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Land Use/Character Introduction

The land use patterns throughout the Town and its Hamlets reflect their roots as scenic waterfront communities, a central hamlet based on manufacturing, commerce and education with the rest of Town reflecting its rural character due to its agricultural past and present.

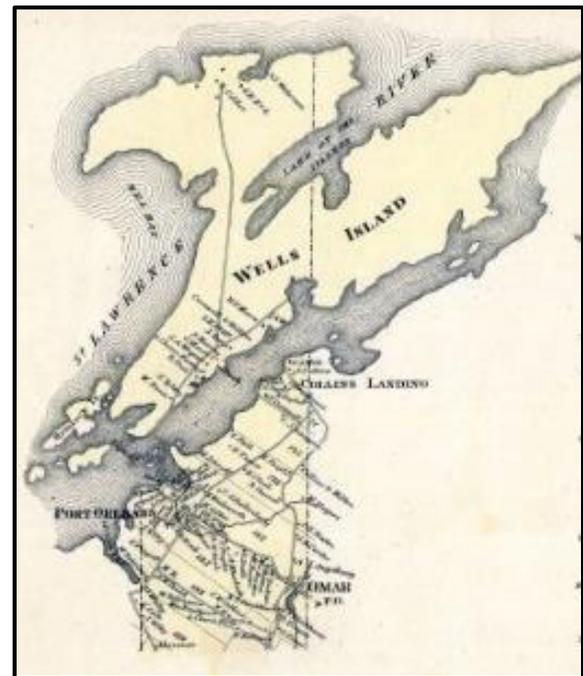
The Hamlet of LaFargeville has been fortunate to retain its dominant character of a small hamlet with many historic structures, an employment base and a strong school system.

Thousand Island Park, on Wellesley Island is maintained as a waterfront enclave of Historic Victorian homes along a street grid pattern, central green space, small businesses, a beach and spectacular views of the St. Lawrence River.

Fishers Landing, a small waterfront hamlet enjoys its St. Lawrence River waterfront and peaceful lifestyle.

Stone Mills, the Town’s first settlement with a number of stone homes continues to reflect the north country’s agricultural heritage with the Stone Mills Ag Museum.

In large part, typical suburban sprawl and strip development have bypassed the



Town's historic hamlets, maintaining much of Orleans rural agricultural character with open vistas and skies.

The Town anticipates new commercial development investment coinciding with the new municipal water district and current sewer service along NYS Route 12. Historically, linear highway oriented commercial development along Rte 12 occurred in the past, leaving a few vacant sites. As some residents identified during the open house public sessions, the Town should examine addressing such dilapidated properties. Similarly, the committee was encouraged to consider preserving and enhancing the Town's physical character for future generations. In particular, more businesses and destinations are preferred but in a way that capitalizes on and preserves Orleans rural character and charm.

It's clear that each community and their residents, business owners and leaders share a sense of pride that few hamlets or towns can muster. Orleans must work to maintain that same sense of pride in future development projects.

To accomplish that goal the Town should build upon the character defining elements of its past. Hamlet character that reflects the efficiencies of high density, walkability, safe/slow moving narrow streets, short blocks, and structures reflecting the massing and roof forms of our architectural past in LaFargeville for example, organized around an efficient street grid lined with treed lawns.

The Town outside the hamlet continues to be largely rural with predominantly agricultural, wetland and forests with scattered homes and farmsteads. Occasional businesses among open areas occur with less dense development for the most part. It is the dominance of agricultural land and natural features and waterfront combined, that the residents of the Town, hamlets, and islands cherish, as well as those who come to live seasonally as well as visit. Orleans reflects its seasonal residences along the St. Lawrence River and benefits from the State Park along its northern boundary. Seasonal residences along the shorelines of the St. Lawrence River in Fishers Landing, TI Park and Fineview define the area where summers typically have more economic and recreational activity in and around the waterfront.

The Hamlet of LaFargeville is less rural and somewhat more urban in nature. While the dominant land use is residential, businesses and a few industrial uses occur, while institutional uses are generally concentrated in one area near the school, playground and ballfields. Multi-family units occur in close proximity.

