

## CULTIVATING COLHCESTER

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**VISION:** Colchester will ~~engage-provide opportunities for~~ the community in life-long learning and recreation in a healthy environment.

**GOAL:** The community will have educated, adaptive, and engaged citizens that provide a skilled workforce. Colchester will continue to be a recreation destination with ~~opportunities equitable access~~ for all, ~~assisting in~~ making it ~~also~~ a healthy community ~~with equitable access for all~~ to achieve physical, mental, and social wellbeing.

**OBJECTIVE:** Partner with the School District and the community to educate residents to become engaged and productive citizens who lead successful, balanced, and healthy lives.

**OVERVIEW:** Colchester is a desirable place to live because of the wide ranging educational and recreational opportunities available. The Colchester School District delivers elementary and secondary education from its five school facilities with a total capacity of 2,600 students. Saint Michael's College is a small, private, Catholic, residential liberal arts college located within the Fort Ethan Allen neighborhood that has an estimated student population of approximately 1,700 undergraduate students and 250 graduate students. The University of Vermont and Albany College of Pharmacy ~~are also of influence in~~ Colchester with facilities in the Exit 16 neighborhood. Colchester is ~~both~~ impacted by the numerous students of these institutions ~~and as well as~~ the economy these institutions create as major employers.

Colchester is home to many passive or non-structured recreational opportunities that allow residents and visitors to enjoy the outdoors on their own time and at their own speed. As detailed in the Governance Chapter, the Town of Colchester provides diverse recreational opportunities, including many partnered with or housed at its schools. Our physical location and many natural areas provide passive recreational activities such as hiking, walking, bicycling, and swimming. With 27 miles of shoreline, Lake Champlain has one of the most profound impacts on the community. It offers recreational opportunities such as boating, fishing, swimming, birding, ice skating, and other winter sports. Many private recreational opportunities are also provided through community organizations, fitness clubs, studios, and schools. With both abundant educational and recreational offerings, Colchester is well poised to thrive as a healthy community. In looking to our future, ~~having~~ significant resources ~~to draw from~~ will help to address the mental and physical health of our community

### EDUCATION

#### **COLCHESTER SCHOOL DISTRICT**

Colchester historically had a variety of independent school districts ~~as well as in addition to~~ shared facilities with Winooski. School standards implemented in the early 1900s created the first consolidation of these facilities as more modern facilities were required. The Log School House, located now at Airport Park, was an early school constructed in 1815 to serve Colchester's South Beach #14 District on West Lakeshore Drive. The Log School House, moved

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in 2006, ~~will~~ serves as an educational facility for the interpretation of Colchester’s educational and historical past. In 1972 the Colchester School District was formed combining many of these districts and in 1975 Colchester High School opened, ~~ceasing-ending~~ the need to ~~tuition-send~~ high school students to other municipalities.

The Colchester School District is an independent governmental body, politically ~~distinct~~ ~~seperateseparate~~ from the Town of Colchester. The District is governed by an elected School Board. There are five school facilities in Colchester: Union Memorial (Gr.K-2), Porters Point (Gr.K-2), Malletts Bay (Gr.3-5), Colchester Middle School (Gr.6-8), and Colchester High School (Gr.9-12). The District has over 430 employees and is one of the largest employers in Colchester.

**SCHOOL ENROLLMENT**

School	Capacity	Actual 1997-98	Actual 2006-07	Actual 2017-18	Current 2018-19
Union Memorial	320	343	247	244	248
Porters Point	304	284	254	247	241
PK/ <del>EEE</del>	24	22	33	254	264
Malletts Bay	650	532	495	502	482
<b>Total Elem.</b>	<b>1298</b>	<b>1181</b>	<b>1029</b>	<b>1247</b>	<b>1235</b>
Middle School	572	585	562	462	498
High School	761	742	795	641	631
<b>Total Secondary</b>	<b>1333</b>	<b>1327</b>	<b>1357</b>	<b>1103</b>	<b>1129</b>
<b>Total Schools</b>	<b>2631</b>	<b>2508</b>	<b>2386</b>	<b>2350</b>	<b>2364</b>

