

## WHO WE ARE

**VISION:** As Colchester continues to grow, our diverse cultural and historic resources will continue to define our character as we ~~look to incorporate new cultural amenities and traditions to ensure all are welcome~~ new residents, cultures and traditions into d and a part of our the community.

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**GOAL:** ~~To s~~Support, preserve, and expand Colchester's one-of-a-kind history and diverse culture ~~while while maintaining and improving our desirable community establishing a more desirable place to live and explore.~~

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**OBJECTIVE:** Ensure equity and involvement as Colchester ~~continues to grow~~ while preserving our historic resources and growing our cultural assets.

**OVERVIEW:** Colchester is a diverse community rich in history with a variety of cultural amenities. Our population and cultural ~~amenities assets~~ help to define the Town's community and create a sense of place. ~~As Colchester continues to grow, it~~ will be challenged with preserving and enhancing these ~~amenities features~~ while incorporating new resources and cultures into the future. The following is not meant to catalog Colchester, but rather to provide a context ~~for~~ the role these resources play in the current community and in planning for Colchester's ~~future~~.

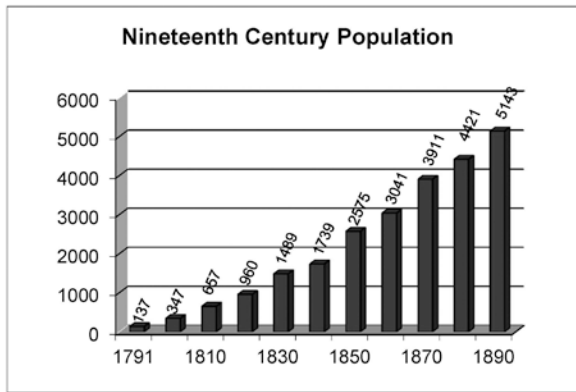
### OUR PAST

Colchester benefits from a well-documented ~~and preserved~~ historical record. The Town is fortunate to have an active Historical Society that is a resource for researchers, ~~as well as a~~ An active steward of several of Colchester's historic buildings, ~~the~~ the Historical Society maintains the Parsonage in the Village as a museum and meeting space and the School House at Airport Park as a seasonal interpretative museum and information center. The Society is a steward for Colchester's history and its efforts to promote and educate local history should be supported. The Burnham Library is another local resource for historical research. Several books have been written on Colchester including: *Colchester, Vermont from Ice Cap to Interstate* by Dr. Ruth Wright, *Look Around Colchester and Milton, Vermont* ~~published prepared~~ by the ~~Colchester~~ Chittenden County Historical Society, *Colchester Center the Evolution of a Village* by Kenneth Degree, and ~~both~~ *Images of America... Colchester* ~~and~~ *Chronicles of Colchester* by Inge Schaefer. A variety of other organizations provide access to primary historical records such as letters, maps, and deeds. These include the Colchester Town Clerk's Office, the University of Vermont Special Collections, St. Michaels College's archives, and the Vermont Historical Society.

Colchester's location has made it a desirable place for settlement since prehistoric times. Colchester was chartered in 1763 and was previously inhabited by native peoples. At the time the US Census was first taken in 1791, the Town's population numbered 137. Historic records lack information on demographics; ~~however,~~ it can be gleaned from the records that Colchester was a rural farming community primarily settled by families of European descent born in southern New England.

