



5 Economic Development

“Competing for success in a global marketplace means creating places where workers, entrepreneurs, and businesses want to locate, invest, and expand.”

- International Economic Development Council

Introduction

A strong local economy is critical for a community’s resilience and quality of life.

This chapter is intended to provide a vision for future economic development in Littleton, a summary of existing economic characteristics of the Town, and an outline of related goals, policies, and initiatives for the Town to implement. These action items build on Littleton’s assets, diversify the Town’s tax base, offer a high-quality environment for business to locate and expand in, increase jobs opportunities, and contribute to a healthy and thriving local economy. This chapter seeks to offer a balanced approach to development that preserves the Town’s character, natural resources, and quality of life.

2017 COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY VISION FOR THE NORTH COUNTRY

“We envision that the rural character of the North Country will be sustained by high quality, natural resource-based clusters of industries including agricultural, energy, tourism, manufacturing, the arts and the other industries that help to maintain our open spaces & connections to the past. We will be strengthened, engaged and informed by our educational and cultural opportunities, telecommunication, transportation and entrepreneurial infrastructures; as well as our adaptive forward thinking.”

ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS

Income

According to the 2017 American Community Survey (ACS), Littleton's median household income as of 2017 is \$39,490. The median household income for New Hampshire is \$71,305, which is about \$31,815 more than Littleton's. Steady income is important for good quality of life and overall health. Comments from an economic development focus group identified that there are not enough high-paying jobs in Littleton and that the community should attract businesses that offer higher wage opportunities. This group was made up of business leaders, commercial property owners, and Town staff.

Being a center for jobs and services, Littleton has a larger concentration of poverty and associated public housing and social services than surrounding communities. According to the 2017 ACS, individuals that are ***below the poverty level*** in Littleton represent **18.1%** of the community. This is higher than the number of individuals below the poverty level in Grafton County, which

account for approximately 10% of the population. There are a number of organizations in Littleton and the surrounding region that are working tirelessly on improving opportunities for low-income individuals/families related to employment, housing, food security, healthcare, and other issues. These interrelated topics must be looked at holistically as Littleton devises strategies for growing its economy and providing diverse job opportunities and fair wages for its residents.

Employment

In Littleton, 68% of individuals 16 years old and over are considered to be part of the labor force. The table on the following page shows a breakout of the Town's labor force by those who are employed and unemployed and how this has changed over the past ten years. According to the 2017 American Community Survey, the unemployment rate in Littleton is 2.4%, a decrease from the unemployment rate in 2010 which was 5.1%. This shows that the job market and local economy have strengthened since the 2008 financial crisis.

According to the NH Employment Security, the largest employers in Littleton include the Littleton



Above: Littleton Coin Company, a successful local business.
Source: America's National Park Quarters

Regional Hospital, Littleton Coin Company, and the Tender Corporation (see the table to the right for largest employers in town). Overall, Littleton has a relatively diverse economy. Littleton has seen a growth in the number of businesses operating in the community during the last decade. 28.6% of Littleton’s workforce is employed in the educational services, healthcare, and social assistance industries, representing the highest employed industry in Town. 14.8% are employed by the retail sector, and 13.2% are employed in arts, entertainment, recreation, food services, and hospitality. Both of these industries reflect Littleton’s role as a **regional hub** for shopping and services and its **strong tourism economy**. 11.2% are employed in manufacturing.

Littleton resident’s average weekly income, depending on the industry, ranges from \$766-\$873 per week on average. Grafton County’s higher income communities range up to \$1,300 (Hanover) per week and typically are college towns like Hanover and Plymouth, medical centers like Lebanon, or have a large

LABOR FORCE (AMERICAN COMMUNITY SURVEY 2019)		
Annual Average	2007	2017
Civilian Labor Force	3,547	3,055
Employed	3,432	2,983
Unemployed	115	72
Unemployment Rate	3.2%	2.4%

MAJOR EMPLOYERS (NH EMPLOYMENT SECURITY)	
Employer	# of Employees
Littleton Regional Hospital	510
Littleton Coin	300
Tender Corporation	195
Burndy Corporation	180
Littleton School District	152
Wal-Mart	144
Lowe’s	125
Home Depot	104
Littleton Food Co-op	89
Shaw’s Supermarket	85

