughout the City. Several sites have been identified including:

1. Property north of Boynton Avenue near Melissa Penfield Park.
2. Plattsburgh Plaza on Cornelia St.
3. Vacant parcels on Cumberland Ave. near Wilcox Dock.
4. South Platt St. Park surrounds.
5. Waterfront parcels on Jay St.
6. Skyway Plaza on Route 9.

The strength and diversity of our neighborhoods are fundamental to the growth of our city. A broad selection of housing options, convenient, nearby businesses, and varied recreational opportunities are the hallmarks of a healthy neighborhood.

### Highlight the Waterfront

This Comprehensive Plan recognizes the crucial role played by the City's waterfront in our past and its potential to shape our future. We anticipate that changes consistent with the land use policies prescribed by this plan and recommendations included in the City's LWRP will occur on our waterfront and that these changes will provide additional opportunities for investment and expanded recreational access to the Saranac River and Lake Champlain.

New waterfront development and improvements that expand public access to

the waterfront will bolster the City's standing as a community that values and highlights its natural assets.

### Strengthen Priority Areas

By identifying areas of the City in need of revitalization, we can facilitate responsive development in support of the City's vision and goals. By encouraging the expanded use of vacant and underutilized properties and by promoting opportunities for infill development, we support environmentally sustainable practices. Further, these investments will expand the City's tax base and strengthen its financial position.

Priority areas are those exhibiting significant mixed-use activity and those with the potential for such activity. Downtown is a great example of a priority area as it includes a wide variety of land-uses within a dense geographic footprint. Other priority areas include:

1. The waterfront, in particular the City's beach complex, the Harborside area, and the site of NYSEG's former manufactured gas plant (MGP) on Saranac Street.
2. Existing highway commercial corridors. These areas comprise much of the City's commercial tax base and yet many properties are underutilized including:
  - a. Corridor along upper Cornelia Street (NYS Route 3).

- b. The area south of Georgia Pacific between Margaret Street (US Route 9) and Weed St./Veteran's Ln.
  - c. Route 9 South near the Former Plattsburgh Air Force Base
3. The area along the north side of Boynton Avenue that has evolved into a commercial corridor.
4. Route 9 south from New York Road to Nevada Oval.
5. Rugar Street at Reeves Lane.

Areas not identified above are also likely to undergo natural development and that development should align with the goals set forth in this plan.

### Preserve our Resources

The importance of the City's natural and historical resources is abundantly clear. As these resources increasingly become a place for public gathering and related recreation, implementation of additional amenities in these areas is imperative. The City's LUP must ensure the preservation of these resources for future generations without impairing the public's ability to access and enjoy them. Balancing these priorities will be an ongoing obligation.

Implementation of the various aspects of the LWRP will ensure adequate protection of our water resources and would cap decades of preservation efforts undertaken by the

community. Recommendations include the modification of the existing waterfront overlay district to encompass the entire waterfront revitalization area as established in the LWRP. A foundational element of the LWRP is the implementation of a review process, similar to SEQRA, to determine a proposed action's consistency with the LWRP in coordination with involved local, state, and federal agencies.

The waterfront overlay district must provide for water-dependent uses and allow for uses that are enhanced by a waterfront setting (e.g., outdoor cafes, water overlooks, residential uses with water views, etc.). To the greatest extent practicable, encouraging and incentivizing public access to the waterfront will be an important feature of the updated overlay district.

Updates to the waterfront overlay district will also clarify existing elements of the zoning ordinance and add new guidelines. For example, the current waterfront overlay district uses "stories" as the incremental measure of building height while most zoning ordinances regulate building height using feet above existing grade. It will also be helpful to develop basic design guidelines for the waterfront area that address shoreline protection measures, stormwater management design, and site development issues including parking areas, landscaping, and lighting.

Development guidelines must also emphasize the preservation of historic resources. This can be accomplished by expanding existing historic districts or by establishing new districts such as the already eligible downtown district or the Cumberland Avenue district. It will be essential to update the zoning ordinance's historic site review guidelines to provide clear direction for historic property owners. These updates should include, at a minimum, the establishment of categorically-excluded improvements that can be approved via an administrative review process so historic property owners are not unfairly burdened.

Most importantly, climate change has produced and will continue to create new hazards and challenges for our community. Assessing the impacts of a warming planet on our infrastructure and ecological systems is critical if we are to ensure the sustainability of our City. Embracing the use of new materials and construction methods will fortify the City against the worst effects of climate change.