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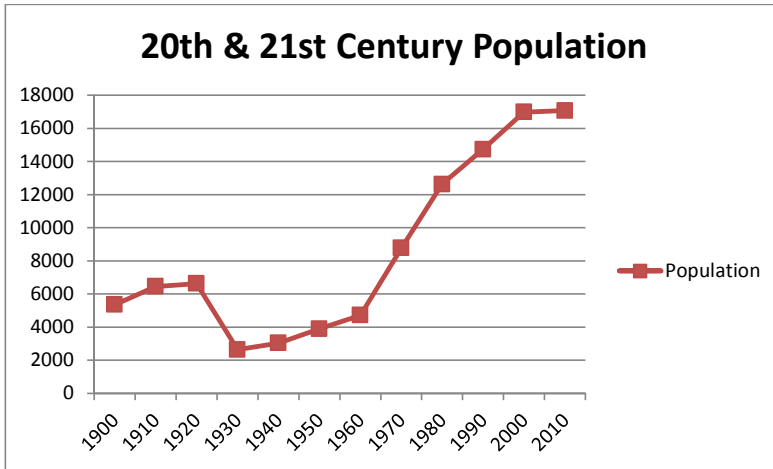
47  
48 Agricultural censuses performed during the mid-nineteenth century provide historical  
49 | information on farming operations in Colchester, which includes family possessions, farm  
50 | yields and acreage. These historic censuses can be found at the University of Vermont's  
51 | Bailey-Howe Library in Burlington and are online:  
52 | <http://www.uvm.edu/~hp206/2010/Colchester/Colchester/census.html>. For the majority of the  
53 | nineteenth century, Colchester's population saw a steady increase that mirrored statewide  
54 | trends, with the exception that Colchester did not see a significant decrease in population  
55 | attributable to the Civil War.  
56



57

58  
59 *Source: U.S. Census Bureau - Census of Population & Housing, 2000 Summary File 1 Table P1*  
60

61 Colchester's population began to blossom in the late nineteenth century as industrialization  
62 | along the Winooski River brought mills and workers to Town. When the urban center of  
63 | Colchester, what is now known as the City of Winooski, separated from the rest of Colchester  
64 | in 1922, it removed two-thirds of the community's population and its industry, as reflected in  
65 | the 1930 Census. The "new" Colchester remained relatively rural and agrarian in keeping with  
66 | its historic character. During the early 1900s, the Town ~~did see saw~~ significant growth in its  
67 | summer seasonal community due to its lakeside location. This seasonal population growth is  
68 | not reflected in the census; however, Colchester's year-round population continued to grow  
69 | steadily through 1960.  
70



71

72 Source: U.S. Census Bureau - Census of Population & Housing, 2010 Summary File

73

74 Colchester’s population nearly doubled in the 1960s with the completion of Interstate 89 and  
75 the introduction of International Business Machines in the neighboring Town of Essex. This  
76 was the beginning of Colchester’s suburbanization as it quickly became a bedroom community  
77 for the greater Burlington area. The population increase seen during this decade was primarily  
78 from in-migration as residential developments surged and Colchester’s natural amenities made  
79 it an attractive place to live. During the 1970s, the rate of population growth slowed only  
80 slightly.

81

82 During the 1980s and 1990s, the Town’s population grew by an average of 218 persons per  
83 year, compared with an average of 395 persons per year during the preceding 20-year period.  
84 Colchester’s annual growth rate during this time period surpassed that of County and State.  
85 The Town accounted for 13% of the County’s total population growth during the 1980s, and  
86 15.2% during the 1990s—surpassed in that decade only by Williston. As of the 2010 Census,  
87 Colchester ranked fourth in the state in population, behind Burlington, Essex, and Rutland  
88 City/South Burlington, making it the third largest community in Chittenden County, and the  
89 second most populous town in the state.

90

91 The landscape of Colchester has changed significantly over the centuries. Remnants of  
92 Colchester’s past have begun to disappear from the landscape. Gone are many of the  
93 prehistoric and early historic sites. Quickly vanishing from the landscape are structures and  
94 features associated with the agricultural history of the landscape. As new development takes  
95 place, Colchester’s pre-European contact sites and historic buildings and structures should be  
96 preserved. Archaeological sites offer insights into the most distant past for which historic  
97 records often do not exist and also provide information about more recent people and activities  
98 that were not documented. As with archaeological sites, significant historic structures should  
99 be preserved, although some structures may not be worth preserving because of their condition  
100 or age (less than fifty years old). Preserving historic structures often requires repair or  
101 rehabilitation to provide continued use.