EMPLOYMENT BY INDUSTRY (AMERICAN COMMUNITY SURVEY 2019)	
Industry Type	# of Labor Pool
Educational Services, Healthcare, Social Assistance	28.6%
Retail Trade	14.8%
Arts, Entertainment, Recreation, Accommodation, Food Services	13.2%
Manufacturing	11.2%
Construction	7.4%
Professional, Scientific, Management, Administrative, Waste Management Services	6.4%
Public Administration	5%
Other Services	4.1%
Transportation, Warehousing, Utilities	3.5%
Finance, Insurance, Real Estate, Renting/Leasing	2.8%
Information	1.4%
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing/Hunting, Mining	0.8%
Wholesale Trade	0.8%

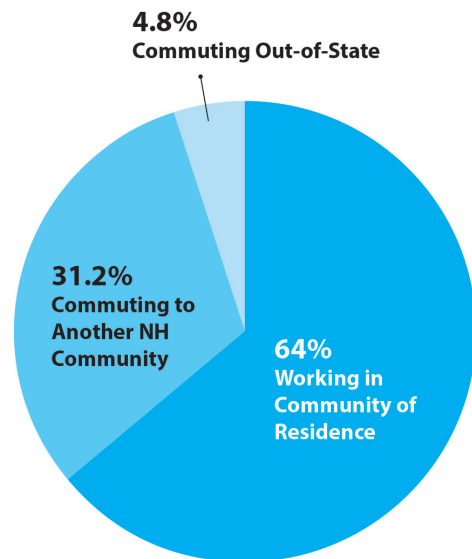
international manufacturer, as Bristol does. Educational level, percent of school age and retired residents, availability and access to jobs, and wages paid, are all factors that influence each community’s median and per capita income. 88.4% of residents have earned a high school diploma or higher, while 23.9% have earned a bachelor’s degree or higher. Opportunity and access to job training and post high school educational opportunities is crucial to ensuring a highly skilled workforce for businesses that expand or locate in Littleton. With this in mind, Littleton must consider what will **attract and retain new jobs** to continue to improve the income levels in the community.

Commute Patterns

Littleton has excellent access to employment opportunities. The convenience of Interstate 93 and the state highway system is reflected in the percentage of commuters traveling in and out of Town to work. Commuting patterns reveal, however, that hometown employment is still a major force in Littleton. This is partially due to Littleton’s role as one of Grafton County’s major employment centers.

Most of the County’s small towns have a much higher out-migration rate. Approximately 64% of residents who live in Littleton also work in Littleton, which presents enormous opportunity for branding Littleton as a “stay, work, and play” community. About 35% of Littleton’s workers are employed outside of the community. It’s also important to note that many residents from surrounding communities and in Vermont commute to Littleton for work. **The day-time population nearly triples during the work week.** According to the chart below, Littleton has a relatively **high proportion of individuals who walk to work**, compared to other communities (the Grafton County average for those who walk to work is 2.2%).

Approximately 64% of residents who live in Littleton also work in Littleton, which presents enormous opportunity for branding Littleton as a “stay, work, and play” community.



COMMUTING TO WORK (AMERICAN COMMUNITY SURVEY 2019)	
Transportation Mode	% of labor force 16 yrs. and older
Drove alone (car, truck, van)	77.3%
Walked	8.7%
Carpool (car, truck, van)	7.5%
Worked at home	5.6%
Other means	0.9%
Public transportation	0.0%

Age

Unlike many other communities in the North Country, Littleton has been successful at attracting and retaining younger people in the community. Currently, the Town’s median age is 43.3 years old, which is lower than the median age of surrounding communities (Bethlehem: 49.9 years old; Whitefield: 49.6; Lyman: 47.2). The Town has an opportunity to build its reputation as an **age-friendly, welcoming, and diverse community** and to build a solid, younger workforce into the future.