### Connect Our Assets

This plan envisions the need for quality connections between the City's various assets including its waterfront, recreation venues, cultural assets, and other community resources to build a more vibrant and resilient Plattsburgh.

While our transport corridors were built to accommodate vehicular traffic, with careful planning they can also serve the needs of pedestrians, cyclists, and those using public transit.

Areas in which land use development should be prioritized include:

- The NYS Route 3/Cornelia Street corridor. A coordinated plan with the Town, City, and other stakeholders including NYSDOT would help streamline the review process for development projects, create a common blueprint for development of the corridor, and set the stage for new investment. The potential for the City to expand its tax base in this area is substantial. New streetscape amenities and improved accommodations for pedestrians and cyclists would beautify this crucial gateway into the City.
- The corridor from SUNY's campus to the City's downtown core. Modern designs for "human-scaled" connections in this area will reinforce the symbiotic

relationship between SUNY and the City by promoting the movement of pedestrians and cyclists through the construction of streetscape improvements, art installations, and wayfinding.

- The connections from the downtown core to the Harborside area. These connections are widely recognized as, at best, substandard and must be improved as part of the City's ongoing efforts to revitalize its downtown.
- Multimodal connections from neighborhoods to community resources and recreational areas such as schools, parks, the waterfront, the museum campus, downtown, and the City's commercial clusters.

### Future Zoning Considerations

In the past, the City has made modifications to its zoning ordinance on an as-needed basis. This methodology has resulted in an ordinance rife with inconsistencies, contradictions, and imprecise language that has been the cause of much confusion and expense over the years. The development of this Comprehensive Plan provides an opportunity for us to look ahead and prepare for the development we need by enacting a comprehensive update to the City's zoning ordinance. This amended framework will ensure that projects that

meet the established criteria can be reviewed thoroughly and efficiently and approved when appropriate or denied when necessary.

The goals of this zoning code update should include formatting changes to increase the ease of reading and reference, the promotion of sustainable economic development, implementation of a zoning approach that incorporates both design guidelines and form-based zoning in certain commercial/mixed-use districts deemed appropriate, and a modernization of the code to address contemporary issues including, but not limited to, provisions for accessory dwelling units and other alternative housing options to increase supply, neighborhood walkability/bikeability, affordable housing, adaptive reuse, green building/green infrastructure practices, environmental sustainability, and similar measures.

Since the City's current zoning ordinance was developed, acknowledged best practices for the crafting of such ordinances have evolved considerably. For example, overview statements included with each section/chapter assist users' understanding as to why certain provisions have been established. It is important for the City to modernize its ordinance so the community has the best tools available to manage

growth and investment efficiently, creatively and equitably.

Other recommended updates include:

- Allowance for mixed-use, infill development.
- Establish criteria for permitting small-scale commercial enterprises in residential areas.
- Clarifications to the process and approval criteria for Planned Unit Developments (PUD) and site plan review.
- Provisions addressing protections for shorelines, riparian buffers, and wetlands.
- Review extensive list of uses that require issuance of Special Use Permits (SUP) for continued suitability and reassess the approval process for SUPs.
- Examine the ordinance's area/bulk formulas and evaluate whether simplification is warranted.
- Provide more appropriate zoning district designations for areas in transition (e.g., the Harborside Industrial District area).
- Clarify guidance for determining conformity of a proposed project's character with a particular district or neighborhood.

- Review parking requirements as to their continued suitability and consider modifications where appropriate.
- Create definitions for land uses and other items that are not defined in the ordinance.
- Modify zoning district provisions appropriately. Certain districts appear overly restrictive while others appear overly flexible.
- Consider expansion of historic districts and the establishment of design review guidelines and a historic commission to evaluate proposed changes to subject sites and districts.
- Review standards governing streets in the subdivision regulations and elsewhere and consider modifications to align with Complete Streets policies.

In the development of provisions for some of the more creative approaches to zoning such as form-based codes, design guidelines, and overlay districts, the City should proceed carefully to avoid creation of an overly prescriptive code that limits the flexibility necessary for development within a modern built environment.

It will be important to recognize and document the subtleties of neighborhood character, specifically the “public realm” along the streetscapes and the transitional

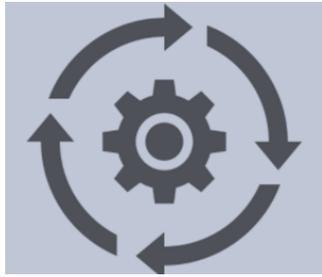
front yard spaces and façade lines in the commercial districts. The development of review criteria and recommended protections for new and existing design elements should be included.