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103 | Pre-contact and historic period archaeological sites, ~~as~~ along with historic buildings and  
104 | structures, constitute Colchester's rich and diverse heritage resources. The State of Vermont  
105 | Division of Historic Preservation has published a State Register of Historic Places that lists the  
106 | historic structures and properties in the Town of Colchester. The list includes 40 properties  
107 | which range from large complexes such as Fanny Allen Hospital and Fort Ethan Allen, to  
108 | historic houses, and even bridges. Fort Ethan Allen is the only National Register of Historic  
109 | Places District in Colchester. The State also maintains a State Archaeological Inventory which  
110 | lists known archaeological sites in Colchester. ~~Several of Colchester's archaeological sites are~~  
111 | ~~also included on the State Register for their significance.~~ The State developed a predictive  
112 | model for archaeological sites that has helped identify potential sites. Identification and  
113 | protection of historic sites is generally required as part of the State's Act 250 permitting  
114 | system.  
115 |

116 | ~~Once historic cultural resources are gone they can never be replaced.~~ For certain eras of  
117 | history, cultural resources may be the only clues to our past. Destroying cultural resources can  
118 | therefore permanently destroy opportunities to understand and interpret our history. As  
119 | Colchester's history continues to develop, cultural resources that represent the community's  
120 | past should be recognized and preserved even as we plan for the Town's future. The Town  
121 | should encourage the preservation and rehabilitation of ~~all~~ historic structures in Colchester  
122 | through its regulations, policies, and budget. Changes to historic structures should be  
123 | sympathetic to the structure and, ~~to the extent possible, in accordance with~~ consider the  
124 | Secretary of Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties. Development should  
125 | be sensitive to Colchester's historic and archaeological sites and structures as these serve as  
126 | visible reminders of the community's past. The Town should explore potential opportunities  
127 | for funding preservation projects with not-for-profit organizations as well as State and Federal  
128 | partners.  
129 |

130 | **OUR COMMUNITY BY THE NUMBERS**

131 | Colchester is ~~square~~ 58.657 square miles with roughly 36 square miles of land making it the  
132 | 13<sup>th</sup> largest municipality by area and approximately fourth largest by population (considering  
133 | the Town of Essex also includes counting the Village and Town of Essex Junction) combined  
134 | per ACS 2015 data). The 2016 US Census Bureau's estimated year-round population for  
135 | Colchester was 17,319. Over the past decade, Colchester has continued to see slight  
136 | population gains despite the state-wide trend toward population decrease. While Colchester's  
137 | population has become more self-sustaining through natural rates of increase, the impacts of  
138 | rapid population growth experienced during the late twentieth century will continue to have a  
139 | significant impact on the demographics of the community. Colchester's population growth has  
140 | stabilized with natural increases, or births, driving population gains while migration becomes a  
141 | negative factor as out-migration has increased. ~~Outmigration can be to a nearby community or,~~  
142 | ~~as people have been doing for decades around the country, moving where they find employment.~~  
143 | ~~We have an attractive community and school district and as new properties are built and existing~~  
144 | ~~ones go on the market we gain new and sometimes returning residents.~~

145 | The Town accounts for approximately 10% of the county's population.  
146 |

147 | Colchester's population is aging ~~which,~~ mirroring state and national trends. The median age  
148 | of Town residents in 2015 was estimated by the Census to be 34.2 years: younger than the

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149 County average of 36.3 and State average of 42.4. Local birth rates have been declining, and  
150 there has been a decrease in the number of younger households. Colchester, like the rest of the  
151 state, has seen a decline in younger workers (20 to 34 years) between 2010 and 2015 however  
152 regionally these younger households are expected to grow by 8.5% through 2020. Colchester  
153 has seen a trend in recent years toward growth in two age groups: 20-24 and 55 plus.  
154 Retirement age individuals now make up more than 10% of the Town's population. The  
155 largest age group in Colchester continues to be 35-54 making up about 26% of the population.  
156 This age group represents family households that are more likely to buy up in the housing  
157 market and have children at home. Growth in the Town's senior population is expected to  
158 continue as the Baby Boom generation ages, suggesting the need for more in-home services to  
159 allow residents to age in place.  
160

