TOWN OF MECHANIC FALLS COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

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TOWN HISTORY
A Brief Overview

Although Mechanic Falls was not organized as a town until 1893, the history of the area goes back to the latter part of the seventeenth century. The land where Mechanic Falls now sets was once occupied by the Anasagunticook Tribe of the Abanaki Indian Nation. These people occupied the area between the Androscoggin and Little Androscoggin Rivers, and it is from the Indian term meaning "a place for preparing and curing" that the rivers receive their common name.

In 1624 the first white man entered the area and established a trading post on the Lower Androscoggin. Thomas Purchase, the original settler, claimed vast areas of land for a group of English investors. Upon his death in 1677 or 1678, the title of the land passed to Richard Warton who secured the deed and gained further land area through trades with Warumbee, Chief of the Anasagunitcook.

After the French and Indian wars of the early 1700s, a large tract of land was granted to Captain Jonathan March and others who had served in the Canadian Expedition. This gift, known as the Bakerstown grant, was in conflict with the previous grants and deed held by Richard Warton's heirs, the Prejepscot Proprietors. The dispute was finally settled by the Legislature of Massachusetts in 1723. This legislative action legalized the delineation of boundaries which had previously been established as those of the towns of Danville (later to become Auburn) and Bakerstown. Bakerstown was incorporated as Poland in 1795, and later in 1802, Minot was set off from Poland and was itself incorporated. These towns remained as established until the middle of the nineteenth century when the events which would bring about the organization and incorporation of Mechanic Falls began to unveil themselves.

The first historical event which materially affected the Town of Mechanic Falls was the establishment of a road from Poland to Minot in the 1850s. When the right-of-way was cut for this road, the Little Androscoggin was crossed near the falls. Travelers soon recognized the water power potential of the falls and a village soon began to take shape. The first resident of the area was Dean Andrews who settled near the falls in the early 1850s and he was indirectly responsible for giving the village its first name. A doctor was called to the area on a less than hospitable night to treat Mr. Andrews. The journey so disheartened the Doctor that he christened the area "Jericho" after the biblical city. "Jericho" developed a populace of hearty folk in its early years among whom were a group of rather heavy rum drinkers. This "infestation" of "rum-dums" resulted in the village being renamed "Groggy-Harbor." As the town grew and prospered, this name gradually disappeared and was replaced by "Bog Falls" or "Bog Hoot" owing to the nature of the land in the area. The village got its first official name in 1841 when the post master, S.F. Masterman, first used the name Mechanics Falls. This nomenclature has endured for over a century with the only change being the dropping of the "S" in 1887 to result in the name under which the town was organized.

Mechanic Falls lived up to its name and became a center for manufacturing. In 1851 the first paper mill was erected in what is now Mechanic Falls. Ebenezer Drake and Erra Mitchell established the first mill on the Minot side and later a third party, Oliver B. Dwinal bought out Mitchell and the firm of Drake, Dwinal & Co. was founded. In the same year, A.C. Denison established a mill on the Poland side of the Little Androscoggin River and in 1865 the two firms were consolidated and a new mill erected on the Drake, Dwinal & Co. site. In 1871, the manufacture of a repeating rifle, designed by G. Frank Evans, was begun in the town. The rifle, reported to be one of the finest of its time, was first manufactured as a

sporting arm and later as a military weapon. The Evan's Rifle was exhibited throughout the world and became the standard personal armament for the Russian Flying Squadron.

John W. Penney established J. W. Penney & Sons in 1872. This firm manufactured steam engines, machinery and other foundry articles. Perhaps the best known produce manufactured by the Penney Company was the steam-engine which became the standard propulsion unit for the Stanley Steamer. This engine, one of the smallest and yet most powerful units of its type, was first produced in 1898 and for many years thereafter the Stanley Brothers used this revolutionary engine to power their automobiles. The firm has continued for many years under the direction of Penney's sons. A year after Penney first started business, the Denison Paper Company was formed and large scale papermaking operations began in Mechanic Falls. The Denison company was later reorganized in 1887 as the Poland Paper Company under the direction of Charles R. Milliken. It was during this time that talk began about separating Mechanic Falls from Minot and Poland and incorporating a new town.

The Village of Mechanic Falls had grown to such proportions by the late 1880s that the legislature was petitioned to grant the village incorporation as a full-fledged municipality. The first attempts by the people of the town to incorporate brought about trouble. In 1890 the incorporation of the entire town failed by six votes. Petitions were drawn up for incorporation of both sides of the river as separate towns, but this measure failed to win legislative approval. Finally, in December of 1892, enough signatures were obtained to petition the organization of both sides of the river into a single town. After more struggle in the legislature, the charter was granted on March 22, 1893.

Mechanic Falls held its first town meeting on March 30, 1893, electing A. J. Weston, F. H. MacDonald and J.K. Denning as selectmen. They ran the town for the following year on a budget of $16,301.68.

Shortly after incorporation, both electric and water supply services were begun in the town. These improvements helped stimulate growth in the town and also ensured the health and safety of her citizens.

The first church in Mechanic Falls was established by the Congregationalists in 1848. The Baptists, however, were the first to hold service within the town with Reverend Christopher Macy preaching in the village as early as 1828. Other denominations, namely the Methodists, Universalists and Adventists, also were among the early churches to be organized in the town. Today, many denominations have established houses of worship in Mechanic Falls, with others nearby in Lewiston-Auburn and Norway-Paris.

The residents of Mechanic Falls have also shown a love of country, and the honor roll of those who have served their country dates back to the Civil War. A statue and plaque honoring those who have served still stands in the center of town.

Between its beginnings in the 1800s and today, Mechanic Falls has seen much activity both in industry and agriculture. From such diverse occupations as brick-making, machining, farming and merchandising, the people of Mechanic Falls have formed a rich heritage. Much of the history of Mechanic Falls lives today, not only in the hearts of people, but also in many of the buildings and physical characteristics of the town.

INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW OF INVENTORY AND ANALYSIS

This Comprehensive Plan is an update of the 1992 Plan that was the first developed and passed under the State's Growth Management Act. Although not exactly the same, it has a similar format, and where possible the data and information from that plan was used. The plan offers updated policies and strategies for the future based on the events which have occurred in the town over the past two decades. The Future Land Use plan is similar, but has been reassessed in the context of zoning ordinance amendments that have been made since the 1992 plan. State law and good legal practice requires that the comprehensive plan be consistent with each other. It was found that the zoning changes were generally consistent with the changes that have been occurring in the community and in neighboring communities including changes on Route 26 in Poland and Oxford. The new Casino in Oxford was a strong consideration as the Comprehensive Planning Committee considered the policies and Future Land Use planning. Current zoning agrees with the updated Future Land Use Plan, but the plan has been revised to offer some additional flexibility in making some minor distinctions within land use districts without revising the Comprehensive Plan.

The Comprehensive Plan provides a guide for the future of Mechanic Falls. While many plans "sit on shelves," the concept is to provide guidance as well as flexibility within a lasting framework as we move into the future. The people who served on the comprehensive planning committee are an important part of the lasting framework. They are interested and generally involved citizens. They have not only shaped the policy but also understand the need for and interrelationships between the policies. They will be important to the implementation of the plan, for often it is the thoughts, ideas and involvement of committee members that live on and bring about implementation rather than the existence of the written document. Fortunately, Mechanic Falls has had a stable town government and several of the municipal officials served on the planning committee. This will serve the town well in the upcoming years.

The plan has two primary sections: Inventory and Analysis is found in Section I, and Section II presents policies and strategies. An inventory and an analysis of the inventory is a necessary step in creating a basis for where the town currently is and establishes a base on where it may go in the future. (Maps for the inventory are presented as a set at the beginning of Section II). The Inventory and Analysis is broken down by a variety of topics. While distinct, they are interrelated in many ways. Likewise, the policies and strategies follow a similar topical breakdown. Again, while appearing distinct, the interrelationship of the policy is what will help to make Mechanic Falls a vibrant and enjoyable place to live and work.

In addition to the categorical policies and strategies in Section II, the section also contains

- a number of inventory maps that are helpful in understanding the resources and infrastructure of Mechanic Falls,
- the Future Land Use Plan and map that will be used to guide growth, and
- a Capital Improvement Plan, that summarizes a more detailed Capital Improvement Program that town officials update annually.

For the reader and future readers who may not be as interested in the inventory and basis for the policies and strategies, at the beginning of each categorical area in Section II, there is a brief summary of the Inventory and Analysis findings. These overviews and the set of maps provide a basic context for the policies and strategies and the Future Land Use Plan.

There is one more important thing to remember in reading and using the Comprehensive Plan. Mechanic Falls has long served as a center of commercial and manufacturing activity for the adjacent area, especially Poland and Minot. While each of these towns had several village areas with a mix of residential, small commerce and light manufacturing, especially in the 19th Century, Mechanic Falls served as a business center and the downtown area had by far the greatest concentration of people of the three town area. With the railroad, a paper mill, and a more diverse array of consumer services, it served as a center of activity for the area well into the 20th Century. To a large extent, Mechanic Falls still provides a variety of the same traditional service center functions. A grocery store, auto parts store, hardware store, two gasoline/corner stores, barber shop, financial services, eating establishments, and several specialty shops are clustered in the downtown. The former paper mill is also the site of a variety of businesses. If these services are available at all in the surrounding towns, they are scattered throughout the communities making downtown Mechanic Falls a convenient one stop consumer experience especially for every day, convenience items. In addition, while no longer concentrated in the downtown, Mechanic Falls offers a variety of manufacturing type jobs located in areas near the downtown, along the railroad and near Route 26, a major connector to Oxford County and the Maine Turnpike.

While services, and to some extent manufacturing type businesses, have developed in several adjacent communities over the past 40 years, the importance of Mechanic Falls as a service center to the area should not be overlooked. Now, in addition to serving the population from adjacent communities, the downtown also serves consumers seeking convenience items on their way from employment in the Auburn – Lewiston area to neighboring communities including those at slightly greater distances such as the Oxford Hills and easterly portions of the Lakes Region.

Below are very brief summaries of the inventory topics. For the reader and future readers who may wish to refer to only the policies and strategies, these brief summaries are repeated at the beginning of each categorical area in Section II.

Population

In the 1992 plan, Mechanic Falls' population had grown about 12 percent over the past decade, a smaller rate of growth than surrounding towns, but still significant. Since then, the population has hovered around 3,000 with the 2010 U.S. Census showing a 100 person (3%) decline over the past decade. There are no projections based on the 2010 Census; based on estimates through the late 2000s, the State Planning Office did project a population increase leveling off at around 3,250 after 2018. This did not account for the population decline in the past few years that has been undoubtedly linked to the nation's overall economic doldrums. It seems that Mechanic Falls' population is relatively stable and accommodating slight declines or increases should not be a significant problem either placing excessive demands on the land and resource base or on government resources.

A consideration that Maine and many municipalities must address is the aging of their population. As the population ages, there will be a demand for somewhat different services or possibly an outmigration seeking living arrangements closer to medical facilities and other services for older people. Mechanic Falls is reasonably well positioned to accommodate older residents with available services in the downtown and reasonable proximity to Lewiston's two major hospitals.

Mechanic Falls has a Median Household Income below Androscoggin County's and the State's, but it has far fewer families living below the poverty level than does the County or the State. Educational attainment provides some insight into this; the percentage of Mechanic Falls' residents without a high school diploma is lower than the County and State, but the percentage with education beyond high school is also lower. It appears that Mechanic Falls has a sound working population earning reasonable wages.

Economy

Since the 1992 Comprehensive Plan, Mechanic Falls' economy has become much more stable. To a large extent, this has been the result of both a more stable economy in the surrounding area but also the development of new businesses in Mechanic Falls. Mechanic Falls supports a higher percentage (compared to the overall number of jobs) in manufacturing than does Androscoggin County. The percentage of jobs in arts, entertainment and recreational services and health, education and social services are considerably lower than the County. The town provides a place of work for many people from other towns in the region. In 2010, Mechanic Falls had an unemployment rate slightly above the State's but similar to Androscoggin County and slightly lower than other counties in western Maine.

Housing

Housing units have grown from 935 in 1980 to 1,425 in 2010 - a 52% increase. The majority of the increase occurred in multifamily and mobile home units with increases of over 30 percent in each of these housing types over each of the past two decades. Since 1990, there has been a small (1.3%) decrease in single-family units. For the most part, housing units in surrounding towns grew at a greater rate than they did in Mechanic Falls, although the difference is not significantly pronounced for all but Minot which almost doubled the Mechanic Falls rate.

The median sale price of homes in Mechanic Falls was $149,450 in 2008. While lower than that of Poland and Minot, but higher than surrounding Oxford County towns, the Mechanic Falls prices had the greatest increase between 1990 and 2008 of any of these communities. The analysis indicated that households at the median household income can afford a single-family home in the town and that rents are generally affordable for those making 80% of the Median Household Income.

Public Facilities and Services

Services provided by the Town include a public water system, a solid waste transfer station, fire and emergency medical (response) service (EMS), police protection and ambulance services, roads,

recreation facilities, and additional administrative services. A special district also operates a public sewer system serving the downtown area. Mechanic Falls along with Poland and Minot formed Regional School Unit 16. The towns support three elementary schools, and a middle school-high school campus. With the population growth of the three Towns, facility needs are the major issue.

The delivery of Town services in all areas appears to be adequate based upon the inventory work. With a somewhat improved economy since the last plan was developed and improved capital planning, a number of needs identified in the last plan have been addressed. The town must continue to be diligent and efficient in addressing their facility and service needs. The town and sewer district, like most towns, are always facing issues created by older sewer, water and storm water systems and limited financial ability to address all road and transportation needs.

Given a somewhat stable population base, it is not anticipated that growth will place a burden on town services. Any needed changes are most likely to come from residents having higher expectations of the quality and types of town facilities and services, from state mandates such as has occurred in the area of education, and from the changing demographics, in particular the aging population.

The residents have done well at addressing some of their own needs such as the extensive outdoor recreational field complex which has been developed by volunteers in conjunction with town assistance, thereby lightening the burden on taxpayers.

Land Use

The Town includes approximately 11.5 square miles (7,300 acres). The Town land size is small as compared with surrounding communities. Although the predominant type of land use in Town is forest or wooded land representing close to 80 percent of the total land area, Mechanic Falls has a considerably higher percentage of developed land than does surrounding towns. After forest use, residential development makes up the next largest use of land followed by agriculture/open space. And although a vigorous manufacturing sector exists, only about 1 percent of the Town's land is developed with commercial/ industrial uses.

With slow population growth expected, there will be a need for some additional residential development, but it should not consume a significant amount of land. Commercial and industrial development, especially industrial, has the potential to consume at least as much land as new residential development given that some businesses and industries need large parcels in the order of between 5 and 20 acres. However, it is difficult to predict what businesses would locate in town. The Route 26 corridor could attract considerable service oriented commercial development given the new casino in neighboring Oxford, and the rail line could be attractive to a variety of warehousing and manufacturing businesses. But it is difficult to predict whether such businesses will locate in Mechanic Falls or neighboring communities.

Natural Resources

Surface waters in Town include the Little Androscoggin River in addition to numerous brooks and streams. The Town does not include any lakes or ponds and only includes the portion of one pond

(Hogan Pond located in Oxford) watershed (drainage area) within its boundaries. There are a number of fresh water wetlands which have been rated in terms of significance as wildlife habitat.

Three aquifers are located along Town boundaries. The aquifer located near the Mechanic Falls/Poland Town Line is a high yield aquifer which serves as a supply source for the Town water supply and for Poland Spring Bottling (just over the town line in Poland), a major commercial bottler of water. Development around this aquifer has been limited. Currently, the Town protects the aquifer through an aquifer protection district established in the Town Zoning Ordinance. The Shoreland Zoning, last amended in 2009, may need to be amended in the future based on changes to State law.

Historic and Archaeological Resources

The Town includes two historic structures of national historic significance (George Seaverns House and The Elms). There are also a number of buildings and one site (Civil War Statue) which have some local historic significance. The majority of the structures and the Civil War Statue are within or near the Downtown Area.

Recreation

The recreation facilities located near the Town Office in the downtown have developed into a quality complex that has a high use. Five ball fields, two added since the previous plan, attract regional and statewide tournaments. A skate park is also popular among young residents, and an outdoor ice rink is provided each winter, weather permitting. The Town hires summer staff to provide recreational programs and an active group of volunteers supplements the recreational offerings. Town residents use surrounding communities' lakes for swimming, boating, and fishing because the Town does not include any lakes or ponds.

The recreational opportunities in Town are addressing a majority of the residents' needs. There is some interest in developing additional river access and in developing additional multi-use trails.

Transportation

Mechanic Falls has 9 miles of arterial highway, 1 mile of collector highways, and 19 miles of local roads. All 19 miles of local roads are maintained by the Town. The Town is also responsible for winter maintenance of certain sections of state roads where there is a concentrated development adjacent to the roadway. Major roads, Routes 26, 121, and 11 all provide excellent connections with surrounding towns and major transportation routes for goods and services. However, the Five Corners intersection (Route 26 and Route 11) continues to be a safety concern.

The St. Lawrence and Atlantic Railroad runs east to west through the town. This railroad has been aggressive at developing into an important short-line railroad connecting Maine with Montreal and the Pacific Coast through the Canadian railroad system. It offers good potential for additional warehousing and manufacturing development in the community.

There are nearly 3 miles of sidewalks, all of which serve the downtown area making the Mechanic Falls downtown a reasonably walkable community. The condition of sidewalks range from good to poor; improvements are included in the Capital Improvement Program.

Fiscal Capacity

This section of the comprehensive plan evaluates the Towns' fiscal capacity or its ability to meet current and future needs through public expenditures. Mechanic Falls' largest source of revenue is property taxes. The major reoccurring expenditures for the Town include school appropriations, road maintenance and repair, and administration costs. The Town has established a Capital Improvement Program to better plan for future capital facility needs. Generally, Town Capital facility needs are funded by setting aside money annually for several years to pay for what is needed.

SECTION I

INVENTORY AND ANALYSIS
DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

Introduction

The following presents an overview of the population trends in Mechanic Falls and surrounding communities. An examination of past trends and characteristics of that population is important for understanding and predicting future population trends. Analysis of the population in Mechanic Falls not only lends insight to future demands for community services, but also provides the platform on which the comprehensive plan is developed.

Population Growth

Table D-1 shows population trends in Mechanic Falls and neighboring communities. Mechanic Falls experienced its most significant growth in recent years between 1970 and 1980 with this 19% growth rate tapering off to an 8% growth rate from 1990 to 2000. The 2010 U.S. Census reported a population of 3,031 which would indicate a 3.4% decline over the past decade. There may be several reasons for this. One may be that the Census undercounted the population; however, a check of the student enrollment (Table D-7) indicates that enrollment has decreased significantly over the past several decades and has just begun to level off in the last several years. There may have been some outmigration from the community due to the economic downturn. Lower income households may have moved into Auburn or Lewiston (where there is public transportation) because they could not afford to maintain vehicles, and young people may have left the area for educational opportunities or employment, a problem common to most of Maine.

Table D-1 lists the average population increase for the county, state, and some surrounding communities (grouped) for 1980 through 2010. Table D-2 lists the same statistics for each of the surrounding towns. In general, the growth rates for the state, county and surrounding towns have decreased from the highs of the 70s and 80s. Poland continues to show significant growth possibly because parts of it are somewhat closer to employment centers of Lewiston/Auburn and Portland. Poland also has a number of lakes where season homes have continued to be converted to year-round by retirees and people working in Lewiston/Auburn and Portland. The significant growth in Hebron is somewhat unexplained, but may be due to an increase in the amount of inexpensive land for sale in this small, rural community. Minot, too, has had significant amounts of land come on the market over the past two to three decades. On the other hand, Mechanic Falls has a very small land mass and has had a minimal amount of land for sale over the past 10 years.

Interestingly, Mechanic Falls serves as a small service center for several surrounding towns, especially Poland and Minot. Many residents of these towns use the grocery and hardware stores, gasoline stations, and convenience stores. Many residents from these towns also attend church and participate in other programs such as the American Legion. The convenience of the Mechanic Falls services enhances the attractiveness for much of Poland and Minot.

Table D-1
Total Population
1980-2010

Year	MECHANIC FALLS	*Surrounding Towns	Androscoggin County	State of Maine
1980	2,616	8,695	99,657	1,125,043
1990	2,919	10,589	105,259	1,227,928
2000	3,138	12,127	103,793	1,274,923
2010	3,031	13,319	107,702	1,328,361
% change				
1980-90	12	22	6	9
1990-00	7.5	14.5	-1.4	3.8
2000-10	-3.4	9.8	3.8	4.2

Source: 1980, 90, 2000, 2010 U.S. Census
*Four town total: Poland, Minot, Oxford, Hebron

Table D-2
Total Population in Surrounding Communities
1970-2010

Year	MECHANIC FALLS	Poland	Minot	Oxford	Hebron
1980	2,616	3,578	1,309	3,143	665
1990	2,919	4,342	1,664	3,705	878
2000	3,138	4,866	2,248	3,960	1,053
2010	3,031	5,376	2,607	4,110	1,416
% change					
1980-90	12	21	27	18	32
1990-00	7.5	12	35	6.9	20
2000-10	-3.4	10.5	16	3.8	34.5

Source: 1980, 1990, 2000, 2010 U.S. Census

Natural Population Changes

As shown in the previous tables, the total population of Mechanic Falls increased by 303 people between 1980 and 1990. The majority of this population growth occurred as a result of natural population changes (births-deaths) and not as a result of in-migration. Table D-3 lists the number of births and deaths for each year from 2000 to 2010. From this, it can be seen that the natural population increase is still healthy.

Table D-3
Natural Population Changes
Mechanic Falls, 2000-2010

Year	Births	Deaths	Natural Population Change
2000	53	12	41
2001	40	34	6
2002	27	22	5
2003	28	10	18
2004	41	20	21
2005	40	32	8
2006	48	23	25
2007	44	17	27
2008	32	18	14
2009	42	25	17
2010	47	17	30
Total	442	230	212

Source: Maine Department of Human Services
Mechanic Falls Town Reports

Age Distribution

Table D-4 contains the breakdown of the population by age for 2000 and 2010 with percentages for age groups provided for Androscoggin County and the State. In 1990 Mechanic Falls had a slightly younger population than Androscoggin County and the State. The gap is narrowing with Mechanic Falls still having a higher percentage of its population in the less than 20 age group than does the county and state but with the 20 to 44 age group now having a lower percentage than the county. This age category has decreased 8% since 2000. The percentage in this age group is only 1% higher than the State's. The percentage of residents in the 45 to 64 category is now higher than for Androscoggin County and similar to the State's. These population trends could well be tied to the reported decline in population since 2000.

Table D-4
Age Distribution

	MECHANIC FALLS				Androscoggin County		State of Maine	
Age	2010		2000		2010	2000	2010	2000
Under 20	795	26%	850	27%	25%	24%	23%	24%
20 - 44	948	31%	1,213	39%	39%	39%	30%	37%
45 - 64	900	30%	719	23%	20%	23%	31%	25%
65 and over	388	13%	356	11%	14%	14%	16%	14%
TOTALS	3,031	100%	3,138	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

U.S. Census

Education Levels

The education levels of Mechanic Falls' population vary considerably from Androscoggin County and State. Table D-5 indicates the differences. The percentage of the reported population not having a high school diploma was similar to the State's and lower than that of Androscoggin County. The percentage of high school graduates was significantly higher than the State's or County's, but the percentage having college degrees was considerably lower than the County's and especially the State's.

Table D-5
Educational Attainment, 2010
(Persons 25 years and older)

	MECHANIC FALLS		**Androscoggin County**		**State of Maine**	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Less than 9th Grade	82	3.7	4318	5.9	35,313	3.8
9th to 12th, No Diploma	132	6.0	5,708	7.8	92,930	6.4
Total No Diploma	214	9.7	10,026	13.7	128,243	10.2
High School Graduate	1,317	59.8	29,127	39.8	327,114	35.2
Some College no degree	399	18.1	14,563	19.9	178,426	19.2
Associates Degree	119	5.4	6,074	8.3	82,708	8.9
Bachelors Degree	108	4.9	9,148	12.5	159,840	17.2
Graduate or Professional Degree	44	2.0	4,318	5.9	87,354	9.4
TOTALS	2,203		73,185		929,301	

Source: 2010 U.S. Census

Student Enrollment

Mechanic Falls recently became a member of Regional School Unit 16. Formerly, the town was a member of School Union #29 which included the same towns as the new regional group: Minot and Poland. One school is located in Mechanic Falls, Elm Street School (Grades PreK-6). Table D-6 provides school enrollment data for years 2008-2009 through 2011-2012. It should be noted that the student enrollment has increased by about 5% even as population reportedly decreased and the age group that would generally have the most children, the 22-44 age, also decreased. There appears to be no significant trend, with varying grades indicating the largest differences over the time shown.

Table D-6
Mechanic Falls Student Enrollment in RSU #16

Year	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	Yearly Total
1988-1989	46	43	39	56	42	47	43	48	54	42	47	41	28	594
2008-09	47	36	35	43	23	35	35	39	31	45	32	44	28	473
2009-10	43	40	35	38	40	27	38	35	39	35	42	35	40	487
2010-11	39	42	40	37	42	41	24	37	35	38	31	37	30	503
2011-12	44	39	41	41	39	33	40	23	34	38	35	30	34	498

Source: Maine Department of Education, October 1 Reporting as of February 14, 2012

Income Characteristics

Income statistics can be a general indication of the prosperity of a community. Table D-7 shows the most recently reported household income levels for Mechanic Falls, Androscoggin County, and the State of Maine. The percentage of Mechanic Falls residents with incomes less than $20,000 is significantly less than for the County and the State, but the percentage in the $20,000 to $29,999 is considerably more than the County and the State. The percentage in the $30,000 to $39,999 is lower than the County's and State's, but that in the $40,000 to $49,999 is similar. In the two ranges that cover the $60,000 to $99,000 categories, the percentage of Mechanic Falls residents significantly exceeds the percentages for the County and State, but the percentage making over $100,000 is considerably lower than for the County and State.

Table D-7
Household Income Levels
2010 Estimates

	MECHANIC FALLS		Androscoggin County		State of Maine	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Below $10,000	79	6	3,315	8	39,795	7
$10,000 - 19,999	37	3	5,890	13	69,093	13
$20,000 - 29,999	285	23	5,505	13	65,752	12
$30,000 -$39,999	81	7	5,130	12	61,477	11
$40,000-$49,999	124	10	4,705	11	55,520	10
$50,000-$59,999	72	6	3,600	8	49,469	9
$60,000-$74,999	213	17	5,423	12	61,834	11
$75,000-$99,999	271	22	5,324	12	67,851	12
Above $100,000	68	6	5,148	12	80,334	15
TOTALS	1,226	100	44,040	100	551,125	100
Median Household Income	53,462		44,470		46,933	

Source: U.S. Census ACS 2006-2010

Table D-8 shows general income characteristics for Mechanic Falls, Androscoggin County, and the State of Maine. These statistics show that, on average, residents of Mechanic Falls earn slightly less per capita than other residents in the County and the State; however, Mechanic Falls has a slightly higher median income and a much smaller percentage of its residents below the poverty level. Again, the data indicates that many residents in Mechanic Falls fall into a moderate income range with fewer lower and higher income residents.

Table D-8
General Income Characteristics
2010

	MECHANIC FALLS	Androscoggin County	State of Maine
Per capita income	$21,507	$22,752	$25,385
Estimated per capita income	$21507	$22752	$25385
Estimated Median household income	$53462	$44470	$46933
Population below poverty level	7.7%	14.3%	12.6%
Families below poverty level	2.8%	9.7%	8.4%

Source: U.S. Census
American Community Survey 2006-2010

Labor Force

The percent of Mechanic Falls residents in several occupational categories differs considerably from that of the County and State. Twenty-four (24) percent of the workers in Mechanic Falls are employed in the manufacture of durable and non-durable goods. Although this was a significant decrease in this sector over the past several decades, it is still almost double the percent of County residents in this category. Mechanic Falls has a significantly higher percentage of workers in Construction and Transportation/ Warehousing/Utilities, but a significantly lower percentage in Retail Trade. These employment trends can be correlated to the income levels of Mechanic Falls residents and the relatively high median household income, but low percentage of residents making more than $100,000.

D-9
Distribution of Labor Force by Industry
2006-2010

	MECHANIC FALLS		**Androscoggin County**	
	# of Workers	*% of Total*	*# of Workers*	*% of Total*
Construction	145	9.2	4,122	7.8
Manufacturing	382	24.2	6,496	12.3
Transportation Warehousing and Utilities	120	7.6	2,223	4.2
Wholesale Trade	74	4.7	1,786	3.4
Retail Trade	94	6.0	8,141	15.5
Educational Services Health Care, Social Assistance	327	20.7	14,055	26
Fishing, Agriculture, Forestry, Mining	0	0	511	1.0
Public Admin.	40	2.5	1,608	3.1
Finance, Insurance, Real Estate	67	4.2	3,459	6.6
Arts, Entertainment, Recreation, Accommodations, Food	118	7.5	2,955	5.6
Professional	132	8.4	4,028	7.7
Information	0	0	1,148	2.2
Other Services	79	5.0	2,121	4.0
Total	1,578	100.0	52,653	100.0

SOURCE: U.S. Census 2006-2010 ACS 5-Year Estimates

General Housing Characteristics

Table D-10 provides housing characteristics for Mechanic Falls, Androscoggin County, and the State. The table shows that Mechanic Falls has a considerably different housing mix than either the County or the State. Mechanic Falls has a considerably lower percentage of single-family homes (not including mobile home units) and a significantly higher percentage of mobile homes than did the County or the State. Androscoggin County has a slightly higher percentage of multi-family units, but both the County and Town have a considerably higher percentage of multi-family units than does the State. In the case of Mechanic Falls, this can be attributed to two relatively large mobile home parks along with two additional parks and the relatively dense residential area surrounding the downtown.