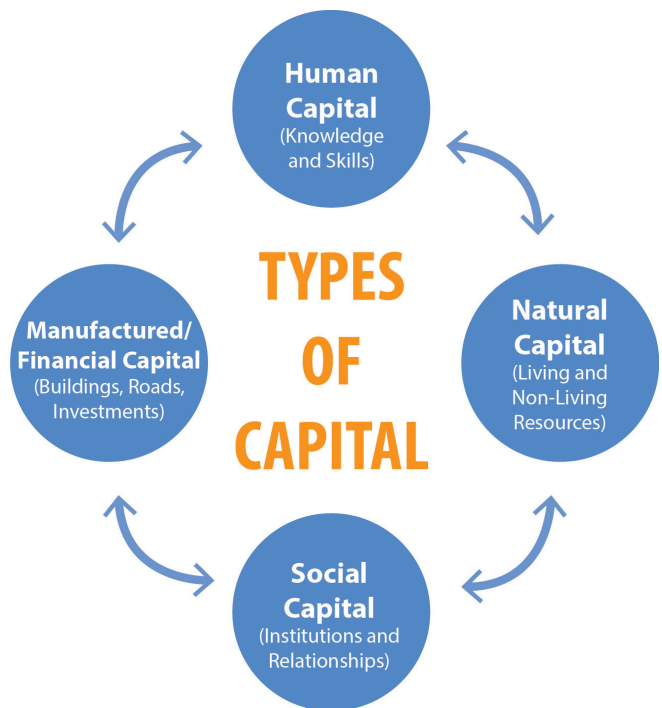
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ASSETS

Economic development refers to programs, policies, and strategies that seek to improve economic well-being and quality of life in a community. These activities aim to generate wealth, create jobs and training opportunities, increase wages, attract new businesses, support entrepreneurship, encourage business expansion, and diversify the economy and tax base. While increasing monetary wealth is important for a community, there are also many of types of capital (see image right) the Town should consider in planning efforts: human capital, natural capital, social capital, and manufactured/financial capital. Each of these types of capital contribute to a strong economy and community and the most successful long-term projects will increase more than one capital type.

Supporting Initiatives

In Littleton, there are a few organizations that support economic development related efforts in Town including:

Brien Ward, founder of the Littleton Economic Development Taskforce, pointed out that since 1995, the town’s assessed valuation has risen from \$241 million to \$819 million and is poised to hit the one billion mark in 2023.
-Union Leader, Nov. 27, 2018



LITTLETON AREA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
This organization provides information and resources to business owners in the wider Littleton region. They host networking events, such as “business after hours” and community conversations about relevant topics or issues that affect business owners and the wider community. They also coordinate celebratory events that attract many visitors to Littleton including the Christmas

Parade, Gathering of the Jack o Lanterns, and the Littleton Arts and Cultural Festival.

LITTLETON INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION (LIDC)

The LIDC formed in the 1960s. In the 1970s, the LIDC purchased 108 acres to establish an Industrial Park to develop more diverse economic development opportunities. The LIDC continues to develop and grow the Industrial Park, which now houses 18 businesses and employs 1,200 residents. They also work to make Littleton an attractive place to do business, maintain strong partnerships with local and regional organizations, and enhance opportunities for small businesses in the region.

LITTLETON RIVER DISTRICT COMMISSION

This is a community group of state and Town officials, business owners, and local residents dedicated to revitalizing the Ammonoosuc River District in Town. The river is located within walking distance of Littleton's award-winning Main Street, and its riverfront is prime for sustainable economic redevelopment, building off the existing projects that have already taken place. Over time, the group aims to fix critical infrastructure issues, provide safe travel opportunities for all modes of transportation, provide new opportunities for commercial and residential development, create more jobs, and increase tourism.

GO LITTLETON

This platform provides a one-stop-shop for visitors and residents of Littleton. The site includes an event calendar, recreation opportunities, arts in Littleton, restaurants, lodging, real estate information, services, classifieds, and more.

Historical Context

From its humble beginning at Solomon Mann's sawmill and gristmill on the banks of the



Above: A recently installed rain garden on Saranac Street as part of the River District redevelopment efforts. Rain gardens absorb stormwater runoff, filter pollutants, and encourage infiltration, protecting the water quality of the River while also providing beauty and pollinator habitat.

