

Town of Belgrade: 2025 Comprehensive Plan



Acknowledgements

Thank you to the numerous volunteers, committee members, town staff, and community members who gave their time and expertise to successfully update the Town of Belgrade's Comprehensive Plan.

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The Importance of Community Involvement

Any good Comprehensive Plan requires a bold planning process that engages the public in a meaningful way to garner input. Without a strong public participation component, there is a risk of developing a plan that lacks broad community support, or a plan that elicits little debate, resulting in a plan that is so cautious it is essentially ineffective.

Communities should always work toward a significant level of public participation and outreach. Many communities, however, struggle with sustaining public interest over the time it takes to develop the plan. Despite efforts to be inclusionary, the individuals responsible for the Comprehensive Plan update often encounter poorly attended meetings and decreased interest. Often, it is not until the public votes on the plan that a large segment of the town's residents voices their views in support of – or in opposition to – the document.

No simple formula exists for increasing the level of public participation in plan updates. Often, encouraging involvement and engaging citizens gets more challenging as time goes by. The public participation process should include creativity, persistence, and a strategic focus to combat declining public interest.

Strong public participation is a must to create “buy-in” to the plan. People will rarely embrace change unless they think there is a problem in the first place. Committees may be stymied in their efforts to address important local and state goals unless a strong case is made for why these goals are pertinent to the community – and important for the town

to pursue. Public “buy-in” is necessary before the community can focus on remedying problems with a sense of common purpose.

A sense of public ownership for goals and planning concepts must be fostered to discredit the belief that the plan is a response only to state requirements. Lack of real support for the plan can lead to poor implementation, blunting its effectiveness. Ideally, there should be a long-term process of building awareness of planning and how it addresses specific goals that ultimately benefit the community.

Creating public ownership of the plan and its related goals, policies, and strategies is essential in its effectiveness. A community should strive to avoid the plan simply becoming a response to state requirements rather than to the community’s own needs.



The Comprehensive Plan and Belgrade's Future

At their most basic level, Comprehensive Plans are completed by communities to prepare for the future. A comprehensive review of a community and its current statistical data, issues, and policies promotes discussion among neighbors, and can help communities avoid problems that sometimes occur when community decisions are made in a piecemeal fashion.

A Comprehensive Plan is a guide to a town's future. It is not an ordinance or a set of rules and regulations, but a guide for town government to use to ensure it is moving in a path determined by the public and municipal officials. It provides a "snapshot in time" of the town, a roadmap with a direction the town wants to take over the next 10 years, and guidance on how to proceed.

Good planning makes good communities. A good Comprehensive Plan should enable Belgrade in:

- Encouraging thoughtful, orderly growth and development in appropriate areas.
- Protecting the town's rural character, protect water quality, and continuing to support existing businesses and tourism.
- Striving to reduce the cost of public services by directing growth to areas that are already developed.
- Preserving a healthy landscape and a walkable community.
- Promoting and encouraging appropriate economic development.
- Identifying future housing needs and how to best address these needs.
- Balancing economic prosperity with quality of life.
- Promoting discussion amongst neighbors.
- Developing a basis for sound decisions in town management.

In summary, a Comprehensive Plan encourages orderly growth and development in appropriate areas of the community, while protecting the town's rural character and natural resources. It ensures efficient use of public services and works toward preventing development sprawl. It considers future possibilities and encourages communities to be proactive, instead of reactive. All of this, in turn, protects the town from growing in a way that will eventually cost residents in increased taxes.

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Note about Data:

Even at the time of completion there is still limited data available from the full 2020 Census; therefore, this plan uses the most up to date information at the time of writing.

INTRODUCTION: THE PLANNING PROCESS

History of the Comprehensive Plan

Maine enacted the Growth Management Act in 1988, which specifies the format and goals for local comprehensive planning. Subsequent revisions to the Act require local Comprehensive Plans to undergo a new State review for consistency every 10-12 years, incorporating new data and findings into the planning process, as well as designating areas earmarked for future growth and locations to be maintained as rural.

While comprehensive planning is not a state mandate, towns that adopt this guiding document are provided with a level of legal protection and qualify for state-based grants to improve growth-related public facilities. Requirements of the Comprehensive Plan include goals and guidelines identified by the State that encourage a thoughtful planning approach for the community's future and support any necessary land use regulations.

Belgrade has enjoyed the benefits of comprehensive planning for decades. This document is an update to the 2013 Comprehensive Plan, which was itself an update of the 1998 Comprehensive Plan. The 2013 Comprehensive Plan became obsolete in both real terms and the eyes of the State as of 2023. In 2022, Belgrade began the lengthy process of a Comprehensive Plan update using the new State guidelines.

Community Involvement

All Comprehensive Plan Committee (CPC) meetings were advertised and open to the public. When feasible, various stakeholders, boards, and commissions in the community were invited and involved in meeting discussions on relevant chapters. For example, the Planning Board weighed in heavily on the Existing Land Use chapter and Future Land Use Plan and the Lakes and Natural Resources Committee had significant input in the writing of the chapter of the same name.

An effort was made by committee members to engage with the public throughout the duration of the update process. The CPC held a public participation meeting October 28th 2024. At the public participation meeting, CPC members took turns speaking on subjects and presenting data gathered through the update process. Results from the survey distributed were also presented.

A Comprehensive Plan survey was also made available both electronically and on paper to encourage resident participation. The survey was open and available from September through Mid-November of 2024 until. The survey was aimed at collecting residents' thoughts, opinions, and feelings about the town in areas from current and future land uses, transportation, housing, town government, local economy, municipal regulation,

and more. There were also several open-ended survey questions where people could express feelings without being prompted by questions.

The survey was promoted on the town's website and through an easy-access QR code linked to an online version of the survey. The QR codes were distributed in common areas around town. In addition, the members of the Comprehensive Plan Committee spread the word in the community about the importance of the survey and the Comprehensive Plan update.

During the time the survey was open, 95 responses were received, which is a 2.9 percent response rate. The survey and responses are attached in the Appendix of this plan.

Furthermore, as the Belgrade CPC completed a review of each analysis chapter, it was added to the town's website for public review. After all the chapters were reviewed, the associated policies and strategies were also posted for public review on the town's website.

Belgrade's vision statement serves as a guiding framework for the future of the town, outlining how its citizens would like to see Belgrade develop in various key areas.

Specifically, the vision statement serves to:

- Document the town's aspirations: It reflects the values, goals, and desired direction of the community, expressing a collective vision for what Belgrade should strive to become.
- Provide a roadmap for development: It functions as a blueprint for future growth and development, covering subjects such as land use, zoning, economic development, transportation, housing, recreation, and more.
- Establish policies and implementation programs: The vision statement's insights inform the development of policies and programs designed to achieve the stated goals and objectives within the comprehensive plan.
- Support sound decision-making: Citizens, elected officials, committees, and business investors refer to the adopted vision statement when making decisions that impact the physical, social, and economic development of the town.
- Ensure consistency with state and regional planning policies: The comprehensive plan, including the vision statement, is developed in alignment with relevant state and regional planning laws and guidelines.
- Guide implementation efforts: The vision statement acts as a yardstick for evaluating the effectiveness of the plan and its policies over time.

Essentially, the vision statement is a vital component of the comprehensive plan, articulating the collective hopes and dreams of the community for the future and providing direction and focus for achieving those aspirations.

Implementation

Nearly every chapter of this updated plan resulted in policies and strategies along with specific recommendations for implementing parties along with a timeframe to complete the task. The key to the plan's success is how well the recommendations can be put into action. This requires an implementation plan and a standard by which to measure results.

The responsibility for implementation almost always falls on the leadership of the town and is often delegated to appropriate boards, committees, commissions, and town staff. While many of the policies and strategies of Belgrade's 2014 Comprehensive Plan were implemented, many were not. The town should strive to accomplish as many policies and strategies in this plan as remain viable and reasonable.

This plan was assembled by the Belgrade Comprehensive Plan Committee, Planning Board and Select Board, in coordination with Belgrade town officials, and KVCOG staff. As such, this plan contains ideas and contributions from elected officials, committees, outside organizations, individual residents, and others who are affiliated with the Town of Belgrade. These constituents all have one thing in common: They are stakeholders in the future of Belgrade. It is their civic duty to see that the recommendations of the plan are carried forward.

While the plan's implementation is assigned to individual members of the town staff, and to boards, committees and organizations, a mechanism to monitor progress and resolve impediments is necessary. This plan recommends the following implementation and evaluation strategies:

- The CEO and Planning Board Chairman will continue to track and document permit application and permits issued to identify trends. The following will also be tracked:
 - The location of new residential structures.
 - The location of new commercial structures/land uses.
 - Redevelopment of existing buildings for commercial/industrial uses.
 - Conversions from seasonal camps to year-round residences.
- The Planning Board Chairman, in conjuncture with the CEO, will prepare a written report on a yearly basis, containing data from the permit tracking history. The report will be shared with the Select Board and Town Manager for review and discussion.
- The Select Board, Town Manager, and Planning Board will identify trends and determine if they are in keeping with the policies and strategies outlined in this plan, as well as the community's vision.