161 | Colchester's population is gradually becoming more ethnically and racially diverse. In 2010,  
162 the Census estimated that 4% of the Town's population was nonwhite. This is due in part to the  
163 ~~presence efforts~~ of the Vermont Refugee Resettlement Center in Colchester. "Special needs"  
164 populations are persons that may require special living arrangements or housing, including the  
165 elderly, disabled, and low-income. In 2015, 9.1% of the community was identified as living  
166 with a disability. Approximately 10% of residents lived below the poverty line in 2015. Given  
167 Colchester's aging population, the number of persons with mobility impairments and  
168 disabilities as well as with restricted incomes is expected to increase during the term of this  
169 plan.  
170

171 The average size of Colchester households has been decreasing since at least 1990, but remains  
172 slightly larger than that of the County and State. In 2015, the average size of all households in  
173 Town was 2.37 persons with 66% of these households being family households. Between 2010  
174 and 2015 the Town's household population grew by 5.5% with estimated household growth  
175 (4.6%) exceeding population growth (1.5%). One and two person households ~~as well as and~~  
176 households with residents exceeding 65 years in age continue to grow more so than any other  
177 household types. The increase in renter households in recent years has impacted this trend to  
178 smaller households ~~with because renter households have~~ average sizes of 2.23 persons per  
179 household compared to owned units with 2.4 persons.  
180

181 | Traditional households, ~~those family households with two spouses and affiliated children,~~  
182 continue to decrease (25% in 2000 to 18.6% in 2010). Colchester has a higher percentage of  
183 minority households (4%) than most towns ~~however but~~ lower than the County average in 2010  
184 of 5.3%. Also of note—, in 2010 nearly 11% of Colchester's population lived in group  
185 quarters, including student housing residents at Saint Michael's College and the University of  
186 Vermont, as well as Green Mountain Nursing Home residents (who were omitted in the 2000  
187 census, but included in the 2010 census count.) It should be noted that group quarters are not  
188 included in household population and the University of Vermont no longer maintains groups  
189 quarters in Colchester.  
190

191 A positive local trend is continued growth in Colchester's reported median household income,  
192 estimated in 2015 at \$67,803 as compared to the County median of \$65,350 and the State  
193 median of \$55,176 (Census). Since 1980, Colchester's reported median household income has  
194 consistently tracked higher than county and state medians. 2015 estimates suggest that the

195 largest income growth locally occurred in higher income brackets (above \$100,000). With  
196 regard to the above mentioned, the median income reported for Colchester households is not  
197 representative of annual wages paid to Colchester ~~residents or~~ workers.  
198

199 A variety of trends in Colchester’s population suggest it will continue to be a vibrant and  
200 dynamic community. The majority of Colchester’s adult population has at least some college  
201 education. In 2010 it was estimated that nearly 50% of local residents possessed a college  
202 degree. While Colchester’s population is growing at a more stable and self-sustaining rate, it  
203 remains dynamic and increasingly tied to regional, state, and even nationwide trends. The  
204 growing number of smaller households will continue to drive the need for more housing with a  
205 projection of 40 to 50 new households a year ~~projected~~. An aging population will impact the  
206 type of housing desired. As Colchester grows and transforms, the composition of the  
207 community will have a significant impact on the Town’s future land use and development, and  
208 what sort of community Colchester becomes.  
209  
210