Ammonoosuc River, the Town of Littleton has used its location at the intersection of rivers, local transportation routes, and later the railroad to its advantage. Littleton first moved from an agricultural to a manufacturing-based economy. Littleton's growth as a mercantile center and the expansion of the tourism industry in northern New England then established Littleton as a regional commercial center by the mid-1800s – a role it continues to fill today. Manufacturing still plays a role in Littleton, but that manufacturing base is much more diverse now, and is complemented by large retail and tourism industries.

Littleton's Economic Assets

LOCATION

Littleton's close proximity to Interstate 93 and its position amidst some of the state's most beautiful and unique natural resources provide opportunities for economic development and boosting the tourism industry. The town is unique in that it has 4 exits on I-93. It's often referred to as the "western gateway to the White Mountains". Many people love the community's location, which is roughly equidistant to Boston, Burlington, Portland, and Montreal. It's also considered to be a major regional hub providing services and activities to surrounding communities.

DOWNTOWN

Littleton has an active, inviting, and walkable Downtown that attracts tourists and supports a thriving small business scene. Restaurants, breweries, art galleries, performance spaces, shops, hotels, and other business types line Main Street and are sprouting up along the Ammonoosuc River. Littleton's Downtown attracts millennials, elderly, and families as preferences for a walkable, livable downtown have shifted to becoming a high priority for many people. Entrepreneurs have also started unique niche businesses in Littleton's downtown, providing a place to test business ideas and create an entrepreneurial network in the community.

Both the Tannery Marketplace and 23 Ammonoosuc St. redevelopment projects have contributed to downtown development efforts. The 23 Ammonoosuc St. building houses the Littleton Studio School, White Mountain Science Inc. (which is a continuing education STEM program), and an iyengar yoga studio. This building was renovated as an asset to the community and a place where arts, education, and collaboration could thrive. Future plans include the creation of an outdoor space and potentially connecting

"Nowhere else will you find the world's longest candy counter, an opera house where Bette Davis once celebrated her birthday, a gallery given to "bad art," an annual "Be Glad" festival and a thriving arts, business and recreation scene all in the same place."

-Business NH Magazine



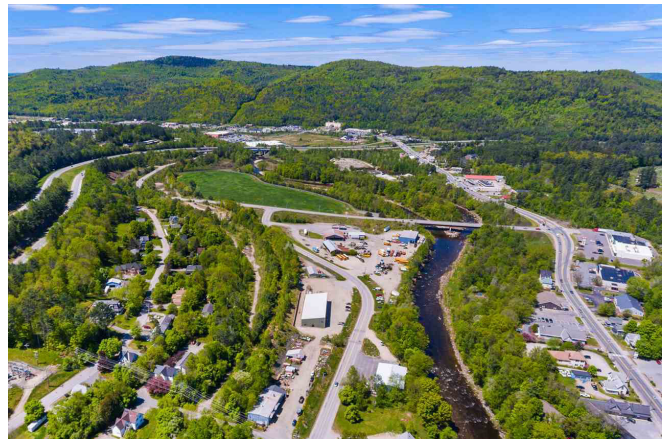
Above: Schilling Beer Company has been growing in Littleton for a number of years and is a popular destination that draws visitors in from all over NH and VT. Recently, the company expanded and created a canning facility and tasting room on the river.



Above: 23 Ammonoosuc St. in Littleton, NH
Source: White Mountain Science, Inc.

the building to 25 Ammonoosuc St, which could house similar organizations. The Tannery Marketplace is located on Saranac Street and has seen significant reinvestment in recent years. Many small businesses (focusing in arts, design, health, and wellness) occupy the former mill on the Ammonoosuc River including a floral studio, a fine leather shop, a chiropractor, massage therapist, and more.

Additionally, the Ammonoosuc Riverwalk is within the Downtown and provides a great way for residents and visitors to access the river. There are picnic tables, gardens, and a beautiful covered bridge that provides a relaxing walking loop for visitors and residents. Its important to note that planning research supports the idea that downtowns are most lively and successful when they consist of mixed uses, a blend of commercial, residential, and civic activity. Littleton should ensure that the Downtown continues to be redeveloped in a way that considers the relationship between these uses.