This review of permits issued, and analysis of trends will ensure that town staff, committees, and elected officials, are held accountable for their designated roles in implementing the policies and strategies outlined in the plan.

The annual review of the Planning Board Chairman's written report will serve to evaluate the progress in implementing the policies and strategies, as well as identify any barriers in carrying out the recommendations identified. This process can easily be managed with a spreadsheet that includes each chapter's recommendations, noting whether implementation has begun, whether it is in progress (and to what degree) or has been completed.

After each yearly review of the Planning Board Chairman's written report by the Select Board and Town Manager, recommendations for the upcoming year will be made along with suggested changes to policies and strategies based on obstacles encountered. The findings of the report will be published in the annual report.

The Select Board, which is Belgrade's legislative body and is ultimately responsible for the implementation of the plan, will establish an annual review workshop so findings can coincide with delivery of the annual report and budget development. This process will allow for and account for all needs in the coming year's budget.

The workshop will review activities over the prior year and determine priorities for activities in the upcoming year. The workshop may also be the source for recommendations for informally updating or amending the Comprehensive Plan.

This process should provide adequate oversight and feedback to ensure this plan is not ignored or forgotten. The process should also indicate when or if the plan needs revision, new timeline details or is nearing completion and will require updating. The next scheduled update to this plan will be in 2035.



Vision Statement

The Town of Belgrade respects and embraces its rural integrity and character, which is built upon the abundance of natural resources, while simultaneously striving to maintain the importance of the town's integral historical character and identity. Belgrade understands the importance of protecting its natural resources and residents alike, and prioritizes certain essential changes aimed at their protection. Belgrade strives to be a livable and workable community, in which neighbors respect and appreciate each other, and where family operated businesses and tradition thrive.

Community Assessment

All statistical data presented in this plan must be viewed through the lens of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has changed many aspects of daily life. At this time, it is not possible to predict the long-term impacts and implications of the virus on the town, but by planning for a range of possibilities, the town can be well prepared. The statistics and data presented in this plan are based primarily on information from early in 2020, and as such will not reflect the sudden, and in some cases, drastic changes brought on by COVID-19; however, this data should be used as a baseline for Belgrade.



Historic And Archeological Resources



The Belgrade area, first called Washington Plantation, West Ponds, and/or Prescott's and Carr's Plantation, lies at the western edge of the Kennebec Purchase, which was comprised of large blocks of land 15 miles east and west of the Kennebec River. The land was part of the Kennebec Proprietors purchase agreement of the land surrounding the Kennebec River. Due to the distance from the shores of the Kennebec, it took several years for the bravest of settlers to begin venturing into the Belgrade area. These early explorers were hunters, trappers, and farmers looking for game or to establish a homestead. Gradually, the Kennebec Proprietors' lots began to be sold. Some of the earliest settlers had money to buy land; some were veterans of the American Revolution claiming their recompense. Some did not have the cash but came anyway and paid for the property later when the Proprietors in their Boston office offered a low price to "quiet"

By 1790, the first Federal Census gives these names of families in Belgrade – names we see on cemetery stones and on old deeds: Bean, Blake, Crosby, Crowell, Fall, Gilman, Hall, Leighton, Linnell, McGrath, Mosher, Page, Philbrick, Rankins, Richardson, Snow, Staples, Taylor, Tilton, Tozier, and Wyman.

the squatters who had no deeds. Twenty-two years after the first settlers' arrival, on February 3, 1796, Belgrade was incorporated as a town in Lincoln County with about 250 inhabitants.

The town was named after Belgrade, Serbia. When the town was incorporated in 1796, residents could not name the newly created town the same as another town in Massachusetts, nor could it be an Indigenous name. At the time, John V. Davis was the man selected to lead the town and determine its name. It is thought that he chose the name Belgrade to honor the Serbian city due to his travels through Europe, although it is not known for sure on if he ever visited Belgrade, Serbia.

Over the next 20 years, Belgrade gained a bit of property from other towns and territories. An act passed in 1839 gave Belgrade portions of what was formally known as Dearborn, and an additional 300 residents, enlarging the town to the size and boundaries of present-day Belgrade. Not until 1834 was the Belgrade town office constructed. However, after a smallpox victim was quarantined in the building, community members refused to use the building any further. As the town grew and more buildings were constructed, the Grange Hall, school gymnasium, and community center all became important meeting locations. The original town hall, believed to have been constructed around 1815, still stands in the Pine Grove Cemetery and is maintained and cared for by the Belgrade Historical Society.

The historical economy of Belgrade was based on farming throughout the 19th century. In the early days, each family or cluster of farms was self-sufficient – clearing their land, depending on their own crops and livestock. Sheep became important locally in the first half of the 1800's, first for domestic use and then for the woolen mills prospering off the importation and breeding of high-quality stock. Sheep's wool yielded to the Jersey cow's milk as a cash crop, and trains that first came through in 1849 increasingly took milk, wood products, and apples to ready markets in Boston.

It is thought that roads and settlements were first clustered around waterways and trails used by the indigenous peoples that lived on this land before the explorers. The earliest roadmap, dated 1858, shows roads just about where they are now with indications of mills at natural dam sites. These mills were constructed to grind corn and wheat, as well as to mill the boxes and barrels to ship products. These factories provided key products and employment opportunities allowing Belgrade to grow in population.

By 1840, the population of Belgrade had peaked at over 1,700 and was starting to decline, probably from a combination of severely cold weather and westward migration, which started before the Civil War. During the years of the Civil War, Belgrade along with most Maine towns, saw a decrease in population, development and industry from many young men leaving to fight in the war. Also, the westward migration continued for some time afterward, taking the traditional workforce of the town with it.

The installation and development of the rail line in 1849 was a key milestone for Belgrade. This allowed for not only the transportation of goods but the installation of the ever-present and booming tourism industry. The rail line connected Belgrade with Augusta and Waterville to the east, Lewiston/Auburn to the west, and Portland to the south. There were two stops in Belgrade, one at the Depot (near Hammond Lumber) and the other located in North Belgrade. By this point, the economic basis of the town had begun the transition to relying on tourism.



Photo: Belgrade Historical Society

Fishing was the primary draw, the multiple lakes providing a range of species to target. In 1900, The Belgrade Hotel (see image above) was built to entice summer visitors to vacation by the clear waters of Long and Great Ponds. Allowing for both sporting and recreation, it complemented the inns and more rustic lodgings around Belgrade's lakeshores. At about the same time, the numbers of new private cottages and summer

youth camps were growing. Over 100 businesses eventually joined the list of accommodations in operation in those decades before World War II.

Automobiles became the new vacation travel mode after World War I. The number of cottages continued to increase. Since that era, hundreds of private cottages have dotted the lakeshores. A few children's camps remain active. Many sets of camps have been sold separately. One or two farms are still viable, and many families continue to maintain vegetable gardens for family use, but the truck farms that sustained the hotels and camps' centralized dining halls are gone.

The businesses that sustain the town now include the camps and vacation rentals, small retail stores, a large lumberyard, a cement/stone business, a building supply company, steel fabrication, storage units, gravel mining, and lake-related businesses.

We have John Clair Minot's writings and his grandfather's good memory to thank for much of Belgrade's written history. It was published as a chapter in the "Illustrated History of Kennebec County" in 1892.

Historic Properties

The Maine Historic Preservation Commission is responsible for identifying archeological sites, helping towns enhance measures to protect sites and to encourage research at significant sites. The primary focus of archeologic research in Maine is the early colonial period. This period is then divided into three time periods: Early Settlement (1604-1675), Indian Wars (1676 to early 18th century) and Resettlement Period (early to mid-18th century). Other sites of importance represent the earliest introduction of Europeans or Early Americans into an area, regardless of the time period.

The small but active and diligent Belgrade Historical Society is working to save and document the rich cultural heritage of the town. The Historical Society is always looking to augment its corps of members to capture memories, work on preservation projects and bring an awareness of local history through local interpretative programs.

There are four buildings in Belgrade listed on the National Register of Historic Places, with numerous others eligible. A locally based inventory and map of historic homes and buildings was started for the 1998 rendition of this plan; however, that was never completed. The four properties listed on the National Register are:

- Chandler's Store – Built in 1838 by John Chandler of granite sourced in Vienna, Maine, the now private residence is in the Belgrade Lakes Village.
- Chandler's Store Carriage Barn – Built in 1850 to service patrons of Chandler's Store. The barn is still attached to the original private residence.
- Barn at Winterberry Farm – The barn is original to the farm and was built between 1900 and 1910.
- The Birches – This cottage was built in 1916 as part of The Belgrade Hotel complex. The cottage has since been improved to allow for year-round use as a private residence.