D-10
Comparison of Average Year-round Housing Units, 2006-2010

	Single-Family		**Multi-Family**		**Mobile Homes**		**Boat, RV, Van**		**Total Units**
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	

Mechanic Falls	685	48	388	27	352	25	0	0	1,425
Andro. County	28,900	59	14,960	31	4,991	10	0	0	48,851
State of Maine	511,306	72	138,580	19	64,221	9	163	.02	714,270

Source: U.S. Census ACS 2006-2010

Table D-11 compares the number of housing units in Mechanic Falls from 1970 to 2010. Between these years Mechanic Falls had a net increase of 701 housing units. Single family units increased by 230; multi-family units increased by 166 units, and mobile homes increased by 305, accounting for 43 percent of the total increase. Over the past two decades, single-family housing growth has lagged behind the growth of multi-family units and mobile homes. In the past decade, reflecting the population decrease, the number of single-family homes decreased. In general, housing growth has been higher than the population growth largely due to decreasing household size.

Table D-11
Housing Units Change by Type, 1970-2010

	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010	% Change 1970-80	% Change 1980-90	% Change 90-2000	% Change 2000-10
Single-Family	455	608	615	694	685	46	1	13	-1
Multi-Family	222	219	320	291	388	-13	46	-9	33
Mobile Home	47	108	183	257	352	119	69	40	37
Total Units	724	935	1,118	1,242	1,425	33	20	11	15

Source: U.S. Census and ACS

Average Household Size

Between 1980 and 2010, the population increased by 15.8%, and the total number of households in Mechanic Falls increased by approximately 37%. However, as shown in Table D-12, Mechanic Falls' average household size decreased during that same period by 20 percent. This trend is typical of surrounding towns as well as the State.

Table D-12
Average Household Size
1970-2010

	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010
Number of Households, Mechanic Falls	687	878	1065	1163	1,206
Average Household Size, Mechanic Falls	3.16	2.97	3.14	2.67	2.5
Average Household Size, Androscoggin County	3.11	2.73	3.04	2.38	2.37

Source: U.S. Census

Projected Average Household Size

National trends show that household size is decreasing as family size is smaller than in the past, there are more single parent families, and the elderly population is growing. However, these cultural and demographic patterns are not expected to change as drastically in the future as they have in the past two decades. Over the next decade, it is anticipated that household size could decrease slightly. It is anticipated that it will be between 2.5 and 2.25 persons per household.

Table D-13
Average Household Size
Mechanic Falls, 1980-2010

Year	Estimated Average Household Size
1980	2.97
1985	2.82
1990	2.71
1995	2.64
2000	2.67
2010	2.50

Source: Androscoggin Valley Council of Governments, 1990 and US Census

Population Projections for Year-Round Population

Anticipating population growth is an integral part of the comprehensive planning process. Depending on future population characteristics, various community needs and facilities can be identified. It should be understood, however, that predicting population with great accuracy is difficult.

Population change is the result of two primary factors, natural increase and migration. Natural increase is derived from the number of births minus the number of deaths over a specific period. Migration is the number of persons moving into or out of a community over a period of time. Table D-3 indicated a reasonable natural increase of 212 over the 2000-2010 decade, but overall population decreased by 107, and therefore outmigration accounted for 319 people leaving the community in that decade.

Table D-14 presents population projections through 2023 developed by the Maine State Planning Office and based on their estimates of 2008 population which indicated that Mechanic Falls continued to have moderate growth from 2000 to 2008. This may well have been the case with most of the outmigration occurring after the economic downturn of 2008. The same projection shows that Androscoggin County would only grow modestly over the next decade plus. Therefore, it cannot be expected that Mechanic Falls would return to the robust growth rates of the 70's and 80's.

There are no projections by a state agency based on the 2010 Census at the time of this writing. It would be anticipated that a projection model would show a very slight growth for the town as the economy improves. From a planning perspective, it can be safely estimated that population growth (or decline if the current trend continues) will not be so significant as to require considerable changes in town services or capital expenditures. It is more likely that federal and state requirements (such as shoreland zoning or

revenue sharing changes and school mandates), aging capital facilities, and increased demand for services from the current residents will place the greatest demands on land use and fiscal capacity.

Table D-14a
Population Projections
Mechanic Falls 2023

Year	Population
2013	3,254
2018	3,263
2023	3,255

SPO Projection based on 2008 population estimate

Table D-14b
Androscoggin County
Population Projections - 2028

Year	Population
2003	105,746
2008	106,877
2013	107,605
2018	107,831
2023	107,524
2028	106,632

Source: Maine State Planning Office
Based on 2010 Census

ECONOMY

Regional Economic Perspective

Due to the way the state and federal government report economic data, it is difficult to develop a detailed profile of individual towns. Additionally, Mechanic Falls' economy is impacted by what happens in Androscoggin County, Lewiston and Auburn, the State and the Nation. An examination of various regional and local economic indicators will provide a picture of Mechanic Falls past, current and future economic characteristics.

Mechanic Falls is located in the Lewiston-Auburn Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) that includes Auburn, Durham, Greene, Lewiston, Lisbon, Poland and Sabattus. Table E-1 summarizes employment (non-farm and salary employment) in the Lewiston-Auburn MSA between 1990 and 2010. According to the table, just over 10% of the jobs in the area are manufacturing and approximately 89% are non-manufacturing.

Total manufacturing jobs for the region experienced an overall loss of about 44% over the 20-year period. The loss of manufacturing jobs is well known on a national basis and has impacted all of Maine, also. While the loss in Mechanic Falls was not reported, the loss shown for Androscoggin County is important since it is a significant employment center for towns surrounding Lewiston and Auburn.

Many of the categories in the non-manufacturing sector showed gains in employment during the period. With the swings in the economy much of which was based on housing and construction, significant changes – first gains and then subsequent losses – in the construction and special trades sectors over the 20-year period is to be expected. Relatively significant gains occurred in transportation and utilities, finance insurance and real estate and health services. The non-manufacturing categories to experience significant losses were wholesale trade, retail trade and services and mining. The overall rate of growth in non-manufacturing jobs from 1990-2010 was approximately 39%.

As seen in Table E-1, total non-farm wage and salary employment for the Lewiston-Auburn MSA experienced an increase of just over 20% for the period between 1990 and 2010.

Table E-1
Lewiston-Auburn MSA
Non-Farm Wage and Salary Employment
1990-2010

	1990	2000	2010	% Change 1990-2010	% Change 2000-2010
Total	**38,910**	**47,060**	**46,789**	**20.2**	**-.06**
Total Manufacturing	**8,760**	**7,646**	**4,894**	**-44.1**	**-36**
Durable	2,310	2,522	1,686	-27.0	-33.1
lumber & wood	300	1,064	273	-9.0	-74.3
logging	50	13	11	-78	-15.4
other durable	2,010	1,445	1,402	-30.2	-3
Non-durable	6,440	5,124	3,208	-50.2	-37.4
printing	730	611	463	-36.6	-24.2
Total Non-manufacturing	**30,160**	**31,753**	**41,895**	**38.9**	**32**
Construction	1,860	2,216	2,174	16.9	-2
special trades	1,420	1,787	1,634	15.1	-8.6
Trans. & utilities	1,350	1,574	2,221	64.5	41.1
Wholesale trade	2,170	1,239	1,270	-41.5	2.5
non-durable goods	1,130	260	328	-71	26.2
Retail trade	7,640	7,127	6,223	-18.5	-12.7
Finance, insurance, real estate	2,320	2,631	3,048	31.4	15.9
Services & mining	10,680	5,331	5,329	-50.1	-0.04
health services	4,480	7,344	9,470	111.4	29

Source: Maine Dept. of Labor

Table E-2 provides another look at employment trends in the region, this one for Androscoggin County. The table indicates similar shifts in employment patterns for Androscoggin County as Table E-1 showed for the labor market area, although computed differently. This table also considers the trends over a longer time period. As Table E-2 indicates, employment increased greatly in the service industries. Employment in manufacturing has experienced a sharp decline in the last three decades between 1980 and 2010.

Table E-2
Number of Employees by Type of Industry
For Androscoggin County
1980-2010

INDUSTRY	1980	1990	2000	2010
Agriculture, forestry & fisheries	1,157	856	316	302
Construction	2,352	3,501	2,924	2,401
Manufacturing	15,109	12,826	8,517	5,129
Transportation & Public Utilities	1,759	2,475	1,760	2,458
Wholesale Trade	2,009	1,941	1,561	1,574
Retail Trade	6,874	9,418	7,766	6,972
Finance, insurance & real estate	3,185		2,953	3,383

Services	10,182	14,812	22,077	24,727
Public Administration	1,682	1,552	1,247	1,249
Other	927	22	818	892
TOTALS*	43,718	50,588	49,939	49,087

Source: U.S. Census and Maine DOL – reported categories changed over the decades – figures have been aggregated to account for changes.
*The totals could reflect changes in categories and data collection techniques.

Mechanic Falls' Economy

Both Mechanic Falls' and Androscoggin County's labor force experienced a slow but steady increase of 3%. Unemployment rates in both Mechanic Falls and Androscoggin County declined during the first half of the period before beginning a sharp increase. While Mechanic Falls had an unemployment rate slightly higher than the County's during most of the period, for the last reported year, 2010, it was the same at 8.1%.

Table E-3
Average Annual Labor Force
2005-2010

	MECHANIC FALLS		Androscoggin County	
	Labor Force	**Unemployment Rate**	**Labor Force**	**Unemployment Rate**
2005	1,701	5.6	56,797	4.9
2006	1,736	5.1	57,733	4.7
2007	1,751	5.0	58,297	4.6
2008	1,755	5.8	58,517	5.5
2009	1,756	8.8	58,039	8.5
2010	1,759	8.1	58,280	8.1
% Change in Labor Force 2005-2010	3.0		3.0	

Source: Maine Dept. of Labor

Table E-4 presents the distribution of Mechanic Falls 2010 labor force by industry and compares that to Androscoggin County. The most significant differences between Mechanic Falls and Androscoggin County was the employment in manufacturing 27.2% compared to 19.3% for the County, in Retail Trade, where the county shows 14.8% compared to 3.3% for Mechanic Falls, and in Health, education and social services where the county shows 22.1% compared to 16.4% for Mechanic Falls.

Table E-4
Distribution of Labor Force by Industry
2010

	MECHANIC FALLS		Androscoggin County	
	# of Workers	% of Total	# of Workers	% of Total
Agriculture, forestry fisheries, mining	0	0	511	1
Construction	145	9.2	4,122	7.8
Manufacturing:	382	24.2	6,496	12.3
Transportation, Warehousing and Utilities	120	7.6	2,223	4.2
Wholesale Trade	74	4.7	1,786	3.4
Retail Trade	94	6.0	8,141	15.5
Information	0	0	1,148	2.2
Finance, Insurance & real estate	67	4.2	3,459	6.6
Arts, entertainment & recreational services/food services	118	7.5	2,955	5.6
Professional scientific, management, admin & Waste Management services	132	8.4	4,028	7.7
Health, Educational and Social services	327	20.7	14,055	26.7
Public administration	40	2.5	1,608	3.1
Other Services	79	5%	2,121	4.0
TOTALS	1,578		52,653	

Source: American Community Survey, 2006-2010

Other data that provide insight into employment patterns are presented in Tables E-5 and E-6. They show that of the 1,540 workers (aged 16 years and over) living in Mechanic Falls in 2010, 169 (11%) worked in Mechanic Falls, and 1,371 (89%) worked outside of Mechanic Falls. Interestingly, Hebron and Oxford both had more of their residents working within their communities, based on data that is collected over a 4-year period from 2006 to 2010. This is somewhat difficult to explain for Hebron unless it relates to the number of people living in Hebron and working at Hebron Academy. There are few other places of employment in Hebron. Oxford's data may be skewed somewhat due to the inclusion of 2006 and 2007 since considerable employment was provided by manufactured housing factories, several of which closed in 2008 and 2009.

Table E-5
Place of Work by Town of Residence
2010

	In Town of Residence		Outside Town of Residence		Total
	#	%	#	%	#
MECHANIC FALLS	169	11.0	1,371	89.0	1,540
Hebron	140	22.9	472	77.1	612
Minot	162	11.7	1,224	88.3	1,386
Oxford	474	24.4	1,470	75.6	1,944
Poland	359	12.7	2,462	87.3	2,821

Source: 2006-2010 American Community Survey U.S. Census

Table E-6 indicates where Mechanic Falls' residents work. It should be noted that this is a picture of one year compared to the multiple years aggregated for Table E-6, and therefore, numbers tend to differ somewhat, but nevertheless, trends can be observed. As indicated by Table E-6, nearly half of the total labor force living in Mechanic Falls works in either Lewiston or Auburn. A much smaller percentage works in Portland or Augusta with still lower percentages working in Poland. A few work in locations that are relatively far away.

Table E-6
Distribution of Labor Force by Place of Employment
2009

Place of Employment	# of Persons	% of total
Mechanic Falls	83	5.6
Auburn	372	25.2
Lewiston	332	22.5
Portland	69	4.7
Augusta	47	3.2
Poland	40	2.7
Bath	36	2.4
Brunswick	26	1.8
South Portland	26	1.8
Other Locations	405	27.4
TOTAL	1,478	100

Source: U.S. Census

Taxable Sales

Table E-7 lists total taxable sales information by year for Mechanic Falls and surrounding communities for 2006-2010. Total taxable sales include consumer retail sales plus special types of sales and rentals to businesses where the tax is paid directly by the buyer, such as commercial or industrial heating oil purchases. Taxable sales are, therefore, one indicator of the retail climate and are of some significance in a town such as Mechanic Falls that has a commercial downtown area. As the table indicates, Mechanic Falls' taxable sales increased by nearly 5% in the five-year period between 2006 and 2010. This increase is lower than the 9.9% increase experienced by Androscoggin County during that period. Surrounding towns experienced anywhere from a loss of 11% to a gain of over 27%. Androscoggin County's growth was mostly a result of increased sales in the Lewiston and Auburn. Poland's growth

may be explained by several new, small commercial ventures, including Dunkin Donuts on Route 26 and possible increases in direct consumer sales by Poland Spring Bottling. The decrease in sales in Oxford is somewhat surprising since they have a concentration of commercial businesses, including several new businesses in the northern portion of the town within easy driving distance of Mechanic Falls, Poland, Norway and Paris. While Mechanic Falls has held its own in this respect, continued concentration on attracting business to the downtown and the possible establishment of services on or near Route 26 and the new casino is important.

Table E-7
Total Taxable Sales
2006-2010
(thousands of dollars)

	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	% Change '06-'10
Mechanic Falls	11,201	12,023	11,814	11,916	11,737	4.8
Minot	3033	3,090	3,186	2,645	3,022	-0.4
Poland	11,682	12,683	14,184	13,702	14,890	27.5
Oxford	110,878	106,692	100,038	98,758	98,403	-11.3
Andros. County	1,114,775	1,113,200	1,085,058	1,001,430	1,004,473	9.9

Source: Dept. of Economic and Community Development

Unemployment

Table E-8 lists rates of unemployment, computed by the Maine Department of Labor, for Mechanic Falls, the Lewiston-Auburn MSA (Metropolitan Statistical Area), various other LMA's (Labor Market Area) in Western Maine, Oxford, Androscoggin and Franklin Counties and the State, from 2001 through 2010.

As shown in this table, unemployment rates in Mechanic Falls have generally been close to the median when compared to that of the surrounding areas. Mechanic Falls' unemployment rate has been consistently above that of both Androscoggin County and the State of Maine. It follows the same basic trend as in all areas, remaining relatively steady through 2007, and then beginning a significant climb over the next three-year period.

TABLE E-8
Unemployment Statistics
Mechanic Falls and Selected Areas, 2001-2010

	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Mechanic Falls	4.4	4.7	6.4	5.2	5.6	5.1	5.0	5.8	8.8	8.1
Lewiston-Auburn Labor Market Area	3.9	4.4	5.0	4.5	4.9	4.7	4.7	5.5	8.6	8.1
Bridgton-Paris Labor Market Area	4.2	5.1	5.4	5.5	5.4	5.5	5.7	7.0	10.4	9.6
Rumford Labor Market Area	5.9	6.8	7.4	6.8	7.4	7.4	7.3	7.8	13.0	12.4

Farmington Labor Market Area	5.3	5.3	6.1	5.8	5.9	6.0	6.1	7.0	10.7	9.9
Portland Labor Market Area	2.8	3.3	3.6	3.5	3.7	3.5	3.5	4.3	6.8	6.5
Oxford County	4.6	5.5	5.8	5.6	5.8	5.8	5.9	6.8	10.8	10.2
Androscoggin County	3.9	4.4	5.0	4.5	5.0	4.7	4.6	5.4	8.5	8.1
Franklin County	4.9	5.1	5.9	5.6	5.8	5.9	6.1	7.0	10.5	9.8
State of Maine	3.7	4.4	5.0	4.6	4.9	4.7	4.7	5.4	8.2	7.9

Source: Maine Department of Labor, Bureau of Employment Security

Current Economic Characteristics

Mechanic Falls has struggled with a degree of economic hardship since the early 1980s when Marcal Mill, a small paper mill that for a longtime was the town's largest employer, closed its doors. Unemployment rates have continued to be consistently above County and State averages and income levels have remained below County and State averages.

The economic situation in Mechanic Falls has been further exacerbated by numerous layoffs and plant closings in nearby Oxford Hills and Lewiston-Auburn. Since a large percentage of the Town's workforce is employed outside of Mechanic Falls, the regional economic picture has a significant impact on the Town and its people.

Table E-9 is a list of the major employers currently in Mechanic Falls as well as the approximate number of employees they employed as of 2012.

Table E-9
Major Employers in Mechanic Falls

Name of Employer	Industry Type	Number of Employees 2012
Auburn Manufacturing Inc.	High temperature industrial textiles	50
Down East Machine & Engineering Inc.	Woodworking & paper mill machinery, hydraulic machinery	35
Maine Wood Treaters Inc.	Preservative Treated Wood	35
Future Foods	Retail Food Grocer	35
Electro Static Technology	Static dissipater brushes	36
Harvest Hill Farms	Agriculture	33
Town of Mechanic Falls	Municipal Government	80
Regional School Unit #16	School Department	53

Source: Direct Contact with Employers, 2012

HOUSING CHARACTERISTICS

Introduction

This Chapter analyzes the current housing stock of both Mechanic Falls and the surrounding communities with the region and examines how demands for housing might be met for future residents of the Town.

Housing Units

The figures in Table HOU-1 show that the housing stock of Mechanic Falls is 48 percent single-family, 27 percent multi-family and 25 percent mobile homes. Looking at how the town compares with the county and the state, Mechanic Falls has a lower proportion of single-family homes than both Androscoggin County and the State of Maine. The town has a higher proportion of multi-family units than the State but a lower proportion of multi-family units than the County. In terms of mobile homes, Mechanic Falls has a much higher proportion than both the County and State.

TABLE HOU-1
Comparison of Housing Units
Mechanic Falls, 2010

Housing Type	Mechanic Falls		Androscoggin County		State of Maine	
	No.	% of Total	No.	% of Total	No.	% of Total
Single-family	685	48.1	28,900	59.2	511,306	71.6
Multi-family	388	27.2	14,960	30.6	138,680	19.4
Mobile Home	352	24.7	4,991	10.2	64,221	9.0
TOTAL	1,425		48,851		714,207	

Source: Preliminary 2010 U.S. Census

TABLE HOU-2
Housing Units, Change by Type
Mechanic Falls, 1990 to 2010

Housing Type	1990	2000	2010	Change 1990-2000		Change 2000-2010	
				#	%	#	%
Single-Family	657	694	685	37	5.6	-9	-1.3
Multi-Family	221	291	388	70	31.7	97	33.3
Mobile Home	195	257	352	62	31.8	95	37.0
TOTAL	1,073	1,242	1,425	169	15.8	183	14.7

Source: US Census

Table HOU-2 shows that Mechanic Falls experienced moderate growth (6%) in single-family homes during the 1990's as compared with a 1 percent loss in units during the 2000's. The table shows that growth in mobile homes and multi-family units increased dramatically during the twenty year period as housing affordability became a problem.

Regional Housing Growth

TABLE HOU-3
Regional Housing Growth
2000-2010

Town	Housing Units		Change 2000-2010	
	2000	2010	No.	Percent
Mechanic Falls	1,242	1,425	183	14.7
Minot	824	1,056	232	28.2
Poland	2,316	2,679	363	15.7
Oxford	1,920	2,170	250	13.0
Otisfield	1,017	1,169	152	15.0
Hebron	410	483	73	17.8

Source: 2000, 2010 U. S. Census

Table HOU-3 indicates that although Mechanic Falls experienced 15 percent growth in the number of total housing units, it was significantly lower than growth in many of the surrounding communities.

Housing Occupancy

TABLE HOU-4
Housing Occupancy
Mechanic Falls, 2000-2010

Occupancy	2000		2010	
	No.	% of Total	No.	% of Total
Owner Occupied	638	70.2	876	72.6
Renter Occupied	271	29.8	330	27.4
TOTAL	909		1206	

Source: 2000, 2010 Census

Table HOU-4 shows that the proportional relationship of owner and renter occupancy has remained relatively constant over the last decade.

Condition of Housing

TABLE HOU-5
Housing Stock by Date of Construction
Mechanic Falls, 2000-2010

Year Built	2000		2010	
	# Units	% of Total	# Units	% of Total
2000 or later			171	12
1990-2000	204	16.4	188	13.2
1980-1989	169	13.6	230	16.4
1970-1979	169	13.6	108	7.6
1960-1969	83	6.7	95	6.7
1940-1959	100	8.1	128	9.0
Pre-1940	517	41.6	505	35.4
TOTAL	1242	100	1425	100

Source: US Census

U.S. Census data was utilized to determine the condition of Mechanic Falls housing stock because of a lack of recent town wide data. Table HOU-5 provides information of the number of units in Mechanic Falls according to the year in which they were built. The age of the housing stock can then be used to draw conclusions regarding the condition of housing. As the table indicates, the majority (35%) of housing units were built prior to 1940 making them more than 70 years old. As housing structures age (30 years), they require a greater amount of maintenance and repairs to maintain them in a safe condition. The age (over 70 years) of a large percentage of the housing stock could generally result in substandard housing.

Additionally, a review of past Community Development Block Grant applications indicates the identification of substandard housing units in Town and high percentages of households with low to moderate income. Mechanic Falls responded to this by spending a significant amount of revolving loan funds on housing rehabilitation during the mid-1980s.

Housing and Rental Costs

Housing Costs

Real Estate Transfer Tax Data is compiled by the MSHA from real estate tax declaration forms. The figures available are for all homes sold, new and existing, mobile homes, and single-family to four-unit homes.

TABLE HOU-6
Median Home Sales Prices
Mechanic Falls and Surrounding Communities
1990-2008

Town	1990	2008 Median Sale Price	% Change 1990-2009
Mechanic Falls	65,518	149,450	128.1
Minot	85,583	207,000	141.9
Poland	98,935	173,000	74.9
Oxford	88,675	115,000	29.7
Otisfield	92,667	108,000	16.5
Hebron	67,500	144,950	114.7

Bearing in mind that the data in Table HOU-6 are medians (and reflect the influence of all homes sold), it is still apparent that the prices of housing escalated greatly in the late 1990s through the 2000s. The median selling price for a home in Mechanic Falls was over 128 percent higher in 2008 than in 1990. This represents a much higher percentage increase than most of the surrounding communities.

Rental Costs

In 2008 the MSHA published the rental rate for an average two-bedroom rent with utilities for municipalities. The Mechanic Falls rate of $726.93 was somewhat lower than those in the surrounding communities, the county ($756.50) and the state ($846.95). In 2009 MSHA's average rental rates for the Lewiston-Auburn MSA were $511.00 for an efficiency apartment, $611.00 for a one bedroom, $776.00 for two bedroom, $882.00 for a three bedroom and $1,029.00 for a four bedroom apartment.

As indicated by Table HOU-7, the average monthly rent as determined by MSHA for 2009 in Mechanic Falls exceeds the HUD established Fair Market Rent (FMR) for all apartment sizes. In fact, the 2009 average rent paid also exceeded the current 2012 FMR for most apartment sizes.

Table HOU-7
Mechanic Falls
Rental costs

MSHA Average Rent 2009	Lewiston-Auburn MSA & Mechanic Falls	HUD Fair Market Rent 2009	HUD Fair Market Rent 2012
Efficiency	$511.00	$420.00	$475.00
1 Bedroom	$611.00	$526.00	$595.00
2 Bedroom	$776.00	$643.00	$727.00
3 Bedroom	$882.00	$815.00	$921.00
4 Bedroom	$1,029.00	$902.00	$1,020.00

Source: Maine State Housing Authority, Housing and Urban Development

Subsidized Units

Table HOU-8 provides a listing of the total number of federally-assisted multi-family housing units in Mechanic Falls as reported by MSHA in 2008.

Table HOU-8
Subsidized Units

Housing - Subsidized Units, 2008	Mechanic Falls	Androscoggin County	Maine
Disabled Units		28	460
Family Units		1,450	11,517
Housing Choice Vouchers	17	1,448	11,369
Senior Units	60	1,286	14,073
Special Needs Units		250	1,846
Total	77	4,462	39,265

Source: Maine State Housing Authority

TABLE HOU-9
Subsidized Units
Mechanic Falls, 2012

Project Name	Sponsor	Program	Total Low Inc. Units		Type of Subsidy		
			Elderly	Family	RA	Sec. 8	Other
Bucknam Oaks	FmHA	515	24	0		24	

Source: Maine State Housing Authority, Androscoggin County Affordable Housing Options 2012

Housing Affordability

Based on information obtained from the Maine State Housing Authority, the median priced home in Mechanic Falls was not affordable to the median income household in Mechanic Falls during the years between 2004 and 2008. Affordability is measured by an affordability index. An index greater than one means that the median value home is affordable to median income households; an index less than one means that the median value home is unaffordable for median income households.

The Maine State Housing Authority reports that 61% of households in Mechanic Falls could not afford the median home in 2008. This compares to 46% for the Lewiston-Auburn Labor Market Area that includes Mechanic Falls.

TABLE HOU-10
Affordability Index
For Those at Median Income

Year	Index	Median Home Price	Median Income	Income Needed to Afford Median Home Price	Home Price Affordable to Median Income
2004	0.89	$114,000	$38,458	$43,385	$101,053
2005	0.78	$137,000	$39,935	$51,098	$107,071
2006	0.90	$135,000	$41,713	$46,350	$120,826
2007	0.83	$150, 000	$42,875	$51,766	$124,236
2008	0.83	$149,450	$42,772	$51,626	$123,820

Source: Maine State Housing Authority

Rental housing is important in meeting the needs for affordable/work force and elderly housing. As with the Affordable Housing Index, a Rental Index greater than one means that the median value rent is affordable to median income households; an index less than one means that the median value rent is unaffordable for median income households.

In 2009, the Maine State Housing Authority reported that the average two-bedroom rent in Mechanic Falls was $753. That compares to $776 for the Lewiston-Auburn Labor Market area. An income of $30,138 would be needed to afford the average rent in Mechanic Falls. This information indicates that households with 80% of the median income can afford rents in Mechanic Falls.

TABLE HOU-11
Rental Affordability Index
2009

	Index	Average 2-BR Rent	Renter Household Median Income	Income Needed to Afford Average 2-BR Rent	Households Unable to Affordable Average 2-BR Rent
Mechanic Falls	1.09	$753	$32,869	$30,138	45.7%
Lewiston-Auburn MSA	0.91	$776	$28,182	$31,041	54.7%

Source: Maine State Housing Authority

Summary/Findings

A review of housing sales prices shows that they are generally increasing at a greater rate in Mechanic Falls than in most surrounding communities. Rental rates, while generally on pace with many of the surrounding communities, appear to be somewhat higher than the HUD Fair Market Rent as determined for 2012. This situation, if it remains the same, may prevent more people from purchasing homes and/or renting apartments in Mechanic Falls. Mechanic Falls does have a much higher proportion of mobile homes compared to Androscoggin County and the State which may address the housing needs of the low-income and very-low-income groups.

However, housing projections for the next decade can be problematic. Demographic indicators indicate an aging population. At the other end of the spectrum are young families trying to purchase their first home. These two segments of the population represent those least able to purchase a home. Housing demands for the next decade are likely to be met with additional mobile homes and an expanded stock of subsidized units.

PUBLIC FACILITIES AND SERVICES

Introduction

An examination of Mechanic Falls' public facilities and their current day capacities is an important element of the comprehensive plan. In addition, the future demands upon the Town's public facilities and services must be addressed along with their adequacy. This chapter presents an analysis of the current demands placed upon existing Town facilities and services and also determines if public facility or service system additions and improvements will be needed to adequately accommodate the use demands of the Town moving ahead.

Water Supply

Mechanic Falls Water Department operates a public water supply system which provides water service to 750 customers in Mechanic Falls, 19 customers in Poland with connections currently installed for 54 new customers. Seventy percent of the population of Mechanic Falls has access to public water. Limited industrial development is located outside the water service area and their water needs are being met by private wells. Additionally, private wells meet the water needs of residential development located outside the water system service area.

Water is supplied from a gravel-packed well located on Winter Brook Road in Mechanic Falls. The well is capable of pumping over 500 gallons per minute. It is estimated that this well could produce up to 720,000 gallons per day. Average daily use of water is 128,000 gallons per day. The well is 74 feet deep and is in good condition. The district also maintains a backup well which is capable of producing 210 gallons per minute and is over 67 feet in depth. Prior development of these wells in 1989, water was drawn from Range Brook and treated at the Water Treatment Plant located on Highland Ave. Because of water quality and quantity problems, as well as the cost of treatment, the well located on Winter Brook Road (Five Corners) was installed along with the transmission line along Route 11 to the existing system. In 2011 a backup well and pump were also installed at this location.

Water storage facilities consist of two reservoirs built in 2006. One reservoir is located on Standpipe Hill and has a capacity of 460,000 gallons. The other reservoir is located on Pigeon Hill and has a capacity of 60,000 gallons.