Above: Littleton Industrial Park
Source: Loon Mountain Real Estate

INDUSTRIAL PARK

Littleton's industrial park is managed by the Littleton Industrial Development Corporation (LIDC) and has been thriving in recent years, seeing an expansion of existing businesses and the addition of new businesses to its 380 acres. The park is home to 18 businesses, which employ more than 1,200 people. The LIDC holds title to the industrial park land in partnership with the Town of Littleton. Twelve existing Littleton area businesses have expanded in the Industrial Park including

Ammonoosuc Stitching, Burndy Corporation, Littleton Coin Company, Harrison Publishing, Tender Corporation, and Federal Express. Four new businesses have located in the industrial park including Genfoot, North Country Hydraulics, Swan's, and SNS.

MEADOW STREET DEVELOPMENT

Littleton has seen significant commercial development occur on Meadow Street in the last 20 years, including large grocery stores, retail, restaurants, a hotel, auto services, and gas stations. These larger businesses contribute significantly to the tax base in Town and provide important goods and services to community members.

A COMMUNITY OF ARTISTS AND ARTISANS

The strong presence of artists and artisans in the community result in a vibrant creative economy and enrich the lives of those that experience their craft. Local art galleries include Bad Art, Littleton Studio School, and the League of NH Craftsmen. Stores have opened on Main Street dedicated to vinyl records, vintage clothing, and herbal medicine. Artisans such as bakers (The Crumb Bar Bakery on Main Street) and brewers (Schilling Beer

Company) have created popular businesses in the Downtown. The growing success of the Littleton Food Co-op offers a venue for local and regional farmers and crafters to sell their products. Space for the performing arts has emerged, such as The Loading Dock, which provides a small venue for eclectic live music, and the newly renovated Opera House. The creative industries have significant potential to both improve livability and boost local economies.

OUTDOOR RECREATION



Above: Parker Mountain has many trails available for mountain biking, hiking, trail running, and snowshoeing. Source: NH Grand



Above: A collaborative partnership between The Loading Dock, Parker Mountain Trails, and other local businesses Shaun Terhane Photography, Schilling Beer Co, Black Sheep NH, and Chutters was created to launch a concert series at Ammonoosuc River Park.

A main attraction of Littleton is its close proximity to many outdoor recreation activities including biking, hiking, rock climbing, skiing, swimming, fishing, camping, and more. The Town has a growing mountain bike trail network with plans to connect with bike trails in Franconia and other surrounding communities, as well as a local bike shop to support the cyclists. The nearby North Country Climbing Gym and Cannon Mountain present indoor and outdoor rock-climbing opportunities while the White Mountains offer access to many hiking trails for varying abilities. Mt. Eustis, the local ski mountain, creates a less commercial and more affordable skiing experience

in the wintertime. The Ammonoosuc River provides a place for fishing and swimming. The Town's Conservation Commission manages town trails and conservation areas that are used often and beloved by the community.

The outdoor recreation industry builds off Littleton's natural resource assets, supports and cultivates a care for and stewardship of the land, and improves overall livability for those who live in and visit Littleton to experience the great outdoors.

HISTORIC LANDMARKS

Littleton's history and cultural heritage is visible in its many historic structures and monuments throughout the community, such as the Pollyanna statue and the restoration of the Opera House. Preserving and reusing Littleton's historic structures and celebrating its historic legacy contributes to tourism planning efforts and protects Littleton's unique character.

PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE

Littleton Water and Light offers high quality electric power and water services. Electric power is offered at an extremely low rate compared to surrounding communities and is one of the lowest in the state which has been a significant asset for commercial and residential development in Town.

Additionally, the Downtown area is currently undergoing public infrastructure improvements to revitalize the Ammonoosuc Riverfront through a combination of taxpayer dollars, grants and tax credits. Improvements include sidewalk reconstruction and upgrading sewer, storm drains and roadways along Saranac, Ammonoosuc and Mill streets. Union Street is also undergoing an upgrade to its water lines as part of the River District redevelopment project. Also, the Town's recently adopted Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan outlines a series of roadway projects aimed at making Littleton's street network more bicycle and pedestrian friendly.