Special attention should also be paid to the following when updating zoning ordinance:

- Protections for the City’s existing stock of affordable housing and provisions encouraging the expansion of that supply while protecting neighborhood character as the City evolves.
- Providing increased clarity as to the appropriate jurisdiction and role of the local boards involved in land use decision making including the Common Council, the Planning Board, and the Zoning Board of Appeals.
- Facilitating beneficial additions to community assets via the development process by clarifying desirable outcomes (e.g., design guidelines that illustrate what success looks like).
- Consider provisions for an administrative review process whereby minor projects could be reviewed against established criteria by City staff to streamline permitting.
- Simplify comprehension of the zoning code via the use of illustrated fact sheets, conveniently located links to referenced provisions, and similar techniques.

Recognizing the benefits of collaboration, including reduced costs and expedited project timelines, consider establishing a mutually agreeable process for coordinated review between the Town and City for projects along our shared border.

A successful land use and zoning strategy will establish a set of clear expectations and clarify all aspects of the review process to minimize confusion among project sponsors, potential developers, and the community.



# CONCLUSION & IMPLEMENTATION

This Comprehensive Plan outlines a variety of broad objectives and specific action items intended to achieve the goals of our community. How and when the City chooses to implement the various aspects of this plan will depend upon the priorities of our elected officials, funding availability, staff capacity, public feedback, and the myriad challenges and opportunities that are sure to arise over the course of the coming decades. The guiding principles of resilience, sustainability, diversity, and vibrancy, which shaped the policies included in this plan, illuminate a path toward a bright and prosperous future.



## ACTION PROGRAM:

**This action program summarizes the larger initiatives upon which the City should focus its attention and implementation efforts during the next one (1) to five (5) years. This list focuses on issues of great importance with the potential to substantially improve the quality of life in the City.**

## #1. Zoning Update

A crucial challenge on the path forward is the forthcoming update to the City's zoning ordinance. The importance of this task cannot be overstated and the opportunity to implement substantial and lasting reforms must be seized by the community. This Comprehensive Plan will serve as a roadmap throughout the reformation of the zoning ordinance.

## #2. Recreation System Investment

With more than twenty-two (22) public parks, six (6) miles of multi-use trails, five (5) miles of Lake Champlain waterfront and eight (8) miles of riverfront along the Saranac, the City's residents will realize substantial benefits from increased investment in parkland and waterfront revitalization projects, particularly those that provide physical improvements and expanded public access to these increasingly valuable and irreplaceable natural resources.

The City's parks form the heart of local community life, providing space for residents to exercise, gather, play, eat, relax, and improve both their physical health and mental wellbeing. The importance of a well-maintained system of public parks has never been better understood than it is now. Communities across the nation are recognizing this fact and prioritizing a revival

of their own systems. Plattsburgh's parks, however, continue to suffer from a chronic lack of investment and their dilapidated state serves as a constant and conspicuous reminder of our collective failure to appreciate and safeguard these invaluable resources.

In recognizing parks as an essential piece of community infrastructure, it is recommended that the City commit itself to an historic investment toward revitalization of our entire parks system. Many of the planning efforts necessary for the judicious deployment of such an investment are already complete and await only the funding necessary to realize them.

The City's LWRP was a parallel project developed at the same time as this Comprehensive Plan and is considered an integral component of the City's planning efforts. The LWRP documents a wide range of waterfront revitalization projects and envisions an attractive mix of waterfront settings including interconnected trails, canoe and kayak launches, parks, and natural areas. It also recommends improvements to viewsheds of the lake and river throughout the City to enhance the experience of living and working here.

Many of the opportunities for waterfront improvements detailed in the LWRP entail

adaptive reuse of formerly developed sites which presents various challenges including environmental remediation and utility relocation that often involve significant costs. Continued financial support from the public sector will thus be an indispensable component of realizing the vision outlined in the LWRP but the long-term benefits to the City's residents and its economy justify the investment.

### **#3. Town & Gown Partnership**

The City's economic success and its future are linked with those of SUNY Plattsburgh. The university and its student population comprise a significant portion of the City's economic base. Those students bring vitality and commerce to the community while contributing nearly \$55 million in direct annual spending to the City's economy. SUNY's annual payroll and associated benefits represent a further \$95 million contribution. These economic inputs are among the most significant to the local economy as they consist, largely, of external capital that would otherwise be spent or invested elsewhere.