*Source: Colchester School District and VT Agency of Education and includes Act 166 students that do not attend school in the district.*

A recent proposed shift in the roles and responsibilities of VT public schools demonstrates the continuing evolution and adaptation of public education in our State. The vision of a cradle to career pathway is being explored by leaders in education, government and business. ~~Education is continuing to change and necessitate adaptation.~~ Recent state-wide focus on early education for pre-kindergarten students has ~~swelled-increased~~ the number of students in ~~our~~ early essential education. Many of these children attend private non-school based programs. Colchester has twelve child care centers and nine registered homes (Show on Map XX) that provide a range of services from early education to full and part time daycare for infants to teenagers. Even with a diversity of facilities, vacancy rates in are in single digits with slight improvements for school aged slots at 14% in 2018. As the State of Vermont looks to increase focus on early childhood education, new and expanded child care centers and registered homes should be encouraged.

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90 In 2017 a study conducted by McKibben Demographic for the School District found that  
91 elementary enrollment will begin to stabilize after the 2020-21 school year. The District  
92 anticipates seeking a 14 student, or 0.7%, decline between 2016 and 2022 and a 19 student, or  
93 0.9% decline between 2021 and 2027 however, has not yet seen this decline as of the 2018-  
94 2019 school year. These projections do not take into account students that are tuitioned to  
95 Colchester from other districts or school choice. At this time, retention of students is high with  
96 Colchester receiving more students than it sends out. This relatively minor adjustment in  
97 population is not statistically significant, especially when compared to larger decline in  
98 students seen state-wide throughout Vermont. These projections will also assist the District in  
99 planning for classroom sizes.

101 Colchester's school facilities range in age-date from 1956 to renovations in 2015 completed to  
102 additions in 2000. The School District has begun evaluating options to best meet the needs of  
103 our youngest students (age 3 through second grade). These options include renovations to the  
104 current elementary schools or a new building to serve preschool to grade two. During the term  
105 of this plan, it is anticipated that one of these options may be acted upon by the School District  
106 will address these needs during the term of this plan.

108 While the School District has begun its new strategic planning process, it is anticipated that its  
109 focus will continue to be on its current goals of high quality instruction, strong support  
110 services, maintain one district status, equity, and accountability. The District will continue to  
111 rise to the challenge to do more with limited funding. Under current sState-wide school  
112 funding requirements, public school funding is based in part upon how many students a school  
113 has in an attempt to provide educational equity. As student population goes down, so does a  
114 community's public school funding. The school's operational cost is partially dependent  
115 upon the cost of utilities, supplies, personnel, and benefits and do not generally decrease  
116 proportionally as the student population decreases. Utilities and benefits have seen steady  
117 increases in recent years. With school quality standards and new initiatives, schools are asked  
118 to do more with less. Local educational taxes are often left to make up the difference between  
119 operational costs and state funding. Despite these challenges, Colchester continues to spend  
120 less per pupil than all other schools in our region with our students ranking in the top quarter of  
121 schools in the county based on statewide assessment exams. In 2016, the Vermont Agency of  
122 Education recognized Colchester for being a low spending district with high performance.

124 During the term of this plan, the Town will continue to work with the School District to  
125 preserve and enhance public school educational opportunities within the community with the  
126 continued sharing of resources as is feasible. A continued example of this is the School  
127 Maintenance Facility operated out of the Town's Department of Public Works Facility. Other  
128 examples are a grant to provide students in the Colchester Park and Recreation summer  
129 programs with free and reduced lunch (approximately 31% of Colchester students receive free  
130 or reduced lunch).