Cultivating "Human Capital"

Capacity building: build skills for self-reliance, collaboration, and entrepreneurship

Education: prepare individuals for today's jobs

Training: teach new skills for employees or displaced workers

Attraction: bring talent to the region for key jobs

COMMUNITY VALUES AND CHARACTER

The master planning process included interviews with focus groups on issues related to economic development, recreation, arts and culture, and natural resources.

Many stated that Littleton's values make the community a great place to live. These include: its vibrant energy, close-knit nature, a bedrock ethic of caring for one's neighbor, its stewardship and connection to the land, hard-working attitude, and a forward thinking, inventive, and future focused mindset.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES

Business Development

Commercial and industrial development accounts for 3% of Littleton's land area. To create a promising economic environment in Littleton, it's important for the Town to consider how they can best attract, retain, and provide the right conditions for expanding businesses in the community.

Nurturing entrepreneurship, or growing business owners from within, should also be a high priority economic development strategy. Because industrial and commercial businesses serve the dual purpose of providing both jobs and a nonresidential tax base, it is important to maintain a sufficient business base to support the Town. Littleton recently hired Buxton, a company that performs extensive market research, to provide the community with a thorough understanding of the markets and brands that exist and potential brands that could locate in Littleton.

BUSINESS INCUBATORS

Business incubators nurture the development of entrepreneurial companies, helping them survive and grow during the start-up period when they are most vulnerable. They typically provide business development services, financing and access to finance, networking opportunity, and brand building advice. There are three business incubators in the region, including Technology Village in Conway, the Dartmouth Regional Technology Center located in Centerra Park in Lebanon, and the Enterprise Center at Plymouth. A virtual business incubator is located at the White Mountains Community College in Berlin and the Women's Rural Entrepreneurial Network in Bethlehem also provides some business incubator services.

SECONDARY EDUCATION

Littleton is fortunate to have the Littleton Industrial Development Committee (LIDC) working to promote business and employee development. Their efforts to provide training/ re-training and the operation the White Mountain Community College's satellite campus in Littleton benefit the community and the region. In March 2019, plans to remake part of a former manufacturing property in Littleton into a community college campus were initiated. The 16-acre former Hitchiner Manufacturing property was purchased by a new owner for redevelopment. The application for this

Growing a Community's Economic Ecosystem

Economic gardening is an approach to economic development that seeks to grow the local economy from within, understanding that entrepreneurs are a driving force in local economic growth. It encourages communities to grow and nurture local businesses rather than merely hunting for "big game" outside the area.

Why?

Local entrepreneurs create companies that bring new wealth to a region in the form of jobs, increased revenues, and a vibrant local business sector. Many new jobs in rural communities are produced by the community's small, local businesses.

Resource: <https://icma.org/articles/article/seven-steps-developing-economic-gardening-implementation-strategy>

project was approved as a special exception for the school, but they withdrew their application before the board could vote. Whether or not this proposal passes, it readies Littleton for its own college campus someday. Exploring other opportunities for a community college campus would be extremely beneficial for the community in attracting and retaining millenials, young professionals, and others, as well as to be able to train a highly skilled workforce for the surrounding area. Additionally, many of the Town's industrial businesses are working on strengthening their partnership with the local high school by providing manufacturing equipment and training to students, ensuring that graduates have the skills necessary to stay in Littleton and become employed at a local company.

Managing Growth

Economic growth can bring net benefits or net costs to the community depending on how it is managed. All businesses, existing and new, can benefit from certain efforts that are within the scope of community control, and they all place a demand on the community's infrastructure and services. Communities can encourage and manage industrial and commercial growth in the following ways:

- Provide suitable land and structures
- Use appropriate zoning techniques
- Provide adequate infrastructure (transportation access, utilities and services)
- Provide a skilled work force
- Active efforts by the Chamber of Commerce and/or other organization
- Public/private partnership programs

SMART GROWTH

Smart growth is an approach to development that encourages a mix of building types and uses, diverse housing and transportation options, development within existing neighborhoods, and community engagement. Smart growth planning principles can help communities direct their planning efforts in a meaningful way. According to Smart Growth America, these principles include:

- Encourage mixed use development.
- Take advantage of compact design and density.
- Create a range of housing and transportation options.
- Create walkable neighborhoods.
- Foster distinctive, attractive communities with a strong sense of place.
- Preserve open space, farmland, natural beauty, and critical environmental areas.
- Direct development towards already developed parts of a town.
- Make development decisions predictable, fair, and cost effective.