Archeological Sites

According to local knowledge, when Central Maine Power sought relicensing on the dams owned by the company there were up to 10 archaeological sites identified. However, the Maine Historic Preservation Commission does not have any data readily available to confirm these findings.

All professional archeological work in Belgrade has been limited to work on the shores of Messalonskee Lake. Archaeologists know from stone and pottery artifacts recovered that indigenous peoples have been using lake shores for thousands of years. However, due to time and erosion, there is little evidence available to reconstruct details and the extent of an area's usage.

It is known that the indigenous populations relied on the interconnected lakes for travel and fishing. It is highly likely that archeological sites exist that contain significant archeological resources, particularly along the lakes and streams. The homesteads and mills of the first settlers of this region have deteriorated to the point of non-existence or faint footprints. There may be anecdotal evidence in old records or among residents of the locations of cellar holes or cold storage, but no effort has been made to document these.

Prehistoric Sites

The Maine Historic Preservation Commission has not identified any prehistoric sites in Belgrade. There have not been any studies conducted to determine possible sites either.

Locally Important Places

Cemeteries are a critical link to our heritage. The town has an obligation to protect and maintain some cemeteries, while others are private or family cemeteries. A combination of Town-employed Sextons, and volunteer groups work to maintain and manage the cemetery grounds, monuments, and markers.

There are seven cemeteries in Belgrade:

Ellis Cemetery	Smithfield Road
Quaker Cemetery	Oakland Road
Pine Grove Cemetery	Cemetery Road
Woodside Cemetery	Cemetery Road
Bickford Cemetery	Private Driveway
Dunn Cemetery	Dunn Road
Hersum Cemetery	Sahagian Road

Of the above listed cemeteries, only Pine Grove Cemetery is open for burials.

There are several other structures in Belgrade that are important cultural landmarks that, while not on the National Register of Historic Places, are nonetheless historic and valued by the community. One is the Old Town Meeting House. As discussed above, the building was once actively used by town members. It was also once used by the operators of the Woodside Cemetery until it fell into disuse. Through an agreement between the Belgrade Historical Society and the town, the historical society preserved and restored the building. It will be used for meeting space and educational purposes in the future. The Belgrade Historical Society is actively working with the Maine Historic Preservation Commission to place the building on the National Register of Historic Places.



Photo: Town of Belgrade

There are two original schoolhouses in Belgrade, though both are now privately owned. While the exterior structures of the schools have been maintained, the use has not; one is now a private residence and the other serves as the site of a food pantry and senior center.

Based on information gathered by the Belgrade Historical Society, there are two churches of note in town, The Old South Church in Belgrade Depot and the Union Church in the Village. Both date back to the 1800's and are still in use as places of worship.

A foundational element of Belgrade is Day's Store. While the name and ownership have changed through the decades, the store still maintains the original footprint of the location that was created to serve early residents. Due to its longevity, much of the identity of the town revolves around the store, and it has become synonymous with Belgrade.

Threats to Historic Resources

There are no historic districts in Belgrade, and of the four historic properties in Belgrade, none are owned by the town. Additionally, none of the eligible locations in Belgrade are owned by a government entity.

The threat to the historic resources of not only Belgrade but to all of Maine extends to the effects of weather events and climate change. These structures and sites have withstood the test of time to this point, and communities should be cognizant of recognizing their cultural and historical importance when planning for weather events. The MHPC has established a website to assist entities across the state with planning for the effects that climate events have on historic and cultural resources.

Discussion

As stated above, there is no historical district in Belgrade. The historic nature of the town is one of the components of its identity, and as such, it should be considered to actively preserve and maintain the integrity of the resources.

The minimum lot size, multi-family, commercial development review, and subdivision ordinances all require that the permit application requires that the builder certify that no historic or archeologic resources will be impacted. This has proven effective towards safeguarding Belgrade's history.

The Belgrade Historical Society is an active group in town and maintains a wealth of knowledge of the town and its past. This resource should be maintained to keep the valuable history of the town intact. Based on conversations with the Historical Society, some newer residents have been surprised by the lack of a historic district in the town.

Analysis

- Consideration should be given to the history of Belgrade when developing and improving. It is important not to lose the historic character of the town.
- The town should address the creation of a historic district, at the minimum in the Village. The creation of such a district would allow for development and improvement while keeping the historic beauty of the town.
- Programs to highlight the history of Belgrade as well as encourage new residents to become more involved in town committees are ongoing and should be advertised.

Community Profile



This report holds a statistical profile of the town of Belgrade and its people. It has a great deal of numerical information about the community. Data like this will often confirm intuitions about what is happening within the community. More importantly, it can show early signs of new patterns and trends before their impact becomes apparent.

Demographic statistical data of a particular place, like Belgrade, is incredibly valuable and can greatly affect future decisions. Demographic data can affect and impact nearly every



Photo: Town of Belgrade

decision made on the municipal level. For example, the amount of money from taxes the town needs to generate is affected by things like services the town offers for its senior citizens, the size of the school system and expected future enrollment, waste management services, and the quantity of recreational amenities provided. The level of services the town needs for senior citizens can be assumed using demographic data, just as the school system size will be affected by total family households in the area. Belgrade is evolving and in the last decade, there are more residents than ever before. Innovative ideas and strategies will be needed to accommodate the increasing and changing population. The information supplied here will be used

throughout the plan and will help inform us about how

the community has changed. Future changes are also discussed. Growth projections will help in planning for the increased housing and public service demands that are expected over the next couple of decades. Similar information can be found in the Housing Chapter of this plan.

Components of Household & Population Change

There are many factors that contribute to population changes besides birth rate, migration, and death rate. Some of these factors include economic development, education, quality of life, urbanism, changes in job availability, and many more. Some of these, although not relevant to Belgrade, may be

You may notice that the population number varies between 3,250 and 3,148. This is because 3,250 is from the Decennial Census and the 3,148 is from the 2021 American Community Survey (ACS) and is an estimate. It has been used in certain charts because the data was calculated based on this number from the ACS. To change the population and recalculate the data would be inaccurate. It is important to understand this because it could be construed as a mistake, and it is not. These discrepancies have been annotated in several places.

factors for why people moved from their original locations to Belgrade.

These changes are never solely a case of emigration; there are various contributing factors for people to move to a new home. Population change in a community is a result of both natural change and migration. Natural change is the difference between deaths and births in the community over a period. Natural change can also be an indicator of population trends in a population. A trend of more births than deaths would indicate a higher number of families as well as residents normally in the 20-40 age range, while a trend of more deaths than births would indicate older populations. Migration accounts for people moving in and moving out. Net migration is population change not explained by births and deaths. Migration is calculated as the difference between overall population change and natural change. People choose to move in or out of a community based on many factors, such as availability of employment, housing costs, and quality of life.

Will the ratio of natural change and net migration continue? Considering the aging population, a trend toward smaller families and increasing housing values, it seems that deaths will continue to outpace births, resulting in an increased decline in natural change.

Population trends are important to identify because they form the basis for future land use and municipal planning. Likewise noting any changes in age distribution and other factors in the town is also important as they may affect municipal services and costs.

Historical Population Trends

“Population” is usually the principal criteria used in measuring the size and vitality of a town. The current population is often used like a yardstick to measure the town’s size and identity in the region, the expected level and use of public and municipal services, and more.

Since its incorporation in 1796, Belgrade has seen an ebb and flow of population, similar to its neighboring communities and the State. Economic and cultural factors heavily influence the population changes that are displayed in Table 1 and Figure 1 as seen below.