211 **OUR CULTURE**

212 Colchester's location has made it a desirable place for settlement since prehistoric times. Before  
213 Europeans first explored Vermont, the area was inhabited by native peoples. During the French  
214 and Indian War the lands that would become Colchester were disputed, with the French and  
215 British warring over the territory. When the war came to a close in 1763 the Town of Colchester  
216 was chartered by the British and soldiers were compensated with land grants. Given its history,  
217 Vermont has a unique blend of European cultures with English and Protestant roots as well as  
218 French and Catholic influences. Colchester is no exception to this, being home to many different  
219 religious institutions. Historic records lack information on demographics, however it can be  
220 gleaned from the records that Colchester was a rural farming community primarily settled by  
221 families of European descent born in southern New England. This consistency would hold until  
222 the mid-twentieth century with the in-migration of the 1950's and 1960's seen post World War II  
223 as the region boomed with the growth of the Essex International Business Machine facility.

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224 The community has a variety of cultural facilities and active social groups. Cultural facilities  
225 range from theaters such as St. Michael’s Playhouse and Colchester High School to private  
226 camps such as Brown Ledge Camp or Camp Dudley. There are also a variety of community  
227 events such as the Winter Carnival, the Fourth of July Pparade and fireworks, Green Up Day,  
228 and Town Meeting. In the Town Plan Survey, these events were the most highly attended  
229 Colchester functions with the Parade surpassing all events. Social groups include formal  
230 facilities like the American Legion with other groups like the Rotary and Lions Clubs meeting  
231 in a variety of places. The Burnham Memorial Library in Colchester Village is a town-owned  
232 cultural facility detailed in the Governance Chapter. The Library’s Long-Range Plan directs the  
233 library’s services and provides guidance for its growth including serving as a clearinghouse for  
234 information on arts, culture, and related events in Colchester.  
235

236 A variety of private cultural centers and groups include Colchester’s various religious  
237 organizations. These organizations include the Islamic Center at Fort Ethan Allen, Day Break  
238 Church, Jehovah’s Witnesses Congregation, the United Church of Colchester, St. Andrew’s

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239 Episcopal Church, Our Lady of Grace, Holy Cross Church, Chapel of Saint Michael the  
240 Archangel, and Catholic Charities. The Catholic Church has been perhaps one of the most  
241 active religious organizations with a senior housing project on Church Road and several  
242 cemeteries. The Catholic Church also had a role in the establishment of Fanny Allen Hospital  
243 and Saint Michael's College. These organizations engage in community-building by providing  
244 services, events, and contributing to charitable causes. Religious organizations also preserve  
245 and sustain cultural and ethnic traditions. As Colchester continues to grow more diverse, these  
246 organizations will be important in facilitating a sense of community while supporting cultural  
247 diversity.

248  
249 The Vermont Refugee Resettlement Center operates out of the Fort neighborhood while  
250 impacting the larger [region](#). While refugees are settled in a variety of communities, mostly  
251 within the greater Burlington area, Colchester is the center for educational and outreach services  
252 for the diverse ethnic groups served by the Center. In 2016 approximately 400 refugees were  
253 resettled in Vermont through this program. The Pine Island Community Farm is a project of the  
254 Vermont Land Trust that supports New American farmers raising goats, chickens, and garden  
255 vegetables. This collaborative farm off of Pine Island Road provides for individual farm  
256 enterprises in which each owner runs the enterprise as a small business. Demand has outpaced  
257 supply with about 60 families currently [being](#) served by the garden plots. As the Community  
258 Farm continues to grow and adapt, it is anticipated that there will be more [events](#) at the facility,  
259 such as the harvest festival hosted in 2018. The Vermont Council on World Affairs (VCWA)  
260 provides educational programs, as well as hosts delegates from around the world. Both the  
261 Town of Colchester and St. Michael's College are partners with the VCWA and have helped to  
262 host various visiting delegations. The future of Colchester is likely to be more culturally and  
263 ethnically diversified and the work of organizations should be supported as providing exposure  
264 to and education on various cultures.