Smaller hamlets like Fishers Landing and Fineview exist in large part due to being accessible areas along the St. Lawrence River waterfront. Thousand Island Park's presence, also attributable to being on a scenic island in the St. Lawrence River, is a unique historic enclave of Victorian era homes laid out in a walkable village style.

The following sections provide a discussion of Orleans's land uses based on assessment category information from the Jefferson

County Office of Real Property. Afterwards, a discussion of land cover and land character based on aerial photography and predominant land use is described.

Town by Assessment

Orleans two predominant land uses by acreage are agriculture and residential (year round, seasonal) illustrated by Figure 68.

As for numbers of parcels, the most numerous category in the Town was residential with 1,451 parcels in 2018, shown by Figure 69. This number of residential parcels includes year round, seasonal, mobile home and others. The second highest number of parcels (520) included the undeveloped category, which would include forested, vacant, and generally undeveloped properties. The third highest in terms of number of parcels was agricultural 154.

Agricultural/Farmland

Although the Town of Orleans has significant riverfront resources with water related development, 39% of the Town’s acreage was assessed as farmland in 2018.

Based upon the total acreage, farming still encompasses the highest proportion of property town-wide. This is evident with many agricultural fields and NYS Agricultural Districts in various areas throughout the Town. Such farm fields allow for open views of much of the surrounding countryside, water bodies, and natural features.

Figure 68 Land Use Acreage by Assessment Category: Town of Orleans - 2018

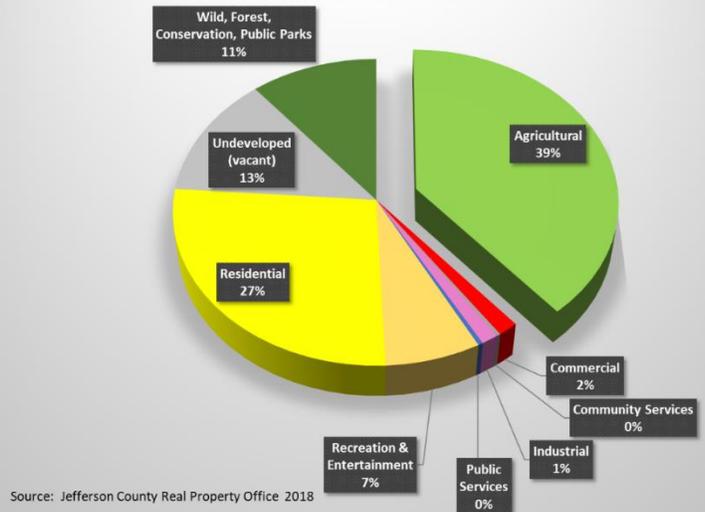


Figure 69. Land Use Number of Parcels by Assessment Category: Town of Orleans - 2018

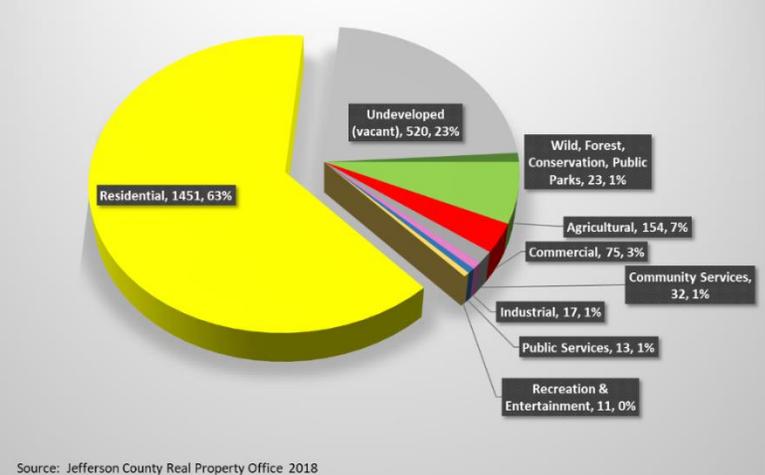
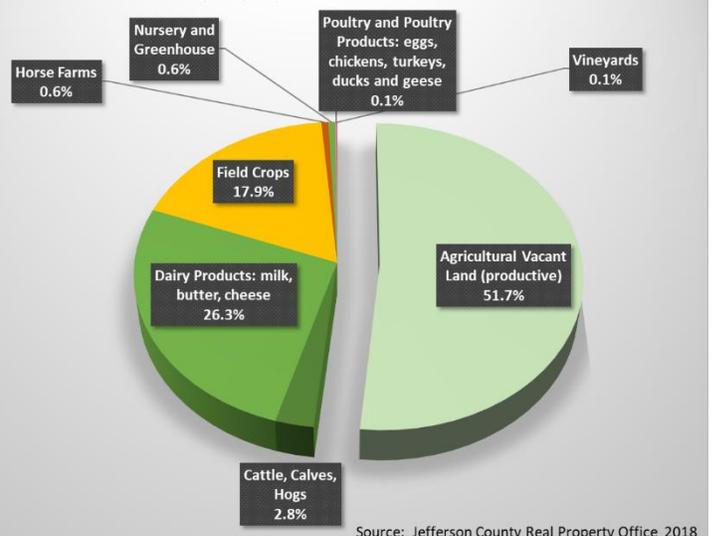