Table 1: Population Count by Census Year

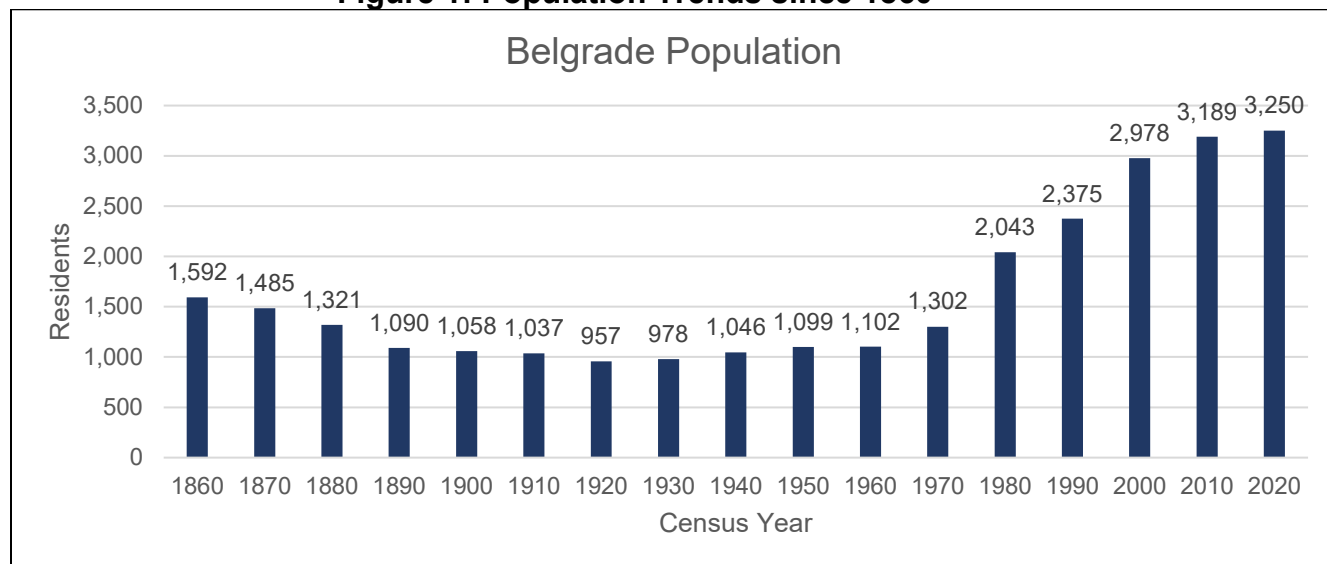
Year	Population	Year	Population
1860	1,592	1950	1,099
1870	1,485	1960	1,102
1880	1,321	1970	1,302
1890	1,090	1980	2,043
1900	1,058	1990	2,375
1910	1,037	2000	2,978
1920	957	2010	3,189
1930	978	2020*	3,250
1940	1,046		

**Population from U.S. Decennial Census*

Following the Civil War, and lasting until the early 20th Century, virtually all of Maine lost population. This was the era of westward expansion when many people relocated to the West. Like many other towns, the population hit its lowest documented point in the 1920's before rebounding over the next several decades.

Belgrade is unique in the fact that while many surrounding towns lost population through the 1920's to 1950's, due to several factors such as the Great Depressions, World War I and II, and westward expansion, Belgrade gained population steadily through the decades. This can most likely be attributed to the flourishing tourism industry. Several summer camps were developed along the shores of the lakes, catering to children and families alike. Along with the camps and hotels were the industries needed to serve them, housekeepers, maintenance and groundskeepers, culinary staff, and recreation staff. One of the largest growing trends in recreation was the fishing industry. The lakes of Belgrade have long been known for their clean waters and excellent fishing.

Figure 1: Population Trends since 1860



**Population from U.S. Decennial Census*

The above graph shows the same data as Table 1 but better highlights the years of rapid growth that the town experienced.

The changes in population can be attributed to the availability or lack thereof of employment opportunities, available modes of transportation to reach undeveloped parcels of land and employment, and changes in the cultural perception of living in a rural community versus an urban community.

Table 2: Age Trends 1990-2021

General Population Characteristics				
	2000 Census	2010 Census	2020 Census	20 Year Trend
Total Population	2,978	3,189	3,250	272
Median Age	39.4	43.8	49.6	10
Persons less than 5 years	137 (4.6%)	173	112	-25
Persons 5 to 19 years	677 (22.8%)	616	550	-127
Persons 20 to 44 years	1,005 (33.7%)	864	789	-216
Persons 45 to 59 years	677 (22.8%)	856	760	83
Persons 60 to 64 years	144 (4.8%)	214	292	148
Persons 65 to 84 years	319 (10.7%)	432	734	415
Persons 85 years and over	19 (.6%)	34	45	26

Source: U.S. Decennial Census

Highlights of Population Trends

- The number of individuals in the 5-19 age range has steadily and significantly decreased. This is the age range that most affects the local education system and those intertwined systems.
- The “family-age” bracket is associated with the population group from 20-44. It has also decreased over the past two decades. This has a direct impact on both the younger and older age cohorts.
 - A lessening of the “family-age” means there will be fewer children being born or otherwise brought into the community. It also means those in that bracket are aging out of it and are not being replaced with new families.
- As expected with the decrease in preceding age brackets, the cohorts of those 45-59, 60-64, and older than 65 have steadily grown with each count.
 - As the baby boomers (those born between 1945 and 1965) ages, it may impact the need for smaller housing or senior housing, workforce levels and need for services within the municipality.
 - This group put an enormous strain on available systems such as in schools, now they are aging out of the workforce and altering the various housing and health services.

Regional Perspective

Belgrade’s development pattern is not at all unusual for Kennebec County. Many towns in this area prospered as farm towns during the 1800’s, with growth slowing during westward expansion and the urbanization period of the late-19th-early 20th centuries and beginning again as suburbs and green spaces. The region’s largest growth period was in the 1970’s and ‘80’s and has slowed since.

Table 3 compares Belgrade to four neighboring communities in terms of population since 2000. Belgrade has grown by 272 residents since 2000, placing its growth directly in the middle of the five towns compared below.

Table 3: Population Comparison to Neighboring Towns

Municipal Population			
Town	2000	2010	2020
Sidney	3,514	4,208	4,465
Belgrade	2,978	3,189	3,250
Oakland	5,959	6,240	6,230
Readfield	2,360	2,598	2,597
Manchester	2,465	2,580	2,456

Source: U.S. Decennial Census

Table 4 compares the 2010 and 2021 population of Belgrade to Kennebec County, the State of Maine, and the United States. The town median age is several years higher than the rest of the county and Maine; it is also significantly higher than the rest of the country. The average family size is also significantly lower than the rest of the country along with a much lower population growth. The Town's population has not grown significantly in the past several years, contrasting with several nearby communities. This could very likely be due to the availability of appropriate housing stock and employment availability both directly in town as well as in nearby service centers.

Table 4: Town, County, State, National Comparison

Town/County/State/ Nation	Population Change		% Change	Average Family Size*	Median Age
	2020	2021		2021	2021
Belgrade	3,250	3,218	-1.0%	2.73	47.3
Kennebec County	122,143	124,486	1.88%	2.72	44.1
Maine	1,327,567	1,372,247	3.25%	2.79	44.7
United States	309,349,689	331,893,745	6.79%	3.15	38.8

Source: 2021 ACS

**This differs from the Average Household Size, which is 2.45 for 2021. Household refers to those living together, related or not. Family refers to those who are living together and are related.*

The region's towns are also somewhat similar in the other two high-impact population trends: median age increase and household size decrease, as mentioned above. Belgrade has the highest median age, 47.3, of the surrounding municipalities, while also having the smallest household size. This can be interpreted as the municipal population being comprised of older adults living singularly or in pairs. Traditionally, an older median age and reduced family size are indicative of a more rural community comprised predominantly of owner-occupied housing units.

Table 5: Median Age and Household Size of Neighboring Communities

Median Age and Household Size Comparison		
Town	Median Age	Household Size
Belgrade	47.3	2.45
Readfield	45.5	2.65
Manchester	44.6	2.47
Oakland	44.5	2.40
Sidney	37.8	2.44

Source: 2021 ACS

Household Characteristics

By breaking down the household characteristics in Table 6, below, we can see how the population from 2000 to 2020 steadily rises, as does the median age and number of households. On the other hand, the average household size and number of couples with children under the age of 18 are decreasing. These trends show that the population of Belgrade is aging in place and there are fewer families and children in town. Additionally, the statistics of fewer people per household can show that there are more residences being built to sustain the population and more residents living alone. The needs that each population has on municipal services changes based on the age cohort.

Table 6: Population and Household Characteristics 2000-2020

General Population Characteristics	2000	2010	2020*
Total Population	2,978	3,189	3,250
Male Population	1,435	1,577	1,610
Female Population	1,543	1,612	1,640
Median Age	39.5	43.8	47.3
Total Households	1,178	2,198	2,267
Married Couple with Children Under 18	320	286	206
Married Couple Households	739	769	790
Non-Married Couple Households	301	330	131
Nonfamily Households Living Alone	301	248	321
Single Parent with Children Under 18	97	96	91
Single-Person Household 65 years +	77	114	87
Average Household Size	2.52	2.51	2.45

*Population from 2020 Decennial Census

The ACS defines household size as the number of people living in one place, who may or may not be related. This contrasts with average family size, which was 2.86 in 2021; average family size is defined as people living in one location who are related to one another.

An emerging, recent trend is multigenerational housing. This living situation was born out of necessity during the COVID-19 pandemic and became the new normal, as it seems to be mutually beneficial to all involved. Multigenerational homes are those that include parents living with their adult children and grandchildren, for example. This is beneficial for the parents of young children, as the grandparents can supply childcare, and it is beneficial for the grandparents as they also have access to care. This situation has proven financially beneficial for all parties. As of the 2021 American Community Survey, there were 694 residents over the age of 65 and 39% of households had one or more persons aged 65 or over. The 2021 ACS also documents 38 grandparents living with their grandchildren.