265  
266 As the community becomes more diverse, the Town should look to preserve and expand upon  
267 its cultural facilities, including private facilities, in order to sustain and enhance the  
268 community's quality of life. Summer camps for children and seasonal cottages contribute to  
269 the Town's tourism economy and the community's sense of place as a lakeside community.  
270 The Fort area continues to evolve as a cultural center for the Town with the Elley-Long Music  
271 Center serving as the home for the Vermont Youth Symphony Orchestra. Private development  
272 of cultural facilities, including religious facilities, should continue to be encouraged. Cultural  
273 facilities should continue to be integrated into the existing fabric of the community [as well](#)  
274 [as and be](#) incorporated in multi-use areas.

275  
276 Colchester's historic and cultural properties are opportunities for economic development through  
277 expanded tourism and adaptive reuse of historic buildings. Historic buildings serve as attractions  
278 and destination places as they create a unique sense of place. To the extent possible, State and  
279 Federal Programs such as the Certified Local Government Program should be tapped to assist in  
280 developing local tourism and reuse projects. A recent example of adaptive reuse is the Log  
281 School House now located at Airport Park serving as a seasonal interpretive museum and  
282 informational center. Efforts to encourage the adaptive reuse of historic properties should be  
283 continued. The current zoning for the Fort Ethan Allen area provides several exemptions for the  
284 renovation, reuse, and rehabilitation of historic properties in exchange for preserving the historic

285 fabric of the property. Similar zoning may be looked to for Colchester Village to incentivize the  
 286 reuse of historic buildings. These historic resources help to define the landscape of Colchester  
 287 and should continue to be utilized in defining the community’s future.  
 288

289 **OUR FUTURE**

290 With no accepted statewide population projections or standard predictive population models in  
 291 place for Vermont towns, the best source of data for inter-census population estimates may be  
 292 the U.S. Census Bureau. Statistical sampling associated with the American Community Survey  
 293 of the U.S. Census continues to have larger margins of error for smaller communities, such as  
 294 Colchester. The Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Development has a high and  
 295 low projection for population from 2013 while Chittenden County Regional Planning has a  
 296 2017 projection. Locally, the Colchester School District produced a 2017 cohort-based  
 297 population forecasts by McKibben Demographics and the Colchester Community Health and  
 298 Wellness Center 2016 Needs Assessment used ESRI projections. Below is a summary of the  
 299 various population projections.  
 300  
 301  
 302

| Population Projections and Forecasts  |        |                      |               |        |               |
|---|--------|----------------------|---------------|--------|---------------|
|   | Census | Projected Population |               |        |               |
|   | 2010   | 2015                 | 2020          | 2025   | 2030          |
| <b>Logarithmic Projection/Census (2012)</b>   | 17,067 | 17,800               | <b>18,163</b> | 18,492 | <b>18,792</b> |
| <b>VT ACCD (2013)</b>   |        |                      |               |        |               |
| <b>Low (2000s in-migration rate)</b>  | 17,067 | ---                  | <b>17,206</b> | ---    | <b>16,981</b> |
| <b>High (1990s in-migration rate)</b>   | 17,067 | ---                  | <b>17,621</b> | ---    | <b>17,901</b> |
| <b>VT DHCD/Bowen/ESRI (2014)*</b>   | 17,067 | 17,297               | <b>17,799</b> | ---    | ---           |
| <b>GreenPlay LLC/ESRI (2016)</b>  | 17,067 | 17,777               | <b>18,351</b> | ---    | ---           |
| <b>Allen Brooks &amp; Minor/ESRI (2017)**</b>   | 17,067 | 17,736               | <b>18,291</b> | ---    | ---           |
| <b>Colchester SD/McKibben (2017)</b>  | 17,067 | 17,540               | <b>17,880</b> | 18,030 | ---           |
| <b>CCRPC/RSG/EPR (2017)</b>   | 17,067 | 17,383               | <b>17,703</b> | 17,953 | <b>18,125</b> |
| *Based on Colchester's estimated 2015 share (10.7%) of projected county population. **As reported for 2016, 2021. |        |                      |               |        |               |

