

Chapter Summaries and Links to DRAFT Chapters (drafted 2016-2021)

What is a Comprehensive Plan?

- A description and inventory of the town as it exists today, and how we got here;
- An identification of issues uncovered during the review process, which can include economic, environmental, housing, educational challenges depending upon the town;
- A summary of State and Local Policies, Goals, and “specific and actionable” Strategies to address the issues uncovered;
- Mandated by Maine law and overseen by the DACF (Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry), which reviews plans for consistency with the goals and guidelines of the Growth Management Act (30-A M.R.S.A. §§ 4312 - 4350).
- Link to State website: https://www.maine.gov/dacf/municipalplanning/comp_plans/index.shtml

What’s in the draft Comprehensive Plan:

Vision Statement

Since the creation of Kennebunk’s first Comprehensive Plan in 1991, the town’s pattern of growth has (mostly) aligned with that Plan’s vision. Residential growth has, in general, followed a pattern that clusters housing in designated growth areas near services and infrastructure and preserves open space and rural areas. “Small town charm” that includes historic homes, good schools, walkable neighborhoods and proximity to the beach, open space and recreational opportunities have made Kennebunk a nationally-recognized place to live and to visit. The population in 1991 was 8300 and according to the 2020 census, it is now about 11,500. The State projects a 7.8% population growth within the next 10 years. To maintain the town’s look and feel in the future, it will be important to balance the location and aesthetics of new development, including needed affordable housing, with preservation of wetlands and open space.

Public Participation Summary

The Comprehensive Plan Update Committee began collecting resident feedback in 2016, through multiple venues. A resident survey was followed by outreach to key community organizations, two public open houses, online Community Voice comments, and discussion at Select Board and Planning Board meetings. Detail has been captured in the Appendix at the end of the document. More feedback opportunities will be available in Fall 2021, and summarized in the final version of this document.

Regional Participation Plan

The town has ongoing agreements with several area towns designed to share costs of equipment, resources, knowledge and labor, including a Harbormaster shared with Kennebunkport. There are also ad hoc agreements designed to achieve specific short term goals. In addition, the town has partnered with Southern Maine Planning Development and other oceanfront towns to share resources designed to protect coastal sustainability in the face of continuing climate change threats.

Historical and Archaeological

This chapter provides a brief history of Kennebunk and creates an inventory of historic and cultural resources within the Town. Summer Street was the first historic district established in the State of Maine in 1963. One of the most famous historic properties in Kennebunk is the Wedding Cake House, which is also the most photographed house in Maine. Kennebunk will need to develop strategies to preserve the cultural and historic heritage of the community as growth continues.

Water Resources

This chapter covers great ponds (Alewife Pond); the Kennebunk, Mousam and Branch Brook watersheds; aquifers; and the town's coastal areas; and details the threats to each resource, including possible sources of non-point pollution that is negatively affecting river water quality.

Natural Resources

A discussion of soils, topography, freshwater and coastal wetlands, wildlife and fisheries habitat, and the role that the *Beginning with Habitat* database plays in identifying vulnerable resources worthy of protection. Also covered is Kennebunk's Open Space Plan, dune ecosystems, and scenic vistas.

Agriculture and Forestry Resources

Farmland, tree growth, and agricultural uses, including open space enrolled in the state's farm, tree growth, and open space law taxation programs. Description of the community's farms, farmland, and managed forest lands, with a brief description of those under threat.

Marine Resources

Focus on the marine resources industry, ports and harbor; coastal water testing info; dredging; protection of working waterfront, water-dependent uses, public access points to the shore; scenic resources along the shoreline, including ownership (public/private) and protections. There is a further discussion of water quality issues, and efforts to identify and mitigate bacteria "hits" especially in the Kennebunk River.

Population and Demographics

The town has grown 10% in the past 10 years, which mirrors York County growth in general but is much higher than the state as a whole. The town has a large population of seniors; over one quarter of households are comprised of a single person; continued "aging out" of the workforce and decrease in the birth rate indicate that future growth will come from in-migration, predominantly from other Northeast states. Other statistics: the town is overwhelmingly White; median income is higher than in the State as a whole; the town's population increases by 50% during the summer.

Economy

A description of town's job market, services and products available, workforce, tax base, commercial and industrial business, availability of necessary infrastructure. The town's early history was that of a center of manufacturing, particularly along the rivers; today's economy is far more diversified and to a certain extent dependent upon the tourism industry. The covid-19 pandemic affected town businesses in ways both positively and negatively, and the end of this story is yet to be written. Centers of commerce include the Route 1/downtown corridor, West Kennebunk/Maine Turnpike interchange, and the more seasonal Lower Village area. A discussion of Zoning ordinances and the role of the Economic Development Commission, the SEDAP plan, Chamber of Commerce and community support provide more detail to flesh out the town's economic blueprint.

