

↑ ATTRACTING & RETAINING NEW RESIDENTS

A Strategy for the Adirondack Park
and its Communities

Year 3 Progress Report – Summer 2024



In a word ... Momentum!

Attracting young people to the Adirondacks and enticing local youth to stay or return after college are economic and community necessities. Every Adirondack community feels the relative absence of residents ages 25 – 45, missing their energy and enthusiasm and presence in the workforce.

Three years ago, the Northern Forest Center launched the *Attracting New Residents Strategy*, a comprehensive approach to guide Adirondack communities to assess their assets, identify areas needing investment, and take action. We're excited with the response from hundreds of community members participating in learning sessions, affinity groups and on the ground projects.

In the past year, we've had the privilege of working with many Adirondack communities that are focused on making improvements today that will help them thrive in the long run.

We have helped them toward their goals by securing significant public funding to support initiatives in **Tupper Lake, Chestertown, and other communities**; by breathing new life into a decades-long effort to construct a municipal sewer system in **Elizabethtown**; by investing in new trails and other outdoor recreation improvements in **Indian Lake, Keene and Keene Valley, Old Forge, and North Creek**; and spearheading community projects in **Tupper Lake, Elizabethtown, and Chestertown**. We have coordinated a young professionals' group to build strong networks **across the region** and engaged hundreds of people to address key issues and learn from each other.

Alongside these community-driven projects, we made major advancements toward our housing development goals with projects underway in **Elizabethtown** (at least 5 units) and **Tupper Lake** (10 units). Ensuring availability of quality housing for young people who want to stay in or move to the Adirondacks is essential for community revitalization.

Looking Ahead

Many of these projects are multi-year endeavors, and Adirondack communities have shown they are ready to dive in and make improvements that will help attract and retain young residents. The Center's mission is to create bold possibilities that give rise to vibrant communities – and we see it happening in the Adirondacks. **Thank you for your support and collaboration in this ongoing work!**

The Center's Adirondack Team,

Leslie Karasin, Program Director

Adam Bailey, Program Manager

Maura Adams, Director of Community Investment

Rebecca Hession, Development Officer

Rob Riley, President



The Attracting New Residents strategy supports community revitalization through (top to bottom) funding for community recreation, networking for young professionals, rebranding for communities, and housing redevelopment.

Digging in, Helping out Young Couple Puts Down Roots

Adam and Sawyer Bailey are among the lucky ones.

“When we started searching for a place to live within a half hour of Sawyer’s office, there wasn’t much for rent,” said Adam, who is the Center’s Adirondack program manager. Sawyer is executive director of AdkAction, based in Keeseville.

“There were even fewer options in our price range. We scheduled one day for house tours and when we pulled in here, we knew it was the spot,” he said of their fixer-upper on Water Street in Elizabethtown.

That was two years ago. “The Adirondacks feel like home for us now,” said Sawyer.

“There’s a real sense of housing insecurity. Young workers have decent incomes but can’t find a decent house that’s not way over budget.”

**– Adam Bailey,
Adirondack Program
Manager for the Center,
Elizabethtown, NY**

“We’re settling into a long campaign on the house and yard. We put in new windows and planted asparagus. We’re putting down roots! The fact that we could buy or rent was a privilege.”

They dug into community as well. They join volunteer days at the E’town Social Center, keep an eye on water quality through a local group, and often join other mountain bikers or hikers on the trail. After a short stint on the planning board, Adam was asked to join the town council to complete an open term and has been really enjoying this new role in public service.

“We both love it here and are investing in it in a variety of ways,” said Adam.

“Adam and I both feel very service-minded,” said Sawyer. “I work for a community development non-profit and it adds such meaning and purpose to my day-to-day. I keep my eyes open for ways to contribute.”

Elizabethtown is less of a travel and second-home destination than some other towns, and it has the county offices, a hospital, and other large employers to attract young

workers. “You want to be part of something,” said Adam. “It feels like there is something happening here all the time. Even people who have lived here for a long time think we can still improve. As a community we deserve good things; there’s an aspirational mindset.”



Sawyer and Adam Bailey are making big contributions to Adirondack communities.

Housing is Key for Young Professionals

As part of his work for the Center, Adam helps lead the Adirondack Young Professionals group along with his colleagues Leslie Karasin, Adirondack program director for the Center, and Jess Grant, a volunteer for the Adirondack Land Trust.

“Our events are great opportunities to interact,” explained Adam.

“Housing constantly comes up in conversation,” said Adam. “I hear stories all the time about how people are patching things together. They’re worrying their landlord will turn their rental into AirBnB. Or they have a 9-month rental and have to figure things out for the summer. There’s a real sense of housing insecurity. Young workers have decent incomes but can’t find a decent house that’s not way over budget.”

“Availability of affordable or mid-market housing is step one to getting people to move here,” said Adam. “We can’t have a workforce without it.”

Left: The Young Professionals group gathers at Echo Farm.