The water supply system consists of 15.52 miles of pipe. The condition of the water pipe in the system varies considerably ranging from some of the original wooden pipe installed in 1894 to the ductile iron pipe. Over half of the system is new in the last 25 years. There are a total of 105 publicly owned fire hydrants connected to the water system. The condition ranges from fair to good for some hydrants installed with CDBG funds in the 1990's.

Sewerage and Stormwater Management

The Mechanic Falls Sanitary District operates a public sewer system which provides service to the Downtown area of Mechanic Falls. The sewer system is owned and operated by a sanitary district which has five trustees elected by the system users. Development located outside the combined system service area uses subsurface (septic) disposal systems.

The treatment plant, built in 1982-83, is located on Lewiston Street. Its design capacity is 490,000 gallons per day. The facility is generally in good condition. The plant provides secondary level treatment and discharges to the Little Androscoggin River.

Sixty-four percent (820) of the population of Mechanic Falls is currently served by the Sanitary District. The average flow for the last twelve months was 340,000 gallons per day (gpd). Due to the combined nature of the sewers and their age, infiltration and inflow creates considerably higher flows during some periods of the year. The District is currently working on separating the storm water system from the sewer system and has completed approximately 60% of that work. The District continues to make major capital investments including completion of the Combined Sewer Overflow project (to eliminate overflows of combined sewage and storm water), an upgrade of the main pumping station, and an aeration upgrade to replace the rotors.

Flow records indicate that, on average, the facility has almost 490,000 gpd of capacity but can handle up to 1.5 million gpd and is considered to be of adequate capacity. The sewer system consists of 34,000 feet of pipe. At this time, there are no plans for expansion of the system.

Solid Waste

The Town of Mechanic Falls constructed a transfer station at 41 Austin Road in 1989. The facility is owned by the town and is operated by a manager who reports directly to the town manager. The station replaced a curbside collection system for which the Town contracted with a private hauler. Two significant events prompted the change away from curbside collection: one was the increased costs necessary to add recycling to the curbside system, and second was the need to transfer waste greater distances.

In the late 1970s, Mechanic Falls contracted with Auburn to dispose of waste at their energy recovery facility. The facility closed in the late 1980s due to its inability to adequately perform. As Auburn made plans to reconstruct the energy recovery facility, the users decided to form a non-profit corporation which each municipality had to join. Given a relatively high projected tipping fee and the extended commitment period, Mechanic Falls decided to consider other options and finally developed a contract with a private operation.

The current facility, built in 1989, has adequate space and is in good condition. A compactor installed at the time of original construction is in fair condition and is able to handle current capacity. The facility has moderate extra capacity. Solid waste generation in communities across Maine and the nation has generally decreased over the past 5 years, mostly attributed to the poor economy. It is difficult to predict

whether solid waste generation rates will increase to pre-2008 levels or greater given a number of factors. However, with the relatively stable population and moderate excess capacity at the transfer station, major expenditures for expansion of the transfer station are not expected.

Currently, Mechanic Falls uses a private contractor to haul its recyclables and solid waste. The solid waste is taken to the MMWAC facility in Auburn and is charged a per ton rate based on an agreed contract with the facility. Recyclables are transported to various facilities; this changes periodically based on negotiated prices for the recyclables. During the life of the plan, the destination for wastes and recyclables and the methods used for recycling may change. Future costs will fluctuate with the market.

The Town's former landfill, which is located on the Walker Road off of Route 121 to the east of the Downtown, was closed according the State of Maine Regulations in 1980s.

Public Safety

Fire Protection and Ambulance and Rescue Service

The Mechanic Falls Fire Station is located next to the Town Offices on Lewiston Street. The Fire station was built in 1972 and is in good condition and includes adequate space needs for fire department and ambulance and rescue service activities

Fire/Rescue is a municipal department managed by the Fire Chief. The department consists of a small core of ranking officers and fire fighting and rescue personnel who are paid by each call.

On average the fire department responds to about 120 calls per year while the rescue department responds to about 250 calls annually. Call volume for these two departments has remained consistent over the last ten years.

The fire and rescue protection services provided to the Town are adequate to meet existing and future needs.

Police Protection

The Town Police Department operates from the Town Office located along Lewiston Street which was renovated in 2003 and is in good condition. The police department will need some minor renovation over the next several years.

The Department includes one full-time Police Chief, one full-time Lieutenant, three full-time police officers and three reserve officers. The Police Department provides police protection to the entire Town and back-up police service is provided by the State Police and County Sheriff's Office. The Department responds to approximately 3,000 calls annually, a call volume which has increased steadily over the last several years.

The police protection service provided by the Town is adequate to meet the needs of the existing and projected population.

Public Works

The Town's roads are maintained by the Public Works Department. The Public Works Department staff includes a foreman and three equipment operators. The Town Manager serves as the Road Commissioner. All road equipment is stored at the Highway Garage. The building was built in 1972 and is good condition.

Education Facilities

Mechanic Falls is a member of Regional School Unit #16. RSU #16 includes the Towns of Poland, Mechanic Falls and Minot. Elm Street School is the only school located in Mechanic Falls, includes grades Pre K-6 and has a student capacity of 500. The oldest portion of the school was constructed in 1954 and is in fair condition. The Gymnasium was constructed in 1984 and is in good condition. And a modular addition constructed in 2003 is in fair condition. Mechanic Falls children in grades 7 to 12 are sent to Whittier Middle School and Poland High School.

Historical student enrollment information for grades K-12, including special education and projections of future student enrollment, are provided in the Demographics Characteristics Chapter of this Plan.

Health and Human Services

Health care services in Mechanic Falls include the Central Maine Family Practice clinic, which is operated by Central Maine Medical Center and was constructed in 2000, and an Optician with a single Doctor near retirement. Both the Clinic and the Optician meet the basic medical needs for the community. No expansion in size is necessary, but increased services may become necessary. Many town residents rely on surrounding community hospitals to meet their needs.

One facility, the John F. Murphy Nursing Home, is located in the Town. The Murphy Nursing Home was constructed in 1986 to provide services for the mentally disabled. The facility is in good condition but is always filled to capacity.

Municipal Government Facilities and Services

The Mechanic Falls Municipal offices are housed in a former high school building. Included at this facility are the Town Clerk municipal services, tax assessing, Municipal administration, Police department, code enforcement and planning services and the Public library. The town office building was constructed in 1928 and renovated for NFPA and ADA in 2003. Overall, the condition of the facility is fair but will require a new roof, exterior siding and insulation work in the next 5-10 years. The facility is generally adequate with no anticipated need for additional growth.

The Fire Station/Public Works garage was constructed in 1972, with subsequent minor upgrades for insulation, lighting and overhead doors. Overall the condition of the facility is good with no anticipated need for additional growth or space.

LAND USE

Introduction

Mechanic Falls has a land area of approximately 11.41 square miles or 7,300 acres. Mechanic Falls includes a Downtown/Village Area centered on the intersection of Route 121, 124 and 11. The Little Androscoggin River divides the Downtown Area almost in half, and the Saint Lawrence and Atlantic Railroad (formerly the Grand Trunk Railroad) also cuts through the downtown on its way from Danville Junction in Auburn to the Canadian border and eventually Montreal. Over the years, the Downtown area has been the location of a mixture of commercial, industrial and residential development. Traditionally, it has been served by water and sewer.

To a large extent, Mechanic Falls with its potential for water power and rail access, served as the business center for Poland and Minot. (In the early settlement pattern the three towns were actually one.) In the early years, the downtown grew around natural resource processing including farm and forest products with the paper mill in the downtown being the last major vestige of the industrial history. As the automobile and trucking became more prevalent in the economic development landscape, the three major transportation corridors of Route 26 and Routes 11 and 121 presented additional opportunities for economic development.

Manufacturing and business development are now located near the transportation corridors. There are three major areas

- along Route 11/121 (the same road) to the east of the downtown and also served by rail,
- in the downtown including at the former Marcal mill, and
- near Five Corners (the intersection of Routes 11 and 26 at the Mechanic Falls/ Poland Town Line)

The area along Route 121 to the west of the downtown has attracted some business development although on a smaller scale than the aforementioned areas. However, this area has significant vacant land and is served by the railroad, also. It should also be noted that public water is available on Route 11 westerly of the downtown area, including the Five Corners Area, due to the location of a new drinking water source to the far west of town near the Poland Town line.

The Town currently has Town-wide zoning which establishes regulations for a variety of districts. These generally coincide with the types of uses existing within the district and account for the public facilities and services available as well as the environmental characteristics of the land and water resources. A map at the beginning of Section II indicates existing zoning. In addition to the somewhat traditional zones, Mechanic Falls has a Watershed Protection Area (Overlay District covering the drainage area of Range/Waterhouse Brook), and an Aquifer Protection District Overlay covering the Winterbrook Aquifer. Minimum lot sizes vary based upon availability of public water and sewer service as well as the zone in which the lot falls. In the Downtown Development District where there are public water and sewer services, minimum lot size is 10,000 sq. ft. Other areas serviced by public utilities have

a minimum lot size of 20,000 sq. ft. The remaining area without public services has a minimum lot size of 40,000 sq. ft.

The following provides information concerning the amount of land devoted to different types of land use activities, examines land use trends or the changes in land use patterns that have taken place over time, and considers possible future land use patterns.

Using property files, as of 2012, municipal staff calculated the following acreage amounts as seen in the table below based on assessing records. This table varies considerably from the 1978 analysis that appeared in the previous plan. That analysis was developed from aerial photography. Both methods have their pros and cons. The aerial photography accounts for a greater extent of forested land because it picks up all areas that are forested, even if part of a residential or developed lot. The assessing file contributes more land to the primary use of the land for residential, commercial or industrial purposes. While the tables vary considerably, a comparison of the 1978 aerial photography with recent aerial photography indicates relatively few changes. This is consistent with the population changes, housing changes and commercial and industrial development and is further discussed following Table LU-1.

TABLE LU-1
Land Use by General Category
Mechanic Falls, 2012

Land Use Category	Acreage	% of Total
Residential	2,824.79	38.59%
Commercial/Services/Institutional	579.85	7.92%
Industrial & Utilities	186.86	2.55%
Agriculture	439.77	6.01%
Forest	2,190.93	29.93%
Mineral Extractive	98.64	1.35%
Wetlands/River	643.02	8.79%
Other (Transportation, Cemeteries)	355.32	4.85%
TOTAL	7,319.18	100.00%

Source: Municipal Staff

Land Use Changes

Since this assessment, there have been several significant developments in Mechanic Falls. Most notably, New England Public Warehouse located along Route 121/11 east of downtown and along the Railroad. Maine Wood Treaters and Auburn Manufacturing also located in this area. A small industrial park/industrial area developed at Five Corners and underutilized farmland along Route 26 in that area developed into a promising "agri-tainment" complex. While the Marcal mill went through a period of being unused, it has developed into a mixed use business complex along with a house and barn complex near the center of the downtown. While this does not constitute a major change in land use, it may represent the future of economic development patterns for the downtown.

There has been some housing development, much of it scattered through the community on single lots. A major residential subdivision was located off Jordan Road to the north of Standpipe Hill. There have also been several group homes established in general proximity to the downtown.

Residential

Residential land use includes single- and multi-family development in the Downtown Area, single-family subdivisions, one large mobile home park, and three smaller mobile home parks and scattered residential developments including individual mobile homes located throughout the Town. In 1978, residential development covered 8 percent of Mechanic Falls.

Table D-11 shows that since 1980 there have been 77 new single-family housing units established in the town, approximately a 12.7% increase, but over the past decade single-family units decreased by 1 percent. It is suspected that this recent downturn occurred as part of the nation's economic downturn and impacted most rental units and housing in the downtown. Most of these units were on outside of the immediate downtown and consumed between one-half acre and two acres. There was considerably more increase in the number of multi-family units with a 77% increase from 1980 and a 33% increase over the past decade. Many of these units are attributable to the division of older, large houses in the downtown being divided into several apartment units. A few are in group homes and low-moderate income-elderly housing units. Land consumption for these units was minimal. Mobile homes increased from 108 units in 1980 to 352 in 2010, a 225% increase with a 37% increase over the past decade. Some of the units were in mobile home parks but many were located on individual lots. It can be estimated that between 100 and 150 acres of residential land use has been added since 1980 and attributable to these units. Thus, residential development would now account for approximately 10% of the land use. The new residential land was converted from farm and forest with the largest subdivision being built on forest land.

Commercial/Services/Institutional

Approximately one percent of the total land area of the Town is being used for commercial/retail including institutional (governmental, educational, religious, etc.) type uses. The majority of the Town's institutional type use is located in the Downtown Area. A large concentration of commercial development is located in the Mechanic Falls Downtown Area, although there is a shortage of available lots to accommodate additional commercial development. However, there is space available at the Marcal mill site, and there are several underused buildings in the downtown. Small commercial can also locate in or replace housing units near the center of the downtown. Commercial service type development has grown somewhat at Five Corners (along with several industrial uses), and there is even more potential for commercial and service uses in this area due to the new casino nearby in Oxford. Home occupations (business operated in the home) are scattered throughout the community. It is not believed that there has been a significant amount of change in this land use since 1980 with the exception of the Marcal mill being converted to more service use, but since it is a mixed use development, for planning purposes, it will be considered in the Industrial category.

Industrial and Utilities

The Introduction of this section along with the Land Use Changes section provides a description of the industrial/manufacturing and warehousing development in the town. Auburn Manufacturing, Maine Wood Treaters and New England Public Warehouse are located in the Walker Road/Route 121 area which is bisected by the St. Lawrence and Atlantic Railroad. The closed town dump is located in this area, but cannot be used for development. Public water has been extended to service this area. The Town Sewage Treatment Plant and Water Department Office/Maintenance Building are located in the Downtown Area. In 1988, the Town developed a new water supply well in the Five Corners Area. In conjunction with this effort, a water line was extended along Route 11. The Five Corners Area has been the home of a metal fabrication business as well as several other moderate size businesses. A lumber mill located along Route 26, north of Five Corners, has expanded and the Town's transfer station was established off of Route 26 in this area, also. It is estimated that between 30 to 50 acres have been added to this land use category since the 1980 inventory roughly doubling the acreage, although the Marcal mill site, or at least a portion of it, would be considered converted to commercial/service use. The town is relatively well positioned to have continued industrial growth in the areas that have experienced it over the past 30 years.

Agriculture

When the data was gathered for Table LU-1, this category represented approximately 8 percent of the total land area of the Town. There are still a few active farms with considerable acreage, and there are also a few new small agricultural ventures. Instead of the traditional Maine farm that once focused on dairy or beef cattle, the farms in Mechanic Falls have evolved into ones concentrating more on crops for local sale. Ram U Farm, a more traditional farm that fell into disrepair, has been revived into the agri-tainment business noted previously. Several farms raise berries, produce, or raise small domestic animals for food or products such as eggs and wool. All of the farms rely on local markets. Hay land

supplements the income for several farms, and a small amount of this land has been converted to housing units.

Forest

The largest amount of land (79%) in the community is devoted to forest use. Forest land occurs throughout the community bordering many of the Town's roads and less developed areas. As noted, some of this land has been converted to residential uses. Active forestry is not a major contribution to the economy of the town as can be noted in the Economy Chapter. It is believed that much of the forest land is not actively managed, but is occasionally harvested to supplement the landowner's income. In addition, farmers may also harvest forest land to supplement their incomes.

In 2012, town records indicated that a total of 1,249 acres of forest land in Mechanic Falls was registered under the State Tree Growth Tax Law Program.

Wetlands

A complete discussion of wetland areas located in the community is provided as part of the Natural Resources Chapter along with discussions of types of land unsuitable for development.

Summary/Future Land Use Trends

It is expected that the growth trends that have been exhibited over the past three decades will continue – continued development of small commercial businesses in the downtown, continued development of the Marcal mill area for mixed light manufacturing, services and specialized commercial, and continued location of warehousing and small manufacturing, especially east of the downtown and in the Five Corners area. New business development, although difficult to predict the exact type, may occur westerly of the downtown along Route 121. The Five Corners area, including land in general proximity to Five Corners along Route 11 and Route 26, should continue to see some small manufacturing type development as well as potentially some commercial development related to the new casino in nearby Oxford.

As with population projections, projecting land use is problematic. This is especially true given the slow economy and lack of housing growth over the past five or so years. Slow housing growth is to be expected, with considerably less conversion of land to residential than occurred between 1980 and 2010. Small commercial/light manufacturing growth will occur in and around the downtown and in the Five Corners-Route 26 area. With a reasonably good road network, recent improvements to Route 26, and access to rail over a considerable portion of the community, Mechanic Falls could benefit from a significant manufacturing or warehousing development, but none can be projected. Small businesses could easily consume 30 acres or so, but one larger railroad dependent business could consume 30 acres on its own.

WATER RESOURCES

Watersheds

The land area that contributes water to a particular stream, river, pond, or lake is known as its watershed. Watershed boundaries are identified by connecting points of highest elevation around a body of water--that is, all the land within the watershed drains to the body of water, and all the land outside the watershed drain somewhere else. Rain and snow falling within this area eventually flow by gravity in surface runoff, streams, and ground water to the lake, pond, stream, or river which is the lowest point in the watershed.

There is only one major drainage system in Mechanic Falls. All of the Town is drained directly by the Little Androscoggin River and its feeder streams, or tributaries. Significant tributaries to the Little Andy include Bar Brook and Bog Brook from the north, and Cousins Brook and Waterhouse Brook from the south. Winter Brook which flows north along the western boundary of the town drains into Hogan Pond in Oxford which drains into the Little Androscoggin River.

Surface Waters: Rivers

The Little Androscoggin River, originating from Bryant Pond, flows towards the southeast for approximately 46 miles through hilly terrain, to join the Androscoggin River in the City of Auburn. The "Little Andy" drains an area of approximately 354 square miles, and has a total fall of approximately 580 feet; its average gradient is 13 feet per mile. Along its course, the River has several areas that are flat and slow-moving, and several areas where it resembles a mountain stream, with many riffles. Within Mechanic Falls, the river exhibits many of these characteristics with rapids at Sawyer Memorial Bridge and falls in the center of downtown. There are also areas where the river is flat surrounded by broad floodplains, some of which are wetlands. These occur southwesterly of downtown where the river crosses Route 11 and for a considerable distance easterly of town to the north of Route 121/11.

Surface Waters: Streams and Brooks

Of particular note are a number of larger streams that contribute to the Little Androscoggin flows including Bog Brook, Waterhouse Brook and Winter Brook. Bar Brook and Cousins Brook also contribute to the Little Andy flow. All these streams and brooks are designated as Class B under the State Fresh Surface Waters classification system.

Surface Waters: Lakes and Ponds

Mechanic Falls has a portion of only one lake watershed within its boundaries. Approximately 39 percent of the watershed of Hogan Pond in Oxford is located in Mechanic Falls. Although the shoreline

of Hogan Pond has experienced heavy development pressures, the portion of the Ponds' watershed in Mechanic Falls has experienced very little development.

Development activities, such as house and road construction, timber harvesting, and agricultural practices, disturb the land that is drained to a lake by streams and ground water--in other words, the watershed. The disturbed and developed land contributes pollutants and other substances to the lake; in turn, lake water quality is degraded. Activity anywhere in the watershed, even miles away, has the potential to impact lake water quality.

Of the myriad of substances that can be carried to the lake from its watershed, phosphorus is of primary concern. Phosphorus is a natural element that clings to soil particles and organic matter. It is necessary for plant growth and is transported by water. When water carrying phosphorus is allowed to seep into the ground, as in an undisturbed watershed, soils and organic matter bind with the phosphorus and hold it for use by plants. However, when surface runoff increases, as in a watershed where the vegetation holding the soil in place has been removed for house or road construction, the phosphorus can be transported, along with eroded soils, and deposited in lakes and streams.

All lakes have the ability to absorb some phosphorus before there is an adverse impact on the quality of the lake. However, when the phosphorous load to the lake becomes too great, the phosphorus acts as a fertilizer and causes algae to flourish. An abundance of algae turns the lake green and blocks sunlight to deeper levels. As the algae crowding the upper part of the lake die and drop to the bottom, they are decomposed by bacteria. The oxygen supply in the bottom waters is exhausted by this bacterial decomposition of the algae. Under the depressed oxygen conditions, phosphorus, which usually is bound in the sediments, may be released. Trout and salmon, which live in the colder bottom waters of many lakes, can suffocate. The decay of algae generates obnoxious odor and taste. Fish, plants and wildlife of the lake ecosystem are endangered in this process. In lakes used for drinking water supply, these conditions make water treatment difficult and expensive.

A lake rich in dissolved nutrients such as phosphorus, and often deficient in oxygen, is termed eutrophic. Once a lake becomes eutrophic, it is extremely slow to recover and, in fact, requires intensive action to immobilize phosphorus in the sediments. Thus, it is well-advised to plan for and manage the amount and sources of phosphorus entering a lake in order to prevent eutrophication.

DEP has developed a phosphorus control method which uses a phosphorus loading model to determine an allowable increase in phosphorous export from the watershed. The method arrives at this figure by coordinating the lake's sensitivity to phosphorus (DEP supplied) with information on the current water quality (DEP supplied) and the level of protection the town selects for the lake. The latter factor is a policy decision to be made by the town or towns in the watershed based on the importance and use of the lake.

Once the allowable increase in phosphorous export from the watershed has been determined, it can be allocated on a per acre basis to the future area likely to be developed in the lake's watershed as projected from past development trends and present development pressures.

The phosphorus control method is based on the lake maintaining its current water quality forever. At the time the previous comprehensive plan was written, towns determined the phosphorus allocation for each lake. Currently, DEP develops allocations based on a consistent methodology across the state.

However, for development that does not come under state review, towns should apply the phosphorus allocation method to development. A criteria in the state subdivision statute requires application of the allocation for subdivisions. The town should consult with the Maine DEP when reviewing development in the Hogan Pond watershed.

Ground Water

Ground water is water that is derived from precipitation that infiltrates the soil, percolates downward, and fills the tiny, numerous spaces in the soil and cracks or fractures in the bedrock below the water table. Wells draw water from permeable layers or zones in the saturated soil and fractured bedrock. In general, the saturated areas which will provide adequate quantities of water for use are called aquifers. Wells in sand and gravel aquifers yield from 10 gallons per minute (gpm) up to 2,000 gpm. Bedrock aquifers do not generally produce large quantities of water and are best used for very small businesses and residences.

Sand and Gravel Aquifers

A sand and gravel aquifer is a water-bearing geologic formation consisting of ice contact, outwash, and alluvial sediments left by the melting glaciers and subsequent melt-water rivers and streams that were once part of this area of Maine (roughly 12,000 years ago). The sand and gravel deposits range from ten feet to more than one hundred feet thick.

Sand and gravel aquifers are generally large, continuous, sand and gravel deposits that extend along a river valley. The sand and gravel deposits fill the valley between the hills on either side to create a fairly flat valley floor. In most cases, the flow path of ground water through the aquifer is from the valley walls towards a stream or river flowing along the valley floor. The stream, then, acts as a drain where ground water enters the surface water drainage system, and flows downstream.

Sand and gravel aquifers can be contaminated from any substances that seep into the ground directly or are carried into the ground after dissolving in water. As water infiltrates from the ground surface and goes down through the unsaturated zone above the water table, the soil, sands and gravel act as a filter and remove some of the contaminants. The degree of filtration depends on the thickness of the unsaturated zone above the water table, and the kind of contaminants. Once contaminants enter the water table, they may travel thousands of feet over time. In many Maine aquifers, the water table is generally close to the surface (within 20 feet) so that natural removal of contaminants by the soil is not nearly complete before the pollution reaches the ground water.

The slow rate of ground water movement causes this resource to be particularly sensitive to contamination. Once contaminants enter the ground water, they do not flush out of the system readily and residual contaminants are often left on the particles of sand or gravel to leach slowly into the surrounding ground water. Often hundreds of years are necessary for an aquifer to clean itself through natural means.

A large and highly productive sand and gravel aquifer runs from the northwestern border of Town southerly to the northern tip of Tripp Pond where it continues to the east then south again through

Poland. This aquifer is part of a much larger one which extends, somewhat intermittently, from Greenwood in the north, southerly to Gray. An area of high yield (over 50 gallons per minute) runs nearly continuously from north to south down the Little Androscoggin then, in Oxford, taking in Hogan, Whitney and Green Ponds and continuing down Winter Brook in Mechanic Falls to Tripp Pond in Poland. The portion of the aquifer along Winter Brook near Tripp Lake is used as a major drinking water source by Poland Spring Bottling and the Mechanic Falls Water Department.

A portion of this same aquifer follows the Little Androscoggin River for a ways into Mechanic Falls as it turns easterly from the Hogan, Whitney Pond area but is significantly less productive. Depth to bedrock ranges from 12 feet to over 85 feet within Mechanic Falls and depth to water ranges from 4-20 feet. Two other smaller aquifers, also associated with the Little Androscoggin River and its tributaries, are present in the eastern most corner of the town. These aquifers are low yield, range from 8 to 85 feet to bedrock and from 3 to 20 feet to the water table.

Development on the high yield aquifer, although relatively heavy in some of the towns north of Mechanic Falls, has been very limited in Mechanic Falls. The low yield aquifer which extends into the eastern area of town, along with the aquifer extending into town from the north along the Little Androscoggin, have experienced the most development, much of which has been residential in nature, with some minor industrial/commercial development. After development of the town's new drinking water well in the Winter Brook area, the town enacted a wellhead protection area as an overlay district in its zoning ordinance.

Bedrock Aquifers

Most of the private individual wells in Maine are drilled into bedrock. The wells penetrate through water bearing cracks or fractures in the bedrock. These water bearing fractures are bedrock aquifers. Most domestic wells penetrate relatively small fractures and, therefore, only produce small amounts of water. There are areas where large fractures and the geologic setting can produce an adequate supply to provide a municipal water supply. Such fractures are difficult to locate. With the extensive sand and gravel aquifer along the western boundary of Mechanic Falls, it has been and should continue to be unnecessary to locate any such bedrock aquifers.

Bedrock aquifers, whether having large or small fractures, are highly susceptible to contamination. The fracture system in the rock is generally extensive and interconnected over large distances. Since the water is confined to the narrow fractures, it may move very quickly over the large distances especially when it is being pumped for a supply. The type and depth of soil above the bedrock as well as the extent of recharge area to the bedrock determine the degree of contamination. Since it is impractical to map bedrock aquifers, the control of potential contaminants from a variety of land uses throughout the community is important to the maintenance of high quality groundwater for those not on the public supply.

Threats to Water Resources: Point Source Discharges

Often, when one thinks of water pollution, what comes to mind is the pollution which originates through discharge pipes - that is, pollution which is generally collected from known sources and discharged at a

single location or point. According to State permitting records and the town's knowledge, the Mechanic Falls' sewerage treatment plant is the only facility with a point source discharge in Mechanic Falls.

Threats to Water Resources: Non-Point Sources

Non-point pollution is the pollution which comes from other than a point source. It is created by virtually all land use activities, ranging from urban development to agricultural and forestry operations. While a few types of non-point pollution--such as erosion of streambank channels--occur due to natural forces, the primary concern is with pollution resulting from human activities and disturbance of the land. In addition to having a negative impact on surface waters--lakes, streams, and rivers, as well as wetlands--non-point sources also may seriously affect ground water. Any activity which disturbs the land or changes its use has some (although in some cases small) impact on either surface or ground water quality.

The federal, state, and local levels of government have been concerned with non-point pollution for some time. Several state laws and regulations are designed to control some sources of non-point pollution. The State Subsurface Disposal Rules control pollution from subsurface disposal systems (septic systems). There are State rules on petroleum storage both for underground and above ground tanks. Since the development of the previous comprehensive plan, the State has enacted rules on storm water runoff which can have a particularly deleterious impact on lakes and streams, but can also impact wetlands and rivers.

Types of Non-point Source Pollution

The following paragraphs present some information concerning the more notable types of non-point source pollution and the concerns for water quality related to each source.

Sedimentation of Surface Water Bodies

When soil is eroded, particles of soil are carried away and then deposited as sediments in lakes, streams, rivers, or wetlands. The sediments adversely impact living conditions for both animal and plant life. While still in suspension, soil particles can irritate and abrade fish gills and reduce sunlight which is required for plant life within the water body. When the soil particles settle out, the sediments can cover bottom habitat, thereby significantly changing it and adversely affecting wildlife feeding and breeding areas.

Hazardous Materials

When allowed to enter surface waters, heavy metals, PCBs, and other types of hazardous materials can accumulate in the tissues of living organisms, causing problems for wildlife, and possibly human, food chains. (An example of this is the pesticide DDT which was found to soften eagle eggs so that the eggs were unable to hatch.) Similar wastes can also enter the ground water through spills, leaks in floor drains or tanks, and poorly constructed storage facilities and degrade the ground water quality below acceptable drinking water standards. In addition, the contaminated ground water may discharge to surface water bodies where the problems mentioned previously may occur.

Petroleum Products

Although not all petroleum products are considered to be hazardous, they may impact both surface and ground waters either by creating toxic conditions or by degrading drinking water conditions.

Non-hazardous Materials

Some chemicals, although not hazardous, can also degrade both surface and ground waters. Perhaps the best example of this is road salt which has been known to contaminate aquifers so that water cannot be used for drinking purposes. Salt can also degrade surface waters where significant concentrations, from either salt storage piles or road salting practices, enter the groundwater or runoff in snow melt and storm water. In ponds they can create a salt layer at the bottom. In streams, concentrations may prove toxic to plants and the small aquatic animals (macroinvertebrates) as well as some fish species.

Non-hazardous Organics

When organic compounds enter surface waters, they are degraded by bacteria. During this process, however, the bacteria demand large quantities of oxygen, thereby stripping the water of the oxygen which is essential to fish and other animal life. Thus, improperly treated organics that enter surface water bodies can have the same negative impact as toxic chemicals in that they may quickly kill off significant numbers of fish and other animals. While it is less likely these types of organics may enter the ground, they can certainly also have an adverse effect on using ground water for drinking purposes. While organics are more commonly the result of point sources of pollution, urban runoff and runoff from areas where significant quantities of organic materials (such as sawdust piles, manure, and vegetative waste) have been either stored or discarded can have the same effect of depleting oxygen from surface and ground water.