Housing

A synopsis of the recent rise in real estate prices, both in Kennebunk and in the Northeast, and the factors contributing to this increase, which impact the ability of middle-class and income-constrained families to afford housing. Definitions of "affordable," "subsidized," and "workforce" housing are provided, with references to town Zoning ordinances designed to enable construction of homes suitable for middle- and lower-income buyers and renters. There is detail about the number and location of residential units approved by the Planning Board in the past 5 years, and the number of units and associated acreage needed if the state's 10 year 7.8% growth prediction comes to fruition.

Recreation

An in-depth description of recreational facilities and programs in the community and surrounding area, especially outdoor opportunities including town-owned parks and playgrounds, open space used for recreation, beaches, access to water bodies. These include Rachel Carson National Wildlife Refuge, Kennebunk Land Trust properties, the Bridle Trail, Eastern Trail, Franciscan Monastery trails, small boat launches on the Kennebunk and Mousam Rivers, biking trails, skateboard park, beaches, Parks &

Recreation programs, RSU-21 recreational locations and activities, Waterhouse Center, Kennebunk Free Library, Brick Store Museum, The Center and River Tree Arts.

Transportation

A description of the town's roads and bridges as well as alternative transportation including access to area train, airport and bus terminals; public transportation; definitions of different types of roads and their function, condition, plan for improvements, and which entity (town/state) is responsible for maintenance. Also covered are high crash areas, parking, pedestrian infrastructure, and the Complete Streets program of rebuilding roads to enable safer shared usage.

Public Facilities and Services

A list of all utilities and municipal services that provide the functional backbone of the community. Covered is the Kennebunk, Kennebunk and Wells Water District; Kennebunk Sewer District; Kennebunk Light & Power; Central Maine Power (serving 20% of the town); Unitil (natural gas; service to a small area); broadband and satellite providers of cellular service, landline and VOIP phone, internet and video services. Health and social services, public and private schools are described. In Town Hall, the function, number of employees, buildings and future needs of each department are covered – Town Manager, Finance and Tax Collection, Community Development, Planning and Codes, Parks & Recreation, Public Services, Tax Assessment, Town Clerk, Police Department and Fire Rescue.

Fiscal Capability and Capital Improvement

A broad explanation of the town budget, independent audits of the town's financial condition, how property assessments work, year-over-year cost comparisons, bonding for capital improvements, and a presentation of the town's multi-year capital improvement plan. Includes a discussion of the recently-completed Facilities Study and how it will impact future planning for the town to continue and enhance its current level of service to residents.

Climate Change and Sea Level Rise

Identifies concerns associated with rising global temperatures that are causing sea level rise, changes in storm intensity, and threats to animal habitat. Shoreline property and public infrastructure are increasingly threatened by higher annual tides, storm surge and storm intensity. Roads and evacuation routes will need to be evaluated along with potential capacity of existing stormwater facilities.

Existing Land Use

The development pattern established during Kennebunk's early days as a center of shipbuilding and manufacturing set into place the location of major roads, centers of commerce and the clustering of homes in village settings. The continuation and enhancement of this pattern is overseen today by the Planning Board, Zoning Ordinances, and Community Planning and Development Department staff. The chapter includes a table of current lot and dimensional standards used for residential, commercial and industrial development, and explains the intent behind the requirements for each zoning district. A discussion of Shoreland Zoning and floodplain management along with current categories of land use is included along with a current zoning map.

Future Land Use Plan

This chapter is the key to town changes over the next ten years; it reflects discussion and decisions on action items to address challenges such as encouraging appropriate development in areas that are supported by town infrastructure; sustainable economic expansion; addressing climate change; improving stormwater, river and ocean water quality; protection of wetlands, wildlife, farmlands. This chapter contains an overview of all subject matter covered in the topic areas, and what it means for potential ordinance changes to achieve the Goals, Policies and Strategies detailed in each subject area (recapped in the FLUP). The Plan divides the town into Growth Areas, Transitional Areas, and Rural Areas (with maps). It also covers Critical Natural Resources and Critical Waterfront Areas

Evaluation

The state requires that Comprehensive Plans include an outline describing how the community will periodically (at least every five years) evaluate the following:

- A. The degree to which future land use strategies have been implemented;
- B. Percent of municipal growth-related capital investments in growth areas;
- C. Location and amount of new development in relation to community's designated growth areas, rural areas, and transition areas;
- D. Amount of critical natural resource, critical rural, and critical waterfront areas protected through acquisition, easements or other measures.

The Town Planner will address these items during the creation of an annual report to be shared with the Select Board and Planning Board, which will roll up into a five year evaluation in 2026.

Appendixes:

These include:

- A. Detail from all public participation outreach activities
- B. The SEDAP Plan created by the Economic Development Commission
- C. 2004 Open Space Plan (still used today)
- D. Portland Road Traffic Study