Figure 70. Percent Acreage by Agricultural Assessment



While Figure 70 illustrates that agricultural vacant land comprises 51.7% of the farm acreage, such land is part of the farm operation and contiguous parcels.

The Land Use by Assessment Map found in Chapter 2 illustrates the location of agriculturally assessed parcels. The operating farms and farm fields also provide habitat options for birds and are considered part of the St. Lawrence River grassland complex which supports migrating birds and bats throughout many areas in the Town.

Recreation and Entertainment –

Recreation and entertainment totaled 7% of acreage in the Town with eleven parcels (0.5% of the total parcels) in 2018.

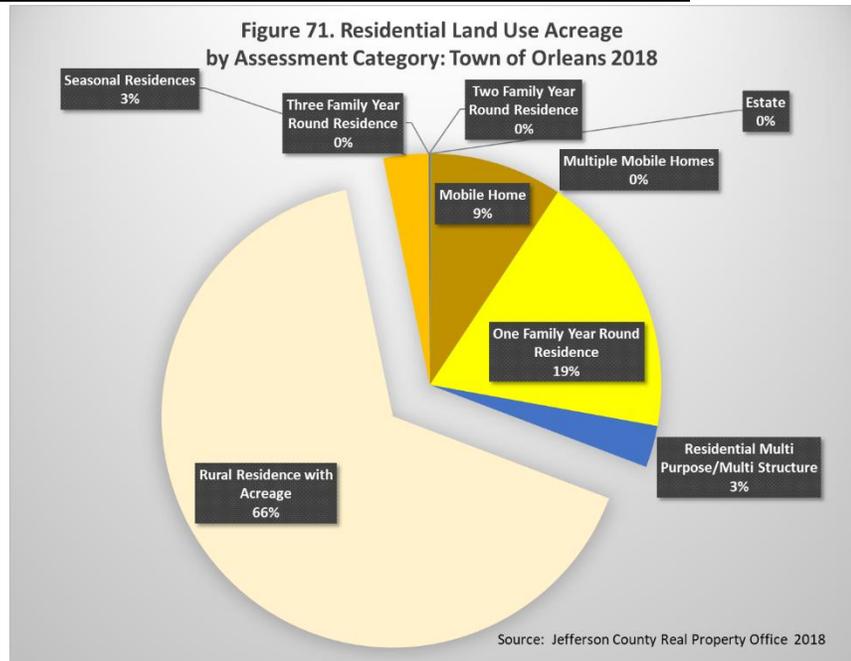
Commercial – Commercial totaled 2% of acreage and 3% of the number of parcels with seventy-five in the Town as of 2018.

Residential Land Use

With the second highest amount of residential acreage at 27% in 2018 (Figure 68), and the highest number of parcels in the Town totaling 63% (Figure 69), residential land use clearly defines the Town of Orleans in terms of its residential character and quality of life. Figures 71 and 72 illustrate the various types of residential land use present in the Town as of 2018.