Sources of Non-point Source Pollution

Another method of categorizing non-point pollution is by the land use activities which are responsible for causing them. The following paragraphs describe some of the ways certain general land use types may contribute to non-point pollution.

Housing and Residential Land Use

Residential development has several potential impacts which are related to non-point source pollution. First, the construction activity can lead to erosion and sedimentation. Second, leaky fuel storage tanks and piping, whether underground, on the ground or in a cellar, can cause ground water contamination. Third, septic system leachate which is not totally treated before leaving the leach field may seep into and degrade surface or ground waters. Usually, housing densities can be managed to insure that contamination of groundwater by nitrates does not cause drinking water supply problems. Finally, the application of fertilizers, herbicides, and pesticides to lawns and gardens, the use of household cleaners and other chemicals and their disposal into septic systems, and other releases of chemicals all represent potential sources of water contamination.

Commercial Activities

Commercial development also has several potential impacts related to non-point source pollution, ranging from erosion and sedimentation during the construction process to activities which could occur at the commercial establishment. For example, rainwater runoff from parking lots can carry sediments, phosphorus, oils, and other substances to streams or dry wells. Specialty commercial operations--such as filling stations, car washes, and other activities where petroleum products or hazardous materials are stored or handled on site--are also of concern. Even warehousing of dry chemicals--where fires or water damage could carry the material into suspension and allow it to wash into surface or ground waters--can pose a serious threat to water quality.

Industrial Activities

Of particular concern are industries which store, handle, or use various types of chemicals. Leaks, spills, or illegal dumping can contaminate ground and surface waters as the material leaches down through the ground, or is washed into streams or other water bodies.

Gravel Pits and Mines

To some extent, earth material acts as a filter between the ground's surface and the ground water table. Any excavation, then, which reduces the amount of earth material also reduces the earth's capacity to absorb any potential contamination, and increases the chance for ground water degradation. Of particular concern are gravel pits located on or near aquifers. Other mining activities also create opportunities for groundwater contamination since most directly expose fractures in the bedrock. For example, inadvertent spills and leaks of petroleum-based fluids during the refueling and/or maintenance of heavy equipment operating in a pit or mine can easily contaminate the ground water. In addition, pits and mines that are abandoned or rarely-used create an attraction to illegal dumping of waste materials (not necessarily by the owner or operator).

Floodplains

Every year, floods destroy millions of dollars' worth of property throughout America, and these problems are also true for Maine and Mechanic Falls. As history reveals, inadequate planning for floods can result in devastating losses, cost businesses, residents and governments extraordinary amounts of money, and delay critical investments for years, thereby having long term negative impacts on the future of the community.

A floodplain is the flat expanse of land along a river or shoreline that is covered by water during a flood. Under the Federal Insurance Program, the 100-year floodplain is called the flood hazard area. During a flood, water depths in the floodplain may range from less than a foot in some areas to over 10 feet in others. Floodplains along rivers and streams usually consist of floodway, where the water flows, and a flood fringe where stationary water backs up during a flood. The floodway will usually include the channel of a river or stream as well as some of the land area adjacent to its banks. Major flooding generally occurs in the spring months from rapid runoff caused by heavy rains combined with snowmelt. Less frequently, flooding occurs later in the year as a result of excessive rainfall, such as from hurricanes. Over the past decade, flash type flooding from severe thunderstorms has become more common, especially in western Maine.

A few existing residential and commercial structures in Mechanic Falls are susceptible to flood damage from the Little Androscoggin River. Obstructions such as trees, brush, and ice at bridges and dams can aggravate flooding. Major flooding on the Little Androscoggin River is generally caused by a combination of heavy winter and spring rains and snowmelt.

Significant flooding occurred on the main stem of the Little Androscoggin River in the past eighty years in March 1936, March 1953, and April 1987. The 1936 flood caused damage to industry, urban centers, highways, railroads, and utilities in the river basin. For the perspective of those who remember the 1987 flood, the discharge at the mouth of the River in Auburn was 14,000 cubic feet per second (cfs). The discharges in the ’36 and ’53 floods were greater than 16,500 cfs. The 1936, 1953, and 1987 floods flows exceeded what is calculated as the 100-year flood for the Little Androscoggin River. (The 100-year flood’s name is somewhat deceiving. It is not the flood that is expected to occur once in 100 years, but rather the flood that has a 1 in 100 – or a one percent – chance of occurring in any given year.)

While there are a number of dams on the Little Androscoggin River, they are not regulated for flood control.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has identified and mapped floodplains in Mechanic Falls; as this is being written, FEMA was in the final stages of updating the floodplain maps. Mechanic Falls participates in the National Flood Insurance Program which allows property owners that are located in the 100-year floodplain to purchase flood insurance. As part of the program, the Town must update their flood mapping and keep their Floodplain Management Ordinance current with state standards. According to FEMA, as of March 31, 2012, there were 8 insurance policies issued in Mechanic Falls with a total coverage of $1,032,900. Since January 1, 1978, a total of $23,385.74 has been paid to policy holders.

CRITICAL NATURAL RESOURCES

Protection of the natural environment of Mechanic Falls is essential to insure a healthy quality of life for future generations in the Town. To adequately protect the environment, it is important to identify the natural elements affecting Mechanic Falls and to understand their ecology--that is, to understand how these elements work together in processes which make the natural system work for our benefit. This chapter documents what is known about environmental resources and processes in Mechanic Falls and examines the opportunities and limitations they present for existing and future development.

Setting

Mechanic Falls is located in the southwest portion of Androscoggin County, Maine, and is bordered by three other towns. These neighboring towns include Minot and Poland in Androscoggin County, and Oxford in Oxford County. The land area of Mechanic Falls is 11.41 square miles (29.55 square kilometers), or 7,300 acres (2,957 hectares). The Town includes several brooks, marshes, and the Little Androscoggin River which flows from north to southeast through the center of the Town.

The climate of Mechanic Falls is marked by cold winters and moderate summers. The average temperature in the summer months (June through August) is 67°F, and in the winter months (December through February) it is 20.5^{o}F. The average annual temperature is 44.3^{o}F. Precipitation averages 43.8 inches per year, and average annual snowfall is approximately 85 inches.

Topography

Topography, or "the lay of the land," can influence not only the views in Town and the general, natural aesthetics of the area, but also where and how development may occur. Two factors are considered here: relief and slope.

Relief

The general height of land above both sea level and other surrounding areas varies throughout Mechanic Falls. Local relief ranges from 660 feet above sea level at the top of Standpipe Hill to about 250 feet above sea level at the northern tip of Town where Bog Brook flows out of Minot to become the boundary between Minot and Mechanic Falls.

The town's physiography is dominated by the Little Androscoggin River Valley, the only two prominent hills being Standpipe Hill and Pigeon Hill. Generally speaking, the land goes out from the floodplains around the brooks and the Little Androscoggin River to the gradual sloping hills lying between these water courses.

Slope

The amount of rise and fall of the ground in a given horizontal distance presents various limitations to development and other land use activities. Generally, as slopes become steeper, construction is more expensive, roads and services are more difficult and expensive to construct and maintain, and the potential for environmental degradation increases.

As was the case with relief, slope also varies throughout Mechanic Falls. In general, most of the areas of steep slope run in sinuous strips in a north-south direction along the sides of hills. This pattern was created by the intense scouring action of the ice sheet, which melted away approximately 12,000 years ago.

U.S. Department of Agriculture, Soils Maps were analyzed, at a scale of 1 inch = 2,000 feet, to determine areas in Mechanic Falls with steep slopes. This method and scale are acceptable for identifying such areas for planning purposes, and these maps suggest areas in Town where particular concern and precautions should be exercised. However, approval for any development, and certain uses, in any area of Town should have site-specific review regarding slope characteristics. A general discussion of areas of steep slope appears later in this chapter.

Soils

Soils are a basic resource of extreme importance to the use and development of a community's land. They are the underlying materials upon which roads, buildings, sewer and waste disposal, and agriculture and other industries occur. Development which occurs upon or in soils which are unsuitable for the proposed use will almost certainly face increased development, construction, and annual maintenance costs, and cause environmental degradation.

The United States Department of Agriculture, Natural Resource Conservation Service has identified and mapped, through a medium intensity soil survey, the soils in Mechanic Falls. This mapping is relatively old and expected to be of higher quality for land that was in agricultural production at the time the mapping was accomplished. There is a complete soil report for Androscoggin County that provides information on the soils and their ability to support a variety of land uses. In more recent years, the soil information was digitized, allowing for improved analysis and overlays of other relevant information.

Soils within Mechanic Falls can be broadly separated into four soil associations. These soil associations are Charlton-Sutton-Paxton; Scantic-Leicester-Scarboro; Buxton-Hartland-Belgrade; and Adams-Hinckley-Ninigret.

The Charlton-Sutton-Paxton association is found in the northwestern third of the town, with a small area in the southeast corner of the town. These soils are deep, medium-textured and moderately coarse textured, well drained and moderately well drained, nearly level to moderately steep, on hills and ridges. Major limitations to development are slope, stones, and slow permeability.

The Scantic-Leicester-Scarboro association runs from the northeast corner of town, south along Bog Brook and continues South along Waterhouse Brook to the southern border of town. These soils are

deep, medium-textured and moderately coarse textured, poorly drained and very poorly drained, level to gently sloping soils. High water table, frost heaving and excessive wetness are the major limitations to development of this association.

At the center of the town is found the Buxton-Hartland-Belgrade association. These soils are deep, medium-textured, moderately well-drained and well drained, nearly level to moderately steep soils. Limitations to various types of development include very slow permeability, seasonal high water table and frost heaving.

The southern-most tip of town and the southeastern corner are covered by the Adams-Hinckley-Ninigret association. These soils are deep, excessively drained to moderately well drained, nearly level to moderately steep, coarse textured and moderately coarse textured soils. Major limitations associated with this soil association are rapid permeability, differential settling and droughtiness.

Prime Farmland Soils

As defined by the United States Department of Agriculture, prime farmland soils are those which, nationwide, have physical characteristics which make them the best agricultural lands. Except for urban land, the designation of "prime farmland" is tied directly to soil properties, and not to current or past land use--it can be land in cultivation, forest, pasture, or idle, and it can be remote or inaccessible. If, however, the land is urban, or built-up, it cannot be designated as prime farmland.

The prime farmland in Mechanic Falls is along the Little Androscoggin River and south around Waterhouse Brook. Generally it's located in the flatter parts of the town along the floodplains and the terraces above them.

Steep Slopes

Generally, as slopes become steeper, construction is more expensive, roads and services are more difficult and expensive to construct and maintain, and the potential for environmental degradation increases.

Due to its location in the transition area between the coastal plain and foothills of western Maine, there are limited areas of steep slopes in Mechanic Falls, at least ones that have significant development concerns given modern construction techniques. However, the environment can be better protected and development will be more economical if these areas are not designated for substantial growth. Although approval for any development should have site-specific review regarding slope and soil characteristics, particular attention should be given to development on the steep slopes and particular precautions should be exercised. U.S.G.S. topographic maps were analyzed to determine areas in Mechanic Falls with steep slopes. While there are areas where the land slopes at least 15 percent (i.e., rises 15 feet with 100 feet of horizontal run) scattered throughout the Town, areas where steep slopes are more concentrated include the western slope of Pigeon Hill, the upper slope of Standpipe Hill and some areas on and around Mt. Hunger between Bog Brook and the Little Androscoggin River.

Wetlands

Wetlands perform a variety of functions. They serve as "natural sponges" that control water runoff by providing a buffer for excess water while allowing a steady, even release of that excess to both the surface and ground water. Wetlands perform a cleansing function by absorbing some physical and chemical pollutants from the runoff. Wetlands can also be important wildlife habitats.

Mechanic Falls' topography and soils are conducive to wetlands. This is confirmed by the National Wetland Inventory Mapping that identifies more than 150 wetlands. These areas range from small forested wetlands to large wetland areas associated with Bog Brook, Winter Brook and Waterhouse Brook. There are 3 wetlands in Mechanic Falls that are zoned under the Shoreland Zoning law.

Multi-function wetlands are wetlands that provide three or more of the following functions: flood flow alteration; sedimentation retention; plant, animal and fish habitat; and cultural value. There are 9 multi-function wetlands in Mechanic Falls that provide for flood flow alteration, sedimentation retention, and plant, animal and fish habitat.

Fish and Wildlife Habitat

Wildlife should be considered a natural resource similar to surface waters or forest land. Our wildlife species are a product of the various habitats that the undeveloped land provides. Therefore, if a habitat does not exist or an existing habitat is lost, various types of species will not be present. Although there are many types of habitats important to our numerous species, there are three which are considered critical: water resources and riparian habitats, essential and significant wildlife habitats and large undeveloped habitat blocks.

Riparian habitat is the transitional zone between open water or wetlands and the dry or upland habitats. It includes the banks and shores of streams, rivers and ponds and the upland edge of wetlands. The riparian area provides travel lanes for numerous wildlife species and is an important source of food and shelter for many species. Studies indicate that riparian habitat is essential to maintaining biodiversity. Supporting numerous species provides for the biodiversity of species, and the travel corridors along water resources helps to maintain the biodiversity of individual species that can travel significant distances from their birthplace and diversify the gene pool. In addition to riparian buffer strips providing adequate cover for wildlife movements, they help to remove pollutants from runoff and to maintain water temperatures critical to fish survival. With its numerous water resources, there is considerable amount of riparian habitat in Mechanic Falls.

Wetlands provide important nesting and feeding habitat for waterfowl and other birds. As with riparian areas, wetlands are also used in varying degrees by fish, beaver, muskrats, mink, otter, raccoon, deer and moose. Each wetland type consists of plant, fish and wildlife associations specific to it. Wetlands, no matter what the size or classification provide valuable habitat and help to maintain biodiversity of many species. While all wetlands can be important for biodiversity as well as being an important part of the surface and groundwater systems, State law requires that wetlands having high or moderate value as waterfowl and wading bird habitat be protected by shoreland zoning. Five wetland areas in Mechanic Falls have been identified for such protection by the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife.

In recent years, the importance of wetland known as vernal pools has become well established. Vernal pools are very small bodies of generally open water that support a number of amphibians and unique aquatic creatures. Vernal pools are known for having no or minimal defined inlets and outlets and, during a normal year, only having open water in them for a short period of time, possibly only a few months. The State has enacted rules to protect significant vernal pools; however, there is no government program to locate and map the significant ones that require protection. Because significant ones are based on the species that live in them, it is necessary to identify them in the spring when they have water in them. This can be problematic for developers who propose development at times when identification cannot be done. Some communities have worked with non-profit groups to identify the significant vernal pools so that they can be protected, and at the same time, allow development to proceed in a timely manner.

In addition to wetlands that may be identified as significant, the State has also identified deer yards as important habitat resources. While deer range freely over most of their habitat during spring, summer and fall, deep snow (over 18 inches) forces them to seek out areas which provide protection from the deep snow and wind and offer a food supply. These areas, commonly known as deer yards or deer wintering areas represent a small portion of their normal summer range. While size and shape of the areas can vary from year to year or within a given year, most are traditional in the sense that they are used year after year. The Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife (IFW) has not mapped any deer wintering areas in Mechanic Falls, but a large area has been mapped just south of the town line, near Waterhouse Brook, in Poland. Since the mapping of this deer wintering area ends abruptly in a line matching the Mechanic Falls Town line, it is expected that it extends into Mechanic Falls. Development in this area should be reviewed with the regional biologist from IFW. It should be noted that in addition to being important for deer, the deer wintering areas can be important for many other species since they provide an excellent source of shelter and food.

Large undeveloped habitat blocks are relatively unbroken areas that include forest, grassland/agricultural land and wetlands. Unbroken means that the habitat is crossed by few roads and has relatively little development and human habitation. There are two types of undeveloped habitat blocks in Mechanic Falls. The first are forested blocks that are less than 300 feet from other non-forested habitat or less than 500 acres. These blocks contain a greater edge to interior habitat ratio. The second type is forested blocks greater than 300 feet from other non-forested habitat and greater than 500 acres. These undeveloped habitat blocks are needed by animals that have large home ranges such as bear, bobcat, fisher and moose. The large, undeveloped blocks have been identified for Mechanic Falls. In addition to the riparian travel corridors, there may be other connections between these large blocks that are important to biodiversity. Although a difficult task, IFW is mapping corridors between the large blocks starting with large undeveloped areas along existing roads.

Rare and Endangered Natural Features

The Beginning with Habitat Program (BwH) has compiled data on Maine's rare, endangered, or otherwise significant plant and animal species, plant communities, and geological features. While this information is available for preparation and review of environmental assessments, it is not a substitute for on-site surveys. The quantity and quality of data collected by the Natural Heritage Program are dependent on the research and observations of many individuals and organizations. In most cases,

information on these natural features is not the result of comprehensive field surveys. For this reason, the BwH program cannot provide a definitive statement on the presence or absence of unusual natural features in any part of Maine.

The listing by BwH for Mechanic Falls shows no records listed of rare or endangered species. This means that the BwH database has no information regarding significant natural resources or rare and endangered plants, animals or natural communities for Mechanic Falls. It does not mean, however, that such features do not occur, only that BwH is not aware of any inventories or surveys that have been conducted specifically to search for these features and species.

Critical and Natural Areas Programs

Critical and Natural Areas are areas that have unique characteristics. In general, they extend over a relatively large area. The Maine Natural Areas Program (MNAP) shows no resources in Mechanic Falls that are considered to be a Natural Area and deserving of special attention. However, as with the rare and endangered species, it does not mean that such features do not occur, only that MNAP is not aware of any inventories or surveys that have been conducted specifically to search for these features and species.

HISTORIC AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESOURCES

At the beginning of this plan, the history of Mechanic Falls was summarized. Much of the history lives today, not only in the hearts of people, but also in many of the buildings and physical characteristics of the town. If the character of Mechanic Falls is to be preserved, steps should be taken now to ensure that the physical reminders of the past are preserved and enhanced. The growth of a town does not necessarily mean the destruction of its history. With a little planning, a town can have both progress and historical preservation.

Historic Resources

According to the Maine Historic Preservation Commission (MHPC), two historic structures in Mechanic Falls are listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Those are the "George Seaverns House" at 8 High Street and "The Elms" on Elm Street.

Additionally, MHPC has information (survey forms) for six other properties in Mechanic Falls. The six properties are listed in Table HIS-1. It should be noted that the Mechanic Falls Public Library, the Mechanic Falls Congregational Church and the Store (located on 2 Judson Street) have been denied National Register listing. However, MHPC noted that further evaluation of the structures' history/importance may yield an association with the Town's commercial development that is of significance.

TABLE HIS-1
Possible Historic Buildings/Structures

Property Name	Address	Approx. Date of Structure	Character/ Significance	General Condition	Survey Form Completed
1. Charles Penny House	106 Pleasant St.	1901	Colonial Revival	Poor	1/1/88
2. Samuel Penny House	38 Maple St.	1901	Colonial Revival	Good	1/1/88
3. S. F. Waterman (single-family house)	High Street	By 1873	Gothic	Fair	1/18/90
4. Former Town Public Library	15 Elm Street downtown	c.1840	Greek Revival	Fair	4/10/90
5. Former Congregational Church (now historical society)	64 Elm Street	1848	Greek Revival	Good	4/10/90
6. Store *	2 Judson St.	c.1870	Vernacular	Fair	4/10/90
*Additional work is needed to specifically identify this structure and determine the extent to which it has been modified.					

Source: Maine Historic Preservation Commission

Since the development of the last comprehensive plan, a local Historical Society has formed. They are now located in the former Congregational Church located on Elm Street and listed in the above table.

The building is now owned by the Town of Mechanic Falls. The town allows many groups to use the building in addition to the Historical Society, which is the primary tenant.

Inventory – Archaeological Resources

MHPC records indicate no known prehistoric or historic archaeological sites located in Mechanic Falls. MHPC recommends conducting professional surveys. The focus of such surveys/field work should relate to the earliest European settlement of the town.

Summary/Findings

Local regulations do not provide protection to the two historic structures listed on the National Register of Historic Places or other historic structures that may exist in Town. The listing of structures on the National Register of Places extends protection of federal legislation against actions by federal agencies only. Additional inventory work should be conducted to identify other historic structures or archaeological resources in town.

RECREATION RESOURCES

Introduction

Mechanic Falls has a good assortment of parks, recreation areas and programs. The Town has added substantially to the quality of facilities and programs since the previous comprehensive plan was developed. While the population increase did not create the need, the interest of residents in becoming more active and providing quality facilities and programs for both adults and children has spurred the improvements. A brief description of the facilities and programs follows.

Public Facilities

Mechanic Falls Recreation Area

This area, located in the downtown area adjacent to the town office, has a parking capacity of 50 cars and possibly more. Facilities include 5 playing fields including one full size (90 foot base paths) and one lighted, 2 basketball backboards (with hoops), 2 outdoor tennis courts, 1 skateboard park, 1 playground, picnic tables and an outdoor ice skating rink (weather permitting). The area has a snack shack that is open for organized events. The snack shack has public restrooms. There are bike racks at the complex.

Veterans Memorial Park

The park is .1 acre in size, is located on Elm Street, to the east of the Little Androscoggin River, and is near the center of town. It includes a civil war statue and monuments. Like the Maisey Keene Park, it provides a shaded, restful place near the river in the center of Mechanic Falls.

Keene Memorial Park

The park is 0.37 of an acre in size, is located on the westerly bank of the Little Androscoggin River at the intersection of South Main and Elm Streets.

Fireman's Field

The field is located just westerly of downtown along the Little Androscoggin River. It is 5 acres in size, has parking for 20 cars and provides access to the river. As a result of a Federal Energy Commission license for an upstream dam on the Little Androscoggin, a boat access ramp and fishing pier were installed. Snowmobile and ATV trails pass through or near the park. The park has been identified as currently underutilized.

School Facilities

Elm Street School

This facility is 5 acres in size and has a parking capacity for 50 cars. Facilities include 2 playing fields, one of which is interchangeable with several sports including baseball/softball and soccer, 2 basketball courts (one located outdoors and one indoors) and two playgrounds. The playground for preschoolers is located in front of the school. There is also parking for approximately 20 additional cars adjacent to one of the fields located off of Highland Avenue.

Water Recreation – Public Access

The Little Androscoggin River provides some boating potential, mostly for paddlers and human powered craft. It also provides fishing opportunities although public access is limited to two locations, Firemen's Field and Sawyer Bridge where the river can be accessed by foot on the Maine Department of Transportation right-of-way down a fairly steep embankment. As paddling has become more widespread over the past decade or so, there is some consideration to improving access at the Sawyer Bridge site including improvements to the parking area that is currently an informal pull-over area adjacent to nearby roads. With Mechanic Falls covering a relatively small area, traveling to river and lake access points in surrounding towns is not an insurmountable task for most residents. There are fishing access sites to the Little Androscoggin River at bridges in Oxford and Poland only a few miles from downtown Mechanic Falls. There is also a State Park in Poland within a 10 minute drive. There is some public access for fishing to brooks in town, mostly at bridges. Most lakes in surrounding towns have public boating access.

Passive Recreation and Trails

For the relatively small size, the town has an extensive network of snowmobile trails, some of which are used for ATV access during the warmer months of the year. A number of residents also use the snowmobile trails for walking and hiking. They are also used to access several areas that are popular for hiking. An old railroad grade connects Route 11 west of town with the Poland Corner area of Poland. It is an unofficial multi-use trail for residents of the area. There has been discussion about building a more extensive multi-use or bike-pedestrian trail network.

Recreation Activities/Programs

A volunteer Recreation Committee is largely responsible for development of the recreation activities in Mechanic Falls. No town staff is tasked with planning or pre-season organization. Town staff includes one full-time summer/seasonal (eight weeks) recreation Director and one part-time Assistant Recreation Director for the summer (eight weeks). Additionally, part-time junior councilors are hired during the summertime. Programs may vary over time since different age groups and populations have varying interests.

The following programs are available under the direction of the Town Recreation Committee:

1. **Basketball -** A recreational basketball program for grades 3 to 8 is provided seasonally at the Municipal Building court and at the school. An informal program for adults takes place at the school.

2. **Winter Ski Program -** A ski instruction program for students is held seasonally on weekday evenings at Shawnee Peak in Bridgton.

3. **Summer Recreation Program -** Program is held for six weeks at the Town Recreation Area. Program includes about 40 children from K-6th grade and features games, crafts, swimming and field trips.

4. **Baseball/Softball -** Mechanic Falls has a robust baseball/softball program offering programs for kindergarten through 16 year olds for boys and 18 for girls softball. Older baseball participants may progress to "Legion" ball. The town also provides softball programs for adults.

5. **Soccer -** The town recreation program provides soccer for children in grades K to 6.

6. **Track -** The regional high school provides a track program, and students can avail themselves of a regional track program sponsored in part by Poland Recreation.

7. **School Sports and Recreation -** RSU 16 provides a number of sports and extracurricular activities. Sport programs include baseball, softball, soccer, field hockey, cheering, ice hockey, track and basketball. Once students reach high school, football is available.

Recreation Committee

The Town has a Recreation Committee consisting of 10 members who are appointed by the Town Council.

Outdoor Facilities

Table R-1 shows the type of outdoor recreation facility along with the number available in Mechanic Falls. When compared to state standards, Mechanic Falls has an excess of developed recreational facilities such as ball fields. Where some deficiency occurs is in significantly sized parks and passive recreational areas. Since the residents of the town have been very active in developing ball fields, playgrounds and other developed facilities, it can be concluded that passive facilities were not a high priority for the citizenry. However, there is some indication that with the development of high end facilities for organized recreation, the residents may be becoming more interested in passive facilities such as trails and water access. However, it should be remembered that Mechanic Falls has a relatively small land mass and is also located only a short distance from amenities such as Range Pond State Park in Poland. Many residents also use the snowmobile trails for walking and hiking and much private land is available to the public for passive activities. It should also be noted that the Poland Regional High

School is on the westerly border of Mechanic Falls and has an extensive recreational program as well as a sports complex including a regulation track.

Table R-1
Outdoor Recreation Facilities
MECHANIC FALLS

Type of Facility	Existing Facilities
Neighborhood Playground (2-10 acres)	2
Baseball Field (90 ft. base paths)	1
Softball/Little League Field	5
Basketball Court	2
Tennis Court	2
Multi-Purpose Field (Football, Soccer, Field Hockey)	2
Ice Skating Area (square feet)	6000
Playground	3
Horseshoe Court	0
Shuffleboard Court	0
Picnic Table	10
Nature Study Area	1

Indoor Facilities

Table R-2 provides a list of the Town's existing indoor recreation facilities. Since the previous comprehensive plan, improvements have been made to the court and stage located in the Municipal Building. In addition, the Town now owns the former Congregational Church. Various groups use the former church for indoor activities. In comparing the facilities to state standards, the only deficiencies are a game room and Teen Center.

Table R-2
Indoor Recreation Facilities and Needs
MECHANIC FALLS
1992, 1998, 2002

Type of Facility	Existing Facilities
School Facilities (avail. public use)	4
Gymnasium or large multi-purpose room	6
Auditorium or assembly hall	2
Arts & crafts shop	4
Senior Citizen center including Adult Ed programs	3
Public library	1

Summary/Findings (Outdoor and Indoor Facility Needs)

The town has excellent developed facilities for organized sports and for family playgrounds. The only outdoor facilities that are lacking are for passive recreation and swimming. Much of the passive outdoor recreation have been met by open woodlands and snowmobile trails across private land. There are not any surface water resources that can be used for swimming but there have been some improvements to provide access to the Little Androscoggin River for paddling and fishing. Range Pond State Park provides an excellent opportunity for swimming and passive recreation on public land. Town residents use surrounding communities' lakes for swimming, boating and fishing. Indoor recreation facility needs of the Town generally appear to be reasonably met by facilities and school programs.

SCENIC RESOURCES AND AREAS OF LOCAL INTEREST

As part of the previous comprehensive plan, scenic areas/views were identified, ranked and mapped. That data was reviewed and several additional views were added based on comparison to the views that were comparable to those listed. As with art, the interpretation of scenic views is "in the eye of the viewer." This undoubtedly explains the difference between the previous list and this list. It also means that there may be other scenic areas/views throughout the Town that some would think should be added to the list.

In addition to scenic views, the public was involved with identifying areas of interest – areas that have some type of special use or meaning to residents. A number of these were identified. After being identified by the public, the Comprehensive Planning Committee reviewed each and decided on its importance for note in the plan.

Table S-1
Scenic Areas/Views

Map Ref.	View Location	Direction of View	Approximate Distance	Comments
1	Route 26 Andros. Cty/Oxford Cty. Line (Pigeon Hill)	Northeast, east and southerly	1 to 10 miles	Landscape view (forests, farm fields); views toward Auburn and Poland Spring. No road-side pull-off area. Similar views, esp. east and south from Harvest Hill Farm, an agri-tainment business open to the public.
2	North Street (Snowmobile Trail)	North St. to Railroad bed on Clifford Street	1/2 mile	Landscape view (farm, fields and abandon railroad); access on private property (maintained snowmobile trail).
3	Elm Street Bridge	Both directions	500-1,000 feet	View upstream of railroad trestle and calm backwater from dam. Downstream rapids with mill works to right.
4	Rt. 11/Red Bridge (old railroad near brook)	southwest	100 yards	View of rustic railroad abutments; no public viewing area.
7	Sawyer's Memorial Bridge	east and west	300 yards	L. Andros. River (rapids-upstream & islands & old stone foundation - downstream).
	Point Road – Off of Marshall St. (private property)	east and west	1/2 mile	View of Bog Brook and L. Andros. Rivers; Viewing area is located on private property.
9	Highland Avenue Bridge	Both directions	500-1,000 feet	Tranquil section of Waterhouse Brook with wetlands to either side, frequented by ducks and other wildlife in close proximity to downtown, school and residential areas.
10	Sherrys Way (private road)	South and east	2-10 miles	Views similar to Pigeon Hill.
11	Austin Road at Transfer Station	South and east	2-10 miles	Views similar to Pigeon Hill.