- Encourage community and stakeholder collaboration in development decisions.

Tourism

According to a 2018 report from the NH Division of Travel and Tourism Development, total direct travel spending in NH was \$5.5 billion in 2017, which increased 2.6% from 2016. All four seasons showed positive growth in travel spending with the strongest growth in spring and the slowest growth in summer. White Mountain Region tourists spent nearly \$965 million in 2017 during their visits. Ensuring that tourists have easy access to information about activities, places, and things to do in Littleton is critical to growing this industry. Additionally, branding and marketing Littleton off its unique assets described in this plan could continue attracting new and old visitors to Town.

Jobs created directly from the flow of tourists in and out of the region including industries such as retail, the arts, entertainment, recreation,



Above: 2019 "Be Glad" Day in Littleton
Photo Courtesy: Union Leader

overnight accommodations, and food services. While these industries are seasonal in nature, Littleton's reputation as a four-season vacation destination does help sustain employment in these industries. The major hotels in Littleton include Hampton Inn on Meadow Street, the Thayer's Inn

Hotel in the downtown, the Beal House Inn, and the Country Squire Motel. There are also a number of short term vacation rentals available through Air B&B and VRBO. To further promote tourism, the Town could use additional overnight accommodations in the community.

Littleton has recently branded itself as the “Be Glad” town, capitalizing on its history of Pollyanna, the literary creation of Littleton author, Eleanor H. Porter. In 2019, a new state law passed that officially designated the second Saturday in June to be “Pollyanna of Littleton, NH Recognition Day”. The law hails the statue as “an attractive and welcoming symbol of the gladness and optimism of the people of NH” and encourages communities, schools, and civic groups throughout the state to celebrating this character. Littleton has hosted “Be Glad” days in June for many years, a celebration community members, businesses, and visitors all participate in. Visitors have come far and wider to celebrate Eleanor Porter and Pollyanna and contributes greatly to tourism dollars in the community.

Development Incentive Programs

TAX INCREMENT FINANCING (TIF)- A PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP

A TIF is a special tax district that may be used as an public financing tool when market conditions will not allow private investment alone to address issues that limit or prevent desirable commercial or industrial development in an area. TIF districts provides financing for public improvements (sewer, water, roads, sidewalks, landscaping, etc.) that are required to stimulate viable economic development. This is accomplished by capturing

the new property tax revenue created by the proposed development and using it to offset the cost of the public improvements. These districts can include undeveloped land, a Main Street district, a whole downtown, or a few parcels, depending on a community’s economic development goals. Currently, Littleton does not utilize the TIF tool.

RSA 79-E COMMUNITY REVITALIZATION TAX RELIEF INCENTIVE

RSA 79-E is a property tax relief program that seeks to encourage investment in town centers and to rehabilitate under-utilized buildings within these areas. Property owners within a designated 79-E area submit an application to the town’s governing body, which are evaluated to make sure the proposal meets 79-E guidelines. In return, the governing body may provide tax relief at a pre-rehabilitation value for a finite period of time. The three criteria a project must meet to be considered for tax relief include: the property must be in an eligible district or area of the community, the rehabilitation project must be substantial, and the rehabilitation project must provide a public benefit.

ECONOMIC REVITALIZATION ZONES (ERZ)

ERZs were established to stimulate economic redevelopment, expand the commercial and industrial base, create new jobs, reduce sprawl, and increase tax revenues within the state by encouraging economic revitalization in designated areas.

The ERZ tax credit offers a short-term business tax credit for projects that improve infrastructure and create jobs in designated areas of a municipality. Currently, there are no ERZs in Littleton.

