

**Planning Commission/Town Plan Steering Committee
Agenda
Monday, September 30, 2024 at 6:00 p.m.
Hartford Town Hall, Room 2 171 Bridge Street, White River Junction, VT
On-line Access**

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1. Public Comments
2. Review of the Steering Committee Minutes of May 29th & June 10th, 2024
3. Review of the Draft minutes of the July 16, 2024 Community Forum
4. Review of the Draft Economic Development Chapter
5. Next Steps
6. Adjournment

Hartford Planning Commission/Town Plan Economic Development Steering Committee Meeting
Town Plan Economic Development Chapter Update
Draft Minutes
May 29, 2024

Planning Commission vice-chair Bruce Riddle called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. He followed by reading the hybrid meeting script and conducting a roll call.

Attendance: The following individuals attended the meeting which was held at the Hartford Town Hall in Room 312 at 171 Bridge Street in White River Junction on Wednesday, May 29, 2024. The meeting was also available remotely and several people joined that way. Planner Matt Osborn announced that since several Steering Committee members were unable to attend tonight's meeting, the meeting will be recorded. There were no objections.

Planning Commission & Town Plan Steering Committee Members:

Bruce Riddle	Planning Commission, term expires 2/7/25
John Heath	Planning Commission, term expires 3/11/24
Toby Dayman	Planning Commission, term expires 6/28/24
Havah Walter	Hartford Area Chamber of Commerce
Kim Souza	Selectboard Liaison to the Planning Commission
Jesse Pollard	Energy Commission
Meghan Asbury	Two Rivers-Ottawquechee Regional Commission

Staff:

Lori Hirshfield	Director, Department of Planning and Development
Matt Osborn	Town Planner, Department of Planning and Development

Consultants:

Jason Godfrey	Better City
Serra Güllü	Better City

Others Present:

David Briggs
Peggy Adams

Public Comments: Bruce asked if there are any public comments. There were none.

Jason Godfrey started by noting that we are now moving from broad topics to specifics. He stated that we will discuss Part I of the potential strategies. Jason noted the context for potential strategies:

- Authenticity: Does it fit with who we are?
- Are there resources available to do?
- Who is going to do it?

Jason stated that Better City received a great deal of input from the March focus groups, interviews and community forum in addition to the surveys.

Jason noted that diversity and inclusion are important qualities to Generation Z. He believes Hartford has taken many actions to be an inclusive community. Bruce added that the Town still needs to work harder at it. Others agreed.

Serra Güllü identified the first four major strategy categories:

1. Identity Positioning
2. Creative Economy
3. Innovative Economy
4. Nature Economy

Serra noted that each topic has a goal, objectives, strategic actions and key metrics.

1. Identity Positioning:

- Helps the community understand and agree on economic goals.
- Provide competitive advantage, sets Hartford apart from neighboring towns and cities.
- Fosters a sense of pride and ownership among residents.
- Directs efforts and resources towards specific economic outcomes.

Goal: Establish and communicate a clear, compelling identity for Hartford that unifies the community and guides economic development decisions.

Strategic Actions:

1. Create an identity positioning statement.
2. Formulate a communication plan.
3. Policy Alignment.

Kim Souza asked if the identity would be townwide. Jason responded yes. Toby Dayman asked if the identity would be different from other area communities. Jason responded yes. Havah asked who will take the lead on the identity and how is it funded? Lori responded that there will be a new position in the Planning and Development Department that will focus on housing and economic development working with the Chamber and other community members. She suggested that the Town consider forming an economic development committee to be a part of the process. Jason stated that identity positioning isn't a one-time effort. It is reflected in policy decisions and communication. David suggested working closely with the Green Mountain Economic Development Corporation. Lori stated that would be part of the process

- 2. Creative Economy:** Jason noted that community input and data gathered indicate this is an important part of who Hartford is and the impact on the economy. He noted there are six established Vermont creative zones, of which Windsor County and Orange County are combined into one. He presented the following statewide statistics:

- 9.3% employment in creative firms.
- 3.2% of Vermont's GDP.
- 85% of Vermonter's say art is an important part of community.
- \$79 million in creative economy employment earnings.

Goal: Strengthen the Town's creative economy, enhancing the quality of life and fostering a distinct community identity.

Strategic Actions:

1. Create a Creative Economy Steering Committee
2. Inventory & Mapping of Hartford's Creative Assets.
3. Education & Training in the Creative Sector.
4. Sustain & Develop Creative Spaces.

Bruce noted a recent creative economy report prepared by the Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee Regional Commission. He stated that it is hard to make a living in the creative economy and be sustainable.

Kim noted the success of the Downtown First Friday events but some First Friday events are busier than others. Bruce added that it is important to promote key events. Lori suggested building on what exists by taking it to the next level and marketing it. Kim noted a new Downtown Business Association that is forming.

Jason emphasized how special Downtown White River Junction's creative economy is, and it can't be replicated easily. He noted that it has grown organically and as such, it is critical in defining who Hartford is and being a focal point of its economy going forward. John Heath asked how the schools tie into it. David Briggs added that this is a huge untapped resource. He suggested more youth-oriented events downtown, in terms of community goodwill and not necessarily for making a profit.

Jason noted that there is an element of inclusivity in the creative economy. Kim noted the importance of sensitivity with language and messaging as well.

3. **Innovative Economy:** Jason noted that Hartford is a highly educated community and surprisingly many jobs in Hartford don't require education. He thinks this is an opportunity. The data show that Hartford is "an innovative community which is characterized by its emphasis on creativity, technology, entrepreneurship and sustainable practices to drive economic growth and development."

Goal: Leverage Hartford's high-skilled local talent and its proximity to world class educational institutions to foster innovation, increase wages and reduce commuting times.

Strategic Actions:

1. Audit and Development of Resources.
2. Public Libraries Collaboration.
3. Local Incubator and Accelerator Program.

Bruce noted that Dartmouth College has incubator space at the Centerra Office Park in Lebanon that has lots of funding that feeds into it. Lori added that the high-tech model is very expensive to set up

and maintain. Bruce suggested there is a local demand for incubator space for wood, stone and metal fabrication and commercial food processing and a butchery. He also believes that many skilled folks in Hartford are underutilized. Havah agreed that creating incubator space is challenging, noting an experience she had with it. She added that it is more about connection to community.

4. **Nature Economy:** Serra noted that the focus of this category is Hartford's rivers and enhancing the quality of life and sense of community as well as preserving historic and cultural significance.

Goal: Enhance outdoor recreation for residents and increase tourism potential in Hartford by expanding and improving river access points.

Strategic Actions:

1. Feasibility Study and Design.
2. Access Points Construction.
3. Promotional Resources.
4. Maintenance Plans.

Serra stated that people living in Hartford typically earn less and pay more for housing. She added that community input indicated that a key reason for people living in Hartford is the high quality of life and many natural amenities. She noted that quality of life is important to employment growth and there is an opportunity to build on this. Kim responded that it has to be tempered, noting an aging population and many living on fixed incomes. John noted that forty years ago, Hartford jobs were primarily based on manufacturing and agriculture, which has changed.

There was discussion about increasing opportunities for river access such as boat launches. Bruce added that with climate change there is more flooding which has damaged past access improvements. Kim noted a current access initiative with the Wilder Dam relicensing, where the Town requested the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) require the property owner open up the pedestrian and bicycle access across Wilder Dam. Matt added that the Town also has requested improvements to Kilowatt Park to increase public access and public amenities. Havah reported that at the Hartford Chamber's recent annual meeting she was surprised that many Hartford businesses were unaware of Wilder Village's history or the available river access at Kilowatt Park. She suggested we need to tell the story. Kim stated that we also should include land acknowledgements for parks.

Conclusion: Lori asked the group if the proposed strategies and subsequent discussions are on the right track. Jason asked if there are other areas that weren't included. Kim noted that Hartford has Vermont Salvage, the Cover Store and other second-hand shopping opportunities which make up a small part of our economy. Jason agreed and noted that including other businesses which are unique to the community is key. Kim stated that she appreciates the content and the presentation, but she would like to see the outline of the whole economic development plan to assess what might be missing.

John Heath stated that the players are limited and include the School District which is a huge entity in Hartford. Jason responded that a focus group with the Hartford Area Career & Technology Center students and an interview was held with the HAC&TC assistant director. David agreed that the day-to-day linkage with the School District is needed.