Summary/Findings (Scenic Resources)

Current local regulations do not provide protection of scenic areas/views or require any assessment of the impacts upon scenic locations.

TRANSPORTATION

Introduction

The location of transportation routes is important to Mechanic Falls and the region's development patterns and its overall economic well-being. Mechanic Falls' transportation system consists of state, local and private roads, sidewalks and bridges as well as rail and transit systems. This multimodal system is extremely important to existing and future development characteristics, both at the local and regional levels.

Highway Classification & Conditions

The Maine Department of Transportation (MaineDOT) has classified highways based on functions within Mechanic Falls as Arterial, Major Collector, or Local. Mechanic Falls has 9.3 miles of arterial highway, 0.96 miles of collector highway, and 19.32 miles of local roads. Brief definitions of the highway functional classifications, as used by MaineDOT, are as follows:

Arterial Highways

The most important travel routes in the state. These roads carry high speed, long distance traffic and attract a significant amount of federal funding. The state is responsible for road repair, resurfacing and winter maintenance on Arterial highways. Lewiston Street (Route 11/121), Pleasant Street (Route 121), Pigeon Hill Road (Route 26) and South Main Street (Route 11) are Arterial Highways.

Collector Highways

These routes collect and distribute traffic from and to the arterial routes serving places of lower population densities, and they are somewhat removed from main travel routes. North Main Street (Route 124) is the only Minor Collector Highway (has a lower traffic count than major collectors) in Mechanic Falls. Typically the State is responsible for road repair and resurfacing on all state roads. However, the state is only responsible for the winter maintenance responsibility of state roads in nonurban areas.

Local Roads

Local roads are designed primarily to serve adjacent land areas and usually carry low volumes of traffic. The town is responsible for both summer and winter maintenance of local roads.

Examination of local highway conditions is important for several reasons. Road conditions can help direct future development and suggest the need for capital expenditures for reconstruction. In the past, Mechanic Falls has used the Road Surface Management System (RSMS) to inventory and determine the physical condition of local roads. The town expects to be transitioning to a newer version of RSMS software in the near future. Until then, the town maintains the following road inventory data:

TABLE T-1
Mechanic Falls Road / Street Mileage
and Paving History

Street Name	Length/Ft.	Miles	Roads	Comments
Atlantis Drive	906	0.172	4	Paved in 2005
Austin Road	1,332	0.252	3	Paved in 2001
Autumn Avenue	758	0.144	2	Paved in 1999
Back Street	535	0.101	3	
Bates Street	503	0.095	2	Paved in 1999
Benson Court	165	0.031	2	Paved in 2000
Brookline Drive	2,471	0.468	3	First Section Paved in 1996 / Second Section Paved in 2006
Bryant Terrace	1,090	0.206	3	Paved in 2004
Brown Road	2,104	0.398	4	Reconstructed Milton Lane to Town Line - 2" Base Paved in 2008; South Main to Milton, Reclaimed and Base Paved 2" and 1" Overlay Whole Length in 2009
Bucknam Street	1,872	0.355	3	Paved in 1996; Reclaimed & Paved 2" in 2010
Clifford Street	1,769	0.335	2	Paved in 1996; Reclaimed & Paved 2" in 2010
Cross Street	682	0.129	2	Reclaimed & Paved in 2004
Dostie Drive	325		3	Paved 1991; Became Town Road 2010
East Chestnut Street	383	0.073	2	Paved in 2004
East Dwinal Street	190	0.036	3	Paved in 1996
Eastview Road	528	0.100	3	Paved / Accepted in 1998
Edwards Road	1,780	0.337	3	Paved in 1996; Reconstructed Base and Paved 3" 2011
Elm Street	9,212	1.745	4	Far 1/3 Reclaimed & Paved in 2003; mid 1/3 Reclaimed & Paved in 2004; First 1/4 Reclaimed and Paved 3" 2011
Fifth Avenue	875	0.166	2	Paved in 1996
First Avenue	748	0.142	2	Paved in 1996
Fourth Avenue	875	0.166	2	
Grove Street	546	0.103	3	Paved in 1996
High Street	518	0.098	2	Reclaimed & Paved in 1996
Highland Avenue	1,132	0.214	3	Paved in 1999
Jordan Road	4,970	0.941	4	Paved in 2000
Judson Street	881	0.167	2	Reclaimed & Paved in 1996
Lane Road	6,030	1.142	4	Paved in 2002

Laurel Street	1,366	0.259	2	Reclaimed & Paved in 1999; Reclaimed & Paved 2" lower 600 feet in 2010
Libby Road	3,950	0.748	3	Reclaimed & Paved in 2004
Lower Myrtle Street	475	0.090	2	Paved in 2006
Maple Street	1,272	0.241	3	Paved in 1996 / 2004
Marshall Street	3,631	0.688	3	Paved in 1996; Reclaimed & Paved 2" in 2010
Martin Street	567	0.107	2.5	Paved in 1996
Milton Lane	2,808	0.532	4	Reclaimed & Paved in 1996
Mitchell Street	1,822	0.345	3	Paved in 2004
Morris Road	729	0.138	3	Paved in 2006
North Main Street	4,963	0.940	4	Locally Maintained State Road
North Street	8,923	1.690	3	Paved in 1996
Oak Street	2,248	0.426	3	Paved in 1996; Reclaimed & Paved 2" in 2010
Park Street	2,069	0.392	3	Paved in 1996
Patterson Road	4,145	0.785	4	Reclaimed & Paved in 2004
Pearl Street	658	0.125	2	Paved in 1999
Perkins Road	1,080	0.205	3	Lower portion Reclaimed & Paved in 2005; Reclaimed & Paved 2" in 2010
Pine Street	2,615	0.495	4	Reclaimed & Paved in 1996
Riverside Drive	2,006	0.380	2	Reclaimed & Paved 2" in 2010
Saunders Road	4,264	0.808	3	First Section Paved in 2002 / Second Section Paved 2006
School Street	528	0.100	2	Reclaimed & Paved 2" in 2010
Second Avenue	528	0.100	2	Reclaimed & Paved 2" in 2010
Spring Street	1,653	0.313	2	Paved in 2004; Reclaimed From Dwinal to Chestnut
Standpipe Road	2,332	0.442	4	Upper Extension Only Paved in 1996
Summer Street	1,376	0.261	2	Paved in 1996; Paved 2004 from Mitchell to D/E; Reclaimed & Paved Mitchell to Maple 2010
Third Avenue	400	0.076	2	
Timber Lane	1,184	0.224	3	Private Gravel Road-Town Plows Only 2008; Paved 3" in 2010; Became Public Road 2010
True Street	1,130	0.214	3	Paved in 1996
Upper Myrtle Street	737	0.140	2	Reclaimed & Paved 2" in 2010
Walker Road	3,291	0.623	4	Upper part (railroad to town line) Paved in 1996, Lower Part Reclaimed & Paved 2" in 2010
Water Street	2,048	0.388	3	Paved in 2001
West Chestnut Street	383	0.073	2	Paved in 2004

West Dwinal Street	378	0.072	3	Paved in 1996
Williams Street	200	0.038	2	
Winterbrook Road	5,104	0.967	3	Reconstructed and Paved 5" in 1999 (by Poland Spring Bottling)
Woodland Road	563	0.107	2	Graveled in 2004
Yates Street	669	0.127	2	Reclaimed & Paved in 2004
TOTALS	***115,275***	***21.77***		
Private Ways				
Abbott Street	655	2		Gravel
Advent Circle				Campground
Androscoggin Drive	350			Gravel
Bryant Terrace	1,150	3		Paved 2004
Callahan Circle				Mobile Home Park
Central Avenue				Mobile Home Park
Dragonfly Lane				Gravel
Dunlop Avenue				Mobile Home Park
Evergreen Drive	144			Gravel
Harvest Hill Way				Gravel
Herrick Avenue				Mobile Home Park
Kyle Avenue				Mobile Home Park
Mink Brook Drive	955	3		Not constructed
Miranda's Way	628	3		Paved 2004
Morey Avenue	960	2		Gravel
Natasha Place	958	3		Paved 2007
Olde Birch Lane	754	3		Paved 2006
Puckerbrush Road	400			Gravel
Purington Avenue				Mobile Home Park
Raspberry Hill Rd.	600	2		Gravel
Riverside Drive Ext	1,550	2		Gravel
Sherrie's Way	3,011	3		Pavement / Gravel
Stone Brooke Drive	2,033	3		Paved 2006
Thunder Road	620	23		Gravel
Tirrell Avenue				Mobile Home Park
Willow Street				Mobile Home Park
Woodland Road	1,200	2		Gravel
Woodside Drive	500			Gravel
State Roads				
Lewiston St.		4		
Pleasant St.		4		
Pigeon Hill Rd.		4		
North Main St.		4		
South Main Street		4		

Parking Lots				
Depot Square				Paved in 2001
Town Hall				Paved in 1998
Fire Station				Paved in 2004, Reclaimed / Repaved 2005
PWD Yard				Paved in 2004
Library Yard				Paved in 2004
Elm Street School				Paved in 2001

Highway Capacities

MaineDOT maintains traffic volume data for selected roads in Mechanic Falls. Typically, these counts are done every two years. However, data may not be available at all locations every three years because data collection points can change over time.

TABLE T-2
Highway Capacities

Location	2001	2005	2006	2007
Route 11/121 (Lewiston Street) southeast of Walker Road		9,420	9,800	9,180
Route 11/121 (Elm Street) northwest of Route 11/121 (Lewiston Street)		10,420	---	10,590
Route 11 (South Main Street) south of Route 121 (Pleasant Street)		3,830	---	3,910
Route 11 (South Main Street) north of Mitchell Street		3,970	---	4,130
Route 11 (South Main Street) northeast of Route 26 (Pigeon Hill Road)		3,770	---	4,230
Route 26 (Pigeon Hill Road) northwest of Winterbrook Road		6,940	---	5,630
Route 26 (Pigeon Hill Road) northwest of Lane Road @ Oxford town line		7,190	---	5,980
Route 121 (Pleasant Street) northwest of Route 11 (South Main Street)		7,540	---	7,660
Route 121 (Pleasant Street) west of North Street		6,300	---	6,010
Route 121 (Pleasant Street) @ Oxford town line		5,570	---	5,650
Route 124 (North Main Street) north of Water Street		2,630	---	2,770
Route 124 (North Main Street) north of Marshall Street		2,410	---	2,520
Route 124 (North Main Street) north of Bucknam Street @ Minot town line		1,910	---	1,970

Source: Maine Department of Transportation

State Highway Improvement Plans

The MaineDOT updates its Six-Year Transportation Improvement Plan periodically. The purpose of the Six-Year Plan is to provide a linkage between the policy-based 20-Year Transportation Plan, the project based Biennial Capital Work Plan, regional planning and local planning.

The 2010-2015 Six-Year Plan identifies no projects in Mechanic Falls.

The MaineDOT's 2012-2013 Biennial Capital Work Plan identifies the following one project in Mechanic Falls:

TABLE T-3

Project ID Number	Road/Subject	Length	Project Description
019104.00	Pigeon Hill Road	3.5 miles	Highway Resurfacing: Beginning 0.01 of a mile north of Pigeon Hill Road and extending northerly 3.5 miles.

Motor Vehicle Crash Data

The Maine Department of Transportation (MDOT) maintains records of all reportable crashes involving at least $1,000 damage or personal injury. A report entitled "Maine Accident Report Summary" provides information relating to the location and nature of motor vehicle crashes. One element of the summary report is the identification of "Critical Rate Factor" (CRF), which is a statistical comparison to similar locations in the state. Locations with CRFs of 1.0 or greater and with more than eight crashes within a three-year period are classified as "High Crash Locations" (HCLs).

Based upon information provided by MDOT for the period January 1, 2008 to December 31, 2010, there was one crash location in Mechanic Falls with a CRF greater than 1.00 and eight or more crashes.

TABLE T-4
MOTOR VEHICLE CRASH SUMMARY DATA
1/1/08 through 12/31/10
High Crash Location

Crash Location	# of Crashes	CRF
Intersection of Pigeon Hill Road, South Main Street, Winterbrook Road (Mechanic Falls/Poland townline) – Five Corners	26	7.81

Bridges

There are eight publically owned bridges in Mechanic Falls. Six of these bridges are owned by the state and maintained by MaineDOT: the Sawyer Memorial Bridge, Red Bridge, Pumping Station Bridge, Pottle Bridge, Mechanic Falls Bridge, and Bog Brook Bridge. Two bridges are owned and maintained by the railroads: the CNRR Bridge on Lewiston Street, and Route 11 Underpass. The bridge inventory

and classification system of public bridges in Mechanic Falls has been established by MaineDOT. The following information has been provided by MaineDOT:

TABLE T-5
Mechanic Falls Bridge Inventory and Classification

Bridge Name	Capital/ Maintenance Responsibility	Location	Structure Class	Length (Feet)	Sub-structure Condition	Super-structure Condition	Deck Condition	Culvert Condition	Inspection Date
Sawyer Memorial Bridge	MaineDOT	Jordan Road – 0.1 miles south of Route 121 intersection	Bridge on Town Way or State Aid Road	196	Good	Good	Satisfactory	Not Applicable	4/2/09
Red Bridge	MaineDOT	South Main Street – 0.3 miles south of Route 121 intersection	Bridge on State Highway	182	Very Good	Very Good	Very Good	Not Applicable	12/3/08
Pumping Station Bridge	MaineDOT	Highland Avenue – 0.1 miles east of Route 11	Bridge on Town Way or State Aid Road	23	Not applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Very Good	8/27/09
CNRR Bridge	Railroad	Pleasant Street – 0.9 mile west of Route 11 intersection		50	Satisfactory	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not applicable	12/3/09
Pottle Bridge	MaineDOT	North Main Street – 1.0 miles north of Route 11/121 intersection	Bridge on Town Way or State Aid Road	228	Good	Very Good	Very Good	Not Applicable	4/2/09
Mechanic Falls Bridge	MaineDOT	Elm Street – Adjacent to Routes 11, 121, & 124	Bridge on State Highway	189	Good	Good	Good	Not Applicable	4/2/09
Route 11 Underpass	Railroad	South Main Street - 0.1 miles south of Route 121 intersection		36	Satisfactory	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	12/3/09
Bog Brook Bridge	MaineDOT	Marshall Street – 0.5 miles east of Bucknam Street intersection	Bridge on Town Way or State Aid Road	75	Good	Good	Very Good	Not Applicable	4/2/09

MaineDOT defines the Federal Sufficiency Rating of a bridge as a numeric indicator of the sufficiency of the bridge. A rating will be from 0 to 100 (100=best, 0=worst). Federal Sufficiency Rating is computed with a federally supplied formula using an array of condition and inventory data. The formula is used to identify bridges eligible for federal funding. Federal sufficiency rating includes both structural deficiencies as well as functional obsolescence. This rating gives an overall value of the sufficiency of the bridge. Since functional obsolescence (too narrow or low weight capacity) may account for a large portion of the rating, do not assume that a low sufficiency rating means the bridge could "fail."

TABLE T-6
Mechanic Falls Bridge Sufficiency Rating

Bridge Name	Year Built	Federal Sufficiency Rating
Sawyer Memorial Bridge	1972	98.9
Red Bridge	1998	89.2
Pumping Station Bridge	1998	96.9
CNRR Bridge	1938	-1
Pottle Bridge	1996	88.4
Mechanic Falls Bridge	1949	55.8
Route 11 Underpass	1921	-1
Bog Brook Bridge	1968	90.9

The Federal Sufficiency Rating for the railroad bridges is less than zero (-1) because these are privately owned (railroad) bridges and not calculated in the federal system.

The MaineDOT posts bridges that are in need of improvement. Posting typically involves establishment of maximum weight limitations that can affect truck routing. The only bridges in Mechanic Falls that are posted are the railroad bridges because of an "Underclearance Limit."

The MaineDOT has established a "Watch List" of bridges that could be subject to weight limitations in the future. Trucks are encouraged to avoid the bridges on the Watch List whenever possible because increased truck weights may hasten the need for posting. There are no bridges in Mechanic Falls on the Watch List.

Access Management

In 2000, the Maine legislature adopted LD 2550, An Act to Ensure Cost Effective & Safe Highways in Maine. The purpose of this act is to assure the safety of the traveling public, protect highways against negative impacts on highway drainage systems, preserve mobility and productivity, and avoid long-term costs associated with constructing new highway capacity. The act is intended to conserve state highway investment, enhance productivity, manage highway capacity, maintain rural arterial speed, promote safety and conserve air, water and land resources.

The rules established as a result of this Act apply to new or modified curb openings (driveways and entrances) on rural state and state-aid highways which have 5,000 average annual daily traffic (AADT) for at least 50% of its length. The standards regulate corner clearances, drainage, driveway spacing, driveway widths, parking, shared driveways and sight distance. The rules define certain arterial highways according to such characteristics as posted speeds, traffic volume, crash rates, etc.

A "Mobility Arterial" is defined as a non-urban compact arterial that has a posted speed limit of 40 m.p.h. or more and is part of an arterial corridor located between urban compact areas or "service

centers" that has 5,000 average annual daily traffic for at least 50% of its length. Routes 11, 11/121, 121 and 26 are Mobility Arterials.

A "Retrograde Arterial" is a mobility arterial where the access-related crash-per-mile rate exceeds the 1999 statewide average for arterials of the same posted speed limit. In addition to meeting the standards for Mobility Arterials, mitigation measures are supposed to be required along Retrograde Arterials before new curb openings are permitted by MaineDOT. MaineDOT has identified Route 11 (South Main Street), Route 11/121 (Lewiston Street) and Route 121 (Pleasant Street) as Retrograde Arterials.

The rule has been amended numerous times by the Maine legislature since its original adoption and may not be as effective as originally intended. To ensure that mobility (timely flow of traffic) is maintained on Mechanic Falls' roads, the town should consider adopting the state's access management rules without allowing the breadth of waivers currently available by the state.

Park & Ride Facilities

There is one MaineDOT park & ride facility in Mechanic Falls and it is located in Depot Square on Pleasant Street. In December 2007, the Maine Department of Transportation and Maine Turnpike Authority jointly published a report (*Maine's Park & Ride Lots: System Update 2007*). This report inventoried the physical amenities available in or near the lot, the physical condition of the lot, and percent usage of the lot. The Mechanic Falls park & ride lot is owned by the town and has 10 commuter parking spaces. When the lot was inventoried for this report, 140% of the commuter spaces were in use. This lot has the highest percentage usage of all park & ride lots in Maine. This park & ride facility is part of a larger parking facility, which enables the lot to exceed its capacity in periods of peak demand. The report identifies the Mechanic Falls park & ride as a "lot to watch" because of its high usage.

Public Transit

Public transportation is a costly service and it is difficult to sustain long-term funding in rural communities. Western Maine Transportation Services, Inc. (WMTS) provides "paratransit" and deviated-fixed-route transportation services to residents of Androscoggin, Franklin and Oxford Counties. Curb-to-curb (a.k.a., "paratransit") and deviated-fixed-route services are available to the general public using the WMTS paratransit bus and minivan fleet. WMTS also provides human service transportation, including MaineCare (Medicaid) trips, to all destinations pre-approved by Maine DHHS. MaineCare transportation is provided both by the WMTS paratransit bus and minivan fleet, and by reimbursed volunteer drivers and Friends & Family self-driven rides which use private vehicles, depending on location and circumstances.

The types/purposes of rides provided by WMTS vary depending upon the rider's needs. The greatest number of rides are for clinical appointments for both adults and children, including developmental services (e.g., day habilitation programs, speech therapy, occupational therapy, etc.). Other trip purposes include shopping, personal appointments (hair, banking, social service, legal, etc.), employment, adult education, entertainment, social and family engagements, and dining at restaurants and senior meal centers, during non-holiday weekdays.

Overall, there has been considerable growth in WMTS ridership numbers for Mechanic Falls residents, as shown on the following table:

TABLE T-7
WMTS – Mechanic Falls Ridership

2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
912	2,823	3,108	2,441	1,085

Several not-for-profit agencies also provide transit services to clients and customers, including Community Concepts, Inc. These agencies are not considered to be public transit providers and may not be able to meet the needs of all residents who need transit services. Mechanic Falls is served by Community Concepts volunteer drivers and the mileage reimbursement program primarily through MaineCare. Other sources of funding for Community Concepts include other DHHS programs, municipalities, schools, United Way, Child Development Services and other grants and fundraising. From 7/1/2010-6/30/2011, Community Concepts provided 10,438 rides to 110 Mechanic Falls residents.

Rail Transportation

The St. Lawrence & Atlantic Railroad runs through the town in a southeasterly to northwesterly direction. There are five at-grade crossings of the main line in Mechanic Falls which are potential safety hazards. The Maine Department of Transportation does not have any specific concerns about any of the at-grade crossings and is not aware of any safety issues associated with these crossings.

Sidewalks

There are 14,464 linear feet (2.7 miles) of sidewalks in Mechanic Falls. The town is responsible for summer and winter maintenance of all sidewalks. Sidewalk conditions range from Poor to Good, as detailed below:

1. Elm Street/Lewiston Street – Main Street/Pleasant Street Intersection to Park Street *(includes Elm Street in front of Bryant Energy & old library)*
    a. 3,627 ft
    b. Condition *(frontage of Bryant Energy & former library)* – Poor
    c. Condition *(from Rainbow Federal Credit Union to Park)* – Good - Fair

2. North Main Street – Pleasant Street Intersection to Clifford Street
    a. 2,174 ft
    b. Condition – Fair

3. Pleasant Street – South Main Street Intersection to beyond Chestnut Streets
    a. 1,771 ft
    b. Condition – Fair

4. South Main Street - Pleasant Street to just before railroad overpass
    a. 608 ft
    b. Condition – *(frontage from barber shop to Maple Street)* – Poor
    c. Condition – *(from Maple to overpass)* - Good

5. Elm Street – Rainbow Federal Credit Union to bridge *(frontage of Veteran's Park)*
    a. 387 ft
    b. Condition - Poor

6. South Main Street – Maple Street to bridge *(frontage of Keene Park)*
    a. 300 ft
    b. Condition - Poor

7. Elm Street – Lewiston Street Intersection to mobile home park
    a. 4,367 ft
    b. Condition – *(Lewiston Street to Elm Street School)* – Fair to Poor
    c. Condition – *(Elm Street School to Woodland Road)* – Good to Fair
8. Pine Street – Elm Street to Yates Street
    a. 270 ft
    b. Condition - Fair

9. West Dwinal Street – Pleasant Street to Summer Street
    a. 708 ft
    b. Condition - Poor

10. Maple Street
    a. 525 ft
    b. Condition - Poor

Aviation

There are no public airports in Mechanic Falls. Nearby public airports are located in Auburn and Oxford.

Local Highway Concerns

The intersection of South Main Street (Route 11), Pigeon Hill Road (Route 26) and Winterbrook Road – locally known as "Five Corners" – has been a High Crash Location since at least 2000. In 2008, the towns of Mechanic Falls and Poland requested MaineDOT undertake a safety audit of Five Corners to see if improvements can be made to improve the safety of the intersection and whether traffic signals should be installed. The safety audit report indicated that the intersection did not meet traffic signal "warrants" but projected traffic growth might result in the warrants being met in 2012 or 2013.

Traffic crash data from 2001-2011 shows a significant reduction in the number of crashes at Five Corners since MaineDOT made safety improvements at the intersection.

TABLE T-8
2001-2011 Crashes Intersection of Route 26 & Route 11

Crash year	Number of Crashes	Fatalities	Incapacitating Injuries	Evident Injuries	Possible Injuries
2001	10	1	0	1	6
2002	3	0	0	0	8
2003	8	0	1	1	4
2004	14	0	0	3	5
2005	8	0	1	3	1
2006	16	0	0	3	8
2007	11	0	0	3	4
2008	12	0	0	1	0
2009	11	0	0	2	1
2010	4	0	0	1	0
2011	4	0	0	2	3
Total	**101**	**1**	**2**	**20**	**40**

(Source: MaineDOT)

Since the safety audit was completed in 2008, a casino has been opened on Route 26 on Pigeon Hill in Oxford and the Bruce M. Whittier Middle School in Poland has been expanded to include seventh and eighth grade students from Mechanic Falls and Minot.

In November 2011, AVCOG asked Maine DOT to do 12-hour turning movement count at Five Corners in September 2012 to see if conditions have changed sufficiently to warrant a traffic signal. Maine DOT accepted this request and has indicated that this will be programmed for September 2012.

FISCAL CAPACITY

Introduction

A community's fiscal capacity refers to its ability to meet current and future needs through public expenditures. As Mechanic Falls continues to develop over the next ten years, demands will be placed upon its fiscal capacity to provide various Town services. These services could include new or improved roads, educational facilities, public water and sewer facilities or recreation areas. The Plan will make various recommendations requiring public investment. These recommendations must be considered in light of Mechanic Falls' fiscal capacity.

Revenues and Expenditures

Table F-1 provides an overview of valuation, mill rates and property tax revenue and other revenues for the past five years. It shows that the Town's local valuation increased 7 % from 2007 to 2011 while the state valuation, that is slightly higher than the local, only rose 1.7 percent. The mill rate has been relatively stable not increasing over the past two years and actually decreasing in the first three years of the reported period. The increase between 2009 and 2010 was very small at 0.15.

TABLE F-1
Tax and Other Revenues

Category	11/12	11/10	10/09	09/08	08/07
State Valuation	$158,550,000	$166,550,000	$166,150,000	$163,750,000	$155,700,000
Local Valuation	$147,314,147	$144,717,137	$141,712,679	$139,705,496	$137,864,855
Millage Rate	$17.55	$17.55	$17.40	$18.30	$18.90
Property Taxes	$2,585,363.28	$2,539,785.75	$2,465,800.61	$2,538,137.00	$2,619,156.91
Other Revenue		$864,012	$970,310	$980,576	$1,113,887
Total Revenue		$3,403,797	$3,436,110	$3,537,187	$3,719,533

Source: Mechanic Falls Town Records

The table also shows that actual total revenues have decreased by 8.5% over the four years from 2007 to 2011. While valuation increased slightly, property tax revenue decreased less than 1 percent due to a decreased mill rate. The town's "Other Revenue" has decreased substantially at 22.4% over the four-year period from 08/07 to 11/10.

Table F-2 shows other sources of revenue beyond property taxes. The "other revenue" category includes all other sources of revenue for the Town such as building permit fees, licenses, planning board fees, charges for copies, sale of tax acquired property, investment interest and Emergency Management Assistance reimbursements.

These other sources of revenue have decreased by $232,000 over the four-year period indicated in the table. The sources of revenue that make up the bulk of the other revenues are highlighted in the left

hand column. The major categories that have significantly decreased are highlighted in the right hand column. Most notably State Municipal Revenue Sharing decreased by 36%, or approximately $165,000. Excise taxes decreased by 6% over the period, but showed a gain over the past year probably due to a somewhat improving economy and the possibility that residents had gotten as much mileage as possible from their vehicles and were forced to replace them. Interest penalties decreased significantly so that it was not a major source of revenue for the past several years. The only increases occurred in categories which are not significant sources of revenue compared to the overall budget.

Table F-2
Other Revenues

	ACTUAL	ACTUAL	ACTUAL	ACTUAL	ACTUAL
	06/07	**07/08**	**08/09**	**09/10**	**10/11**
MISC. TAXES	$9,274	$2,758	$8,010	$5,936	$10,712
EXCISE TAXES	$388,231	$375,211	$347,261	$348,991	$363,654
INTEREST / PENALTIES	$101,714	$96,234	$59,613	$40,547	$27,868
PERMITS	$18,623	$14,875	$8,485	$21,566	$16,226
LICENSES	$15,408	$15,108	$15,088	$15,096	$15,150
INTERGOVERNMENTAL	$485,651	$526,880	$460,939	$374,690	$323,986
Highway Block Grant	$17,612	$18,003	$15,975	$15,230	$22,992
Revenue Sharing	$458,797	$495,595	$429,188	$337,387	$293,020
CHARGES	$34,326	$36,163	$40,670	$43,338	$51,295
FINES	$500	$1,367	$1,983	$563	$1,100
MISC. REVENUES	$42,906	$45,292	$38,527	$75,033	$54,020
RESERVE BASED REVENUE					
Debt Service Reserve	$0	$0	$0	$44,550	$0
Total	**$1,096,634**	**$1,113,887**	**$980,576**	**$970,310**	**$864,012**

It is expected that valuation will continue to increase modestly, perhaps at a slightly higher rate than occurred over the past four years given that property values have actually decreased throughout the state and nation over that period. Over this same period, Mechanic Falls has not seen any significant private sector investment, and therefore, the increasing valuation is a positive sign. Unfortunately, it is feared that "other revenue" sources have a more dismal outlook.

Table F-3 lists significant Town operating expenditures by category. It indicates that total expenditures increased by 10%. However, in the past several years, a significant amount of money was transferred from the Fund Balance in order to mitigate potential property tax increases caused by decreases in property tax revenue and state municipal revenue sharing. The far right column shows the percent of increase or decrease of the particular budget categories.