Rural Residence with Acreage

Out of the Residential assessed parcels, the rural residence with acreage category predominates in terms of acreage in the Town, making up 66% of the residential acreage. In



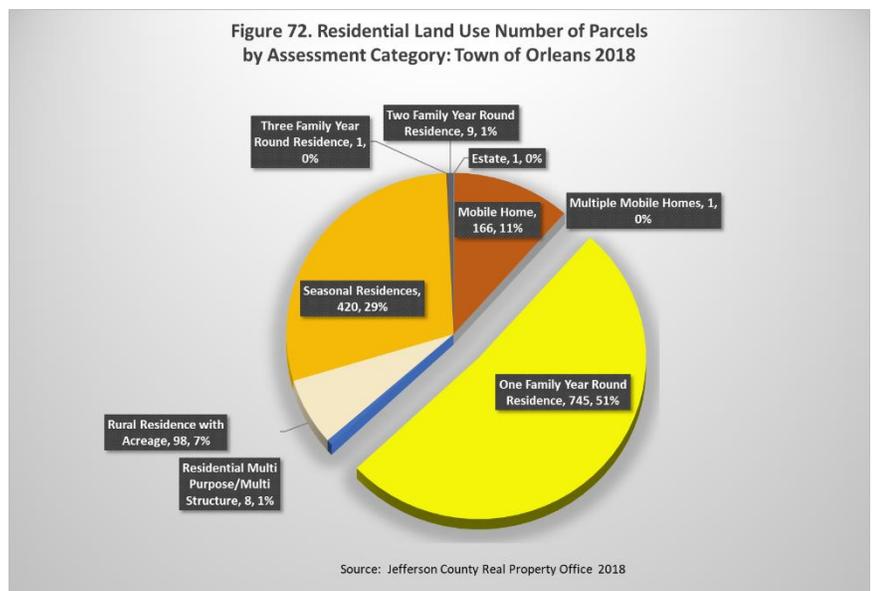
terms of the number of parcels, there were 98 which comprised 7% of them.

Year-Round Residential

The second largest amount of residential acreage was the one family year-round residences with 19%. However, the number of parcels in the one family comprised more than half of the Town with 51% of the total number of parcels.

Seasonal Residential

While the number of seasonal residences makes up only 3% of the residential acreage,



it comprised 29% of the number of parcels with 420 in the Town.

Mobile Homes

While the number of mobile homes made up about 9% of the acreage and 11% of the number of parcels in the category. Clearly this affordable option for housing is still needed for some residents and their families.

- 1) **Agricultural** - Property used for the production of crops or livestock.

Agricultural vacant land: Land used as part of an operating farm. It does not have living accommodations and cannot be specifically related to any of the other uses under agricultural. Usually found when an operating farm is made up of a number of contiguous parcels.

- 2) **Residential** - Property used for human habitation. Living accommodations such as hotels, motels, and apartments are in the Commercial category.
- 3) **Vacant Land** - Property that is not in use, is in temporary use, or lacks permanent improvement.
- 4) **Commercial** - Property used for the sale of goods and/or services.
- 5) **Recreation & Entertainment** - Property used by groups for recreation, amusement, or entertainment.
- 6) **Industrial** - Property used for the production and fabrication of durable and nondurable man-made goods.
- 7) **Community Services** - Property used for the well-being of the community.
- 8) **Public Services** - Property used to provide services to the general public.
- 9) **Wild, Forested, Conservation Lands & Public Parks** - Reforested lands, preserves, and private hunting and fishing clubs.

Source: NYS Office of Real Property Services

Specific Types of Residential:

One Family Year-Round Residence - A one family dwelling constructed for year-round occupancy (adequate insulation, heating, etc.).

Seasonal Residences - Dwelling units generally used for seasonal occupancy; not constructed for year-round occupancy (inadequate insulation, heating, etc.). If the value of the land and timber exceeds the value of the seasonal dwelling, the property should be listed as forest land.

Rural Residence with Acreage – A year-round residence with 10 or more acres of land; it may have up to three year-round dwelling units.

Mobile Home - A portable structure built on a chassis and used as a permanent dwelling unit.

Multiple Residences - More than one residential dwelling on one parcel of land. May be a mixture of types, or all one type.

Commercial (residential income generating):

Apartment – Generally, when four or more units generate income or a profit they are considered to be apartments in the commercial assessment category.

Land Cover Types

Land Cover was mapped using the 2015 aerial photography at a scale of 1:5,000. Categories used were: Barren (quarries), Developed, Farmland, Forest/Scrub, Herbaceous, Recreation, Water, and Wetland according to the US Geological Survey – Land Cover Institute.