John Heath expressed concern about White River Junction becoming car dealership central.

Jason concluded by stating that it was a productive meeting and he appreciated the input. Lori thanked everyone for attending and participating in the discussion.

Next Meeting: Matt reported that the next Planning Commission/Steering Committee meeting is scheduled for Monday, June 10th in Room 2 at 6:00 p.m. He also noted the community meeting on Tuesday, June 18th at 6:00 p.m. which will be completely remote.

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 7:37 p.m.

Hartford Planning Commission/Town Plan Economic Development Steering Committee Meeting
Town Plan Economic Development Chapter Update
Draft Minutes
June 10, 2024

Planner Matt Osborn called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. He followed by reading the hybrid meeting script and conducting a roll call.

Attendance: The following individuals attended the meeting which was held at the Hartford Town Hall in Room 2 at 171 Bridge Street in White River Junction on Monday, June 10, 2024. The meeting was also available remotely and several people joined that way.

Bruce Riddle	Planning Commission, term expires 2/7/25
John Heath	Planning Commission, term expires 3/11/27
Colin Butler	Planning Commission, term expires 7/12/24
Havah Walther	Hartford Area Chamber of Commerce
Kim Souza	Selectboard Liaison to the Planning Commission
Jesse Pollard	Energy Commission
Meghan Asbury	Two Rivers-Ottawquechee Regional Commission

Staff:

Lori Hirshfield	Director, Department of Planning and Development
Matt Osborn	Town Planner, Department of Planning and Development

Consultants:

Jason Godfrey	Better City
Serra Güllü	Better City

Others Present:

None.

Public Comments: Matt asked if there are any public comments. There were none.

Jason Godfrey started by noting that we are now moving from broad topics to specifics. Serra Güllü stated that we will be covering village centers and the prioritization of strategies. Serra presented the following definition of a village center:

“A Village Center is the heart of the community. It is an authentic place that reflects the character and culture of the community and where people come together for a variety of purposes: shopping, dining, socializing, and participating in cultural activities. The concentration of diverse uses and amenities within a walkable area creates a vibrant and dynamic environment that fosters a strong sense of place and community identity.”

Jason asked what the Steering Committee thought of the definition. Kim Souza noted that Hartford has five unique villages that are not defined by boundaries. Havah Walther added that the definition is aspirational.

Jason noted that in 2011, the Town embarked on the Village Center Project and developed vision plans. He thinks it is valuable information in line with many of the current economic development project objectives which the Town can update, build on and move toward implementation. Lori noted that one part of the 2011 Village Centers Project was identifying what each village brings to the Town. She added that the Village Center Project led to the State Village Center designations for Quechee Village and Hartford Village which opened access to some grant opportunities. The intent was that we would pursue designation for Wilder Village and West Hartford Village as well. However, for a variety of reasons, including the 2011 Irene Flood, community participation dwindled. Lori added that the state has specific criteria for the Village Center Program area boundaries, but these aren't critical to this discussion.

Kim requested a copy of the 2011 Village Center Report. Colin Butler said past studies should be accessible on-line. He asked why village centers are involved in an economic development plan. Jason responded that a sense of place equals economic gravity. It is becoming much more important.

Jason presented the following goal for village centers: "Create a vision for Hartford's Village Centers to become vibrant, economically dynamic hubs that enhance community life for villages and surrounding areas and cater to modern preferences for density and diverse amenities"

Jason noted three principles for village centers:

1. Identity: Each village has its own identity that is independent but related to the Town's. Must simultaneously build unity and diversity.
2. Incrementalism: Progress is the key. Movement towards a recognized objective.
3. Mobility: Ensure accessible and economical transportation options between and within village centers.

Jason suggested a Village Ambassador Program (VAP) which could be utilized to follow-up on the visions and recommendations in the 2011 Village Center Project. Bruce expressed his concern about the challenges and barriers to implementation such as having key leaders, financing, property owner cooperation and property owner turnover citing his experience with Hartford Village. Kim responded that it is a chicken and egg issue and that we need to create an atmosphere for community engagement. Lori noted that the new housing and development position in the Planning and Development Department will help facilitate the village projects. She suggested that the implementation process include reviewing the visions to make sure they are still current.

There was discussion about the Visitor Ambassador Program and whether it should be formal or informal. Jason stated that grassroots efforts always seem to work better. Kim asked if there is a way that the Town can facilitate an informal group of residents with a basic structure. Lori suggested starting with defining what we want to do. There was discussion about funding options, public private partnerships and Go-Fund-Me projects, the Hartford Business Revolving Loan Fund, and TIF District public infrastructure improvements.

There also was discussion about what role the Town could play in development of projects beyond facilitation and the permitting process. There was general agreement that the Town could have a facilitative role by identifying other outside funding opportunities. However, there were many questions about further Town financial involvement for private development. Each development would need to be evaluated on a case by case basis taking into consideration the need for and impact on enhancing the Town's economic development, and level of the Town's financial involvement.

June 18th Community Forum #2: Jason reported that an entirely remote community forum is scheduled for Tuesday, June 18th. He stated that he will give an overview of the project's purpose and process. They will present what we heard from the public and present the draft strategies.

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 8:08 p.m.

Hartford Economic Development Community Forum #2

Draft Minutes

July 16, 2024

Planning and Development Director Lori Hirshfield called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. She noted that the forum is a hybrid meeting and introduced consultants Jason Godfrey and Serra Güllü. She noted that the meeting will be recorded. There were no objections.

Attendance: The following individuals attended the meeting which was held at the Hartford Town Hall in Room 2 at 171 Bridge Street in White River Junction on Tuesday, July 16, 2024. The meeting was also available remotely and several people joined that way.

Planning Commission & Town Plan Steering Committee Members:

Bruce Riddle	Planning Commission, term expires 2/7/25
John Heath	Planning Commission, term expires 3/11/27
Toby Dayman	Planning Commission, term expires 6/28/24
John Reid	Planning Commission, term expires 2/5/27
Colin Butler	Planning Commission, term expires 6/24/2027
Havah Walther	Hartford Area Chamber of Commerce
Kim Souza	Selectboard Liaison to the Planning Commission

Staff:

Lori Hirshfield	Director, Department of Planning and Development
Matt Osborn	Town Planner, Department of Planning and Development

Consultants:

Jason Godfrey	Better City
Serra Güllü	Better City

Others Present:

David Briggs
Sue Buckholz
Adams Carroll
Esme Cole
Reika Hoffman Kiess
Brett Long
Allan Reetz
Brandon Smith
Donna W.

Lori welcomed everyone to the forum. She went over the rules of conduct. She noted that the purpose of the forum is to review the draft goals and strategies and seek community feedback. Lori provided an

overview of the meeting. She noted that although housing is a major economic issue, a separate housing process is underway and requested that we not delve into the subject.

Serra Güllü went over the purpose of the economic development chapter update and the project timeline. She gave an overview of the process:

- a. Economic Analysis
- b. Industry Analysis
- c. Community Engagement
 - I. Community Forum
 - II. Focus Groups
 - High School
 - Developers
 - Small Businesses
 - Organizations
 - III. Community Survey (139 responses)
 - IV. Individual Interviews

She noted that the end goal is a strategic roadmap, a specific task with defined objectives. Serra went over the following terms:

Goal: The overarching opportunity.

Objectives: Specific steps.

Strategic Actions: Detailed actions or activities.

Key metrics: Indicators to measure the effectiveness of the strategic actions and the progress towards the goals.

Serra went over some of the highlights noting that residents are largely very satisfied with the Town and in particular value the recreational and cultural amenities here. Shopping and dining amenities are not highly rated but don't impact the overall satisfaction with the Town. Resident priorities for economic development are small business support and helping locals succeed.

Serra Güllü identified the five major categories:

1. Identity Positioning
2. Village Centers
3. Nature Economy
4. Creative Economy
5. Innovative Economy

Serra noted that each topic has a goal, objectives, strategic actions and key metrics.

1. Identity Positioning:

- Understand and agree on economic goals.
- Competitive advantage.

- Sense of pride.
- Directs efforts and resources towards specific economic outcomes.

Jason noted that this is not about marketing, it's all about having a common, shared vision for the community and ensuring that the vision drives decision making.

Goal: Establish and communicate a clear, compelling identity for Hartford that unifies the community and guides economic development decisions.