TABLE F-3
Expenditures

BUDGET CATEGORIES	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	
	Expended	**Expended**	**Expended**	**Expended**	**Expended**	**Change**
Administration	$446,372	$467,924	$497,102	$498,180	$487,477	9%
Library	$14,683	$14,786	$14,251	$17,003	$20,948	43%
Recreation	$8,305	$6,630	$6,630	$3,712	$2,993	-64%
Social Services	$20,889	$29,123	$28,410	$25,722	$14,700	-30%
Misc	$10,267	$8,147	$4,844	$8,894	$14,467	41%
Debt Service	$161,364	$158,935	$156,425	$153,813	$212,650	32%
Pensions/Insurances	$242,929	$254,016	$270,255	$279,493	$293,788	21%
Public Safety	$342,284	$340,452	$334,233	$362,494	$367,202	7%
Public Works	$238,331	$266,239	$245,839	$249,971	$279,181	17%
Solid Waste	$114,231	$104,455	$122,160	$112,108	$106,913	-6%
County Tax	$128,656	$138,098	$149,675	$149,142	$153,041	19%
TOTAL GENERAL FUND	$1,728,311	$1,788,805	$1,829,824	$1,860,532	$1,953,360	13%
CIP BUDGET	$135,730	$198,101	$205,420	$54,000	$99,000	-27%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	$1,864,041	$1,986,906	$2,035,244	$1,914,532	$2,052,360	10%
USE OF FUND BALANCE	$129,700	$0	$0	$147,000	$212,650	
APPLIED NON TAX REVENUES	$1,096,634	$1,113,887	$980,576	$970,310	$864,012	-21%

A number of the budget categories have expense categories somewhat beyond the Town's control including Insurances, solid waste disposal and county taxes. Given the projected modest growth rate, it is estimated that current services will adequately serve the population for the planning period. However, the cost of providing current services and maintaining existing infrastructure and equipment will continue to increase. In addition, residents of Mechanic Falls have been making improvements to the town in the form of recreational fields, town office rehabilitation, and downtown amenities including parking and sidewalks. Therefore, it is expected that the Town will have to face some tax increases given potential decreases in state assistance, increases in school and county assessments, increasing operational costs, and only modest growth in valuation. It should be noted that the town actively seeks economic development from the private sector and also has an excellent history of resourceful citizens such as those that have greatly improved the recreational fields.

The Town has an active Capital Budgeting process. The Capital Budget is updated annually using a robust process involving department heads, the town manager, budget committee and Town Council. Capital budgeting is difficult given the revenue issues facing the Town, but as finances become more difficult, capital budgeting becomes even more important. The capital budget decreased by 27 percent over the time period; however, the town's capital budgeting process should help the town to adequately plan for future expenditures. This is further considered in the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) contained in this document. Because the Town has an extensive Capital Budgeting process and a relatively lengthy budgeting process that continuously reviews town needs, only a summary document is presented in this plan.

Tables F-4a and b represent what was actually spent on capital items. It differs from what was budgeted since the CIP budget also generally contains money to be set aside for reserve. Fund balance may be used to create reserves for certain expected large expenditures such as highway equipment and fire trucks or to pay down debt for prior capital improvement projects that were paid for by bond.

Table F-4a
Capital Expenditures – Locally Funded

	Reserves	Fund Balance	Bonds	Taxes	Total
2006/2007	$24,039	$87,670		$15,845	$127,555
2007/2008	$18,996			$48,623	$67,619
2008/2009	$27,649			$50,039	$77,689
2009/2010	$142,807	$58,920			$201,728
2010/2011	$49,239		$409,365		$ 458,605
Totals	$262,732	$146,590	$409,365	$114,507	$ 127,555

Table F-4b
Capital Expenditures – Grants and Totals

	Grants	FEMA Funds	Total Grants	Total Capital
2006/2007		$11,695	$11,695	$139,250
2007/2008	$86,173	$7,932	$94,106	$161,725
2008/2009				$77,689
2009/2010	$4,998		$4,998	$206,726
2010/2011	$10,000		$10,000	$468,605
Totals	$101,171	$19,627	$11,695	$139,250

The tables show that the amount spent on capital varies considerably from year to year. This is caused by a combination of town needs and the difficult economic times that have been experienced for most of the report period. Capital expenditures is one budget category that a town can adjust in order to help smooth the overall tax rate in the face of increasing fixed costs and decreasing federal and state revenues. In the 11/10 fiscal year, the Town issued a major bond to upgrade roads. This skews the capital expenditures for that fiscal year but will help to address a number of important road problems before they require even larger expenditures. It will also help to be able to smooth out the total capital expenditures going forward.

Other Factors, TIF, Tax Exempt Property

Table F-5 indicates the tax exempt properties in Mechanic Falls. The total is slightly less than a million dollars or just over 1 percent of the total valuation. This translates to just over $30,000 in lost tax revenue from these properties. In fiscal year 11/10, the properties paid $701 as payment in lieu of taxes. This is included in the miscellaneous revenue in the previous revenue table.

Table F-5
Significant Tax-exempt Properties

Properties	Amount
John Murphy Homes (group homes)	$ 630,650
Central Maine Medical Center (clinic)	$535,610
Auburn Housing Authority (housing)	$413,880
Advent Campground (church)	$ 379,440
	$1,959,580

Table F-6 shows the use of the Fund Balance, the amount remaining between expenditures and revenues. Towns use the fund balance as a contingency for emergencies and other necessary expenditures that occur after adoption of the annual budget and appropriations that occur at town meeting. If no such expenditures occur in any year, the fund balance may accumulate for use in a subsequent year. As it accumulates, then officials may choose to use some of the balance to offset tax increases. In Mechanic Falls, the Town has contributed to reserve accounts, used it for Capital purchases and paid debt service with it in order to help stabilize the tax rate in the face of uncertain economic times for its residents.

Table F-6
Use of Fund Balance

	To Reserve	CIP Purchases	Debt Service	Total
2006/2007	$36,000	$87,670	0	$123,670
2007/2008	0	0	0	0
2008/2009	0	0	0	0
2009/2010	$88,000	$58,920	0	$146,920
2010/2011	0	0	$212,650	$212,650

In 1998, the Town created a TIF district to assist a business desiring to expand in the town. The district created the revenue shown in Table F-7. It is a relatively minor amount of revenue, and the interest on it has decreased as some funds have been used for economic development purposes and interest rates have plummeted.

Table F-7
Tax Increment Financing

	TIF Amount	Interest Earnings of TIF
2006/2007	$24,460	$179
2007/2008	$24,460	$136
2008/2009	$23,683	$36
2009/2010	$22,519	$9
2010/2011	$22,713	$9

Several years ago, the State Legislature enacted a law (LD1) that limits the amount of revenue that a town can raise by property taxes. It requires a town to override the limit at town meeting should the property tax levy exceed the allowed amount. Table F-8 shows the amount of money raised by Mechanic Falls each year and the amount that it is allowed to be raised according to State Law. LD1 limits have never been surpassed in Mechanic Falls since the inception of the regulation, and therefore, the town has never needed to put forth a vote for an override.

Table F-8
LD 1 Funding Limits

	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12
Property Tax Levy Limit	$1,864,740	$2,015,246	$925,613	$1,025,902
Property Tax Levy	$898,429	$803,685	$803,686	$934,365

Debt

At the time of the last Comprehensive Plan, the town had no debt except for schools. In the past five years, the town has carried an interest payment on debt. In the 2010/2011 fiscal year, the debt amounted to 10 percent of expenditures and only approximately 0.1 percent of the state valuation. The Town's total outstanding debt is limited by State law to 15 percent of the Town's last full State valuation. (This limit is reduced by 7 1/2 percent if the debt for schools, sewer and airport, water and special district purposes are excluded.) The Town is well below its theoretical debt limit. Borrowing for major equipment purchases and infrastructure improvements may be an important strategy as the Town recovers from the recent recession and tries to continue to maintain a relatively stable tax rate.

Regional Cooperation

Mechanic Falls has worked with surrounding communities on a number of programs to reduce the costs of the programs. Most notably, although not unique to Mechanic Falls, they participate in mutual aid for fire protection with surrounding towns and the City of Auburn. Given several large business structures in the town, this mutual aid has been more beneficial to Mechanic Falls and several surrounding towns

with similar structures than it is for many rural Maine communities. Mechanic Falls is also a member of Regional School Unit 16 with Poland and Minot. The town also uses the regional waste-to-energy facility in Auburn for solid waste disposal.

Fiscal Capacity

The analysis of taxes, revenues and expenditures combined with significant borrowing capacity indicates that the Town has adequate fiscal capacity. The rigorous Capital Budgeting process coupled with a sound Transportation (Road and Sidewalk) Improvement Plan places the Town in a good position moving forward. They have managed to have a stable and somewhat decreasing tax rate and have managed to have a significant fund balance that has been used to help with the tax rate on several occasions over the past few years. However, disturbing trends indicate that the town will need to be vigilant in coming years. Property valuations are expected to rise quite slowly while there is little hope for any stabilization in some fixed costs such as insurance and county taxes. In addition, it would appear that the trend of decreasing state and federal assistance will continue.

Fortunately, the Town has relatively good programs and services, and with the slow growth, the demand for additional services to accommodate the growth will be minimal. Residents may expect capital improvements to provide improved roads and better transportation as well as additional recreational facilities such as water access and walking trails in order to improve their and their children's quality of life. The town also needs to continue downtown improvements in order to maintain a vital downtown neighborhood. As residents may request improved or additional services, the town must be prepared for the state and federal levels to thrust additional demands or decrease revenue sharing on it. Fiscal problems are as likely to be generated by state and federal actions as they are by local needs and desires.

With much of the new housing being mobile homes that do not generate tax revenue at the rate of higher priced stick built or manufactured homes, it is imperative that the town maintain a vital downtown, provide good services and maintain an overall good quality of life in order to attract a broader mix of housing as well as businesses. For years, Mechanic Falls has done well at attracting new businesses. The reasonably good transportation routes and reasonably progressive railroad running across the town bodes reasonably well for future economic development. One problem that the town faces is the sporadic nature of land along the transportation corridors being put on the market. In some cases, businesses may want a certain location but the land is not for sale. For this reason, the town has designated fairly large portions of land along the railroad, in particular, for economic development.

SECTION II

INTRODUCTION TO SECTION II

This section provides the guidance for the future of Mechanic Falls. The major parts of the Section are the Policies and Strategies and the Future Land Use Plan. However, it begins with a set of maps showing the natural resources and infrastructure upon which the planning process was built.

Maps

As part of the Inventory work, a series of maps were developed to assist with the analysis of a number of the Inventory topics. Rather than present the maps independently for each topic, they are presented at the beginning of this section to assist in visualizing the town's resources and facilities. The maps were developed from information available from the State, the Town and the Committee members. The following is a brief description of each map to be found here. A Future Land Use Map is provided within the Future Land Use Plan subsection.

Road Map: The road map is based on the E-911 road information developed by the town. The E-911 information was compiled by the State Office of GIS (Geographic Information Systems).

Natural Resources Maps: The Natural Resources maps contain information on Deer Wintering Areas, Waterfowl and Wading Bird Habitat, Floodplains, Wetlands, Steep Slopes and Prime Farmland. Since a single map with all of this information would be difficult to read, the natural resources are shown in a series of maps several of which have appropriate subjects presented together.

Deer Wintering Areas, and Waterfowl and Wading Bird Habitat: Both of these maps were prepared from the State's Beginning with Habitat program. For an unknown reason, the Deer Wintering Area mapping was not accomplished in Mechanic Falls, but was done for adjacent towns. There is a deer yard on the Town's southerly border with Poland which undoubtedly extends into Mechanic Falls.

100 Year Floodplain, National Wetlands Inventory, and Deer Wintering Areas: Floodplain maps are provided by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). New maps are being adopted as this is going to print. The wetlands mapping was done by a federal program that mapped wetlands throughout the United States. Wetlands were mapped using aerial information supplemented by other techniques. These maps are for planning purposes only. The location of wetlands should be verified on site. There are both wetlands missing from the map and areas mapped as wetlands that are not wetlands. The mapping of large wetlands several of which are in Mechanic Falls is reasonably accurate.

Steep Slopes and Prime Farmland: Both were based on soil information and criteria developed by the USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service.

Water and Sewer: This map indicates the extent of the public water system including the source on Winterbrook Road, and it also depicts the location of the sewer lines. These maps are based on information provided by town and Sanitary District officials.

Public Facilities: This map shows all of the land and buildings that are owned by the Town and that is used to provide services to the public including the town office and town recreational land.

Existing Zoning Map: The map provides the current zoning. The proposed Future Land Use Map and this map are very similar with the Future Land Use Map having some minor changes and being somewhat more general in the distinctions between various growth areas depicted on the Existing Zoning map. This will allow for more flexibility in making some specific zoning decisions on the detailed uses that can occur in any given growth district.

Policies and Strategies

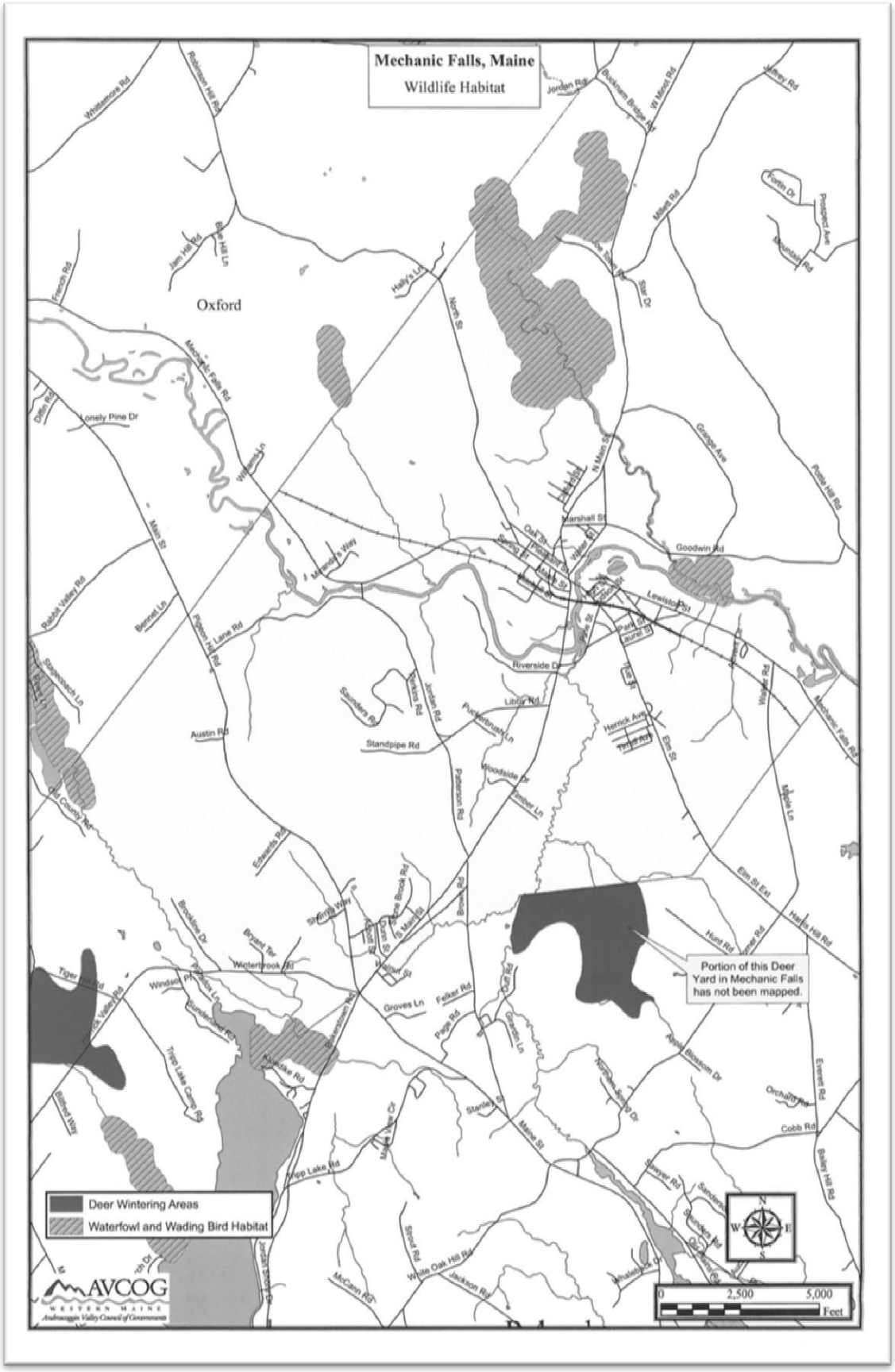
Policies and Strategies are provided for the topics that were discussed in the Section I, Inventory and Analysis. The policies lay a framework for the future and the strategies are action steps to be taken to realize the strategies and ultimately the vision for the town. Together they should guide town officials at they prepare for the future of the town. For each topic, a brief summary taken from Section I is provided followed by the State Goals that were adopted by the State Legislature as part of the Growth Management Act. The State Goals are followed by Policy statements and then a number of Strategies that are necessary to implement the Policy and the Plan.

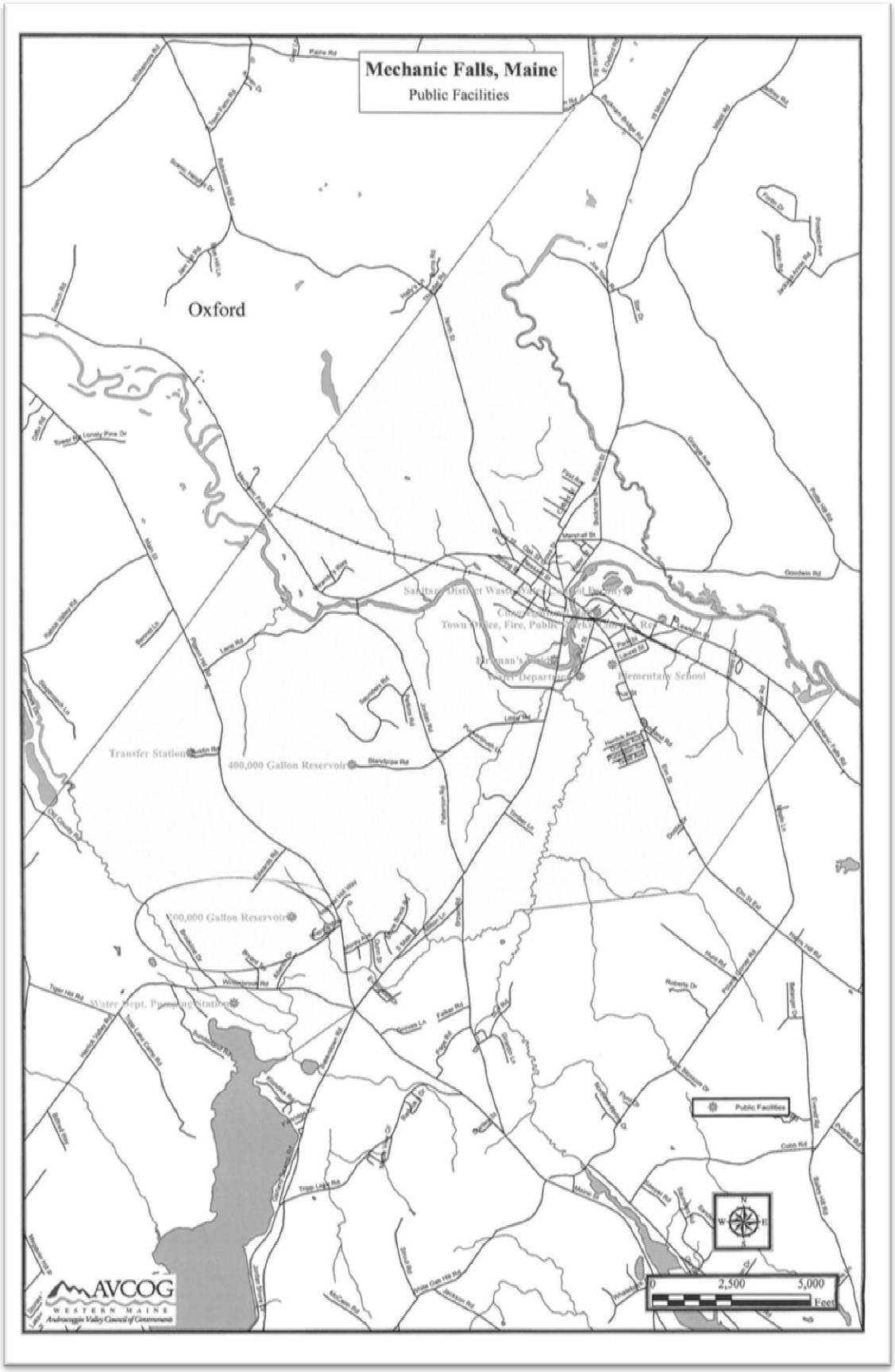
Future Land Use Plan

The Future Land Use Plan is the culmination of much of the work that the Comprehensive Planning Committee accomplished over the past several years. The plan provides guidance for Land Use decisions. The plan is very similar to existing land use. It is intended to provide for continued economic growth for both commercial and manufacturing sectors, protect residential neighborhoods, and protect important natural resources. By combining these goals, Mechanic Falls will continue to provide for a high quality of life for its residents.

Capital Investment Plan

Mechanic Falls has been diligent about the development and maintenance of a Capital Improvement Plan for their infrastructure. The Capital Investment Plan contained in this section provides guidance for future Capital Improvement Plans and also summarizes the most significant expenditures that the town must undertake to realize the vision for its future.


Mechanic Falls, Maine
Wildlife Habitat
Oxford
Portion of this Deer Yard in Mechanic Falls has not been mapped.
Deer Wintering Areas
Waterfowl and Wading Bird Habitat
AVCOG
WESTERN MAINE
Androscoggin Valley Council of Governments
0
2,500
5,000
Feet


Mechanic Falls, Maine
Public Facilities
Oxford
Transfer Station
400,000 Gallon Reservoir
Elementary School
Public Facilities
0
2,500
5,000
Feet
AVCOG
WESTERN MAINE
Androscoggin Valley Council of Governments

MECHANIC FALLS - POLICIES AND STRATEGIES

POPULATION OVERVIEW

In the 1992 plan, Mechanic Falls' population had grown about 12 percent over the past decade, a smaller rate of growth than surrounding towns, but still significant. Since then, the population has hovered around 3,000 with the 2010 U.S. Census showing a 100 person (3%) decline over the past decade. There are no projections based on the 2010 Census; based on estimates through the late 2000s, the State Planning Office did project a population increase leveling off at around 3,250 after 2018. This did not account for the population decline in the past few years that has been undoubtedly linked to the nation's overall economic doldrums. It seems that Mechanic Falls' population is relatively stable and accommodating slight declines or increases should not be a significant problem either placing excessive demands on the land and resource base or on government resources.

A consideration that Maine and many municipalities must address is the aging of their population. As the population ages, there will be a demand for somewhat different services or possibly an outmigration seeking living arrangements closer to medical facilities and other services for older people. Mechanic Falls is reasonably well positioned to accommodate older residents with available services in the downtown and reasonable proximity to Lewiston's two major hospitals.

Mechanic Falls has a Median Household Income below Androscoggin County's and the State's, but it has far fewer families living below the poverty level than does the County or the State. Educational attainment provides some insight into this; the percentage of Mechanic Falls' residents without a high school diploma is lower than the County and State, but the percentage with education beyond high school is also lower. It appears that Mechanic Falls has a sound working population earning reasonable wages.

PLANNING ISSUE: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

ECONOMY OVERVIEW

Since the 1992 Comprehensive Plan, Mechanic Falls' economy has become much more stable. To a large extent, this has been the result of both a more stable economy in the surrounding area but also the development of new businesses in Mechanic Falls. Mechanic Falls supports a higher percentage (compared to the overall number of jobs) in manufacturing than does Androscoggin County. The percentage of jobs in arts, entertainment and recreational services and health, education and social services are considerably lower than the County. The town provides a place of work for many people from other towns in the region. In 2010, Mechanic Falls had an unemployment rate slightly above the State's but similar to Androscoggin County and slightly lower than other counties in western Maine.

State goals relating to planning issue

1. To promote an economic climate that increases job opportunities and overall economic well-being; and

2. To encourage orderly growth and development in appropriate areas of each community, while protecting the State's rural character, making efficient use of public services and preventing development sprawl.

Economic Development Policies

It is the policy of the Town

a. to encourage the continuation of environmentally sound business development.

b. to provide for commercial and manufacturing land uses in those areas where it will not conflict with adjacent, less intense land uses.

c. to develop and maintain an economic development strategy which reflects the economic development needs of the Town (also, refer to the Regional Coordination Program).

d. to encourage appropriate commercial development within the Downtown/ Village area.

e. to allow home occupations throughout the community. Home occupations should be limited in size by the number of employees and the area of the home used.

f. to assist existing businesses and encourage the reuse of existing structures.

g. to include appropriate financial commitments in the Capital Improvement Program to support desired economic development, including needed public improvements, and

h. to coordinate with regional development organizations and surrounding towns as necessary to support desired economic development.

Implementation Strategies

1. The Zoning Ordinance should provide for suitable locations of sufficient size for commercial and manufacturing development, and the Town should continue to evaluate additional suitable areas as may become necessary.

Responsibility:	Planning Board
Time Frame:	1 year

2. The Mechanic Falls Development Commission (MFDC) should develop and promote an Economic Development Strategy for the Town in coordination with the Town Council, Town Staff, Planning Board, representatives of the general business community and public. The strategy should identify and promote available space in the downtown.

Responsibility:	MFDC/Council
Time Frame:	2 years

3. In the Zoning Ordinance, continue to encourage the reuse and redevelopment of existing structures, especially those in the downtown.

Responsibility:	Planning Board
Time Frame:	On-going

4. Amend local ordinances, if appropriate, to reflect the desired scale, intensity, and location of future economic development and provide a degree of compatibility with neighboring properties or neighborhoods including industrial and commercial areas and the downtown.

Responsibility:	Planning Board
Time Frame:	1 year

5. Develop and adopt incentives suitable for the types and locations of economic development desired in the community.

Responsibility:	Mechanic Falls Development Committee, Town Council, and Planning Board
Time Frame:	1 year

6. Consider the following mechanisms as needed to invest in the improvements needed to support further commercial and industrial development: local tax dollars, tax increment financing district(s), Community Development Block Grants or other grants, bonding, impact fees, and others as appropriate or may become available.

Responsibility:	Mechanic Falls Development Committee, Town Council, and Planning Board
Time Frame:	On-going

7. Continue to participate in regional economic development efforts.

Responsibility:	Mechanic Falls Development Committee and Town Council
Time Frame:	On-going

PLANNING ISSUE: HOUSING

HOUSING OVERVIEW

Housing units have grown from 935 in 1980 to 1,425 in 2010 - a 52% increase. The majority of the increase occurred in multifamily and mobile home units with increases of over 30 percent in each of these housing types over each of the past two decades. Since 1990, there has been a small (1.3%) decrease in single-family units. For the most part, housing units in surrounding towns grew at a greater rate than they did in Mechanic Falls, although the difference is not significantly pronounced for all but Minot which almost doubled the Mechanic Falls rate.

The median sale price of homes in Mechanic Falls was $149,450 in 2008. While lower than that of Poland and Minot, but higher than surrounding Oxford County towns, the Mechanic Falls prices had the greatest increase between 1990 and 2008 of any of these communities. The analysis indicated that households at the median household income can afford a single-family home in the town and that rents are generally affordable for those making 80% of the Median Household Income.

State goal relating to planning issue

1. To encourage and promote affordable, decent housing opportunities for all Maine citizens.

Housing Policies

It is the policy of the Town

a. to encourage and promote adequate workforce housing to support the community's and region's economic development.

b. to ensure that land use controls encourage the development of quality affordable housing, including rental housing.

c. to seek to achieve at least 10% of all housing built or placed during the next decade be affordable.

d. to encourage and support the efforts of the regional housing coalitions and providers, such as Auburn Housing Authority and others, in addressing affordable and workforce housing needs.

e. to allow for mobile home park development only in those areas where municipal services and roads are adequate to provide such services to that type of development.

f. to allow mobile homes on individual lots in all locations within the community where traditional single-family homes are allowed.

g. Regional Issue - to coordinate with adjacent communities to develop a regional fair share affordable housing formula (Refer to the Regional Coordination Program).

Implementation Strategies

1. The Zoning Ordinance should continue to include a variety of lot sizes and zones which allow residential development.
   Responsibility: Planning Board
   Time Frame: Done, on-going review

2. Ensure land use regulations continue to support high density development and small lot sizes, frontage requirements, and setbacks in growth areas designated in this plan.
   Responsibility: Planning Board
   Time Frame: On-going review

3. Ensure the widths of new streets proposed in growth areas do not increase the cost of street construction to the detriment of housing affordability.
   Responsibility: Planning Board and Council
   Time Frame: On-going review

4. The Zoning Ordinance should continue to allow the addition of at least one accessory apartment per dwelling unit of limited size in growth areas, subject to site suitability.
   Responsibility: Planning Board and Council
   Time Frame: On-going review

5. Continue to support a community affordable housing committee or regional affordable housing coalition or providers.
   Responsibility: Council
   Time Frame: On-going

6. The Zoning Ordinance should continue to include provisions for the location of mobile home parks within growth areas pursuant to 30-A MRSA §4358(3)(M).
   Responsibility: Planning Board
   Time Frame: On-going review

PLANNING ISSUE: PUBLIC SERVICES/FACILITIES

PUBLIC FACILITIES AND SERVICES OVERVIEW

Services provided by the Town include a public water system, a solid waste transfer station, fire and emergency medical (response) service (EMS), police protection and ambulance services, roads, recreation facilities, and additional administrative services. A special district also operates a public sewer system serving the downtown area. Mechanic Falls along with Poland and Minot formed Regional School Unit 16. The towns support three elementary schools, and a middle school-high school campus. With the population growth of the three Towns, facility needs are the major issue.

The delivery of Town services in all areas appears to be adequate based upon the inventory work. With a somewhat improved economy since the last plan was developed and improved capital planning, a number of needs identified in the last plan have been addressed. The town must continue to be diligent and efficient in addressing their facility and service needs. The town and sewer district, like most towns, are always facing issues created by older sewer, water and storm water systems and limited financial ability to address all road and transportation needs.

Given a somewhat stable population base, it is not anticipated that growth will place a burden on town services. Any needed changes are most likely to come from residents having higher expectations of the quality and types of town facilities and services, from state mandates such as has occurred in the area of education, and from the changing demographics, in particular the aging population.

The residents have done well at addressing some of their own needs such as the extensive outdoor recreational field complex which has been developed by volunteers in conjunction with town assistance, thereby lightening the burden on taxpayers.

State goals relating to planning issue:

State Goal

To plan for, finance and develop an efficient system of public facilities and services to accommodate anticipated growth and economic development.

Overall Policies

a. To finance existing and future facilities and services in a cost effective manner.

b. To explore grants available to assist in the funding of capital investments within the community.

c. To reduce Maine's tax burden by staying within LD 1 spending limitations.