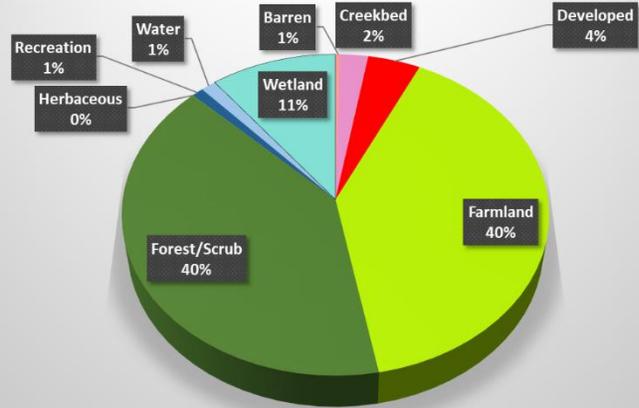
Forest Scrub - comprised 40% of the Town in terms of acreage. This included areas characterized by tree cover and natural or semi natural woody vegetation. Trees included evergreen, deciduous, and mixed types, as well as shrub and overgrown areas.

Farmland – comprised 40% of the Town in terms of acreage. This included areas of pasture, or areas planted and managed such as hay, row crops, and grains.

Developed - areas included residential, commercial, mixed uses, and vacant structures that may be underutilized. It included the Hamlet of LaFargeville, Census Designated Places Fishers Landing, TI Park, and Fineview and many of the shoreline areas where seasonal and year-round homes predominate and comprised 4% of the area.

Barren - areas made up about 1% of the Town, and included areas of bare rock/sand/clay which included mining areas. Mining for sand and gravel and former quarries are recognizable. Please note: some areas coded as barren may actually be wetlands that may have appeared brownish when the aerial photography was taken.

Figure 73. Land Cover Types (Based on Aerial Photography) - Town of Orleans 2015



Source: Heads-up digitization of the 2015 Digital Ortho (aerial photography) - Jefferson County Planning

Recreation - areas made up a small percent of the mapped area (1%), as they include the Can Am speedway, campgrounds and marinas on the state parks, golf courses, park within LaFargeville as described in the Community Facilities Chapter. All other recreation areas were coded as their predominant land cover types.

Herbaceous - areas include very small sections that appeared to be dominated by grassland that made up only 0.04% of the area.

Wetland – included areas where the soil or substrate is periodically saturated with or covered with water and appeared to include wetland associated plants which came out to 11% of the mapped land cover areas.

Land Use, Land Cover, Landscape = Character Areas

A character area is a portion of the town or community with distinct features, shared identity, and characteristics that differ from neighboring areas. The above described agricultural, year-round residential, seasonal residential, commercial and recreational land uses, when recognized within their associated land cover type areas, and landscape, comprise a number of distinct areas throughout the Town. Many such land use/land cover/landscapes are considered special and unique with their own characteristics that make several unique areas in the Town.

Therefore, the character areas were developed to identify such communities and places and emphasize the importance of the Town’s small town and rural character land uses within their landscape context. The intent behind identifying the Character Areas is to consider appropriate future land uses.

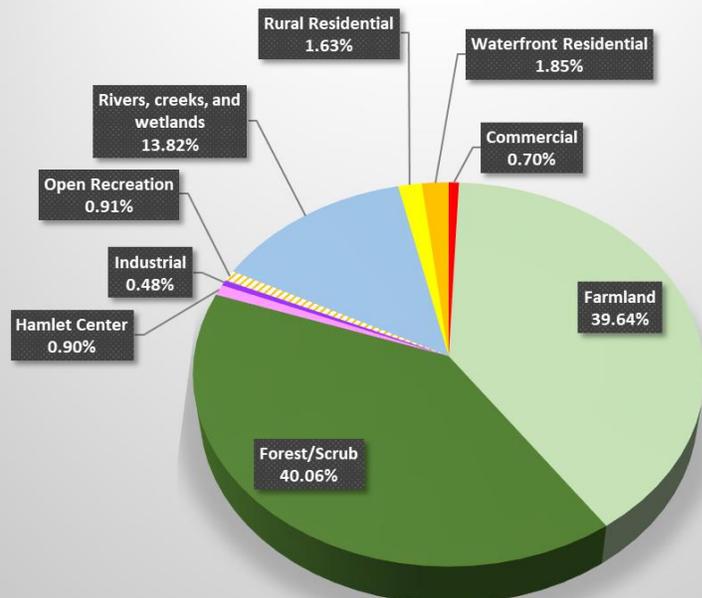
The Town’s character areas were generalized and mapped using aerial photography, land use parcels by assessment category and land cover and then categorized into Character Areas identified throughout the Town of Orleans. The Character Areas

Map shows their locations and general areas of extent.