Population & Housing Density

The rate of housing development is a good way to estimate population growth, but it is also a good way to manage it. Local policies can affect the rate of housing growth through their influence on the cost of development or land use restrictions.

Trends can be managed, to a certain extent, to produce desired results. For example, if the local economy or housing market changes, that in turn affects how the community grows and changes, as well. Municipal regulation and policy can have an influence on the size and types of new houses constructed, which in turn will drive population demographics. Neighborhoods with large lots tend to add to building costs and require expensive homes to be built. Many times, these homes are 3-, 4-, or 5-bedroom houses suitable for large families with young children. On the other extreme, housing units can be designed exclusively for senior populations with 1- and 2-person households. This type of development would more closely match the demand for housing but would not add as much to the growth potential of the town.

Table 7: Municipal Housing Density

Land Area and Housing Density					
	Square Miles	2000 Housing Count	2010 Housing Count	2020 Housing Count	Unit per Sq. Mile
State	30,864	651,901	721,830	739,072	23.9
Kennebec County	867	56,364	60,972	62,607	72.2
Belgrade	57.93	1,178	2,198	2,267	39.13
Readfield	30.95	1,148	1,293	1,320	42.65
Manchester	22.62	1,181	1,255	1,259	55.66
Oakland	28.17	2,847	3,024	3,136	111.32
Sidney	45.51	1,518	1,850	2,063	45.33

Source: U.S. Decennial Census

Population density is a gauge of residents per square mileage of land. While the square mileage of Belgrade is documented at 57.83, only 43.24 is made up of land which increases the density to 75.16 residents per square mile. Much of the population is focused on the village area and along the lake shores.

Table 8: Municipal Land Area and Population Density

Land Area and Population Density							
	Square Miles	2000 Population	2000 Density	2010 Population	2010 Density	2020 Population	2020 Density
State	30,864	1,274,923	41.3	1,328,361	43.0	1,362,359	44.1
Kennebec County	867	117,114	135	122,151	140.9	123,642	142.6
Belgrade	57.83	2,978	51.5	3,189	55.1	3,250	56.2
Readfield	30.95	2,360	76.2	2,598	83.9	2,597	83.9
Manchester	22.62	2,465	108.9	2,580	114.1	2,456	108.6
Oakland	28.17	5,959	219.3	6,240	221.5	6,230	221.2
Sidney	45.51	3,514	77.2	4,208	92.4	4,465	98.1

Source: U.S. Decennial Census

Growth in population and households increases the demand for public services and commercial development. Unless specifically designed for senior citizens, each new household must have one or more jobs to support it. Younger, larger households will generate schoolchildren. Nearly all households require added waste management and road maintenance costs. All these factors must be considered when projecting population growth.

School Enrollment

The changes and trends in municipal population have a direct impact on the education system. As the population ages out of schools and is not replaced, it creates a lesser need for school programs and transportation. School enrollment can also be impacted by existing housing stock. As prices increase it will naturally not be as available for first-time home buyers. Additionally, housing stock made up of smaller homes is not as appealing for larger families with multiple children.

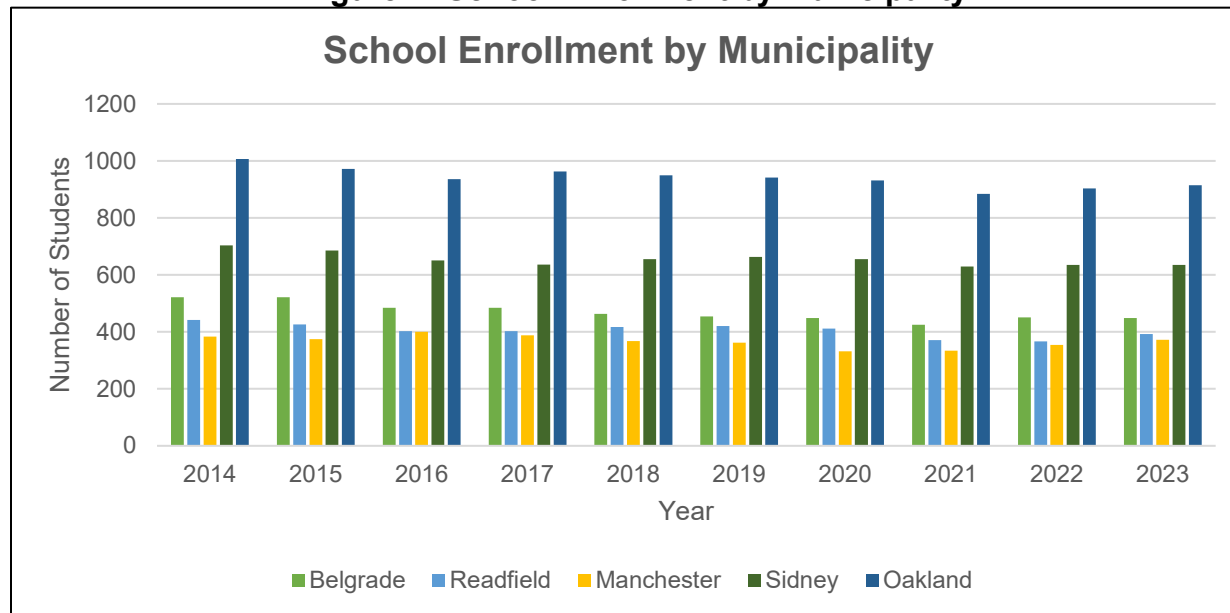
Table 9: School Enrollment by Municipality

School Enrollment											
County/ Town	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	10 yr. Average
Kennebec County	17,221	16,965	16,957	16,798	16,981	16,790	16,621	15,842	16,140	16,150	16,646.5
Belgrade	522	522	485	484	463	454	448	425	451	448	470.20
Readfield	442	426	403	403	417	420	412	371	367	392	405.30
Manchester	383	374	400	388	368	362	332	334	354	372	366.70
Sidney	703	685	651	636	655	663	655	629	635	635	654.70
Oakland	1,007	972	936	963	949	941	932	884	903	915	940.20
Rome	140	132	130	124	130	140	139	136	147	135	135.5
China	719	683	698	688	685	663	671	647	658	677	678.9

Source: Maine Department of Education; Public Funded Residential County by Town & County

Belgrade is a part of Regional School Unit 18, which also serves the towns of China, Oakland, Rome, and Sidney. Belgrade students in K-5 attend the Belgrade Central School.

Figure 2: School Enrollment by Municipality



Source: Maine Department of Education

There is a small portion of the school age population that is home schooled. According to the Maine Department of Education there are four or less home-schooled students in each municipality. The specific data is redacted for the student's privacy.

Population Projections

The Maine State Economist has released population projections covering the state, counties, cities, and towns for 5-year intervals to 2040. Historic population and demographic trends are interesting, but their true value is in preparing for the future. Population projections provide a short and easy answer. These are mathematical extrapolations of past population growth and factors such as age distribution and household size.

Table 10: Projected Population Change by Municipality through 2040

Population Change	
Municipality	Percentage
Belgrade	9.1%
Readfield	7.6%
Manchester	-3.4%
Sidney	24.9%
Oakland	7.5%

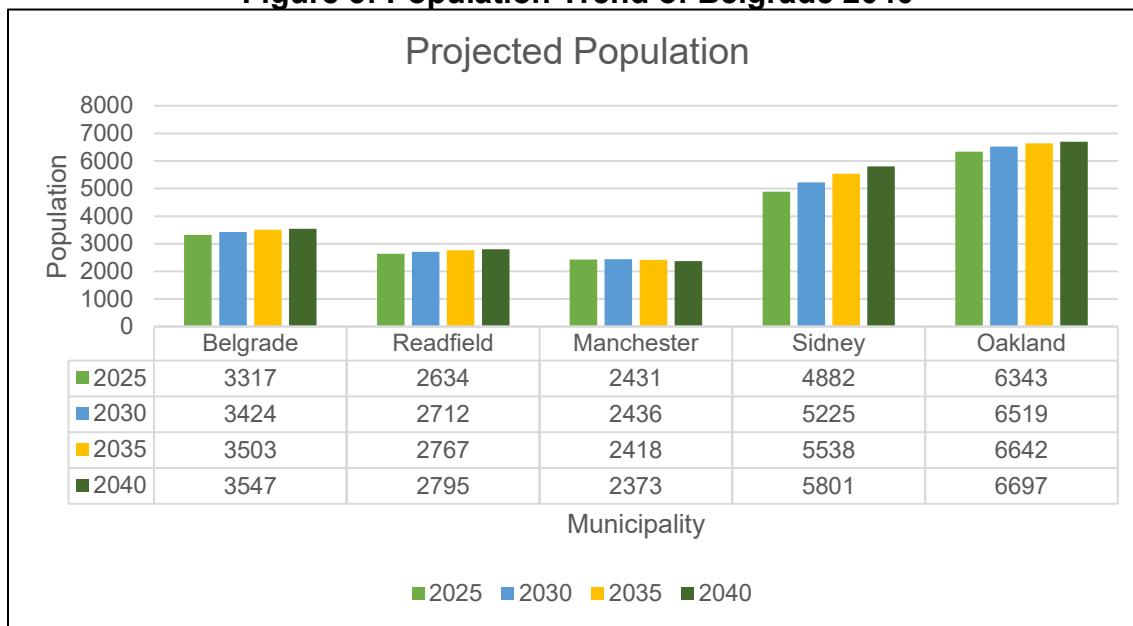
Source: Department of Administrative and Financial Service, State Economist

While there is no way to predict if the 9.1% growth will be due to natural change or migration, this will have an impact on the housing density, development, and vacancy of existing units. It is unlikely that the 9.1% growth, which equates to 289 new residents, will all be natural population gain. It can be assumed that due to the increasing population and housing density, a portion of this population will require newly built units.