Overall Strategies

1. Explore opportunities to work with neighboring communities to plan for and finance shared or adjacent capital investments to increase cost savings and efficiencies.

2. Explore grants available to assist in the funding of capital investments within the community.

3. Explore joint projects with state agencies that may be making capital improvements in Mechanic Falls, such as the Maine Department of Transportation.

Fiscal Impact Policy

a. It is a policy of the town to require the developers of new projects, which will exceed the capacity of any existing off-site Public Services and Facilities, to pay a proportionate share of the cost for expansion of those services and facilities.

Fiscal Impact Implementation Strategy

1. Ordinances should continue to require developers to finance the cost of public improvements directly attributable to the development.

Responsibility:	Planning Board
Time Frame:	on-going

Public Safety Policies

a. It is a policy of the Town to maintain needed public safety facilities in a centralized location.

b. It is a policy of the Town to assure that public safety services are adequate to serve new growth and development including amending ordinances to require financial assistance from developers that place a significant burden on the services.

Public Safety Implementation Strategies

1. The Town Manager/Public Safety Chiefs will to continue to analyze public safety facilities and municipal facilities needs and include needs in the Capital Improvement Program.

Responsibility:	Town Manager, Fire and Police Chiefs, and Council
Time Frame:	on-going

a. Ordinances should be amended ordinances to require developers to provide financial assistance for any capital needs or phase their development when their development places a significant burden on the services.

Water System Policies

a. To provide adequate quantity and quality to meet the needs of customers and future growth of the town.

Responsibility:	Planning Board
Time Frame:	2013

Water System Implementation Strategies

1. The Town Council, Manager, and Water Department Superintendent will continue to pursue federal and state funding to rehabilitate and/or expand the water system.

Responsibility:	Council/Town Manager
Time Frame:	Ongoing

2. To continue the Wellhead Protection zone contained in the Zoning Ordinance.

Responsibility:	Planning Board
Time Frame:	on-going

Wastewater Treatment Policies

a. To provide adequate sewerage disposal for urban areas of Mechanic Falls in cooperation with the Mechanic Falls Sanitary District.

b. To protect the water quality of the Little Androscoggin River by providing an efficient wastewater treatment system.

c. To continue to work with the Mechanic Falls Sanitary District to plan and finance improvements to the sewage collection and treatment system including removal of stormwater as needed to protect water quality.

Wastewater Treatment Implementation Strategies

a. The Town will encourage the Sanitary District to develop a Capital Improvement Plan in coordination with the Town's Future Land Use Plan and Capital Improvement Program.

Responsibility:	Town Council/Mechanic Falls Sanitary District
Time Frame:	2012 and thereafter

Solid Waste Policies

a. It is a policy of the town to continue its recycling efforts and to continue to purchase necessary equipment for the transfer station.

Solid Waste Implementation Strategies

1. Residents should be encouraged to participate in the Town's recycling program through education and information.

Responsibility:	Transfer Station Manager
Time Frame:	Ongoing

Town Administration Policies

a. To maintain adequate facilities and staff to provide the public services needed by Town residents.

Implementation Strategies

1. Annually, as part of the budgetary process, review existing Town staff positions, their assigned work responsibilities and make a determination if staff position adjustments are necessary.

Responsibility:	Town Council/Town Manager
Time Frame:	Ongoing

PLANNING ISSUE: TRANSPORTATION POLICY AND STRATEGY

TRANSPORTATION OVERVIEW

Mechanic Falls has 9 miles of arterial highway, 1 mile of collector highways, and 19 miles of local roads. All 19 miles of local roads are maintained by the Town. The Town is also responsible for winter maintenance of certain sections of state roads where there is a concentrated development adjacent to the roadway. Major roads, Routes 26, 121, and 11 all provide excellent connections with surrounding towns and major transportation routes for goods and services. However, the Five Corners intersection (Route 26 and Route 11) continues to be a safety concern.

The St. Lawrence and Atlantic Railroad runs east to west through the town. This railroad has been aggressive at developing into an important short-line railroad connecting Maine with Montreal and the Pacific Coast through the Canadian railroad system. It offers good potential for additional warehousing and manufacturing development in the community.

There are nearly 3 miles of sidewalks, all of which serve the downtown area making the Mechanic Falls downtown a reasonably walkable community. The condition of sidewalks range from good to poor; improvements are included in the Capital Improvement Program.

State goal relating to planning issue

1. To plan for, finance and develop an efficient system of public facilities and services to accommodate anticipated growth and economic development.

Transportation Policies

a. To prioritize community and regional needs associated with safe, efficient, and optimal use of transportation systems including continuing the 10-year road improvement program.

b. To safely and efficiently preserve or improve the transportation system.

c. To promote public health, protect natural and cultural resources, and enhance livability by managing land use in ways that maximize the efficiency of the transportation system and minimize increases in vehicle miles traveled.

d. To meet the diverse transportation needs of residents (including children, the elderly and disabled) and through travelers by providing a safe, efficient, and adequate transportation network for all types of users (motor vehicles, pedestrians, bicyclists).

e. To promote fiscal prudence by maximizing the efficiency of the state or state-aid highway network.

Transportation Strategies

1. The Road Commissioner will continue to develop a ten-year road improvement program for local/regional transportation system facilities that reflects community and regional needs and state objectives. The program should include improvement priorities and estimated costs for a five-year period.
   Responsibility: Road Commissioner
   Time Frame: Ongoing

2. The town manager should actively participate in regional and state transportation and land use planning efforts.
   Responsibility: Town Manager
   Time Frame: Ongoing

3. Local ordinances should continue to be consistent with regional and state transportation policies, and ordinances should be amended as appropriate as policies change to address changing needs.
   Responsibility: Planning Board
   Time Frame: Ongoing

4. Local ordinances should continue to be consistent with:
   a. Policy objectives of the Sensible Transportation Policy Act (23 MRSA §73);
   b. State access management regulations pursuant to 23 MRSA §704; and
   c. State traffic permitting regulations for large developments pursuant to 23 MRSA §704-A
   Responsibility: Planning Board
   Time Frame: Ongoing

5. Continue to require public and private roads to foster transportation-efficient growth patterns and provide for future street and transit connections by requiring such roads to conform to town road construction standards
   Responsibility: Planning Board
   Time Frame: Ongoing

6. Town Ordinances should allow the Planning Board the authority to request applicants to conduct a Traffic Impact Analysis so that road capacity can be assessed. Then require the developers of new or redeveloped projects which will exceed existing town roadway capacity to make roadway improvements necessary for planned traffic volumes.
   Responsibility: Planning Board/Town Council
   Time Frame: Ongoing

7. Work with the MaineDOT as appropriate to address deficiencies in the system or conflicts between local, regional, and state priorities for the local transportation system.
   Responsibility: Planning Board/Town Council
   Time Frame: Ongoing

8. Provide for adequate pedestrian facilities as well as parking amenities to facilitate use of downtown businesses.

a. Maintain existing sidewalks to ensure access to the elementary school, the downtown, and recreation areas.
b. Extend sidewalks, as fiscally feasible, in appropriate areas of the community and include funding in the transportation improvement plan and CIP.
c. Provide adequate public parking for downtown in order to encourage further business development. The town should seek appropriate state and federal funding to provide necessary parking, and the town should allow the appropriate sharing of parking spaces by businesses.

Responsibility: Planning Board/Town Council
Time Frame: Ongoing

9. Continue to work with the railroad to improve the safety of railroad crossings and railroad overpasses which are both narrow and have a low clearance limit.

Responsibility: Town Council
Time Frame: Ongoing

10. Require new commercial and residential development outside the downtown to provide adequate parking.

Responsibility: Planning Board
Time Frame: Ongoing

11. The Road Construction Standards Ordinance should continue to include privately owned roads.

Responsibility: Planning Board
Time Frame: Ongoing

PLANNING ISSUE: LAND USE/DEVELOPMENT PATTERNS

LAND USE OVERVIEW

The Town includes approximately 11.5 square miles (7,300 acres). The Town land size is small as compared with surrounding communities. Although the predominant type of land use in Town is forest or wooded land representing close to 80 percent of the total land area, Mechanic Falls has a considerably higher percentage of developed land than does surrounding towns. After forest use, residential development makes up the next largest use of land followed by agriculture/open space. And although a vigorous manufacturing sector exists, only about 1 percent of the Town's land is developed with commercial/ industrial uses.

With slow population growth expected, there will be a need for some additional residential development, but it should not consume a significant amount of land. Commercial and industrial development, especially industrial, has the potential to consume at least as much land as new residential development given that some businesses and industries need large parcels in the order of between 5 and 20 acres. However, it is difficult to predict what businesses would locate in town. The Route 26 corridor could attract considerable service oriented commercial development given the new casino in neighboring Oxford, and the rail line could be attractive to a variety of warehousing and manufacturing businesses. But it is difficult to predict whether such businesses will locate in Mechanic Falls or neighboring communities.

State goals relating to planning issue:

A number of the State Goals, that are enumerated in other Planning Issue sections of this plan, relate to land use and development patterns. The policies and strategies herein must support those state goals, including:

- To encourage orderly growth and development in appropriate areas of each community, while protecting the State's rural character, making efficient use of public services and preventing development sprawl;

- To plan for, finance and develop an efficient system of public facilities and services to accommodate anticipated growth and economic development;

- To promote an economic climate that increases job opportunities and overall economic wellbeing; and

- To safeguard the State's agricultural and forest resources from development which threatens those resources.

Policy

a. To coordinate the land use adjacent municipal and regional land use planning efforts.

b. To support the locations, types, scales, and intensities of land uses the community desires and has set forth in this plan.

c. To make the financial commitment necessary to provide needed infrastructure in growth areas.

d. To establish efficient permitting procedures, especially in growth areas.

e. To protect critical rural and critical shoreline resources from the impacts of development.

Strategy

1. The Future Land Use Plan, contained in Section III of this plan will be implemented by a joint effort of the Planning Board, Town Manager and staff, and the Town Council.

2. Enact or amend local ordinances in accordance with the Future Land Use Plan and the other policies and strategies contained herein.

   Responsibility: as noted in #1 above
   Time Frame: Feb 2014

3. The ordinances shall
   - Clearly define the desired scale, intensity, and location of future development;
   - maintain fair and efficient permitting procedures,
   - Clearly define protective measures for critical natural resources and, where applicable, important natural resources.
   - Clearly define protective measures for any proposed critical rural areas and/or critical shoreland areas.

4. The Planning Board shall explore streamlining permitting procedures in growth areas.

   Responsibility: Planning Board
   Time Frame: Dec 2013

5. Ensure that the Capital Investment Plan includes anticipated municipal capital investments needed to support proposed land uses.

   Responsibility: Town Manager and Town Council
   Time Frame: Ongoing

6. Discuss with neighboring communities coordination of land use districts and regulatory and non-regulatory strategies.

   Responsibility: Town Manager, Code Enforcement Officer and Town Council
   Time Frame: Ongoing

7. Provide the code enforcement officer with the tools, training, and support necessary to enforce land use regulations, and ensure that the Code Enforcement Officer is certified in accordance with 30-A MRSA §4451.

   Responsibility: Town Manager and Council

Time Frame: Ongoing

8. Track new development in the community by type and location.
   Responsibility: Code Enforcement Officer, Assessor
   Time Frame: Ongoing

9. Direct new municipal growth-related capital investments into designated growth areas identified in the Future Land Use Plan through tools including Capital Investments, Zoning, Streamlined Permitting, and Financial Incentives.
   Responsibility: Town Council, Planning Board
   Time Frame: Ongoing

10. Periodically (at least every five years) evaluate implementation of the plan.
    Responsibility: Town Council
    Time Frame: Ongoing

11. Use the following policy guidance for each of the uses noted below while implementing the above strategies.

Manufacturing/Industrial Development Policies

a. to locate manufacturing type land uses in those areas where it will not conflict with adjacent, less intense land uses.

b. to ensure that new industry is complementary and not detrimental to Mechanic Falls' character and environment.

c. To encourage the reuse and redevelopment of existing structures.

Commercial Development Policies

a. To allow for appropriate commercial development within the Downtown/Village area, Five Corner Area and Lewiston Street.

b. To consider the compatibility of commercial development design including advertising features during the development review process.

c. To allow for home occupations, cottage industries and micro-businesses in appropriate areas of the community.

d. To consider the suitability of the highway/road system in approving the development of new commercial development.

Residential Policies

a. To identify the locations for residential development where municipal services including roads are available or can be efficiently provided.

b. To encourage that intensive residential or cluster development utilize shared driveway access points.

c. To encourage the utilization of innovative residential development techniques that conserve land, significant natural areas and reduce construction costs.

d. To encourage the development of a variety of housing and tenure types to meet changing needs of housing consumers.

e. To assure that new residential development minimizes impacts upon the natural environment.

f. To identify locations for mobile home park development.

g. To maintain the values of residential areas.

PLANNING ISSUE: AGRICULTURAL AND FOREST RESOURCES AND OPEN SPACE

State goal relating to planning issue

1. To safeguard the State's agricultural and forest resources from development which threatens those resources.

Policies

a. To encourage appropriate use of lands identified as prime farmland or capable of supporting commercial forestry so that they will be available for these uses for future generations.

b. To promote the use of best management practices for timber harvesting and agricultural production.

c. To support farming and forestry and encourage their economic viability.

d. To encourage appropriate Open Space and Green Space when land is developed for residential or economic development, especially when located outside of the downtown area.

Strategies

1. Consult with the Maine Forest Service district forester when developing any land use regulations pertaining to forest management practices.
   Responsibility: Planning Board
   Time Frame: As needed

2. Consult with Soil and Water Conservation District staff when developing any land use regulations pertaining to agricultural management practices.
   Responsibility: Planning Board
   Time Frame: As needed

3. Amend land use ordinances to encourage commercial or subdivision developments in Rural areas to maintain areas with prime farm soils as open space to the greatest extent practicable, including the use of Open Space development layouts.
   Responsibility: Planning Board
   Time Frame: 2013

4. Limit non-residential development in *critical rural areas* to natural resource-based businesses and services, nature tourism/outdoor recreation businesses and public facilities, farmers' markets, and home occupations.
   Responsibility: Planning Board
   Time Frame: 2013

5. Encourage owners of productive farm and forest land to enroll in the current use taxation programs.

Responsibility:	Planning Board, Council, Assessor, CEO
Time Frame:	On-Going

6. Amend ordinances as needed to permit activities that support productive agriculture and forestry operations, such as roadside stands, greenhouses, and pick-your-own operations when located on active farms or forest lands. Permit farmers' markets in most zones, as appropriate.

Responsibility:	Planning Board
Time Frame:	2013

7. Work with the Androscoggin Valley Soil and Water Conservation District and Androscoggin Valley Council of Governments, as appropriate, to encourage local and regional agriculture and commercial forestry operations and include such in regional plans.

Responsibility:	Planning Board and Town Manager
Time Frame:	On-Going

8. The Town will continue to review the Bureau of Forestry the "Notification Prior to Harvest" as required by Title 12, MRSA Section 8883.1. The Town should maintain a file of such harvesting operations.

Responsibility:	CEO
Time Frame:	Ongoing

PLANNING ISSUE: NATURAL RESOURCES AND CRITICAL NATURAL RESOURCES

NATURAL RESOURCES OVERVIEW

Surface waters in Town include the Little Androscoggin River in addition to numerous brooks and streams. The Town does not include any lakes or ponds and only includes the portion of one pond (Hogan Pond located in Oxford) watershed (drainage area) within its boundaries. There are a number of fresh water wetlands which have been rated in terms of significance as wildlife habitat.

Three aquifers are located along Town boundaries. The aquifer located near the Mechanic Falls/Poland Town Line is a high yield aquifer which serves as a supply source for the Town water supply and for Poland Spring Bottling (just over the town line in Poland), a major commercial bottler of water. Development around this aquifer has been limited. Currently, the Town protects the aquifer through an aquifer protection district established in the Town Zoning Ordinance. The Shoreland Zoning, last amended in 2009, may need to be amended in the future based on changes to State law.

State goal relating to planning issue

1. To protect the State's other critical natural resources including, without limitation, wetlands, wildlife and fisheries habitat, sand dunes, shorelands, scenic vistas and unique natural areas.

Policies

a. to conserve critical natural resources in the community

b. to coordinate with neighboring communities and regional and state resource agencies to protect shared critical natural resources.

c. to ensure that development and other land use activities occur upon soils which are suited for such uses

d. to protect the integrity of significant wetlands so that their overall benefits and values are maintained.

e. to maintain its wildlife resources through habitat preservation and/or enhancement.

f. to maintain wildlife travel corridors along streams, rivers and wetlands.

Implementation Strategies

1. Ensure that local shoreland zone standards meet current state guidelines.
   Responsibility: Planning Board
   Time Frame: 2012 and as needed

2. Designate critical natural resources as Critical Resource Areas in the Future Land Use Plan.
   Responsibility: Planning Board
   Time Frame: as part of plan

3. Ensure that the town's land use ordinances require subdivision or non-residential property developers to look for and identify critical natural resources that may be on site and to take appropriate measures to protect those resources, including but not limited to, modification of the proposed site design, construction timing, and/or extent of excavation.
   Responsibility: Planning Board
   Time Frame: 2013

4. Through local land use ordinances, require the planning board (or other designated review authority) to incorporate maps and information provided by the Maine Beginning with Habitat program into their review process.
   Responsibility: Planning Board
   Time Frame: 2013 and as needed

5. Adopt natural resource protection practices and standards for construction and maintenance of public roads and properties and require their implementation by the community's officials, employees, and contractors. The road foreman and crew should be provided training in soil erosion and storm water control practices.
   Responsibility: Planning Board
   Time Frame: on-going

6. Initiate and/or participate in interlocal and/or regional planning, management, and/or regulatory efforts around shared critical natural resources.
   Responsibility: Planning Board
   Time Frame: on-going

7. Pursue public/private partnerships to protect critical natural resources such as through purchase of land or easements from willing sellers.
   Responsibility: Planning Board
   Time Frame: on-going

8. Distribute or make available information to those living in or near critical natural resources about applicable local, state, or federal regulations.
   Responsibility: Code Enforcement Officer
   Time Frame: on-going

9. Land use ordinances should require the identification of potential soil contaminants and ensure conditions upon such developments to safeguard against soil contamination.

Responsibility:	Planning Board
Time Frame:	Ongoing

10. Town Ordinances should require submittal of appropriate soils and significant/critical habitat information, including IFW Beginning With Habitat mapping information, as part of development application procedures.

Responsibility:	Planning Board
Time Frame:	Ongoing

11. The Planning Board and Code Enforcement Officer, as elements of their development reviews, shall insure that permits required by the Natural Resource Protection Act (Title 38, MRSA Sec. 480-A-S) and Section 404 of the Federal Water Pollution Control Act (FWPC) 33 USC Sec. 1344), are obtained prior to construction.

Responsibility:	Planning Board/CEO
Time Frame:	Ongoing

12. When habitat mapping is in question, the Planning Board should request review by the regional office of the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife.

Responsibility:	Planning Board
Time Frame:	on-going

13. The Town's ordinances should continue to include provisions which encourage the preservation of significant wildlife habitat such as cluster development.

Responsibility:	Planning Board
Time Frame:	done/on-going

PLANNING ISSUE: WATER RESOURCES

State goal relating to planning issue

1. To protect the quality and manage the quantity of the State's water resources including lakes, aquifers, great ponds, estuaries, rivers and coastal areas.

Water Resource Policies

a. To protect current and potential drinking water sources.

b. To protect significant surface water resources from pollution and improve water quality where needed.

c. To protect water resources in growth areas while promoting more intensive development in those areas.

d. To minimize pollution discharges through proper maintenance and upgrade, as needed, of existing public sewer systems and wastewater treatment facilities.

e. To cooperate with neighboring communities and regional/local advocacy groups to protect water resources.

f. To regulate development adjacent to surface waters in such a manner as to protect water quality, maintain wildlife travel corridors, aesthetics and other natural resources.

g. Regional Issue - To protect Hogan Pond in accordance with State guidelines on phosphorus control and storm water runoff from development.

h. To protect the water quality of Bog Brook.

i. To protect the quality and quantity of ground water resources for current and future use.

j. To ensure that activities over significant aquifers will be directed so that the cumulative effect of those activities do not bring water quality below State drinking water standards.

k. To protect the recharge area for the municipal well from those activities which could degrade its quality.

l. To discourage construction and development in floodplain areas that increase the risk of property loss and/or increase the level of flooding.

Implementation Strategies

1. Amend local land use ordinances as applicable to incorporate storm water runoff performance standards consistent with:
    a. the Maine Stormwater Management Law and Maine Stormwater regulations (Title 38 MRSA §420-D and 06-096 CMR 500 and 502).
    b. Maine Department of Environmental Protection's allocations for allowable levels of phosphorus in lake/pond watersheds.
    c. Maine Pollution Discharge Elimination System Stormwater Program

    Responsibility: Planning Board
    Time Frame: 2013

2. Keep the town's floodplain management ordinance updated to be consistent with state and federal standards.

    Responsibility: Planning Board
    Time Frame: 2013

3. Consider amending local land use ordinances, as applicable, to incorporate low impact development standards.

    Responsibility: Planning Board
    Time Frame: 2013

4. Update public wellhead and aquifer recharge area protection provisions in local land use ordinances, as necessary.

    Responsibility: Planning Board
    Time Frame: 2013

5. Make water quality "best management practices" information available to farmers and loggers.

    Responsibility: Code Enforcement Officer
    Time Frame: on-going

6. Adopt water quality protection practices and standards for construction and maintenance of public roads and properties and require their implementation by the community's officials, employees, and contractors. Specifically, provide the road foreman and crew training in soil erosion and storm water control practices

    Responsibility: Council
    Time Frame: 2012 and thereafter

7. Participate in local and regional efforts to monitor, protect and, where warranted, improve water quality.

    Responsibility: Council
    Time Frame: 2013

8. Provide educational materials at appropriate locations regarding aquatic invasive species.

    Responsibility: CEO and Council
    Time Frame: 2013

9. The Planning Board and Code Enforcement Officer shall administer and enforce the Shoreland Zoning Ordinance as adopted.

Responsibility:	Planning Board/CEO
Time Frame:	Ongoing

10. Ensure that land use ordinances provide the appropriate lake protection level for Hogan Pond in accordance with State DEP guidelines.

Responsibility:	Planning Board
Time Frame:	2013

11. The Shoreland Zoning Ordinance should be amended to include a Resource Protection Zone along portions of Bog Brook that are not suitable for development.

Responsibility:	Planning Board
Time Frame:	2013

12. The Planning Board should provide the Water Department with the opportunity to review development proposals for land in the Wellhead Protection area.

Responsibility:	Planning Board/Water Dept.
Time Frame:	2013

13. The Town's Ordinances should continue to protect the quality and quantity of ground water in the municipal well recharge area.

Responsibility:	Planning Board/Water Dept.
Time Frame:	on-going

14. The Planning Board and Code Enforcement Officer should strictly administer and enforce the Town's Floodplain Management Ordinance.

Responsibility:	Planning Board/CEO
Time Frame:	Ongoing

PLANNING ISSUE: HISTORIC AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESOURCES

HISTORIC AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESOURCES OVERVIEW

The Town includes two historic structures of national historic significance (George Seaverns House and The Elms). There are also a number of buildings and one site (Civil War Statue) which have some local historic significance. The majority of the structures and the Civil War Statue are within or near the Downtown Area.

State goal relating to planning issue

1. To preserve the State's historic and archaeological resources

Historic and Archaeological Resources Policies

a. Protect to the greatest extent practicable the significant historic and archaeological resources in the community.

b. To maintain and enhance the traditional characteristics of the Downtown/Village area, while providing for contemporary shopping modes.

Historic and Archaeological Implementation Strategies

1. The Site Review process (Zoning Ordinance) and Subdivision Ordinance shall require sites with identified potential of having historical and archeological resources to identify any such resources using existing available information including this comprehensive plan and to take appropriate measures to protect those resources, including but not limited to, modification of the proposed site design, construction timing, and/or extent of excavation.
   Responsibility: Planning Board
   Time Frame: 2013

2. Zoning and subdivision ordinances shall require the Planning Board to incorporate maps and information provided by the Maine Historic Preservation Commission into their review process.
   Responsibility: Planning Board
   Time Frame: 2013

3. Apply for such funding as may be available for Downtown and Village improvements and to assist with preservation of historic and archaeological resources.
   Responsibility: Selectmen, Town Manager
   Time Frame: on-going

4. Encourage the Mechanic Falls Development Commission to coordinate with the Mechanic Falls Historical Society and adopt guidelines for the conservation of historic structures and archaeological resources for loan proposals under consideration.

Responsibility:	Selectmen, Town Manager, Development Commission, and Historical Society
Time Frame:	On-going

5. Encourage the Mechanic Falls Historical Society to further assess the historic and archaeological resources of the community and coordinate such work with the county historical society and the Maine Historic Preservation Commission as a supplement to work already completed by the Androscoggin County Historical Society and the state commission.

Responsibility:	Town Manager and Council
Time Frame:	2014

PLANNING ISSUE: RECREATION

RECREATION OVERVIEW

The recreation facilities located near the Town Office in the downtown have developed into a quality complex that has a high use. Five ball fields, two added since the previous plan, attract regional and statewide tournaments. A skate park is also popular among young residents, and an outdoor ice rink is provided each winter, weather permitting. The Town hires summer staff to provide recreational programs and an active group of volunteers supplements the recreational offerings. Town residents use surrounding communities' lakes for swimming, boating, and fishing because the Town does not include any lakes or ponds.

The recreational opportunities in Town are addressing a majority of the residents' needs. There is some interest in developing additional river access and in developing additional multi-use trails.

State goal relating to planning issue

1. To promote and protect the availability of outdoor recreation opportunities for all Maine citizens, including access to surface waters.

Policies

a. To plan for, develop, upgrade and/or maintain recreational facilities to meet current and future needs or town residents.

b. To conserve open space for recreational use as appropriate and work with private landowners to encourage them to continue to keep their land accessible to the public for a variety of public uses compatible with their needs and the constraints of the land.

c. To provide access to the Little Androscoggin River and evaluate the potential of providing additional access sites.

d. To support the efforts of interested parties to maintain and potentially expand a multi-use trail system within the Town.

e. To evaluate the potential for additional multiple use trails and work with adjacent towns to develop an interconnected trail system.

Strategies

1. Include any capital needs identified for recreation facilities in the Capital Investment Plan.
   Responsibility: Council/ Town Manager

Time Frame: 2013

2. Work with public and private partners to extend and maintain a network of trails for motorized and non-motorized uses. Connect with regional trail systems where possible.
   Responsibility: Council/ Rec. Committee
   Time Frame: 2013

3. Work with an existing local land trust or other conservation organization to pursue opportunities to protect important open space or recreational land.
   Responsibility: Council/ Town Manager
   Time Frame: 2013

4. Provide education regarding the benefits and protections for landowners allowing public recreational access on their property.
   Responsibility: Rec. Committee
   Time Frame: 2013

5. The Town's Recreation Committee should continue to assess recreational needs and develop a brief plan outlining those needs. Needs should address recreation opportunities for all age groups.
   Responsibility: Town Manager/Rec. Committee
   Time Frame: 2013

REGIONAL COORDINATION PROGRAM

The regional coordination program identifies those resources, programs, and infrastructure that are shared with adjacent and/or nearby communities (Minot, Oxford and Poland) or that may lead to improved efficiency or service by sharing.

Regional Issues

- A portion of the Hogan Pond watershed is located in Mechanic Falls. It is to the benefit of both Oxford and Mechanic Falls to protect Hogan Pond through good watershed management practices,

- The Little Androscoggin River flows from Greenwood at its source through Woodstock, West Paris, Paris, Norway, Oxford, Minot, Poland and Auburn. The corridor could prove to be an important recreational resource for these communities.

- Land use and development can significantly impact adjacent communities. It can have both beneficial impacts and deleterious impacts. Economic development near a town's border may improve opportunities for development in an adjacent town. However, certain types of development may create traffic, noise or other annoyances for nearby residential neighborhoods. Likewise, residential development near an adjacent town could discourage commercial and industrial development.

- Sharing of infrastructure and business services could reduce the costs and provide additional amenities for economic development,

- Aquifer (ground water) protection in the area of Winter Brook is important to the provision of water system services as well as to the Poland Spring Bottling Company located in Poland, but providing an important source of jobs and economic stability for the region.

Regional Coordination Policies

- Ensure that ordinances provide protection for Hogan Pond in accordance with DEP recommended guidelines.

- To recognize the Little Androscoggin River Corridor as a significant regional resource.

- To coordinate with adjacent communities in land use/ zoning designations along town boundaries.

- To coordinate economic development program with adjacent communities and with the region through AVCOG – the local economic development district.

- To coordinate and/ or work jointly on affordable housing programs through existing housing authorities and non-profit providers of affordable housing.

- Work with adjacent communities to ensure continued protection of the Winter Brook and Little Androscoggin River Aquifers.

Implementation Strategies

1. Include phosphorus control regulations to protect the water quality of Hogan Pond in Zoning and subdivision ordinances.

   Responsibility: Planning Board
   Time Frame: 2013

2. Prior to any public hearing on a land use/zoning change that abuts or is in proximity to the Town's border, Mechanic Falls should provide a copy of the proposed amendments to the adjacent community and request comments.

   Responsibility: Planning Board
   Time Frame: Ongoing

3. Continue discussions with adjacent towns concerning the potential for joint economic development efforts and participate in the AVCOG Economic Development Strategy process.

   Responsibility: Development Commission
   Time Frame: on-going

4. Continue to encourage adjacent towns (Oxford and Poland) to keep their aquifer protection provisions of ordinances current and to enforce the provisions.

   Responsibility: Manager/Planning Board
   Time Frame: on-going

FUTURE LAND USE PLAN

Introduction

Probably the most difficult undertaking in the preparation of a community comprehensive plan is the development of a future land use plan and future land use map. The Future Land Use Plan should serve as the community's development guide to identify the future development pattern in the community.