Farmland Character Area – (light green on the map) Farmland areas are dominated by large fields utilized for crops and/or grazing. In addition, there are farmsteads and scattered groups of residences that occur primarily in a linear fashion along roadways. Portions of NYS Routes 12, 180 and 411 as well as County Routes 13, 15, 181 have a number of farm fields alongside.

Forest/scrub Character Area – (dark green on the map) Such areas include deciduous and some coniferous trees, with a high percentage of the land that is forested or covered by early successional scrub brush/trees that grow after farm fields are not cultivated or cleared for a number of years. Some areas can include grasslands, creeks and wetlands. Portions of NYS Routes 12 and 180 as well as Town and County Roads intersect forest/scrub land character.

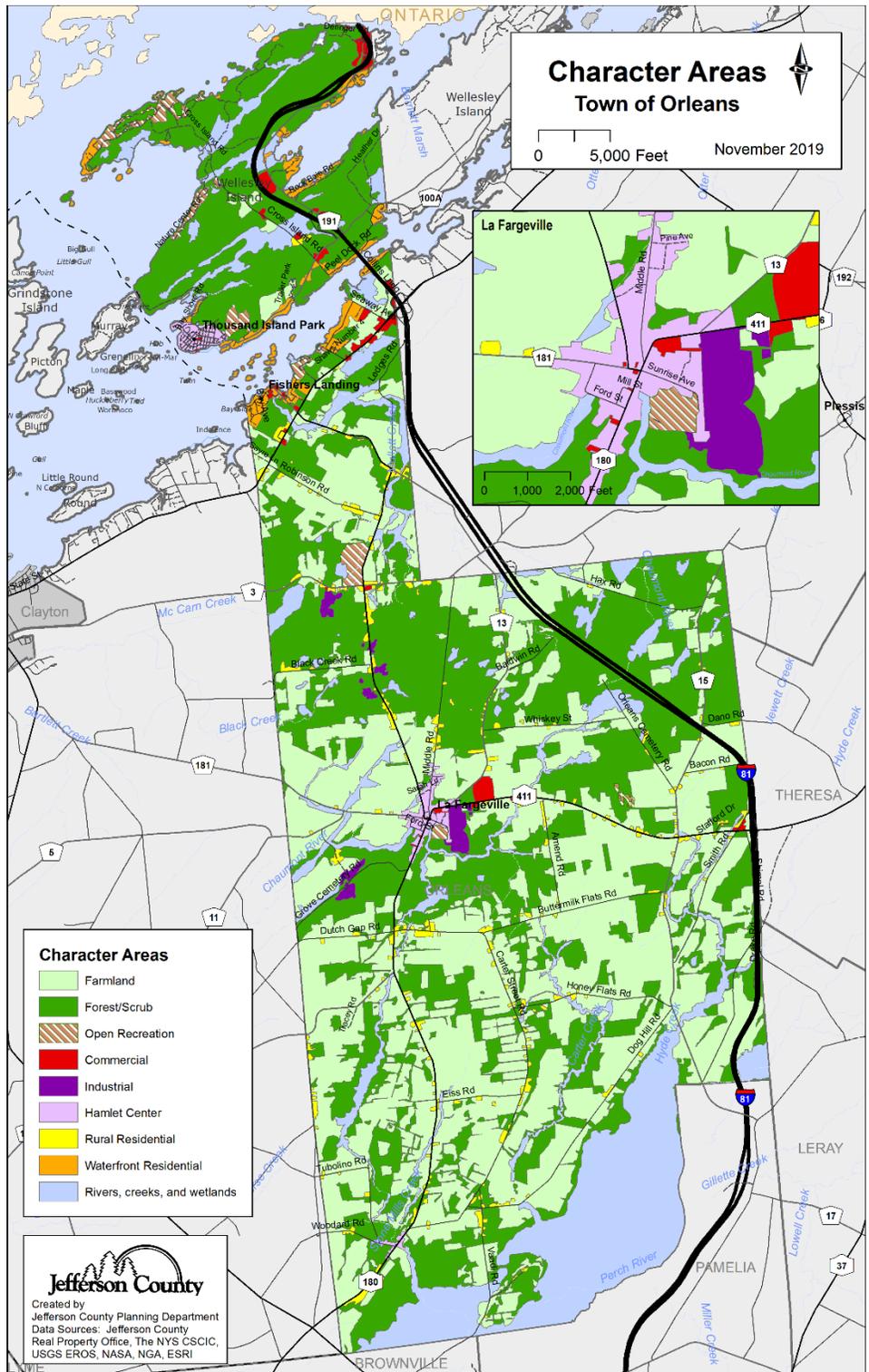
Figure 74. Character Areas - Town of Orleans