132 Education and our schools will continue to be dynamic during the term of this plan and the  
133 anticipated 2019 Strategic Plan will provide a road map for the Colchester School District.  
134 New requirements such as the Flexible Pathways required in Act 77 will allow early or dual  
135 college enrollment for high school students, increased virtual or blended learning

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136 opportunities, more access to career and tech education, personalized learning plans, and adult  
137 diploma programs. An estimated 93% of Colchester High School students currently graduate  
138 with approximately 60% of these students then attending college and 40% entering a trade  
139 school, the military or finding employment.  
140

141 **HIGHER EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES**

142 Colchester’s higher educational institutions provide the area with a trained and educated  
143 workforce that, in turn, enables the creation and attraction of business to Colchester. Lifelong  
144 learning in the community is an educational priority for our community. Also benefiting the  
145 community is its close proximity to half a dozen other higher educational institutions in the  
146 Burlington area. Many other opportunities are available online or through workplaces. —An  
147 example is the University of Southern New Hampshire that maintains its Vermont offices within  
148 the Exit 16 area to support a variety of graduate educational programs provided at local schools  
149 throughout the state. During the term of this plan, it is anticipated that higher education will  
150 continue to become more diversified and delivery of education will happen in a more dispersed  
151 way.  
152

153 **SAINT MICHAEL’S COLLEGE**

154 Saint Michael’s College was founded by Edmundite priests in 1904 as an Institute. It has  
155 grown from just over thirty students to approximately 2000 within the span of its first 100  
156 years. It employs over 580 full time employees including 132 faculty and occupies over 440  
157 acres within Colchester. Traditionally, the school was male with women being admitted as  
158 students only in 1970. Now the school’s student population is 55% female and enrollment has  
159 stabilized. The mission of Saint Michael’s College is to contribute through higher education to  
160 the enhancement of the human person and to the advancement of human culture in the light of  
161 the Catholic faith. This mission has made the College a strong member of the community with  
162 many students and faculty volunteering to serve within the community of Colchester in various  
163 capacities from rescue squads to hosting forums in conjunction with the Vermont Council on  
164 World Affairs.  
165

166 **ALBANY COLLEGE OF PHARMACY AND HEALTH SCIENCES**

167 In 2009, Albany College opened a satellite campus on Water Tower Hill at Exit 16. Founded in  
168 the 1880’s in the New York State capital region, the College provides both undergraduate and  
169 graduate degrees in pharmacy, pharmaceutical sciences and the health sciences as well as and  
170 is engaged in research in drug discovery, disease state management and health outcomes. The  
171 Vermont Campus of Albany College began with a Doctorate of Pharmacy (Pharm D.) degree,  
172 the first such program in Vermont, and added a Master’s Degree in Pharmaceutical Sciences  
173 shortly thereafter. Enrollment has stabilized at approximately 250 students. The Campus  
174 helps to fill a larger regional need for pharmacists as well as foster synergy with other medical  
175 opportunities within the Exit 16 area. While the College does not provide dormitory housing,  
176 the College has established a relationship with Severance Village to place many of its students  
177 in rental units within the growth center. The College will continue to enrich Colchester with its  
178 students and staff.  
179

180 **UNIVERSITY OF VERMONT**

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181 | The University of Vermont has a presence in ~~its research facilities at~~ Colchester at its research  
182 | facilities located at Exit 16. ~~A presence~~ Located on South Park Drive since 2001, the Robert  
183 | Larner, M.D. College of Medicine took over the entire 75,000 sq. ft. facility in 2008. The  
184 | UVM Colchester Research Facility provides research laboratories, offices and conference rooms.  
185 | ~~In 2014,~~ The Vermont Department of Public Health new laboratory building was constructed in  
186 | 2014 adjacent to the Research Facility. These two facilities were subsequently connected and  
187 | currently maintain cooperative arrangements for specialized lab facilities.  
188 |