However, the economic benefits derived from SUNY's presence within the City are not guaranteed to continue indefinitely. Perhaps the most important trend to recognize and address is the declining rate of enrollments across the NYS university system. SUNY Plattsburgh is not exempt

from this trend. During the past ten (10) years, its enrollment has declined by more than twenty-four percent (24%), a larger decline than the statewide average of twenty percent (20%). If those trends continue, SUNY Plattsburgh's future is very much in doubt. Recognizing SUNY's importance to the City, it is incumbent upon the community to take appropriate steps in order to ensure the university's continued viability.

Through expanded collaboration among local and regional partners including other educational institutions (e.g., Clinton County Community College, Champlain Valley Educational Services), and with support from the university both locally and at the NYS level, enrolment figures at SUNY Plattsburgh can be stabilized. Such a development would have significant beneficial impacts on the City and the regional economy.

The most effective way the City can assist in bringing about a stabilization of enrollment figures is to expand opportunities for students and faculty to connect with the off-campus aspects of the greater Plattsburgh community. Those opportunities should include expanded internship programs for SUNY students and concerted efforts to inform both students and faculty of the local civic, economic, social, and recreational activities open to them.

It is recommended that City and SUNY leadership create a task force to develop a focused program with a short-term goal of staving off declining enrollment and a long-term goal of expanding connections and cooperation between the two organizations. This can also advance SUNY Plattsburgh's recently completed strategic plan and its attention to "service to the community and the North Country." Doing so will mutually benefit each institution and will help convince SUNY students to make Plattsburgh their home after graduation.

#### #4. Downtown Revitalization

Continuing to advance the City's Strategic Investment Plan for downtown created as part of the DRI is crucial to the implementation of this Comprehensive Plan. Capitalizing on current and future opportunities for economic development requires that steps be taken now to prepare downtown and, to that end, the DRI's Strategic Investment Plan provides a detailed plan of action.

The renovation of existing but derelict residential units and the addition of new and varied housing options will swell downtown's population and bolster the social and commercial vitality of the district. A larger downtown population will increase visitation to local shops, restaurants, entertainment venues, and personal and professional service firms and the vibrancy

of the district's public spaces would be enhanced by more frequent pedestrian traffic.

Implementing and maintaining the infrastructure needed to support these revitalization efforts will continue to be important. Streetscape enhancements, public parking facilities, water and sewer lines, and communication/broadband facilities are all critical pieces of downtown's support system.

#### #5. Community Connections

As the City continues to evolve, it will become increasingly important to foster strong connections within the City's borders and with its regional partners. These efforts should be multifaceted:

1. Support public recreation by revitalizing the City's park system and recreational facilities, investing in recreational programming, and continuing to expand the existing trail system.
2. Expand promotion of and explore additional funding sources for local and regional events, festivals, and public art.
3. Expand business recruitment and retention efforts and highlight Plattsburgh's position as a welcoming community for

immigrants to help strengthen the population base.

4. Bolster pedestrian connections throughout the City via implementation of a Complete Streets Program starting with the NYS Route 3/Cornelia St. corridor.
5. In coordination with the Town of Plattsburgh, enhance and beautify the City's gateways.

**Project Funding.**

The City recently retained a consulting firm to assist with administration of the City's existing grants and develop a pipeline of long-term, priority projects for which various funding opportunities may be pursued. This coordinated effort has been managed through the City's Community Development Office (CDO) and an extensive list of departmental priorities has been compiled including projects related to infrastructure, building improvements, technology, equipment purchases, and recreation.

As these various projects advance toward the design and implementation phases, a strategic approach to the securing of funding necessary to complete them is critical. Many projects are suitable candidates for grant applications while others will have to be financed directly by the City. Specific projects may be best pursued by other entities or via public-private partnerships.

**Annual Tracking and Reporting.**

Subsequent to formal adoption of this Comprehensive Plan, it is recommended that the Mayor and Common Council mandate the submission of an annual report detailing progress toward the goals articulated in this plan. These reports should be compiled each spring to avoid intrusion upon the City's yearly budget proceedings and so that they may inform decisions involving which grant funding opportunities to pursue through New York State's annual Consolidated Funding Application process held each summer.

Within these reports, successes should be saluted and failures frankly acknowledged so policy makers can adjust course accordingly and set priorities for the coming year that align with the objectives outlined in this plan but which also account for the inevitable changes in circumstance our community will experience during the coming years