Sources: Heads up digitization of the 2015 Digital Ortho (aerial imagery) and 2019 land use assessment parcels

Rural Residential Character Area – (Yellow on the map) The Rural Residential Character Area represents a transitional area between farmland and/or forest and village/hamlet areas. Within these areas, housing may not occupy the largest portion of the land, but both farmsteads and other residences were noted. Scattered rural residential occurs along many roads in the Town.

Hamlet Center Character Area – (Pink on the map) The Hamlet Center areas are relatively compact with more urban style development focused along stretches of main streets, state highways, or near primary intersections. The land use mix of these hamlet centers typically includes residential with some retail, services, offices, restaurants, school, churches, parks, or municipal buildings. While in some cases they include commercial businesses, hamlet centers contain single and multi-family homes. On some main streets, sidewalks may exist and allow pedestrian activity and streetscape that typically includes street trees, light poles,



and other amenities. Overall, hamlet centers play a major role in defining the image and quality of life for their respective hamlet and their surrounding areas.

Commercial Character Area – (Red on the map) The commercial areas include areas of commercial activity such as small retail, motels/hotels, restaurants, marinas, convenience stores, and other businesses that may be within or near the hamlet centers, or scattered throughout farmlands, forests, rural residential, and/or waterfront residential areas. They often occur along major highways where traffic levels provide a consistent source of exposure to potential customers (along NYS Route 12) They occur some along NYS Route 180, but that stretch of highway is more agricultural and rural residential with scattered mixed uses. Such areas outside the hamlet can be somewhat more suburban in character than the surrounding rural areas. Where the hamlet character areas include a greater density of services and development, the commercial areas can include single story or buildings such as in the Hamlet. It also includes the sand/gravel mining operations in the Town.

Outside the hamlet centers, many properties are designed primarily for access by automobile, although pedestrian activity does occur and should be incorporated to diversify traffic types and make the Town a more inclusive destination for all travelers. Boat access such as docks can enhance customer levels and attract an increased number of patrons during the summer as occurs in Fishers Landing and Thousand Island Park.

Industrial Character Area – (Purple on the map) The Industrial Character Area in the Town serves as an employment center such as Hood (formerly Crowley Foods) and trucking businesses such as Gilco as well as a

number of quarries around the Town where some sand and gravel operations exist.

Open Recreation Character Area – (Brown strips on the map) The Open Recreation Character area consists of state parks, golf course, and other lands set aside for recreation purposes. However, state wildlife management areas, Thousand Island Land Trust properties, Nature Conservancy, and similar parcels were still categorized as either forest or wetland character area depending on the predominant land cover.

Waterfront Residential Character Area – (Orange on the map) Most of the uses in waterfront residential areas include year-round and seasonal residences along the shorelines of the St. Lawrence River and its bays. There are some marinas and businesses oriented to the water, however the predominant use in many cases are the residences and seasonal residences. Marinas were assigned as commercial.

Future Land Use Development

Each character area within the Town, Hamlet and its distinct neighborhoods should be considered when developing or amending respective zoning regulations and allowable uses. Prospective development should enhance or add to community and rural character and should minimize potential negative impacts within the community.

The following chapter outlines a series of considerations to use when deliberating the merits and scope of potential development proposals and implementing the Comprehensive Plan for any pending amendment(s) or review procedures.