Strategic Actions:

1. Identity statement.
2. Communication plan.
3. Policy alignment.

2. **Village Centers:** Lori noted that the concept is not new and there are visions in place. The issue is how to make progress. She stated that there are three principles:

Identity: Each Village has its own identity that is independent but related to the Town's. Must simultaneously build unity and diversity.

Incrementalism: Progress is the key. Movement towards a recognized objective.

Mobility: Ensure accessible and economical transportation options between and within Village Centers.

Goal: Establish a procedural and organizational framework for Hartford's Village Centers to become vibrant, economically dynamic hubs that enhance community life for villages and surrounding areas and cater to modern preferences for density and diverse amenities.

Strategic Actions:

1. Village Ambassador Program.
2. Visioning.
3. Village Project Application Process.
4. Funding.
5. Phased Development.
6. Public-Private Partnerships.

Public Comments:

Kim Souza noted that we should keep an eye on those villages that don't have a village store such as West Hartford and Wilder. David Briggs agreed and noted the Putney General Store, Pierce's General Store in Shrewsbury and the Brownsville Butcher Shop as successful examples.

3. **Nature Economy:** Matt Osborn noted that quality of life is a more important determinant of economic success for communities than focusing on the business environment. For many who moved here, quality of life was a major factor in the decision to locate here. Natural amenities are an important part of that. Enhancing local natural amenities can have a direct and significant economic impact.

Goal: Expand and improve river access points to enhance the rivers as economic assets to increase the community's desirability as a place to work and live.

Strategic Actions:

1. Feasibility Study and Design.
2. Construction.
3. Promotion.
4. Maintenance Plans.

Public Comments:

Havah Walther agreed that improving river access can improve the quality of life.

Kim Souza noted the trend of increased flooding. She asked if river access is the only option? Jason responded that there are many natural resources here. The idea is to focus on one item and work on implementation. Kim suggested including a broader statement in the chapter beyond river access. Lori noted that we can explore options.

John Reid agreed with the statement on the importance of quality of life. He asked if we should differentiate between the quality of life of Hartford and that of the Upper Valley. Lori responded that there is an interconnected relationship between Hartford and the Upper Valley.

4. **Creative Economy:** Lori noted that the creative economy is a key part of Vermont's identity. Leaning into that is consistent with both the state and the Town's core character. The following are statistics related to the creative economy:

- 9.3% employment in creative firms.
- 3.2% of Vermont's GDP.
- 85% of Vermonter's say art is an important part of community.
- \$79 million in creative economy employment earnings.

Lori noted that Vermont has six creative zones. Hartford and Windsor County along with Orange County fall within the state designated Cornerstone Creative Community District.

Goal: Strengthen the Town's creative economy, enhancing the quality of life and fostering a distinct community identity.

Strategic Actions:

1. Establish a Creative Economy Steering Committee.
 2. Inventory & Map Hartford's Creative Assets.
 3. Education & Training in the Creative Sector.
 4. Sustain & Develop Creative Spaces.
5. **Innovative Economy:** "Vermont's creative economy is an interconnected tapestry of artisans, innovators, makers, educators, performers, designers, writers, preservationists, and more, working together and individually to enhance the cultural and intellectual landscape of the state." Jason

noted that Hartford is a highly educated community and surprisingly many jobs in Hartford don't require education. He thinks this is an opportunity. The data show that Hartford is "an innovative community which is characterized by its emphasis on creativity, technology, entrepreneurship and sustainable practices to drive economic growth and development." Jason noted that the speed at which artificial intelligence is impacting the economy is rapid. He asked how the Town will position itself to be part of the entrepreneurial arena?

Goal: Leverage Hartford's high-skilled local talent and its proximity to world class educational institutions to foster innovation, increase wages and reduce commuting times.

Strategic Actions:

1. Audit and Development of Resources.
2. Public Libraries Collaboration.
3. Dedicated Shared Maker Spaces.

Public Comments: John Reid stated that there is a decline in the quality of education including the reduction in arts education and noted an increase in home schooling. He asked if the Town should supplement education by providing programs that the schools don't offer. Kim Souza responded that the Parks and Recreation Department offers lots of arts programming as well as camps by Northern Stage, Junction Arts and Media and Craft Studies. Havah Walter agreed and noted other opportunities in nearby Upper Valley communities as well.

Conclusion: Lori asked the group the following questions

- Are we are on the right track?
- Does it make sense?
- Is there anything we are missing?

Colin Butler stated that he thought it was a very good discussion. Regarding the village ambassador concept, he thinks that there is a level of complexity that needs to be flushed out. Regarding education, Colin noted that he has experience serving on school boards. He feels the topic deserves more discussion. He is concerned that charter schools and private schools will divert funds away from public schools and could result in weakening the public school system.

There were no other comments.

Lori thanked everyone for attending and participating in the discussion.

Adjournment: The forum was adjourned at 7:37 p.m.

Hartford, Vermont

Town Plan Economic Development Chapter

Prepared by Hartford Department of Planning and Development with assistance from Better City, LLC. This project was funded by a Vermont Municipal Planning Grant and supplemented with Town funds.

September 2024



Table of Contents

• Introduction	3
• Economic Profile	6
• Strategic Plan	16
• Metrics	32
• Appendix	36



1 Introduction

Hartford is the largest town in the Two Rivers-Ottawquechee Region, and together with Lebanon and Hanover, New Hampshire serve as the functional capital of the Upper Valley area. Hartford is distinguished by its vibrant community spirit, highly educated, highly engaged workforce, and exceptional quality of life.

As Hartford looks to the future, it must adeptly navigate broad macroeconomic shifts, such as technological advancements and the changing housing and work style preferences of younger generations. These shifts present both challenges and opportunities.

This chapter provides an overview of Hartford's current economic landscape, identifies key economic drivers, and outlines strategic goals and actions to foster economic growth. Emphasis is placed on supporting existing businesses and ensuring that economic development efforts are aligned with the community's core values and needs. The strategic direction of this plan is rooted in extensive community engagement and a thorough industry analysis, which are detailed in the Appendix. This foundational work ensures that the strategic goals and actions outlined in this chapter are not only responsive to current economic conditions but also reflective of the community's aspirations and priorities. By leveraging its inherent strengths and proactively addressing challenges, Hartford will create a vibrant and resilient economy that benefits all residents.

It must be noted that the current housing shortage and dramatic increase in home prices, highlighted in the Housing Chapter of this plan, directly impacts the local economy. The lack of affordable and sufficient housing options strains the workforce and makes it difficult for employers to attract and retain talent. Higher housing costs also affects consumer spending within the community as residents have less to spend on local goods and

services. The Housing Chapter provides an in-depth analysis of this issue, and it will not be further elaborated upon here to avoid redundancy and confusion.

Process for Updating the Economic Development Chapter

The process of updating the Economic Development Chapter of Hartford's Town Plan was a collaborative effort led by the Planning and Development Department, the Planning Commission and the Economic Development Steering Committee. This significant update was funded by a Vermont Municipal Planning Grant, supplemented with Town funds, and facilitated by the consulting firm Better City.

Community Engagement

To ensure that the Economic Development Chapter reflects the priorities and character of the community, extensive community outreach was conducted including two community forums, four focus group discussions, fifteen interviews, and a town-wide survey that garnered 139 survey responses from residents, property owners, businesses, and workers in Hartford.

Data Analysis

An economic and industry analysis was conducted that included comparisons with the 2002 Town Plan Economic Development Chapter and utilized data from the U.S. Census, the American Community Survey, the Bureau of Labor Statistics, and OnTheMap. The analysis provided a foundation for understanding local economic conditions and trends.

Review of Past Plans

To ensure alignment with broader regional and local planning efforts, several key documents were reviewed, including the 2019 Town Plan, the 2023 Draft Town Plan Housing Chapter, the 2020-2025 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS), and the Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee Regional Plan.

The Planning and Development Department and the Planning Commission/ Economic Development Steering Committee were involved throughout the process. These entities helped determine which goals and strategic actions best reflect the needs and aspirations of the community. Fifteen meetings and discussions were held to refine these goals and actions and ensure they accurately reflect the community's priorities.

The goals, objectives, and strategic actions presented in this chapter reflect the diverse perspectives and insights gathered from the community and are designed to promote sustainable and inclusive economic growth in Hartford.



2 Economic Profile



During the background research, extensive analysis was conducted that looked at demographic, social, industry, and economic data. The following are the curated observations that were most relevant and salient.