While some towns can use municipal policies to impact population change, it requires a need and consensus to take strong action. It is important, however, that the community pays attention to annual changes in housing development and other local and regional indicators. The town should continue to monitor the rate of new construction and the type of homes that are being built and should continue to discuss the implications and address them through policy changes.

An important topic of discussion that is being held across planning organizations and municipalities is the effect that the COVID-19 pandemic has and will continue to have on populations. While the popularity of remote work exponentially increased during the pandemic, it also allowed for changes in where employees traditionally live. Companies developed remote working policies and adopted flexible scheduling, giving their employees a wider option of towns to live in, thereby expanding the company's traditional geographic footprint as well as where they can recruit qualified employees from.

Figure 3: Population Trend of Belgrade 2040



Source: Department of Administrative and Financial Service, State Economist

Seasonal Population

All the above analysis and data cited above refers to year-round residents. While the classification of a resident vs. non-resident is multi-faceted, generally a person is considered a resident of the State of Maine when they spend more than 183 days in the State and maintain a permanent place of abode in Maine.

According to the American Community Survey, there are 885 housing units that are classified as for seasonal, recreational, or occasional use. There are also a number of hotels, camps and rentals available in Belgrade that contribute to the changes in the seasonal population. The vacation or tourist season in Maine is associated with the months of May, when the weather begins to warm, through October, which is the height of foliage change or “leaf peeping” If the 885 housing units are occupied by the average family size for the United State of 3.15, this would account for an additional 2,787.75 people present in the community.

As discussed in the Population and Housing Density portion of this chapter, the population density of Belgrade is 56.2 people per square mile and rises to 75.2 people per square mile when the amount of surface area covered in water is removed. The seasonal population of Belgrade causes the density to rise to 104.4 people per square mile and further grows to 139.6 when calculated using just land area.

This seasonal fluctuation has significant effects on the town such as increased traffic, demand on commercial/retail establishments, use of public safety services and more. Belgrade relies on the seasonal boost to the economy through the businesses downtown, rentals and amenities. The Belgrade Lakes Golf Course has been ranked as one of the top public golf courses nationwide and in Maine.

Discussion

There are several solutions to combat or encourage these population trends. Belgrade is a short drive from the capital city of Augusta, making it an ideal community for those who work in the city or those who wish to be nearby for convenience. Other neighboring and nearby towns are working on extensive downtown revitalization projects and Belgrade’s proximity to many waterbodies all make the town attractive for those looking to live in Central Maine. While the rate of natural change cannot be impacted by town policy, the rate of migration can be affected by managing land use controls, promoting economic sectors that fit the character of the town, and offering public services that town residents want and need.

It is believed that the Covid-19 pandemic has caused a unique surge in populations to rural communities, such as Belgrade. While at the time of this plan development there is no known study conducted determining why many communities surged in population, the pandemic is a likely factor. With the majority of organizations choosing to have employees work remotely, it has allowed those employees a wider range of locations to choose from. Occurring simultaneously as the pandemic Maine also experienced a housing boom with many new homes being built, likely to accommodate the surge in relocations.

A demographic shift to highlight would be the ongoing growth and increase in the average age of community members. At this point, Belgrade has the largest population in its existence as well as the oldest population in its existence.

Analysis

- With its convenient location to the populations of Waterville and Augusta, Belgrade is well located for the workforce.
- The seasonal population and associated tourist dollars provide a significant benefit to the town and commercial enterprises.
- As seen in many other towns, the conversion of seasonal residences to year-round residences is a likely byproduct of COVID-19. The extent is still being studied.

Most of the population growth through the past two decades has been in the older generations. In order to maintain a diverse population and workforce, there needs to be consideration given on how to maintain a diverse population. It is crucial to focus on strategies that attract and retain younger generations, while simultaneously promoting intergenerational engagement and addressing the unique needs of diverse generations of older adults.

The Local Economy



Introduction and Overview

The health of a community is often measured by its economic activity. Income and employment, in addition to describing the nature of the population, can be indicators of current and future demand for housing, recreation, social and cultural services. While the Historic Profile chapter outlines the active role that community leaders and citizens in general have played in building the backbone of Belgrade, this chapter seeks to describe the town's current conditions, outline Belgrade's role in the regional economy, and examine visible trends and areas that need improvement. This chapter will also identify the town's economic development assets and incorporate public sentiment to lay out a direction and strategy intended to guide the town's economic development efforts for the foreseeable future.

As with many central Maine communities in recent times, Belgrade has had challenges and successes regarding economic development. The town of Belgrade must constantly grow and adapt to changes in economic activities and consumer demands. These efforts are ongoing, and the town must make purposeful decisions that will retain and attract both consumers, workforce members, and businesses.

As will be discussed throughout this chapter and several others, the data and subsequent analysis needs to be viewed through the lens of the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic, which in Maine began in March 2020, changed nearly all aspects of daily life. At this point in time, it is not possible to truly depict and see the long-term impacts on Belgrade. In light of this, it is recommended to plan for a range of possibilities so the town will be well prepared. In the interim, statistics and data presented in this plan are primarily based on information from early 2020, and as such will not reflect the sudden changes brought on by COVID-19. These statistics and data will present a baseline of the essential components for Belgrade's local economy, even if it is used for a comparison before and after the effects of the pandemic.

Per Capita Income Vs. Household Income

The most conventional measure of a town's economic health is the income of its individuals and families. The Census reports two basic types of income measures: "per-capita income," which is simply the aggregate income of the town divided by its population, and "household income," which is the income, usually the median income, of the households within the town. The latter is more helpful from a planning perspective.

The per-capita income, or PCI, is used to determine the average per-person income for an area and to evaluate the standard of living and quality of life of the population. Since PCI divides the number of the town population, including all individuals and not just adults, by the total income of the population, it will inevitably be lower for areas where more people are not working or are working but earning lower wages money. PCI is also a useful way to assess a municipality's affordability. When compared to real estate prices it can determine if average home prices align with a family's income, as well as in commercial settings such as a new business opening. If a town's population has a high

per capita income, there is most likely a better chance of generating higher revenue and goods sales.

One use of per-capita income is comparison among towns. According to the 2020 American Community Survey (ACS), Belgrade had a per-capita income (PCI) of \$45,494, which is the highest of the five towns compared in Table 1. The median household income of Belgrade is the second highest, with Readfield being the highest of the comparison towns. Belgrade's abundance of waterfront real estate is the likely reason for higher median household incomes and higher PCI than surrounding towns.

Table 1: Comparison of Surrounding Towns Per Capita Vs. Median Household Incomes

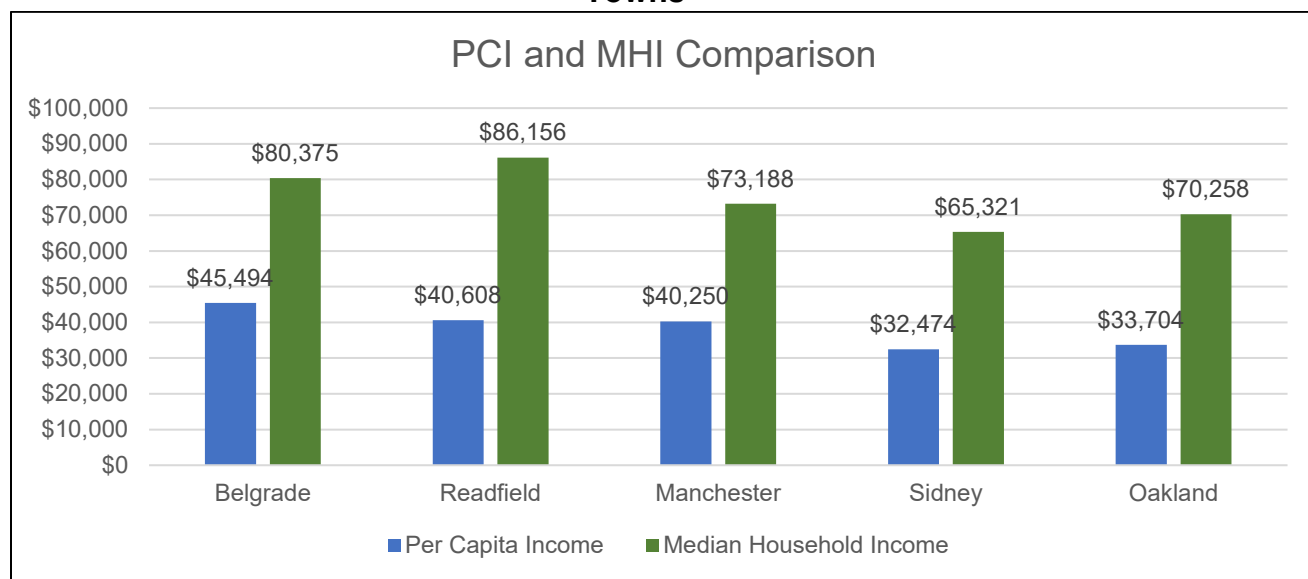
	Belgrade	Readfield	Manchester	Sidney	Oakland
Per Capita Income	\$45,494	\$40,608	\$40,250	\$32,474	\$33,704
Median Household Income	\$80,375	\$86,156	\$73,188	\$65,321	\$70,258