189 |  
190 |

**RECREATION & WELLBEING**

191 | Colchester’s parks, natural areas, and open lands offer a wide range of passive recreation. ~~These~~  
192 | ~~areas draw many to our community and keep people here.~~ Residents and visitors alike are drawn  
193 | to the many opportunities provided by Colchester’s natural resources. Hiking, snowmobiling,  
194 | four wheeling, mountain biking, and cross country skiing trails span both public and private  
195 | lands. These forms of recreation are unstructured and can be enjoyed by many of varying  
196 | mobility. Hiking or trail walking is a free activity that can be enjoyed anytime for any duration.  
197 | Outdoor recreation not only offers physical fitness but mental benefits as well. More time spent  
198 | in parks and green spaces can decrease depression, stress, and anxiety according to the National  
199 | Recreation and Park Association. With 27 miles of shoreline as detailed in the Natural Heritage  
200 | Chapter, Lake Champlain is a main resource for recreation. Through current Development  
201 | Regulations, most residential developments are required to provide at least passive recreational  
202 | opportunities. Continuing to make ~~the~~ use of our natural beauty available for residents to enjoy  
203 | will improve and sustain our quality of life.  
204 |

205 | Community organizations and clubs such as VAST and the Fellowship of the Wheel work to  
206 | maintain and improve trails for snowmobiling and mountain biking. Colchester will continue to  
207 | work with these organizations to optimize trails and possibly expand existing networks. A  
208 | variety of private industries in Colchester also provide opportunities for fitness. Gyms, fitness  
209 | clubs, studios, and schools provide training and equipment to improve health. A gym and two  
210 | fitness studios are located in Colchester as well as ~~two~~ martial arts studios, two dance studios,  
211 | and a sailing school. Pools, racquetball courts, climbing walls, and other expanded services are  
212 | lacking in the community. The Colchester Parks and Recreation Department, as detailed in the  
213 | Governance Chapter, provides many programs and events with a range of multigenerational  
214 | activities. The Bayside Park Master Plan~~s~~ proposes to provide a public community center with  
215 | fitness amenities. The Master Plan will be implemented incrementally over the term of this plan  
216 | and future plans.  
217 |

218 | Expanded fitness and sporting opportunities, such as indoor ice rinks, are available within the  
219 | larger Burlington area. Saint Michael’s College and the University of Vermont provide other  
220 | recreational opportunities through the use of private venues for sporting events and cultural  
221 | events. These events may be enjoyed by the residents of Colchester and the greater community.  
222 | The Saint Michael’s Ross Sports Center is a significant venue for private events. The Colchester  
223 | Schools also provide venues for sporting and cultural events.  
224 |

225 | Contributing to the wellbeing of our community is a variety of medical facilities. Colchester is  
226 | home to the UVM Laboratory for Clinical Biochemistry Research that includes cardiovascular

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227 research and the Albany College of Pharmacy’s Vermont Campus that has approximately 250  
228 graduate pharmacy students. There are a wide array of health facilities in our community  
229 | including the UVM Medical Center’s Fanny Allen Campus, the UVM Home Health and  
230 Hospice Center, the Vermont’s Health Lab, the UVM Medical Center Family Medicine Clinic, a  
231 surgical center, a fertility clinic, a cosmetic surgery center, and several private practice doctors  
232 and dentists. Over the term of this plan, the medical industry and offerings are expected to  
233 expand within Colchester to serve our residents and the larger community.  
234

235 Health care will be an important component of maintaining the wellbeing of our community,  
236 especially as our population ages, however this is only one aspect of health. The rising cost to  
237 | provide health care and services can be ~~stemmed-counteracted by through~~ improving healthy  
238 behaviors. The Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission’s 2018 ECOS Plan states  
239 that 50% of the deaths in Vermont occur as a result of four chronic diseases: cancer, heart  
240 disease and stroke, type 2 diabetes, and lung disease. Addressing health behaviors such as  
241 tobacco use, lack of physical activity, and poor nutrition can decrease the risk of chronic  
242 | diseases. Continuing to improve ~~community design through more~~ access to recreational  
243 opportunities will serve our town well. Access to healthy food and other basic needs including  
244 education improves wellbeing. In the Natural Heritage Chapter, the importance of our  
245 agricultural operations in providing local fresh food is highlighted. Markets, community  
246 sustained agriculture, and other partnerships to increase food options and access should continue  
247 to be encouraged.  
248