First Impressions: Littleton, NH

New Hampshire First Impressions, a UNH Cooperative Extension program, is designed to help a community learn about their downtown's existing assets and opportunities for improvement as seen through the eyes of first-time visitors. This is accomplished by matching two communities (in this case, Littleton and Rochester) to conduct "secret shopper" assessments in the other community and report their findings. After completing research and a site visit to Littleton, the partner community identified assets and opportunities for improvement for the downtown area. Assets included a charming Main Street, historic beauty, a diverse business community, and artsy/folksy streets. For more information, please see: https://extension.unh.edu/resources/files/Resource007038_Rep10184.pdf

Opportunities for improvement included:

- Wayfinding and Signage: more signage in the River District and directing individuals to parking
- Visual Appearance: improve outdoor appearance of the backside of Main Street (as seen from the River District), such as screening for dumpsters; incorporated more street trees into streetscape in Downtown
- Business/Workforce: Downtown needs more overnight accommodations
- Transportation: create bike lanes, install bike racks, explore traffic decongestion strategies, lack ridesharing services, improve quality and visual appearance of sidewalks and crosswalks just outside of Downtown
- Access to Information: When asked if they would visit Littleton with friends and family, some said no because it was not close enough to outdoor activities (highlighting a need for better marketing and promotion displaying all the activities Littleton has to offer)



Above: Features of Downtown Littleton that were noted by the City of Rochester team
Photo Courtesy: First Impressions Report

CASE STUDY

Business Development Initiatives in the Monadnock Region

In recent years, the Monadnock Region has cultivated infrastructure, programs, and policies to support small business development, startup capital, training, and business development resources. The greater Littleton area has similar assets to the state's rural southwest corner that could be leveraged to create similar programs and facilities in Littleton. These types of initiatives have the potential to help small businesses and entrepreneurs grow and thrive.

BUSINESS INCUBATOR PROGRAMS

Keene, NH's Hannah Grimes Center is a business incubator and co-working space for start up companies and small businesses in the greater Keene area. They offer training in sales, marketing, graphic design, leadership, business planning, management, and other related skills for beginning entrepreneurs. They also host a "Pitchfork Challenge" to coach business entrepreneurs to pitch their business investment opportunity on a quarterly basis to a room full of investors with a purpose to boost the startup rates in the Monadnock region. The top pitch receives \$10,000 in cash to launch their business idea forward. The MAXT Makerspace provides shared space and tools (for woodworking, digital fabrication, textiles, jewelry making, and welding) for small businesses in the trades, arts, or crafts. Through a membership program, they offer workshops, training programs, and mentoring services. They also offer a 12-week accelerator program called ReadyMakeGo! that connects new and growing companies with resources, one-one-one mentorship, and networking.

ONLINE CROWDFUNDING PROGRAM

The Local Crowd Monadnock is a community-based crowdfunding platform funded by a USDA

grant that aims to empower individuals in the Monadnock Region to support its businesses, organizations, and initiatives. Crowdfunding is the digital sourcing of small contributions from a large number of people to provide funding for a particular project or campaign. The primary goals are to increase access to capital for both the for-profit and non-profit sectors in the region, create a collaborative community of investors, and cultivate a strong local economy in the region. The program started in 2017; in January 2019, the platform raised \$93,402 from 727 supporter for 14 crowdfunding campaigns. Past campaigns included a co-working space, new infrastructure for local farms, a food truck, and an outdoor classroom for a Montessori School.



Above: A makerspace provides shared tools and resources for craftspeople and small businesses. These may include tools for woodworking, welding (shown above), auto repair, and more.

Photo Courtesy: MAXT Makerspace

APPLICATION FOR LITTLETON

Being that Littleton has a large collective of small trade and artisan businesses and entrepreneurs in the community, the Town has the potential to partner with stakeholders and invest in a business incubator project that could support some of these businesses and encourage new ones to form. Since Littleton has its own chamber of commerce and a population of active, community oriented residents, these efforts could be replicated successfully in town to provide additional avenues for start up capital and financing small business development.

CONCLUSION

In the 2018 report from the North Country Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy Committee, the Littleton Labor Market Area is identified as an area showing competitive advantage in, retail, hospitality, personal/recreation services, manufacturing and agricultural industries. This is thought to be due, in part, to the

success of the Littleton Industrial Park and the Main Street Program. The Town and its local boards and committees should ensure they are implementing policies and practices that grow these sectors, promote wise and sustainable economic development, and ensure a local economic system thrives in the community.