Demographics

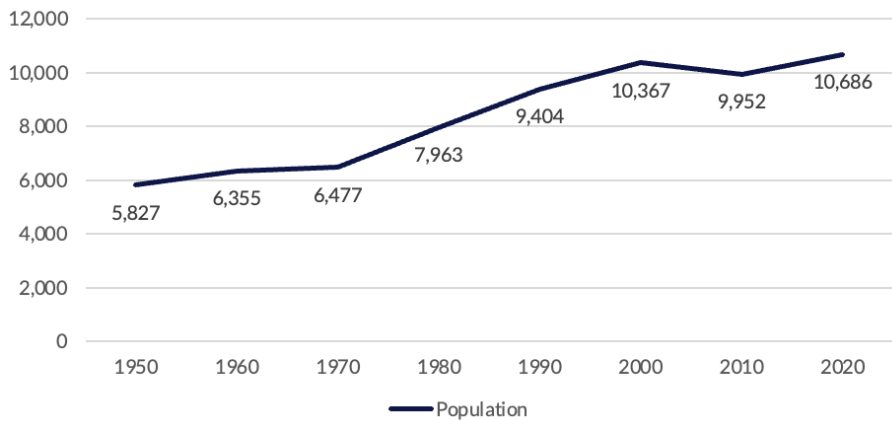
Since the beginning of the 21st century, Hartford's total population size has remained relatively stable, though there have been significant changes in the age demographics of its residents. The character of the Town's residents has remained consistent, with a significant portion of the community that is educated, highly engaged, and self-sufficient and values a high quality of life.

Between 1970 and 2000, Hartford experienced an average annual population growth rate of 2%. However, from 2000 to 2020, this growth nearly stagnated, averaging only 0.2%. While the overall population numbers remained largely static, there was considerable movement of residents in and out of the Town during this period. By 2020, the number of residents over the age of 65 increased by 821, with this age group growing from 14.6% to 22.4% of the total population. At the same time, the Town experienced a net loss of 502 residents under the age of 65.

Hartford's residents can be characterized as follows:

- **Educated:**
 - 34% more residents hold bachelor's degrees (see Figure 14) or higher compared to the national average.
- **Highly engaged workforce:**
 - The labor force participation rate is 67.6%, which is 6% higher than the national average, despite the median age being nearly four years older and fewer people

Figure 1: Population Growth by Decade



Source: U.S Census Bureau

Figure 2: Labor Participation Rates, 2022

	Hartford	Vermont	U.S
Labor Force Participation Rate	67.5%	64.9%	63.5%

Source: American Community Survey

being in the traditional working ages.

- The poverty rate is 9.2%, which is 36% lower than the national average.
- The unemployment rate is only 3.4%, which is 65% below the national rate.

Figure 3: Poverty Rates, 2022



Source: American Community Survey

Figure 4: Income Levels, 2022

	Hartford	Vermont	U.S
Median Income (Dollars)	69,138	74,014	75,149

Source: American Community Survey

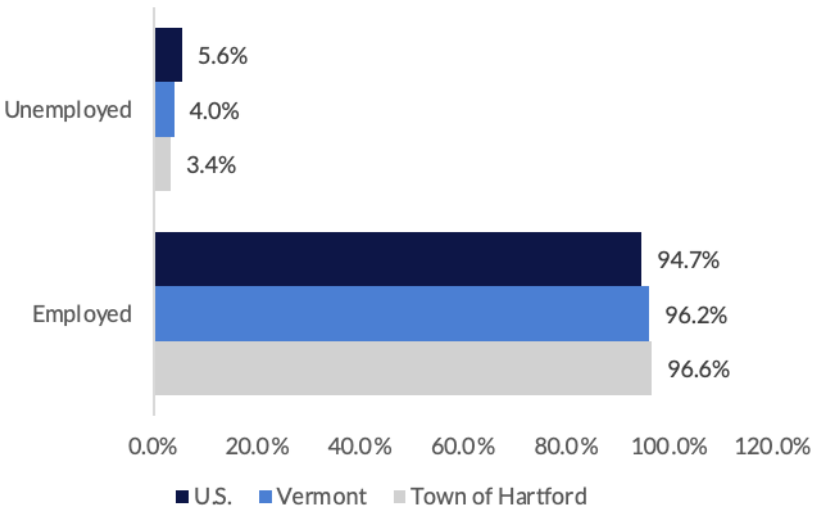
- **Quality of life-oriented:**
 - Hartford is characterized by a population that, on an aggregate level, values quality of life over income. Many residents, including young professionals and families, are drawn to the Town’s strong sense of community and vibrant cultural environment. These individuals often choose to live in Hartford despite its relatively high cost

of living, prioritizing the Town’s quality of life amenities and community values over higher income prospects elsewhere.

However, Hartford is more diverse than this trend alone suggests. It remains home to long-term residents and seniors who have lived here for generations. Many of these individuals may have lower incomes but are deeply rooted in the community and contribute to its rich social fabric. This diversity of backgrounds and life experiences is a vital part of what makes Hartford a welcoming and inclusive community.

As Hartford evolves, it embraces a broad spectrum of residents—those who have recently moved for its appealing lifestyle and those who have built their lives here over decades. This dynamic creates a unique and diverse environment where all are welcomed and valued, ensuring that Hartford remains a place where everyone can thrive.

Figure 5: Employment Status, 2022



Source: American Community Survey

Labor Market

Hartford serves as a regional employment hub, with the total number of jobs in the Town (10,604) nearly exceeding the number of residents (10,686). The number of people employed in Hartford is growing rapidly. From 2002 to 2021, the number of jobs in the Town nearly doubled, increasing by 82% from 5,842 to 10,604.

Figure 6: Labor Market, 2021

Town of Hartford Labor Market (All Jobs)		
In-Hartford Labor Force Efficiency (All Jobs)		
Living in Hartford and Employed in Hartford or Outside	4,567	100%
Living and Employed in Hartford	1,162	25.4%
Living in Hartford but Employed Outside	3,405	74.6%
In-Hartford Employment Efficiency (All Jobs)		
Employed in Hartford	10,604	100%
Employed and Living in Hartford	1,162	11.0%
Employed in Hartford but Living Outside	9,442	89.0%

Source: On the Map

However, there is a significant mismatch between the skills and career paths of Town residents and the jobs available locally. While there are 2.4 jobs in the Town for each of its 4,567 employed residents, only 25% (1,162) work within the Town. Every workday, 3,405 residents commute outside of Hartford for work, while 9,442 workers from surrounding areas commute into the Town.

As a result, 75% of Hartford's workers commute out of the Town daily, passing three times their number headed in the opposite direction.

Figure 7: Jobs by Worker Age

Jobs by Worker Age				
	2021		2002	
	Count	Share	Count	Share
Age 29 or younger	1,892	17.8%	1,330	22.8%
Age 30 to 54	5,110	48.2%	3,525	60.3%
Age 55 or older	3,602	34.0%	987	6.9%

Source: On the Map

Figure 8: Jobs by Earnings

Jobs by Earnings				
	2021		2002	
	Count	Share	Count	Share
\$1,250 per month or less	3,610	34.0%	2,606	44.6%
\$1,251 to \$3,333 per month	2,805	26.5%	2,110	36.1%
More than \$3,333 per month	4,189	39.5%	1,126	19.3%

Source: On the Map

The Area Profile from 2021 compared to previous years shows the following trends:

- **Increase in Local Jobs:** From 5,842 in 2002 to 10,604 in 2021
- **Aging Workforce:** The share of workers aged 55 or older increased from 16.9% in 2002 to 34.0% in 2021
- **Increased Earnings:** The share of jobs paying more than \$3,333 per month has increased from 19.3% in 2002 to 39.5% in 2021

Several key findings emerge from the economic performance analysis:

- Despite lower income levels relative to state and national averages, Hartford's high quality of life makes it an attractive place to live. This underscores the importance of maintaining and enhancing factors that contribute to this quality, such as community services, recreational opportunities, and environmental stewardship.
- With its high employment rates, Hartford remains a strong economic performer within the region.
- The low unemployment rate indicates that residents have good access to jobs, though this also points to a tight labor market that could hinder the attraction of new employers.
- Income levels in Hartford have not kept pace with state and national averages, suggesting a need for economic strategies that support higher wages and job diversification.
- Limited housing availability and rising living costs continue to be significant obstacles, affecting both the attraction of new workers and the living standards of current residents.