303  
 304 The more recent and detailed McKibben 2017 and the CCRPC forecasts appear to best match  
 305 current trends. According to these forecasts, the local population will reach 18,000 (an increase  
 306 of 500 to 600 residents) around 2025. Population growth exceeded 1.5% annually in the 1990s  
 307 and then slowed to .05% in the 2000s. During the term of this plan, population growth is  
 308 anticipated to remain positive but hover around .03% within Colchester and less than half a  
 309 percent county-wide. Colchester’s population will likely continue to follow county  
 310 demographic trends over the next twenty years more so than the state’s ~~that~~ which may trend  
 311 toward negative growth. While there may be minor room for Colchester to affect its  
 312 composition, Colchester’s population will continue to shift to an older demographic with fewer  
 313 traditional households. Colchester’s population will continue to be dynamic, with higher  
 314 percentages of non-native ~~and minority~~ residents. If Colchester continues to hold its place as an



315 employment center endowed with higher learning institutions, its population will also continue  
316 to be more highly educated and more affluent than the greater northwest Vermont region.  
317

318 In looking to Colchester's future, it will be important to continue to address equity.  
319 Colchester's population is becoming more diverse and income inequities continue to exist. All  
320 members of our community should have access to and use of our economic, environmental,  
321 and social assets. Civic engagement, as detailed in the Governance Chapter, is essential to our  
322 Town and opportunities for engagement and outreach should continually be assessed and  
323 potential barriers addressed. To ensure that Colchester is welcoming to all, under-represented  
324 populations should be celebrated and measures taken to provide higher rates of inclusion. The  
325 Town's [web page includes transition options to help facilitate such inclusion, and online](#)  
326 [presence should continue to be evaluated for](#) accessibility and translation [tools or](#) services for  
327 documents and meetings [can be](#) made available as necessary. As detailed in other sections of  
328 this plan, equitable access to education, transportation, services, and environmental and public  
329 health are important for all community members.  
330

331  
332 **POLICIES**

- 333 1. To the extent possible, the Town should encourage important archaeological sites  
334 be identified and avoided [by development; and](#) thereby [preserved-preserving the](#)  
335 [sites](#) for future generations and reducing development costs.
- 336 2. Colchester's historic and cultural properties are opportunities for economic  
337 development through expanded tourism and adaptive reuse of historic buildings. The  
338 Town should encourage the preservation and rehabilitation of [all](#) historic structures in  
339 Colchester through its regulations, policies, and budget. Changes to historic structures  
340 should be sympathetic to the structure and, [to the extent possible, in accordance with](#)  
341 [consider](#) the Secretary of Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties.
- 342 3. Community organizations, such as the Historical Society, that serve as stewards of  
343 the Town's historical and cultural resources are important community assets and  
344 should be sustained.
- 345 4. Private development of cultural facilities, including religious facilities, should  
346 continue to be encouraged as they are important in facilitating a sense of  
347 community while supporting cultural diversity.
- 348 5. As the community becomes more diverse, the Town should look to preserve and  
349 expand upon its cultural facilities, including private facilities, in order to sustain  
350 and enhance the community's quality of life.
- 351 6. The work of organizations providing exposure to and education on various cultures  
352 should continue to be supported.
- 353 7. Cultural and historical events should continue to be celebrated, promoted, and  
354 expanded upon.
- 355 8. Opportunities for engagement and outreach should continually be assessed and  
356 potential barriers addressed.
- 357 9. Mobility impairments and other special needs will continue to be addressed and  
358 accommodated.

359 **ACTIONS**  
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1. The Town should explore participating in the Certified Local Government program and other State or Federal historic preservation programs during the term of this plan.
2. The State Register and National Register listings for the Town should be used to assess the significance of historic buildings and structures. This inventory should be maintained and updated to provide accurate documentation of the Town's historic resources.
3. The Town's online presence should continue to be evaluated for accessibility and translation services for documents and meetings made available as necessary.

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