Activities & Accomplishments

Laying Foundation for Community Development

Community revitalization comes from success on many fronts, using key building blocks to strengthen the community from within. Through the *Attracting New Residents* strategy, the Center has laid the foundation for community development by:

Engaging Community Members

- Engaged more than 500 people with communications and messaging related to Attracting New Residents.
- Built a network of nearly 150 young professionals to foster personal and work relationships.

Building Affinity Groups

- Hosted more than 20 forums for regional discussions on key topics including housing, downtown revitalization, community branding, and a roundtable on the technical economy. More than 450 people have engaged for at least one session, and many people attend regularly.

Hosting Webinars, Shared Learning

- Hosted nearly 1,000 participants in a dozen community investment webinars, in addition to others on outdoor recreation and forest economy.

Securing Public Funding

- Since starting the Attracting New Residents strategy in 2021, the Center has helped secure grants or access to federal and state funding totaling more than \$11 million, providing critical funds for community development. The most recent awards include:
 - » A \$125,000 Smart Growth grant through NY DEC that will enable the Center to support predevelopment work on housing projects in multiple Adirondack communities;
 - » Support for over \$500,000 of others' NY Smart Growth awards;
 - » A \$10,750 grant to help Chestertown pursue a National Historic District; and
 - » An \$800,000 Restore NY award to the Village of Tupper Lake to support the Center's redevelopment at 179 Park Street.

Redeveloping Property to Create Quality Housing

- Purchased Hale House and the adjacent Law Library in Elizabethtown to develop at least five apartments in these underutilized historic buildings within walkable distance to downtown, schools, and major employers.
- Concluded predevelopment and design work and secured critical state and local permits, along with a Restore NY award, to begin demolition and redevelopment at 179 Park Street and 185 Park Street, where we will build a new, 9-unit apartment building and renovate a single-family home, respectively.



Architectural elevations show how the exterior of 179 Park Street will look when the new building is completed.

Awarding Outdoor Recreation Grants

- Through the Adirondack Community Recreation Alliance, granted more than \$70,000 to 25 impactful local projects, helping to strengthen community-based outdoor recreation. Some of the most recent projects funded include:
 - » Building the Crow Hill Loop Trail in Indian Lake as part of the town's plan to develop multi-use trails near its Ski Hut facility;
 - » Constructing the last section of trail that will connect Keene and Keene Valley without using busy roadways;

Continues on next page.

Activities & Accomplishments, continued

Recreation Grants, continued

- » Upgrading trailhead amenities and the mountain bike system at McCauley Mountain in Old Forge, including new trail signage and expanding the skills park at the site;
- » Updating wayfinding and signage for trails at and near the North Creek Ski Bowl Park and connecting to the North Creek business district and the historic riverwalk trail;
- » Revitalizing the 20-year-old informational kiosk about paddling opportunities in Old Forge with physical improvements and new interpretive and informational panels.

Spearheading Community Development Projects

- Transformed the Elizabethtown municipal wastewater project from “never going to happen” to “we can do this!” We anticipate \$10 - \$20 million of public funds for this project from the foundation we helped to build in the past 18 months.
- In Chester, led the planning of a multi-use connector trail, supported the town’s Pro-Housing Communities designation, and spearheaded the Town’s application to the \$4.25 million NY Forward program;
- In Elizabethtown, we partnered with the Town, the

Elizabethtown Social Center, and members of our advisory group to develop a new brand and logo for the community as part of developing a new town website.

- Facilitated local municipalities and multiple state offices to design better connectivity for the Adirondack Rail Trail into the Junction in Tupper Lake.

Leslie Karasin (left) worked with the Tupper Lake Snowmobile Club and other partners to ensure that the Adirondack Rail Trail made a good connection to the Junction in Tupper Lake.



For more information or to get involved, contact Leslie Karasin (lkarasin@northernforest.org) or Adam Bailey (abailey@northernforest.org).

Join Us by Making a Gift to the Northern Forest Fund

The projects we work on have been identified and championed by local perspectives. We provide extra capacity to accelerate momentum and success, and to focus projects through the lens of attracting and retaining younger residents.

We are committed to the long-term success of the *Attracting New Residents Strategy* and to proving that the investments we’re making now will fuel transformative projects and programs over the next decade. Please consider donating to the Northern Forest Fund to support this work.

The Northern Forest Fund is a bold initiative to invest in solutions to the region’s most pressing needs, including housing that’s affordable to local workers, recreation that’s accessible to area kids, and business assistance and innovation that help sustain the forest.

With a goal of raising \$30 Million, the Northern Forest Fund will fuel transformative projects and programs in 10 communities over the next decade.

We’re almost there but need your help to meet our goal by December 2024. Donate today to build the new forest future. Your gift will make a difference!

Donate online at northernforest.org/campaign, or send your check to Northern Forest Center, 18 N. Main St, #204, Concord, NH 03301. Please write “Northern Forest Fund” on the memo line.

For more information, contact Rebecca Hession: rhession@northernforest.org or 603-724-7021.