Industry

The story of Hartford's job growth over the last 20 years has been heavily influenced by the healthcare sector. Of the 4,762 new jobs added in Hartford from 2002 to 2021, 94% (4,483) were in the healthcare field. Although the VA White River Junction Medical Center has been a key driver of this growth, it now accounts for only approximately 19% of healthcare employment in the Town.

Figure 9: Jobs by NAICS Industry Sector by Years

Jobs by Earnings							
	2002		2010		2021		Difference (2002 and 2021)
	Count	Share	Count	Share	Count	Share	
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	35	0.6%	27	0.2%	16	0.2%	-19
Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	7	0.1%	7
Utilities	23	0.4%	24	0.2%	17	0.2%	-6
Construction	196	3.4%	224	2.0%	204	1.9%	8
Manufacturing	134	2.3%	76	0.7%	118	1.1%	-16
Wholesale Trade	198	3.4%	185	1.7%	262	2.5%	64
Retail Trade	637	10.9%	551	5.0%	591	5.6%	-46
Transportation and Warehousing	408	7.0%	484	4.4%	328	3.1%	-80
Information	96	1.6%	91	0.8%	79	0.7%	-17
Finance and Insurance	109	1.9%	194	1.7%	281	2.6%	172
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	87	1.5%	65	0.6%	128	1.2%	41
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	235	4.0%	392	3.5%	530	5.0%	295
Management of Companies and Enterprises	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	55	0.5%	55
Administration & Support, Waste Management and Remediation	140	2.4%	146	1.3%	149	1.4%	9
Educational Services	470	8.0%	575	5.2%	440	4.1%	-30
Health Care and Social Assistance	1,910	32.7%	6,766	61.0%	6,393	60.3%	4,483
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	68	1.2%	115	1.0%	202	1.9%	134
Accommodation and Food Services	574	9.8%	680	6.1%	381	3.6%	-193
Other Services (excluding Public Administration)	378	6.5%	367	3.3%	327	3.1%	-51
Public Administration	144	2.5%	126	1.1%	96	0.9%	-48
Total	5,842	100%	11,088	100%	10,604	100%	4762

Source: On the Map

Figure 10: Location Quotient Analysis by 2021

Jobs by NAICS Industry Sector by 2021 (Town/State Comparison)	Town of Hartford (Share)	Vermont (Share)	Location Quotient
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	0.20%	1.10%	0.18
Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction	0.10%	0.20%	0.50
Utilities	0.20%	0.50%	0.40
Construction	1.90%	5.40%	0.35
Manufacturing	1.10%	9.90%	0.11
Wholesale Trade	2.50%	3.10%	0.81
Retail Trade	5.60%	12.60%	0.44
Transportation and Warehousing	3.10%	2.40%	1.29
Information	0.70%	1.50%	0.47
Finance and Insurance	2.60%	3.00%	0.87
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	1.20%	1.00%	1.20
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	5.00%	6.00%	0.83
Management of Companies and Enterprises	0.50%	0.70%	0.71
Administration & Support, Waste Management and Remediation	1.40%	3.90%	0.36
Educational Services	4.10%	13.00%	0.32
Health Care and Social Assistance	60.30%	18.60%	3.24
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	1.90%	1.30%	1.46
Accommodation and Food Services	3.60%	8.40%	0.43
Other Services (excluding Public Administration)	3.10%	2.80%	1.11
Public Administration	0.90%	4.40%	0.20

Source: On the Map

The remaining growth is spread across various healthcare providers and related services, reflecting a broader diversification within the sector. This expansion has resulted in a significant concentration of employment in healthcare, which now accounts for 60.3% of all jobs in Hartford.

The Location Quotient (LQ) is an analysis tool used to compare the concentration of employment in a community to that of the state. An LQ of 1 indicates that the percentage of workers employed in a particular industry cluster is the same in Hartford as it is at the state level. An LQ of 2 signifies double the state percentage, while an LQ of 0.5 means the concentration of employment is half that of the state.

Hartford's Location Quotient for the healthcare industry is 3.24, indicating that the Town has more than triple the percentage of its workers in this industry compared to the state average. Such a high concentration of employment in a single industry sector poses an economic risk to the community should there be a dramatic shift in the industry or the entity.

When excluding the healthcare industry, the adjusted Location Quotient analysis reveals that the groups of industries with the highest concentrations of employment in Hartford are:

- **Arts & Entertainment:** 3.03
- **Professional Services:**
 - Real Estate: 2.36
 - Finance & Insurance: 1.78
 - Professional & Scientific: 1.72
 - Management: 1.44

- **Logistics:**

- Transportation and Warehousing: 2.61
- Wholesale Trade: 1.63

A high Location Quotient in Arts and Entertainment aligns with Hartford's concentration of artists, craftspeople, entertainment venues, and establishments. These businesses are a key part of Hartford's identity, character, and economy.

The overrepresentation of professional industries corresponds with the high education levels of the workforce. These industries have also experienced strong growth over the past 20 years.

Industries with low concentrations in Hartford include:

- **Manufacturing:** 0.23
- **Agriculture and Forestry:** 0.28
- **Public Administration:** 0.42
- **Education:** 0.65

There are proportionally fewer jobs in the Public Administration and Education sectors in the Town compared to the state average.

Figure 11: Location Quotient Analysis (Excluded Health Care and Social Assistance) by 2021

Jobs by NAICS Industry Sector by 2021 (Town/State Comparison)	Town of Hartford (Share)	Vermont (Share)	Location Quotient
Manufacturing	2.8%	12.2%	0.23
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	0.4%	1.4%	0.28
Public Administration	2.3%	5.4%	0.42
Utilities	0.4%	0.7%	0.62
Educational Services	10.4%	16.0%	0.65
Construction	4.8%	6.6%	0.73
Administration & Support, Waste Management and Remediation	3.5%	4.8%	0.73
Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction	0.2%	0.2%	0.77
Accommodation and Food Services	9.0%	10.3%	0.88
Retail Trade	14.0%	15.5%	0.91
Information	1.9%	1.9%	0.99
Management of Companies and Enterprises	1.3%	0.9%	1.44
Wholesale Trade	6.2%	3.8%	1.63
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	12.6%	7.3%	1.72
Finance and Insurance	6.7%	3.7%	1.78
Other Services (excluding Public Administration)	7.8%	3.4%	2.30
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	3.0%	1.3%	2.36
Transportation and Warehousing	7.8%	3.0%	2.61
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	4.8%	1.6%	3.03

Source: On the Map

Overall, several important findings and takeaways emerge from the industry analysis:

- **Health Care and Social Assistance** is the largest industry sector, with employment nearly doubling from 32.7% in 2002 to 60.3% of all jobs in 2021.
- The **Professional Services** sector added 235 jobs from 2002 and has grown by 20%. This growth in higher-skilled jobs aligns with the Town's educational resources and proximity to Dartmouth College.
- **Manufacturing** remains a small part of the economic base at 1.1%, indicating that Hartford has not significantly increased its manufacturing sector since 2002.
- Diversifying the economic base by attracting industries such as **Innovative High-tech Manufacturing** and **Professional Services** can reduce dependency on the **Health Care Sector** and provide higher-paying job opportunities.
- Enhancing **Creative Sectors** and **Retail Trade** around rivers and Village Centers can further diversify the economy and improve the quality of life for residents.
- Leveraging regional partnerships with regional bodies can help address broader economic and infrastructural challenges.





3 Strategic Plan

The data collected through community forums, focus group discussions, interviews, and the town-wide survey were shared with residents during public forums and Steering Committee meetings. This input was instrumental in refining the goals and actions presented in this chapter. The process was also guided by the previous Town Plan, insights from the resident survey, and state economic development policies.

The goals, objectives and strategic actions outlined below are designed to foster economic growth across various sectors, increasing support for existing businesses and promoting more innovation while maintaining Hartford's unique character.

To ensure accountability and track the success of the proposed actions, specific metrics are provided at the end of the strategy. These metrics will measure progress and effectiveness in achieving the outlined goals, allowing for adjustments and improvements over time.

The table on the right provides explanations of the key terms used in the strategies and outlines the hierarchy and definitions.