Source: 2020 American Community Survey

Median household income represents the total gross income received by all members of a household within a 12-month period. The median is achieved by dividing the income distribution into two equal parts: one half of the cases falling below the median income and one half above the median income. Two factors distinguish medium household income from per capita income:

- Decreasing household size over time.
- Changes in the number of members of the household with income.

Figure 1: Per Capita Income and Median Household Incomes of Surrounding Towns



Source: 2020 American Community Survey

Figure 1, above, presents the same data as Table 1 but in a graphic format rather than a numerical format. It shows the per-capita income of Belgrade and surrounding towns alongside the median household income.

Belgrade's income profile most closely resembles Readfield's and Manchester's. To give more perspective, the State of Maine has a Per-Capita Income of \$87,756 and a median household income of \$69,543. Kennebec County had a PCI of \$74,079 and a median household income of \$62,943. Belgrade has a significantly lower Per Capita Income than both Maine and Kennebec County, and a much higher median household income.

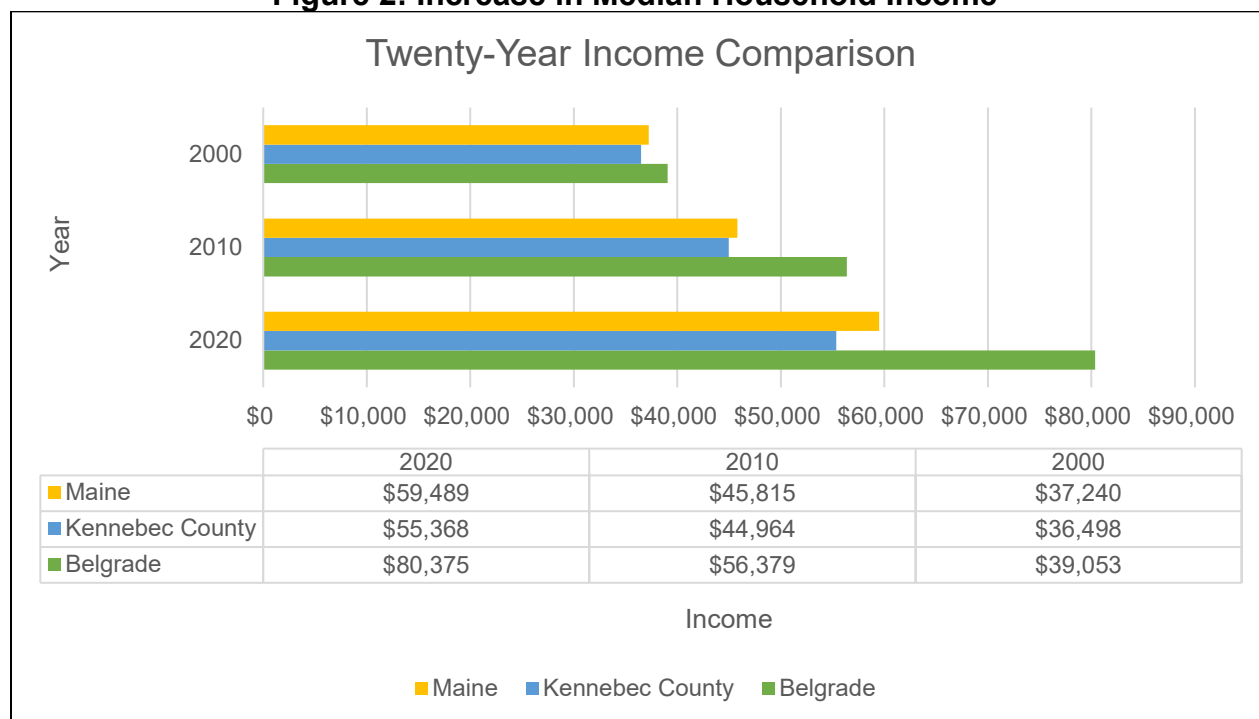
Table 2: Median Household Income Comparison

Median Household Income	
Belgrade	\$80,375
Kennebec County	\$62,943
Maine	\$69,543
United States	\$74,755

Source: 2020 American Community Survey

The changes in Belgrade's Median Household Income overtime are illustrated in Figure 2, below.

Figure 2: Increase in Median Household Income



Source: 2020 American Community Survey

From 2000 to 2010 there was a 44-percent increase, from 2010 to 2020 there was a 43-percent increase in median household income. When considering the economic events of the past two decades, these percentages make sense. While Belgrade has historically

maintained a higher MHI when compared to Kennebec County and the State of Maine, the difference calculated in the 2020 census is drastic, over \$20,000.

These income levels are also a way to assess housing affordability. A house is considered affordable if a household whose income is at or below 80 percent of the Area Median Income (AMI) can live there without spending more than 30 percent of their income on housing costs (including heat, electricity, insurance, etc.). What this means in practice differs for rental and ownership units.

Table 3: 80% of Annual Median Income by Household Size

County	Household Size							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Kennebec	\$45,500	\$52,000	\$58,500	\$64,950	\$70,150	\$75,350	\$80,550	\$85,750

Source: Maine State Economist

The data above is from 2023 and is produced and maintained by Maine Housing. In Belgrade, 80% of the median household income is \$64,300. 20.8% of Belgrade households make \$49,999 or less, equating to 261 households. The American Community survey identified 525 households whose income includes social security benefits in 2020, roughly 41% of households in Belgrade. It further identifies 398 households with retirement income, which equates to 31% of households. There is certainly a significant overlap between both categories. 4.8% of households, 61 households, in Belgrade receive some sort of public assistance in the form of food stamp benefits.

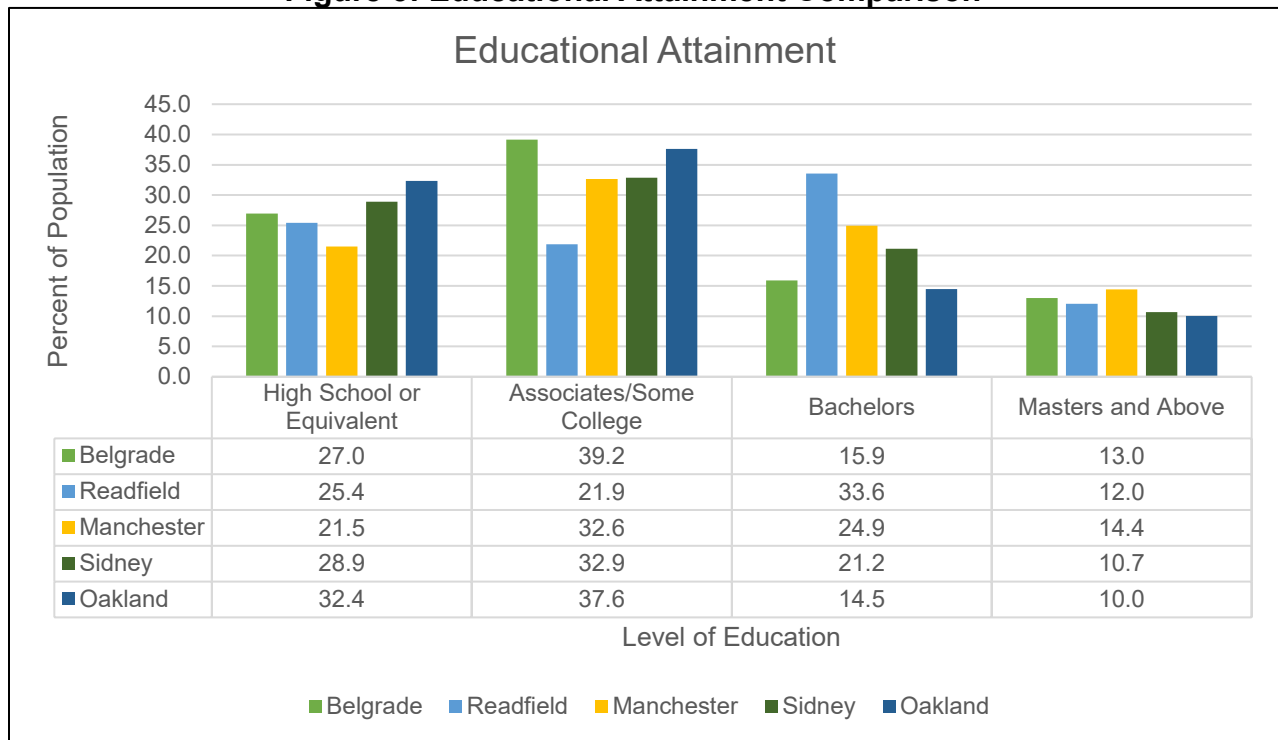
Educational Attainment

Analyzing the educational attainment and background of a municipality's residents is another way to measure how likely the town is to progress and change over time. Jobs that require mastery of mathematics, sciences and specialty skills are more likely to cause a concentration of residents that have higher educational levels.