The development guide or Future Land Use Plan for the Town of Mechanic Falls is based upon the following principles.

1. The type and density of development should be compatible with existing development patterns and the natural constraints of the land. Existing development patterns in Mechanic Falls and in neighboring communities, availability of Town services, surface and ground water quality, soils, and environmentally sensitive areas were key factors in identifying the future land use pattern.

2. Economic development should be encouraged in appropriate areas through designating areas of sufficient size to accommodate modern development that takes advantage of rail and highway access and that are or can be efficiently provided with municipal services that meet the need of the development and the community. Economic development may consist of manufacturing, warehousing, trade or services. It is essential that development provide employment opportunities and add to the tax base of the community.

3. Mixed uses in various parts of Mechanic Falls should be encouraged. It has served the town well over the years with industry, commercial development and housing co-existing in the downtown area since the village of Mechanic Falls was first developed along the falls on the Little Androscoggin River. Mixed uses makes the best use of the limited land area in Mechanic Falls and can offer employment opportunities to the nearby communities of Poland and Minot that have limited services and land area designated for businesses.

4. Where mixed uses are encouraged, adequate controls through site plan, conditional use and other mechanisms should provide for buffering and other conditions to minimize potential conflicts.

5. The desire to maintain the Town's character while accommodating residential and economic growth.

The Mechanic Falls Future Land Use Plan, includes land use classifications that

1. provide for the compatibility of land uses with those that currently exist,

2. provide for residential, commercial, and industrial growth, and

3. provide for protection of the Town's most important natural resources.

Following are descriptions of the land use categories included in the Mechanic Falls Future Land Use Plan and identified on the Future Land Use Map. In constructing ordinances, it may be appropriate to vary lot sizes somewhat from those suggested and to further divide some land use districts in order to protect existing uses or to promote the most desirable uses for a given area such as the clustering of heavier industries or consumer services.

LAND USE CATEGORIES

One principle of development is that certain areas of a town should be protected from adverse development. These areas include those areas that make a significant contribution to the maintenance of the natural environment, that are critical to the ecology of the region or larger area, and/or that are important to the well-being of residents and the development and residents of nearby communities. These areas are identified as Resource Protection Areas and Special Protection Areas. Protection does not necessarily mean that no development or use of the land can occur, but it does mean that the resources of that area deserve special attention. These two areas are further explained below.

1. Resource Protection Areas

The Resource Protection areas consist of a limited area of the community. These areas are located along water bodies including rivers and streams and 10 acre open water wetlands, which must be zoned in accordance with the State Shoreland Zoning guidelines. They include:

a. critical and undeveloped floodplains,
b. areas of steep slopes, and
c. areas surrounding wetlands rated as having a high or moderate value as wildlife habitat.

They may also include other important or critical areas identified locally.

The Resource Protection area reaches inland 250 feet from rivers and wetlands and 75 feet from streams. It may reach inland the width of the floodplain where the floodplain width exceeds 250 feet. Resource Protection areas have limited potential for development due to their unique characteristics.

2. Special Protection Areas

Special Protection areas allow certain types of development but require special precautions in order to protect the environment, residents, or nearby neighborhoods or communities. Mapped Special Protection areas include

a. the 100 year floodplain,

b. riparian (shoreland) areas within 250 feet from rivers and wetlands and 75 feet from streams that are not in the Resource Protection area,
c. Critical Wildlife Habitat,
d. Wetland and Lake Watersheds and
e. Groundwater and Public Drinking Water Supplies (wellheads).

Each Special Protection area has its own unique characteristics and therefore its own constraints to development. Ordinances should be formulated to regulate development to the extent necessary to protect the unique resource in accordance with the policies contained in the Comprehensive Plan. Regulations should be specific to the resource.

A brief description of the Special Protection areas that are designated on zoning or land use ordinances include.

a. Floodplains. 100-year floodplain

b. Riparian, also called Shoreland Areas. State Law requires that land within 250 feet from great ponds, lakes, rivers, and certain wetlands; and land within 75 feet from streams be regulated under shoreland zoning regulations. These regulations allow building but with additional safeguards to the water resources. Ordinances can be adopted locally with some minor variation from the State Guidelines. Ordinances establish density and use restrictions for the shoreland area.

c. Aquifers and Wellheads. Special precautions should be taken when development occurs on sand and gravel aquifers and especially in designated public wellhead areas. Specifically, **Wellhead Protection Areas,** designated by State guidelines around public water supplies or by hydrogeologic study around the town's public water supply, must be protected from potential for degradation and/or contamination. Certain types of development have the potential to cause serious contamination of groundwaters. These include but are not limited to residential development on small lots, storage of chemicals or petroleum products, especially underground storage, and a variety of industrial operations. Mechanic Falls' Zoning Ordinance currently contains a Wellhead Protection Overlay district that contains performance standards to protect the ground water resources and prohibit development of uses which could adversely affect the ground water resource. This district should continue and be reviewed at regular intervals to ensure its adequacy.

Listed below are areas that are generally considered to be "special protection areas," but that are not specifically placed in a land use district. Rather they are depicted on the map series contained in this plan; these maps should be available to the Planning Board during development reviews. Local ordinances should address these areas in the standards for development. Development is allowed, but special consideration should be given to the type, intensity and design of development in these areas. Other natural features which become known through the development review process may also warrant protection through development standards.

d. Additional wetlands not regulated under Shoreland Zoning Regulations. The Fragile Areas Map prepared by AVCOG for Mechanic Falls identifies some additional wetlands.

d. Watershed Area. There is only one lake watershed within the Town of Mechanic Falls: Hogan Pond, located in Oxford. Development occurring in the watershed (drainage area) of the pond should be regulated to minimize surface water quality degradation. Refer to Fragile Area Map.

e. Critical Wildlife Habitat Areas including Deer wintering yards and significant waterfowl and wading bird habitat (not regulated under shoreland zoning). These areas should be maintained through development standards that minimize detrimental alterations and impacts to them. Refer to a map entitled "Wildlife Habitats" which contains data prepared by the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife. The Planning Board may also check with IFW field personnel to confirm the mapping as some is relatively old.

f. Steep Slopes. Special precautions should be considered where development occurs on areas with sustained steep slopes of greater than 20%. Refer to the Fragile Area Map.

g. Aquifers and Wellheads. Special precautions should be taken when development occurs on sand and gravel aquifers and especially in designated public wellhead areas. Specifically, **Wellhead Protection Areas,** designated by State guidelines around public water supplies or by hydrogeologic study around the town's public water supply, must be protected from potential for degradation and/or contamination. Certain types of development have the potential to cause serious contamination of groundwaters. These include but are not limited to residential development on small lots, storage of chemicals or petroleum products, especially underground storage, and a variety of industrial operations. Mechanic Falls' Zoning Ordinance currently contains a Wellhead Protection Overlay district that contains performance standards to protect the ground water resources and prohibit development of uses which could adversely affect the ground water resource. This district should continue and be reviewed at regular intervals to ensure its adequacy.

3. Residential

Much of the residential development which has historically occurred in Mechanic Falls has been in or adjacent to the traditional "downtown." Some residential development has spread to more rural areas, and there is some scattered single family development throughout the community.

Some principles should guide residential development in all areas, including the mixed use, commercial, and industrial areas; all residential development should be required to have the minimum lot area and minimum frontage for each dwelling unit which is located on the lot. Also, all back lots should have a 50 foot right of way to a public road, and in all but the Rural

area, back lots should have 3 acres. In the Rural area, back lots should be 5 acres in size. In all areas, no more than one single family home should be allowed to be located on a single lot.

General Residential (areas adjacent to downtown): This area of the community is generally located around the downtown area. Much of it has been traditionally developed as higher density residential use. It includes the residential areas that started as the town grew up around the water power available in the center of the town or continued after World War II as suburban style development. The majority of this area is served by public water and sewer. Densities can be in the medium range with minimum size lots of 10,000 to 20,000 square feet on public sewer and water and 40,000 square feet without sewer. Currently the minimum is 20,000 square feet but this should be reviewed to determine if smaller lot sizes on public water and sewer may be feasible and lead to an improved growth pattern as well as potential to provide more economic vitality to the downtown. In addition to residential uses, small commercial and services compatible with residential areas, and municipal uses are appropriate. Road frontage, currently 200' should be reviewed as noted for lot size. Frontage of 100 feet may be appropriate if lot sizes were reduced. When located on public water and sewer, lot frontages should be adequate to provide separation of dwellings for privacy, safety, and fire protection but should not discourage the extension of water and sewer by making their installation cost prohibitive.

Rural: This area encompasses the largest area of the community. It includes the majority of the community's open space and useable farm and forest resources. In recent years considerable single-family residential development has occurred in this area. To provide for the preservation of the town's character, residential densities should not exceed one dwelling unit per 80,000 square feet and should be compatible with rural uses including agriculture and commercial forestry. However, incentives (density bonuses of up to 20 percent) for cluster type development will be allowed, provided that the existing agricultural and forest land set aside as open space is protected and of such a size to make commercial use of the land for agriculture or forestry viable. In order to protect the natural resources and the rural nature of the areas, performance standards for development should address the following: (1) agriculture/ open space, (2) forest land, (3) critical habitat, (4) wetlands, and (5) surface water resources.

Natural resource based industry should also be allowed in this area with Planning Board review to insure that residential values are not degraded. Industries such as lumber yards, farm product sale and processing (except abattoirs), gravel and mineral extraction, and resource based recreation should be allowed.

Mobile Home Parks: Given the town's significant existing stock of mobile homes and the fact that there are vacancies within existing mobile home parks, a Mobile Home Park overlay district is created to encompass the existing parks; these include the Willow Street Trailer Park, Callahan Circle Trailer Park, Evergreen Drive park, and Pleasant View Mobile Home Park. The Mobile Home Park Overlay Districts at Willow St., Callahan Circle and Evergreen Drive should be allowed to expand in land area by no more than 25 percent of the development land area as of January 1, 1990. The Pleasant View Mobile Home Park Overlay District should not be expanded beyond a total of 136 sites as approved.

4. Business/Mixed Use

There are a number of areas in Mechanic Falls which are amenable to commercial, light industrial and institutional development. Several of these areas can also accommodate residential development in the mix. Areas that can accommodate business development include portions of the downtown area, the areas adjacent to the downtown along Lewiston St. and Pleasant St., and an area at the intersection of Routes 26 and 11. These locations have been designated for the following reasons:

- to allow locational options for various types of businesses,
- the availability of public sewer and water or the ability to reasonably extend water and sewer in the future,
- the availability of transportation systems including railroad in some areas and
- to encourage growth in and adjacent to the existing business center.

While these are all suitable areas for business and mixed uses, the type and intensity of the development will vary. The ordinances should consider that and regulate the uses accordingly. Ordinance provisions to minimize conflicts between commercial development and traffic movement are necessary. The potential to cluster both residential and commercial development in these areas should be considered in order to provide for more constructive open/green spaces. Such spaces provide some environmental benefits, and small "parks" created by the green space can provide recreational opportunities for residents and workers. Places to eat lunch, take walks, run dogs, and such can be beneficial even in commercial areas. While possibly not currently necessary, as areas get built out over a long period of time, these will benefit residents and workers.

Downtown Business/Mixed Use: This area encompasses the Downtown Area and surrounding area where the mixture of land use currently includes residential, commercial and limited industrial development along with institutional uses. Much of the residential development is older structures containing more than one dwelling unit. Since a majority of this area is currently served by water and sewer service, it is intended that this area of Town will continue to be more intensely developed as compared to other areas. Similar development to existing uses and redevelopment should be allowed to occur with minimal regulatory hurdles but adequate safeguards must be established to minimize the degradation of neighborhoods. Increased setbacks or buffers should be provided for uses which may create minor conflicts with neighboring uses.

Minimum lot sizes should be consistent with existing regulations which allow one structure per 10,000 square feet where public water and sewer is available and 20,000 square feet where public water and sewer service is <u>not</u> available. Multiple uses should be allowed in this area. Back lot requirements should not be imposed on commercial development in these areas. It may be appropriate to vary density in the area adjacent to the former Marcal Paper Mill in the downtown. This can be done through creation of a special district within this downtown area or as conditional use criteria.

Gateway Areas

Lewiston Street Gateway Area: Most of this area adjacent to the downtown has similar characteristics to the Downtown. Densities are lower but there is a mixture of commercial, industrial, warehousing, institutional, and residential uses. Most of the area is served by water.

In addition to the area along Lewiston Street, this area also includes a relatively large tract of land southwesterly of the railroad extending to Woodland Road. This additional area is designated for larger business uses which may need access to the railroad. Minimum lot standards should be in the 20,000 square foot range with sewer and the 40,000 square foot range without sewer. For multiple commercial and institutional uses on the same lot, each additional use after the first should have an additional 10,000 square feet. It may be appropriate to limit a few uses in certain areas of this larger designation in order to protect existing residential development from incompatible uses. However, in general, the vast majority of uses can be permitted in all areas.

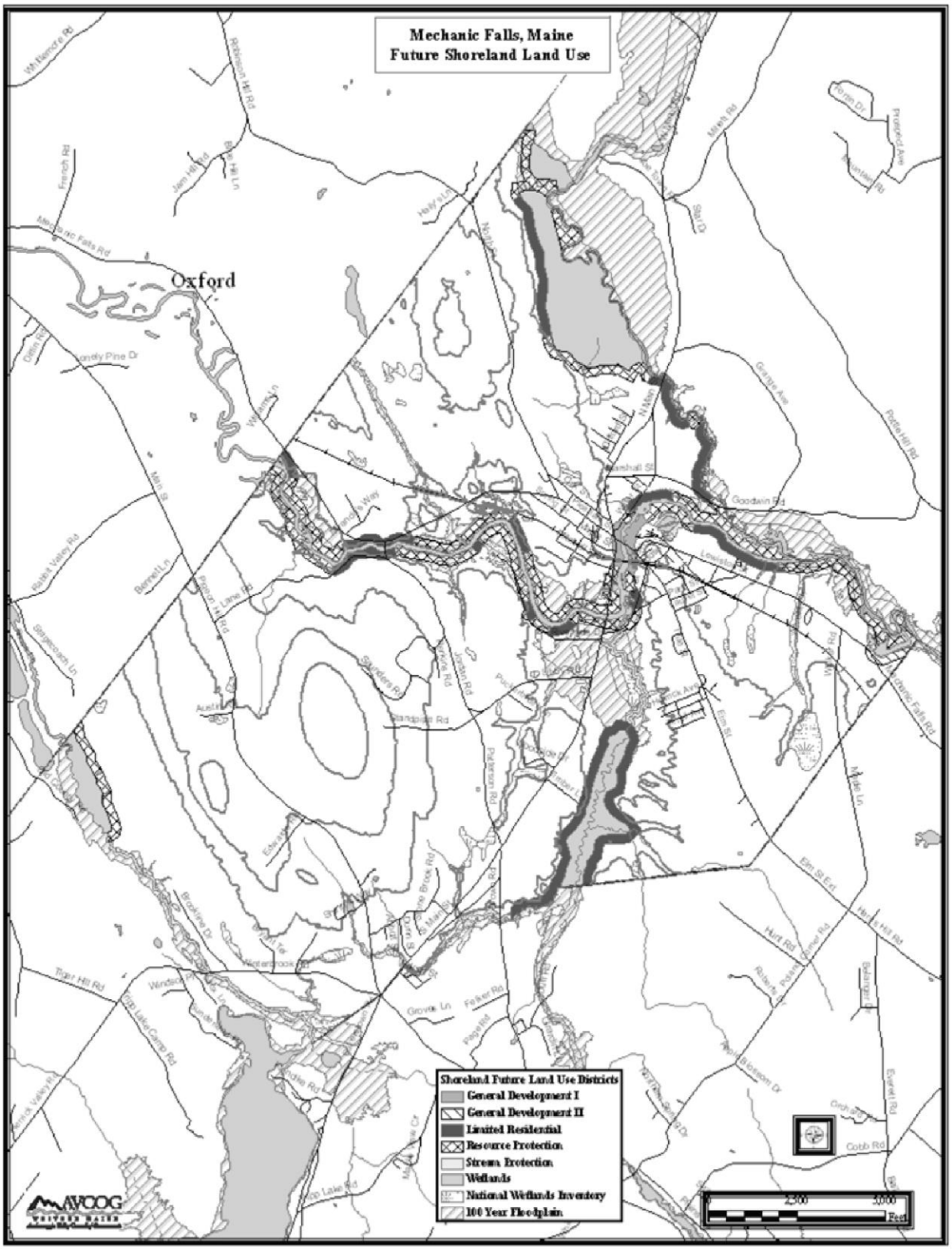
Pleasant Street Gateway Area: This area is located to the west of the Downtown along Route 121 and extends northeasterly from Route 121 past the railroad. It has been designated commercial because of the number of businesses already located there. It is served by Route 121, which has high traffic counts and the potential to be served by rail. Possible future extensions of water and sewer make the area suitable for additional development. In addition, its proximity to "downtown" makes this area attractive from the service delivery perspective. Uses would be similar to the Lewiston Street Gateway Mixed Use Area, including light industry and larger industrial and warehousing uses that may be interested in rail service. Review criteria must provide for control of the uses so that nuisance conditions are not created for neighboring properties, whether developed or not. Densities should be in the 40,000 square foot range with additional uses on a lot requiring some additional square footage.

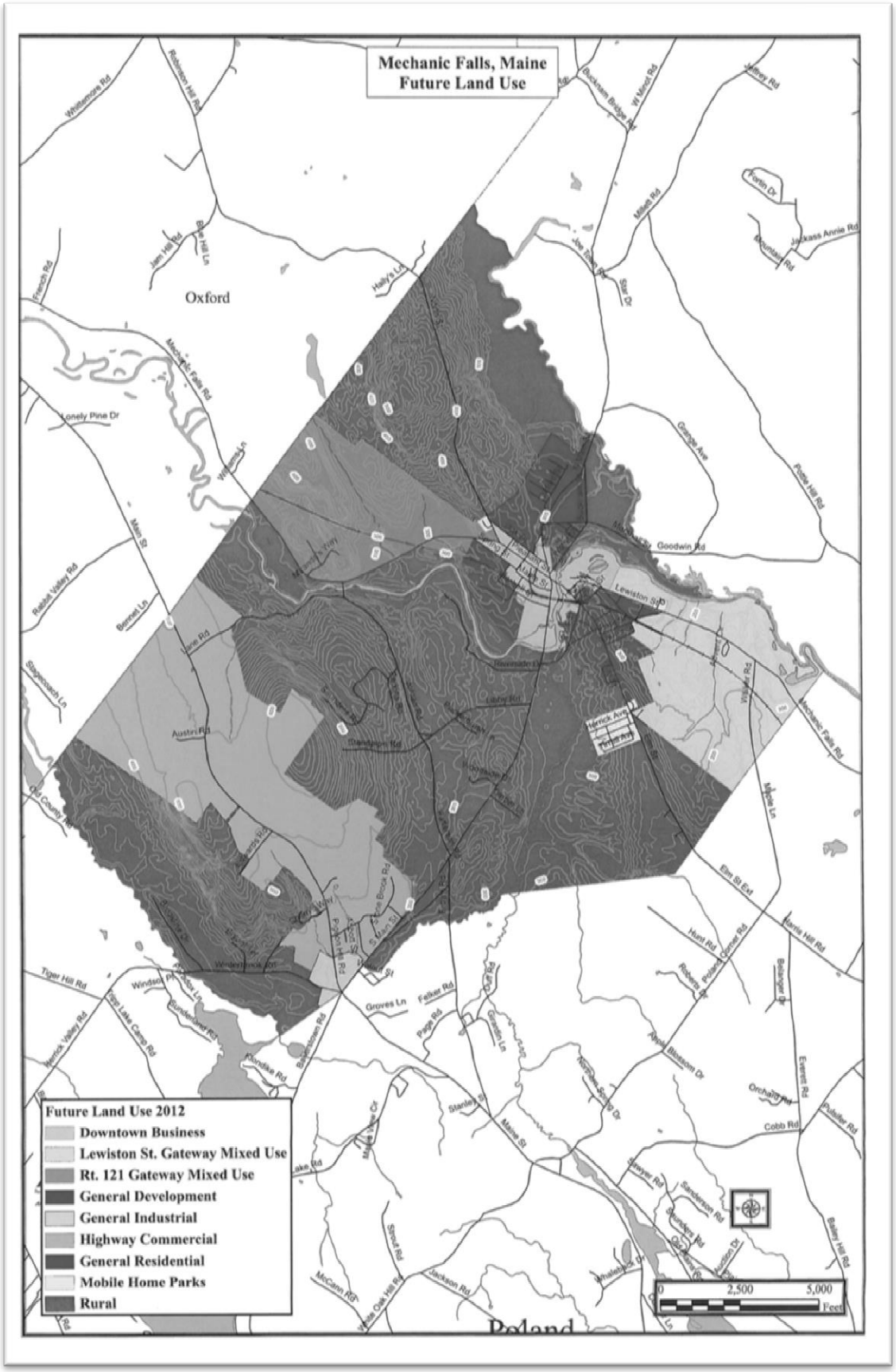
Highway Commercial: This area encompasses the area near the intersection of Routes 26 and 11 and runs along Route 26 to the Oxford town line. It has been designated to provide for commercial development adjacent to Route 26 along the southern entrance to the Oxford Casino. Development standards should minimize "strip" development and assure safe traffic movement. Standards such as Access Management guidelines should be considered for adoption by the Town. An experiential agricultural business is located in this area along with some small commercial uses and single family homes. There is also some industrial development located in an adjacent area near the intersection of Route 26 and Route 11 (Five Corners). The mixture of uses should continue into the future. Lot standards should be in the 40,000 square foot range; multiple commercial uses should have an additional 20,000 square feet for each use after the first use. Incentives, such as reduced frontages and setbacks should be offered to encourage the clustering of commercial uses and the maintenance of green space. Lot sizes for residential uses should be similar to those required in the Rural land use district, 80,000 square feet.

5. Industrial

Although light industrial uses, warehousing and similar uses are allowed in many of the mixed use areas, an area dedicated primarily to industrial use is needed.

General Industrial: The area, which includes an industrial park, is located at the intersection of Routes 26 and 11. Commercial and residential uses may be allowed but industry should be encouraged. Minimum lot standards should be in the 40,000 square foot range with multiple commercial and industrial uses having an additional 20,000 square feet for each use after the first.


Mechanic Falls, Maine
Future Shoreland Land Use
Oxford
Shoreland Future Land Use Districts
General Development I
General Development II
Limited Residential
Resource Protection
Stream Protection
Wetlands
National Wetlands Inventory
100 Year Floodplain
0
2,500
5,000
Feet
AVCOG


Mechanic Falls, Maine
Future Land Use
Oxford
Poland
Future Land Use 2012
Downtown Business
Lewiston St. Gateway Mixed Use
Rt. 121 Gateway Mixed Use
General Development
General Industrial
Highway Commercial
General Residential
Mobile Home Parks
Rural
0
2,500
5,000
Feet

Implementation

The Future Land Use Plan and Map will be implemented through the development and adoption of a revised and updated town-wide zoning ordinance. The Future Land Use Plan will provide the basic direction to the drafters of the Zoning Ordinance. The Future Land Use Map also will serve as the basis for the development of a Zoning Map which will precisely define the different development districts. Unlike the Future Land Use Map, the Zoning Map will utilize property lines, setbacks from roads or other definable landmarks to define the different development districts. The final Zoning Map will perhaps be somewhat different from the Future Land Use Map to account for specific district locations; however, it cannot deviate substantially. Substantial deviation from the Future Land Use Map would result in a Zoning Map that is inconsistent with the Comprehensive Plan.

During the development of the Zoning Ordinance and Map, the public will be given ample opportunity, through public meetings and hearings, to provide input.

CAPITAL INVESTMENT PLAN

OVERVIEW OF FISCAL CAPACITY

This section of the comprehensive plan evaluates the Towns' fiscal capacity or its ability to meet current and future needs through public expenditures. Mechanic Falls' largest source of revenue is property taxes. The major reoccurring expenditures for the Town include school appropriations, road maintenance and repair, and administration costs. The Town has established a Capital Improvement Program to better plan for future capital facility needs. Generally, Town Capital facility needs are funded by setting aside money annually for several years to pay for what is needed.

Introduction

Roads, sewer, water, schools, highway and fire equipment, recreation areas and other public facilities are required to support the services provided by the Town of Mechanic Falls over the next ten years. Town development depends on maintaining, expanding and improving systems that support and/or stimulate development. Capital expenditures are needed to:

-promote appropriate development and accommodate Mechanic Falls' projected growth;
-address existing problems;
-improve the quality of life;
-promote the health, safety and welfare of residents; and
-fulfill the policies and strategies of the Plan.

Capital investments as used in the Capital Investment Plan refer to expenditures greater than $2,000, which do not recur annually, and have a useful life of greater than three years and result in fixed assets. They may include:

-new or expanded physical facilities;
-rehabilitation or replacement of existing facilities;
-major equipment which is expensive and has a relatively long period of usefulness;
-engineering or architectural studies and services; and
-the land for community facilities or other community benefits.

Capital investments or improvements usually require the expenditure of public funds: town, state, federal or some combination thereof. Funding limitations will likely make it impossible to pay for or implement all needed major public improvements at any one time or even over a multi-year period. The formal Capital Improvement Program called for within the Comprehensive Plan is a process whereby the needs identified will be formalized and specific priorities and implementation periods targeted. Mechanic Falls currently has a Capital Improvement Program. Excerpts from that program appear on the following pages. The program should then be updated on an annual basis to fulfill the needs of the residents and businesses in the Town.

CIP Plan Summary

Category	Activity	Year	Recurrence Interval	Cost – 2012 dollars
Municipal Complex			-	
	Town Office Building	2012		$12,000
	Town Office Air Conditioning	2013	-	0
	Town Office, Siding	2014		0
	Transfer Station	2012		$15,000
Police Vehicles				
	Cruiser	2012	3 years	$16,000
	Pickup	2014	4 years	0
Public Works Vehicles / Equipment				
	Loader	2012	10 years	$12,000
	Dump Truck	2015	10 years	$12,500
	Dump Truck	2017	10 years	$12,500
	Dump Truck	2020	10 years	$16,000
	Skid steer	2021	8-10 years	$4,200
	Pick up	2016	5 years	$6,000
Fire Department Vehicles				
	Rescue Truck	2016	15-20 years	$8,000
	Fire Truck E-2	2025	25 years	$14,000
	Fire Truck E-3	2014	25 years	$10,600
	Ladder Truck, L-1	2029	30 years	$19,000
	Fire Truck, E-5	2026	15 years	$5,000
	Pickup Truck	2013	10 years	$1,500
Highway – See Transportation Section in Inventory for Improvement Plan				
	Sidewalks approx. 3 miles	2015	5 years	$20,000
	Municipal Parking Lots	2021	10-15 years	$3,500
	Road Surface Improvements	2015	5 Years	$100,000

Capital Improvements Financing

Capital improvements, as they are prioritized and scheduled for implementation require a funding source or means of financing. A variety of techniques for financing capital improvements exist and are

outlined here. State laws usually govern which techniques are authorized and how they are to be carried out.

Current Revenues (Pay-As-You-Go)

The most fundamental and simplest means of paying for capital improvements is on a pay-as-you-go basis - funding capital improvements from current revenues. This has the advantage of avoiding bonding and interest costs. Its disadvantage is that large scale capital improvements may require a similarly large amount of money to finance them that would create an inordinate tax burden for the implementation period and extreme fluctuations in the tax rate. Spreading these costs over a longer period reduces such sudden impacts and tax rate swings.

Bonding or Borrowing

Borrowing against future taxes using direct federal, state, or bank loans, general obligation bonds, or revenue bonds (that are paid back from future service charges or fees) to finance long-term public improvements is widely practiced and makes good sense from the standpoint of "paying-as-you-use." Borrowing or bonding evens out the tax impact over time and allows the municipality to obtain vital improvements earlier in time than current revenue or reserve fund arrangements would permit. As a general rule, no improvement or equipment should be borrowed for or bonded beyond its service life and thus violate the pay-as-you-use rule. The chief disadvantage of bonding is the payment of interest on the borrowed money. The fact that purchasers of municipal bonds are usually exempt from payment of taxes on interest received causes the interest rate on such bonds to fall below market rates. Often, municipalities can also receive favorable rates from banks since their ability to pay back the loan is generally good. Federal and/or state loans may be available for certain capital improvements including sewer, water, and public safety.

Borrowing and bonding should be done in consideration of current interest rates, ability to pay off the loan/bond, and the rate of inflation. For example, when money can be borrowed at low interest rates, but the rate of inflation is relatively high, borrowing can make good sense in order to make the capital improvement before the cost of making the improvement inflates.

Reserve Fund

This is a technique used by many municipalities and is a major part of Mechanic Falls' Capital Improvement planning. A reserve fund is analogous to a family savings account for a future big ticket purchase (car, appliance, etc.). Reserve funds are often used to replace equipment with a known service life whose cost and date of replacement are fairly accurately known and can be planned. The full replacement cost thus becomes available at the time when replacement is necessary without the necessity of bonding or suffering a sudden impact on the tax rate. Other advantages are that reserve funds may be invested to collect interest on their principal, thus reducing the tax revenue contribution required. Reserve funds, like borrowing, even out the flow of revenues required for capital improvements.

Grants

There are a number of federal and state grants available for specific improvements. A few are also available for certain programs. Many grants, sometimes combined with loans from the same agency, are based on the median or average income or residents and other factors indicating a community's need. Mechanic Falls benefitted from a number of Community Development Block Grants in the past, but income levels are now high enough to make the town ineligible for most of the CDBG programs. Generally grant programs are available for certain capital improvements including water, sewer, sidewalks, public safety, and recreation facilities.

Coordination with Other Programs and Agencies

In some cases, combining efforts with an adjacent town or a state agency can help to lower the cost of improvements. An example is rehabilitating sidewalks or sewer and water lines to coincide with road work being done by the Maine Department of Transportation. The best example of working with adjacent towns is mutual aid services for fire protection, thus sometimes eliminating a need for additional fire equipment.