Figure 12: Strategic Planning Framework

Goal	Broad primary outcome that sets the direction for more specific objectives and actions.
Objectives	Specific and more precise steps that are taken to achieve the larger goals.
Strategic Actions	Specific practical activities or initiatives that will be undertaken to meet the objectives.
Key Metrics	Indicators that are used to measure the effectiveness of the strategic actions and the progress towards achieving the goals.

1. Identity / Positioning

Goal

Establish and communicate a clear, compelling identity for Hartford that unifies the community and guides economic development decisions.

Identity and positioning help the community understand and agree on shared economic goals, creating a unified vision for the Town's development. This consensus ensures that all stakeholders are aligned and working towards common objectives. Additionally, a well-defined identity provides a competitive advantage, distinguishing Hartford from neighboring communities. By highlighting its unique strengths and opportunities, Hartford can attract businesses, investors, and visitors.

A strong identity also instills a sense of pride and ownership among residents, enhancing community engagement and support for local initiatives. Finally, this strategy directs efforts and resources toward specific economic outcomes, ensuring that investments are strategically aligned with Hartford's long-term vision.



Objectives

- **Define Hartford's Unique Identity:**
 - Identify and articulate the Town's core economic values, strengths, and future aspirations to create a cohesive and inspiring vision for economic development.
- **Communicate the Positioning and Unity:**
 - Foster a sense of pride, cohesion, and shared purpose among residents and businesses by effectively communicating Hartford's economic positioning.
 - Engage diverse community groups in the communication process to enhance inclusivity and representation.
- **Inform Decisions:**
 - Ensure that economic development decisions are consistently aligned with the community's core identity and values.

Strategic Actions

- **Identity Positioning Statement**
 - Establish a Town appointed Economic Development Committee staffed by the Department of Planning and Development.
 - Use the input from the visioning workshops to create a clear and compelling economic positioning statement that captures Hartford's unique identity and vision for the future, ensuring it represents all community segments.

- **Communication Plan**

- Formulate a plan to share the identity with the community. Utilize town meetings, social media, local media, and printed materials to ensure widespread awareness and engagement.

- **Policy Alignment**

- Integrate core values and vision into the decision-making process for economic development policies and initiatives.

Metrics

- **Adoption of Identity Positioning Statement**

- The Selectboard establishes the Economic Development Committee.
- Hartford Identity Positioning Statement is formally adopted by the Town Selectboard.

2. Village Centers

Goal

Establish a procedural and organizational framework to enable Hartford's Village Centers to become vibrant, economically dynamic hubs that enhance community life for villages and surrounding areas and cater to contemporary preferences for density and diverse amenities.

The concept of Village Centers is to create a hub that serves as the heart of the community and embodies its character and culture. These authentic spaces provide a place where people come together for shopping, dining, socializing, and participating in cultural activities. The concentration of diverse uses and amenities within a walkable area creates a vibrant and dynamic environment, fostering a strong sense of place and community identity.

Within Hartford, each of the five villages has its distinctive characteristics. Each Village Center should be developed to amplify its unique identity while complementing the overall character of the Town. Improving multi-modal connectivity between the Village Centers will encourage greater community engagement, stimulate local economic activity, and making it easier for residents to access services and participate in local events. The Transportation Chapter of the Town Plan provides strategies for creating greater connections and these strategies have clear economic benefit.



Objectives

- **Foster Community Leadership and Engagement:**
 - Strengthen the role of community leaders to enhance representation and participation in decision-making processes.
- **Streamline Project Support and Development:**
 - Promote systematic and collaborative development that aligns with the unique characteristics and needs of each village center.
- **Enhance Economic Vitality:**
 - Attract new businesses and residents to the Village Centers.

Strategic Actions

- **Village Ambassadors Program**
 - Create the program.
 - Define the role of village ambassadors as liaisons between the community and the Town Village Coordinator. Ambassadors will represent community interests, gather feedback, and communicate project updates.
 - Establish a transparent process for selecting Village Ambassadors. This could include nominations from community members, application reviews, and selection criteria based on community involvement and leadership.
 - Develop a formal process for ambassadors to petition the Town for support on projects. This process should include guidelines for submitting

proposals, obtaining necessary endorsements, and presenting to relevant town committees.

- Establish the Role of Village Coordinator.
 - Formally integrate the role of a Village Coordinator within the Planning and Development Department. The Village Coordinator will work with village ambassadors, facilitate project approvals, and ensure alignment with Town goals.

- **Visioning**

- Use the 2011 Visioning Project and 2018 community engagement documents as a foundation. Incorporate recent community feedback to ensure the vision reflects current needs and aspirations.
- Create dedicated sections for each Village within the updated vision document. Highlight unique characteristics, historical elements, and future goals for each area.
- Ensure the updated vision and Village-specific sections are accessible to the public via the Town's website. Use this platform to gather ongoing feedback and keep the community informed.

- **Village Project Application Process**

- Establish a formalized process for Village Ambassadors to seek support for their projects. This should include clear steps for project proposal submissions, review, and approval.
- Encourage Ambassadors to collaborate with residents, business owners, property owners, and local stakeholders.
- Each project proposal should include a specific timeline, detailed steps, and measurable objectives.

Ambassadors should work closely with the Village Coordinator to ensure feasibility and alignment with town goals.

- **Funding**

- Identify and apply for grants, private investments, and public funds to support the development of Village Centers such as Better Places. Apply for grants and funds for village green initiatives such as Village Greens Initiative.

- **Phased Development**

- Begin with pilot projects in selected Village Centers to demonstrate success and gradually scale up the development efforts.

- **Private - Public Partnership**

- Establish policies and parameters for engaging in Private Public Partnerships (PPPs).
 - Clear and transparent objective principles and parameters engaging in PPPs should be agreed upon before any project is presented to ensure decision-making is objective. Include criteria for evaluating projects, defining roles and responsibilities, and ensuring accountability.
 - Ensure that every potential PPP project aligns with the broader community goals and delivers tangible benefits to the public.
 - Recognize legitimate and compelling reasons for municipal involvement in real estate projects, such as when a project will have a large, lasting impact on the community, when there is potential downside from non-optimized development, or when the cost of desired community features makes the project unfeasible for private developers alone.

- Identify and secure diverse funding sources and resources such as TIF, revenue bonds based on projections of future tax revenues, and property acquisition.

Metrics

- **Village Ambassador Engagement**

- Track active village ambassadors and their participation in community meetings and projects.

- **Community Satisfaction and Involvement**

- Conduct annual surveys to gather feedback on the effectiveness of village center initiatives and community involvement.
- Monitor engagement through website analytics and social media interactions.

- **Funding and Resource Allocation**

- Track the total funds received from grants, private investments, and public funds.
- Record the number of grants applied for and awarded and evaluate the utilization of these funds in village center projects.