249 The physical and mental health issues facing our community are not isolated to Colchester. The  
250 national opioid epidemic has resulted from increased substance abuse across all demographics.  
251 | ~~The impact of s~~Substance abuse ~~impacts~~-spans well beyond the immediate user to family and  
252 work places. Crimes associated with substance abuse are up statewide. Treatment and recovery  
253 programs and related services are necessary to address this epidemic and should be  
254 | accommodated wherever feasible. Mental illness and disease ~~are~~ also recognized as impacting  
255 our community more significantly as isolation increases and access to services are limited by few  
256 options and long waits. While recognizing and treating both substance abuse and mental illness  
257 is important and should be destigmatized, prevention is needed. Providing more spaces and  
258 opportunities for social connectedness reduces isolation, depression and loneliness. These are  
259 often risk factors for substance abuse as well as mental illness. By continuing to provide  
260 inclusive recreational programing, informal spaces such as parks, and community events such as  
261 | Winter Festival and the Fourth of July, Colchester can sustain and grow both relational and  
262 collective connectedness. Over the term of this plan, new options for improving connectedness  
263 should be evaluated including dog parks, caregiver support, free arts and cultural events.  
264

265 Colchester’s quality of life and the opportunities offered in our community draw people to our  
266 town and often to stay. Our schools, parks, natural areas, and recreational opportunities  
267 contribute to our physical, mental, and social wellbeing. While Colchester must rise to face many  
268 of the health challenges our state and country face, our community has many existing resources  
269 to draw from and build upon to adapt.  
270

271  
272 **POLICIES**

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- 273 1. The Town should seek opportunities for mutually beneficial sharing of services,  
274 facilities and personnel with the School District.  
275 2. Lifelong learning in the community is an educational priority.  
276 3. ~~The~~ Colchester School District Vision/Strategic Plan will provide the goals for the  
277 school district and the -community with regard to K-12 education during the term of  
278 this plan.  
279 4. Higher educational facilities, such as St. Michael’s College and the Albany College of  
280 Pharmacy, are an asset to the community and should continue to be supported by the  
281 community.  
282 5. The Development Regulations should continue to promote passive recreation and  
283 connectivity of trail networks.  
284 6. Opportunities for new and expanded medical uses should be allowed within the village  
285 mixed use, business, and growth center districts.  
286 7. Markets, community sustained agriculture, and other partnerships to increase food  
287 options and access should continue to be encouraged.  
288 8. Increased public gathering spaces and opportunities for social connectedness, such as  
289 events and programing, should be encouraged through development review and Town  
290 programing.  
291 9. Create and encourage health care partnerships.  
292 ~~8.~~10. As the State of Vermont looks to increase focus on early childhood education,  
293 new and expanded child care centers and registered homes should be encouraged.  
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**ACTIONS**

- 298 1. A comprehensive plan for elementary educational facilities in Colchester is expected to  
299 be advanced during the term of this plan. At such time as the School District requests,  
300 the Planning Commission should become engaged in reviewing any regulatory barriers to  
301 necessary school improvements.  
302 2. As higher education continues to become more diversified and delivery of education more  
303 dispersed, the Development Regulations should be examined during the term of the plan to  
304 ensure these uses are widely allowed.  
305 3. During the term of this plan, the first phases of the Bayside Park Master Plan are  
306 anticipated to be implemented resulting in increased recreational offerings benefiting the  
307 community.  
308 4. Health and fitness clubs should continue to be widely allowed in the Development  
309 Regulations as these regulations are re-evaluated over the term of this plan.  
310 5. Changes to the Development Regulations should be evaluated for community health  
311 impacts. Rezoning and other changes that would result in negative health impacts  
312 should not be permitted.  
313 6. Over the term of this plan, new options for improving social connectedness should be  
314 evaluated including dog parks, caregiver support, free arts and cultural events.