3. Nature Economy

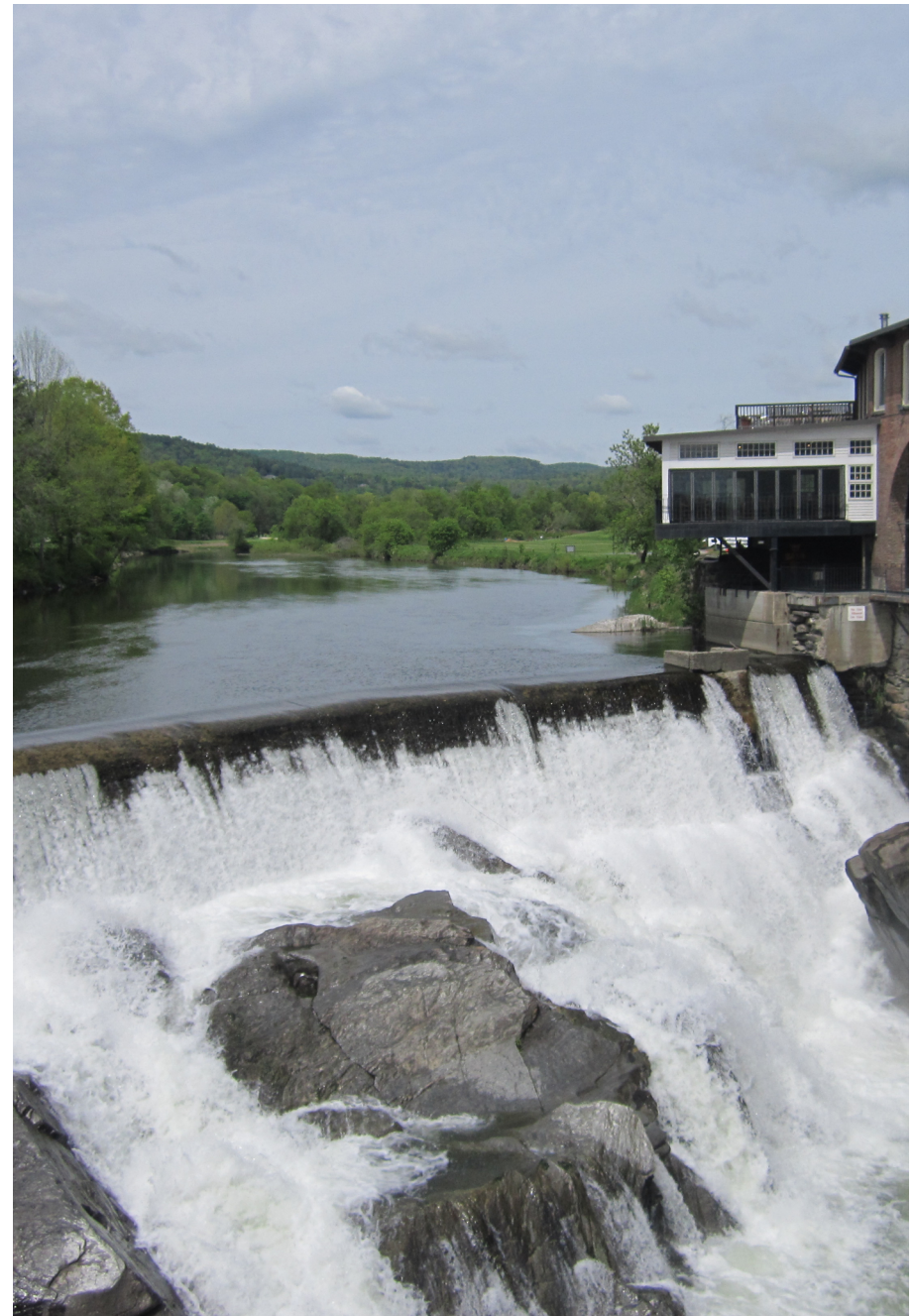
Goal

Expand and improve access to nature: the rivers, parks, and trails to increase the community's desirability as a place to work and live.

The presence of natural amenities such as parks, rivers, trails, hills, ridges and green spaces significantly enhances residents' quality of life. These natural assets provide recreational opportunities, scenic beauty, and a peaceful environment that are highly valued by the community.

Natural amenities influence economic factors. Studies have shown that communities with more natural amenities are more desirable as places to live, and residents are willing to pay higher housing prices and accept lower wages to enjoy the quality of life offered. It is also reflected in Hartford's economic data where labor force participation and educational attainment are high and unemployment low despite lower income levels compared to state and national averages.

The impact of Hartford's Parks & Recreation Program on the local nature economy is considerable as the agency employs seasonal and part time workers, vendors who complete work for the Town, and the purchase of products and services that support the use of natural amenities. Many of the Town's natural resources and park amenities enhance tourism locally, generating significant economic benefits for the business community.



Objectives

- **Improve Access to Natural Assets and Improve User Experience:**
 - Enhance and expand river access points and amenities.
 - Enhance connections between parks and trails through expanded multi-modal trail networks.
- **Promote Environmental Stewardship:**
 - Ensure all river and trail development projects integrate environmental protection measures to preserve natural habitats.
- **Boost Economic Activity:**
 - Increase local economic activity by attracting businesses and tourists to the riverfront areas.

Strategic Actions

- **Feasibility Study and Design**
 - Assess existing river access points and conditions to identify gaps, opportunities, and areas for improvement. Collaborate with the Parks and Recreation Department to ensure alignment with local recreational goals.
 - Assess opportunities to expand some river access points for commercial activities such as kayaking rentals, fishing excursions, and riverfront food trucks to boost economic activity, in collaboration with the Parks and Recreation Department to ensure community and environmental interests are balanced.
 - Conduct Feasibility Studies on expanding trail networks between natural amenities.

- **Construction**

- If determined feasible, plan and build additional river access points or trail networks.
- Install amenities like picnic areas, benches, informational signage, and restrooms at strategic locations along the riverfront or trails to enhance user experience.
- Protect natural habitats and comply with relevant regulations, promoting sustainability in all projects.

- **Promotional Resources**

- Develop brochures, booklets, and online resources highlighting existing and new river access points and trails to raise awareness and attract visitors.

- **Maintenance Plans**

- Create and implement long-term maintenance plans to ensure the sustainability and upkeep of new infrastructure, preserving quality over time.

Metrics

- **River Access and Amenity Usage**

- Track the construction and enhancement of river access points and amenities and miles of new trails.
- Monitor usage rates through visitor counts and surveys.

- **Environmental Impact**

- Conduct regular environmental assessments and audits to ensure that development projects comply with regulations and effectively protect natural habitats.

- **Economic Activity**

- Track the number of new businesses (e.g., kayaking rentals, fishing tours, cafes) established along the riverfront and monitor their revenue and economic impact through business reports and local economic data.



4. Creative Economy

Goal

Strengthen the Town's creative economy.

Vermont's creative economy is a network of artisans, innovators, educators, performers, designers, writers, and preservationists, all contributing to the state's cultural and intellectual landscape. This sector accounts for 9.3% of the state's employment and contributed 2.85% to Vermont's GDP in 2022. 85% of Vermonters recognize art as an important part of their community, and 94% value arts in education.

Over the past two decades, the creative economy has blossomed particularly in Downtown White River Junction and been an integral part of the village's revitalization. Hartford's unique retail landscape benefits the creative economy as smaller; artisan shops don't have to compete with big-box stores. Residents and visitors support unique, locally owned businesses, performing arts, and visual arts that reflect the Town's character and creativity. By promoting a vibrant creative sector, Hartford presents a unique experience that attracts tourists, new residents, and businesses who value its distinctive and vibrant cultural offerings.

The creative economy's emphasis on diversity, inclusivity, and collaboration aligns well with the Town's character. By promoting and investing in the creative sector, Hartford can enhance these cultural assets, create job opportunities, strengthen its unique identity and heritage, and continue to improve quality of life in the Town.

Figure 13: Creative Economy in Vermont, 2022



9.3% Employment in creative firms



3.2% of Vermont's GDP



85% of Vermonter's say art is an important part of community



\$79 million creative economy employment earnings

Source: Think Vermont

Objectives

- **Increase community engagement and collaboration:**
 - Foster deeper collaboration between local government and the creative community to drive the development of the creative economy.
- **Strengthen cultural infrastructure:**
 - Develop and enhance the infrastructure necessary to support and grow the creative sectors within Hartford.
- **Promote and Support Local Creatives:**
 - Encourage the growth of local businesses and entrepreneurs within the creative sectors to diversify and strengthen Hartford's economy.

Strategic Actions

- **Creative Economy Steering Committee**
 - Form a committee, under the Planning and Development Department, to develop cultural infrastructure and integrate the creative sector into broader economic initiatives.
 - Determine actions to promote the creative economy, such as creating websites, brochures, and other promotional materials.
 - Establish a network for local creatives to share resources, collaborate on projects, and support each other's work. Regular networking events, collaborative projects, and a shared online platform can facilitate community building.
 - Partner with the regional Cornerstone Creative

Community (3CVT) to enhance collaborative efforts.

- Host and expand annual cultural festivals and markets to celebrate local talent and attract visitors.
- Promote the Hartford Business Revolving Loan Fund to provide financial and coordinative support for new creative ventures.
- **Inventory and Mapping**
 - Perform a detailed inventory of creative assets in Hartford, including artists, resources, and venues, to identify strengths, gaps, and opportunities for growth. This initiative could be a collaborative cross-class project or internship with educational institutions such as Dartmouth College.
- **Education and Training in the Creative Sector**
 - Collaborate with local educational institutions to offer courses and workshops that enhance skills in the arts. This could include artist residencies where experienced artists mentor emerging talent.
- **Creative Spaces**
 - Sustain and develop incubators, maker spaces, and studios in Hartford to support local artists and entrepreneurs, thereby preserving and building upon the Town's creative infrastructure.

Metrics

- **Cultural Infrastructure Development**

- Track the development and improvement of cultural infrastructure, including maker spaces, and studios.
- Monitor the usage rates and occupancy of these spaces.

- **Support and Growth of Local Creatives**

- Track the number of artists and creative entrepreneurs receiving support through initiatives like the Hartford Business Revolving Loan Fund.
- Measure the economic impact of these creatives on the local economy through business growth and revenue generated.



5. Innovative Economy

Goal

Leverage Hartford's high-skilled local talent and its proximity to world class educational institutions to foster innovation, increase wages and reduce commute times.

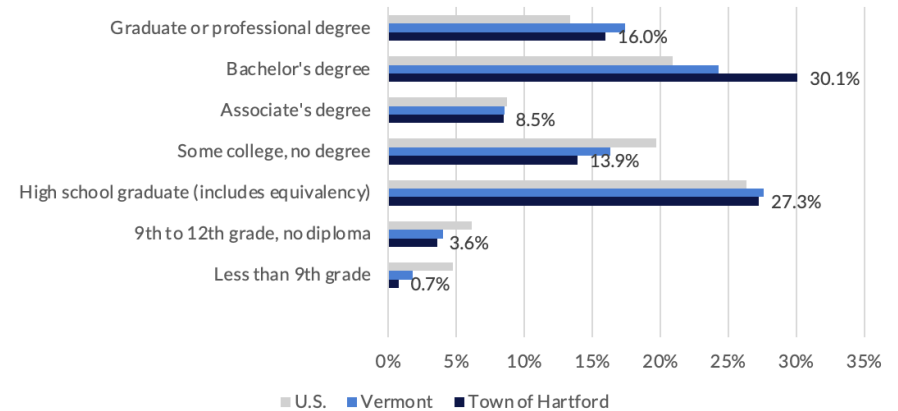
The Innovative economy leverages creativity, technology, entrepreneurship, and sustainable practices to drive economic growth and development. This Innovative Economy enhances productivity, creates high-quality jobs, and improves the overall quality of life in the community.

Hartford's educational attainment levels support the foundation for an innovative economy. 30% of Hartford's workforce hold a bachelor's degree and 16% a graduate/professional degree - far higher than the national and state averages (see Figure 14). A high level of educational attainment is a critical asset that enables innovation.

Hartford has a robust entrepreneurial ecosystem. The total value of loans to small businesses per civilian labor force in the Town (\$3195) was 43% higher than the national average (\$2230) and 72% higher than Vermont (\$1533). This strong financial support for small businesses is indicative of an entrepreneurial spirit and a vibrant ecosystem that forms the backbone of an innovative economy.

Implementing an innovative economy strategy will help Hartford build on these strengths by creating an environment that supports startups, remote workers, and unique entrepreneurial ventures.

Figure 14: Educational Attainment by Population 25 Years and over, 2022



Source: American Community Survey

Figure 15: Business Loans with Gross Annual Revenues <= \$1M

	U.S.	Vermont	Windsor County	Town of Hartford
Amount of Loans to Businesses with Gross Annual Revenues <= \$1M (Thousands)	374,445,725	537,829	56,164	19,157
Civilian Labor Force	167,857,207	350,677	30,316	5,995
Total Amount of Loans per Civilian Labor Force	\$2230	\$1533	\$1852	\$3195

Source: FFIEC, CRA Aggregate Data

Objectives

- **Develop entrepreneurial infrastructure:**
 - Establish facilities and support systems that encourage the creation and growth of innovative startups and businesses.
- **Increase quality of life:**
 - Increase quality of life by reducing commute times and increasing wages of local high-skilled talent.
- **Enhance collaboration with educational institutions:**
 - Strengthen ties with educational institutions such as Dartmouth College, Vermont Community Colleges, Center for Cartoon Studies, Community Colleges of New Hampshire and other educational entities to align with local business needs.

Strategic Actions

- **Audit and Development of Resources**
 - Perform a detailed audit of existing resources to identify potential resources for development that support startups and innovative businesses.
- **Transformation of Non-Traditional Spaces**
 - Explore non-traditional spaces in the Town, such as public libraries, to incorporate workspaces for startups, entrepreneurs, and remote workers, thereby enhancing accessibility and resource availability.

- **Dedicated Shared Maker Spaces**

- Collaborate with county and regional resources and the Green Mountain Economic Development Corporation to program and fund these initiatives.
- Convert underutilized properties into shared maker spaces tailored to the needs of Hartford's entrepreneurs. Ensure these spaces provide necessary amenities and equipment.
- Actively promote these new spaces and programs to foster a collaborative entrepreneurial ecosystem and attract participants.
- Develop marketing strategies to attract and retain talent, emphasizing Hartford's innovative environment and opportunities.

Metrics

- **Resource Utilization and Development**

- Track the completion of the resource audit and the subsequent development of identified resources. Monitor the usage rates of these resources by local startups and entrepreneurs.

- **Community Engagement and Collaboration**

- Record the number of formal partnerships established with organizations and property owners. Track the usage rates of non-traditional spaces converted into workspaces for startups, entrepreneurs, and remote workers.

- **Maker Space Utilization and Economic Impact**

- Track the development of shared maker spaces and monitor their occupancy rates. Measure the economic impact of these spaces through business growth, job creation, and local economic activity.

While the current plan focuses on five primary areas, it is important to acknowledge that there are other sectors within Hartford that, while not prominent today, have the potential to become significant contributors to the local economy in the future. These evolving industries, such as clean energy and agro-tourism, may not yet be at the forefront, but they hold promise as mainstays of Hartford's economic landscape. As the community continues to grow and adapt, this plan can be revisited and updated to reflect emerging trends and opportunities. The Economic Development Committee will monitor and evaluate these evolving sectors regularly, ensuring that the Town remains flexible and proactive in its approach. This will help Hartford to pivot and support new industries as they rise to prominence, allowing all residents, regardless of their job type or income level, to continue thriving in this dynamic and eclectic community.



4 Metrics



		Stewardship	Timeline
1. Identity / Positioning			
Adoption of Identity Positioning Statement	Hartford Identity Positioning Statement is formally adopted by the Town Select Board.	- Town Selectboard - Planning and Development Department	Q4 2024
2. Village Centers			
Village Coordinator Engagement	Track village coordinator's participation in meetings and projects.	Planning and Development Department	- Starting from Q4 2024 - Ongoing, with quarterly reviews
Community Satisfaction and Involvement	- Conduct annual surveys to assess village center initiatives and community involvement. - Monitor engagement using website analytics and social media interactions.	Planning and Development Department	- Starting from Q4 2025 - Annual survey in Q4
Funding and Resource Allocation	- Track funds from grants, private investments, and public sources. - Record grant applications and awards; evaluate fund utilization in projects.	- Planning and Development Department - Finance Department	Annual review and reporting

		Stewardship	Timeline
3. Nature Economy			
Nature Access and Amenity Usage	- Track construction of river access points, amenities, and new trails. - Monitor usage with visitor counts and surveys.	- Parks and Recreation Department - Planning and Development Department	- Starting from Q2 2025 - Ongoing, with semi-annual reports
Environmental Impact	Conduct regular environmental assessments to ensure regulatory compliance and habitat protection.	Planning and Development Department	Annual assessments
Economic Activity	Track new riverfront businesses and monitor their revenue and economic impact.	- Planning and Development Department - Finance Department	- Starting from Q4 2025 - Annual review in Q4
4. Creative Economy			
Cultural Infrastructure Development	- Track development and improvement of cultural spaces. - Monitor usage and occupancy rates.	- Planning and Development Department 3CVT - Steering Committee	- Starting from Q1 2025 - Ongoing, with annual reports
Support and Growth of Local Creatives	- Track creatives receiving support through local initiatives. - Measure their economic impact through business growth and revenue.	- Planning and Development Department 3CVT - Steering Committee	- Starting from Q1 2025 - Ongoing, with annual reports

		Stewardship	Timeline
5. Innovative Economy			
Resource Utilization and Development	Track resource audit completion and usage by startups.	- Planning and Development Department - Green Mountain Economic Development Corporation	- Audit completion by Q4 2025 - Ongoing usage tracking
Community Engagement and Collaboration	Record partnerships with libraries and usage by startups.	Planning and Development Department	- Starting from Q3 2025 - Ongoing, with annual reviews
Maker Space Utilization and Economic Impact	Track maker space development and measure economic impact.	- Planning and Development Department - Green Mountain Economic Development Corporation	- Starting from Q3 2026 - Ongoing, with annual economic impact report

5 Appendix