Conversely, positions, such as those in the trades, that require high levels of technical licensing and education do not require employees to live in proximity to a traditional "office." Many of these types of jobs cover large service areas which allows employees more flexibility of where they live. The following figure referencing high educational attainment charts collegiate education levels.

Figure 3, below, details the educational attainment for Belgrade residents in comparison to surrounding towns.

Figure 3: Educational Attainment Comparison

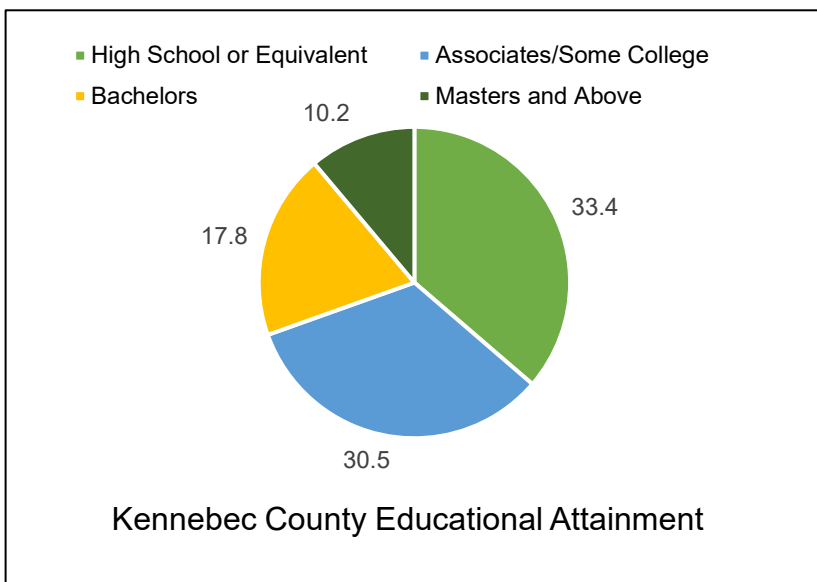


Source: Maine State Economist

The percentage of the population of Belgrade that has a high school diploma, or equivalent, is seemingly equivalent with the neighboring communities, as shown above. The population with an associate's degree or completion of some college is the highest percentage of the comparison towns at 39.2%. The town closest to this percentage is Oakland, which has a baseline population nearly double that of Belgrade. At 15.9%, the category of those with a bachelor's degree is the second lowest of the compared towns; it is nearly half of the neighboring town of Readfield. Comparatively, Belgrade has the second-highest level of those with a master's degree and above, just lower than Manchester.

Figure 4: Educational Attainment in Kennebec County

The rate of those in Kennebec County who have a high school degree or equivalent is higher than that of Belgrade at 33.4%, as is the rate of those with a bachelor's degree. However, the population of Belgrade has a higher rate of those with an associate degree and a higher rate of



those with a master's degree or above when compared with Kennebec County. Overall, Belgrade residents have lower levels of education at the high school level and equivalent as well as those with a bachelor's degree. Belgrade has high levels of residents with an associate's degree or some college, and high levels of residents who have earned a master's degree or higher.

Local Labor Force and Employment

The labor force refers to the number of people either working or available to work within the working-age population. For the purposes of the U.S. Census, the working-age population is everyone over the age of 16, including those of retirement age. Being in the labor force does not equate to being employed. Rather, the labor force is the sum of the employed plus the unemployed; this makes up the number of individuals *available to work*. It should be noted that the Census defined "unemployment rate" only as representing the number of unemployed people as a percentage of the civilian labor force. What it does not specify is that those counted as being unemployed were only those who were actively collecting unemployment.

In 2020 Belgrade's working-age population consisted of 2,535 people. Of that, 59.8% of the working age population was in the labor force, 1,515 residents. Of this 580, or 46.3%, were female and 935, or 53.7%, were males. In 2010, there was a working-age population of 2,479 and 62.3% of the population was in the labor force. This was made up of 737 females and 1,266 males. In 2020, there were 2,267 households in Belgrade.

Table 4: Labor Force Data Through Past Two Decades

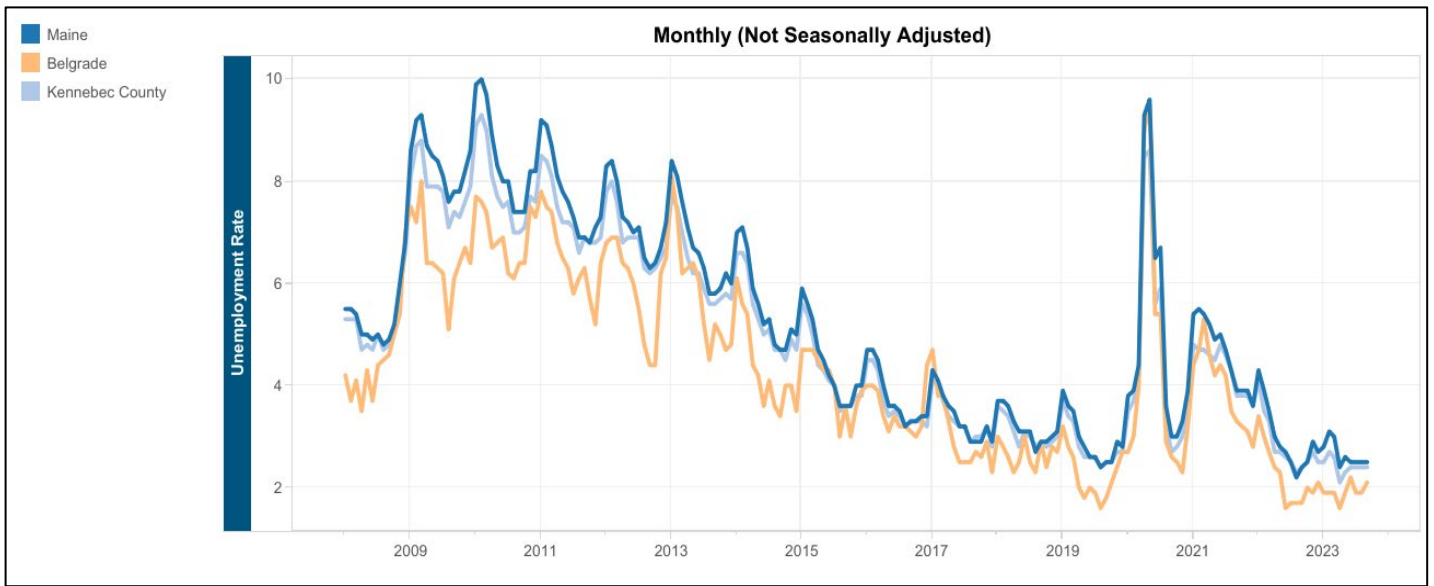
Year	Working Age Population	In Labor Force	Female	Male	Unemployed
2020	2,535	1,515	580	935	108
2010	2,479	1,545	737	808	70
2000	2,315	1,574	765	810	46

Source: Maine Department of Labor

An interesting trend that appears in the above data is that while population and working-age population in Belgrade are steadily growing, as discussed in depth in the Community Profile chapter, the number of residents in the labor force, specifically women in the labor force, is decreasing. Despite the decrease in the labor force, the number of men in the labor force has grown.

The Maine Department of Labor better reports on unemployment through monthly surveys. The MDOL measures the unemployment rate on a month-to-month basis through a sample of households surveyed. MDOL defines unemployment as the number of people who are not employed but are actively seeking work. Included in that category are those who are waiting to be called back from being laid off or those who are waiting to report to a new job within 30 days.

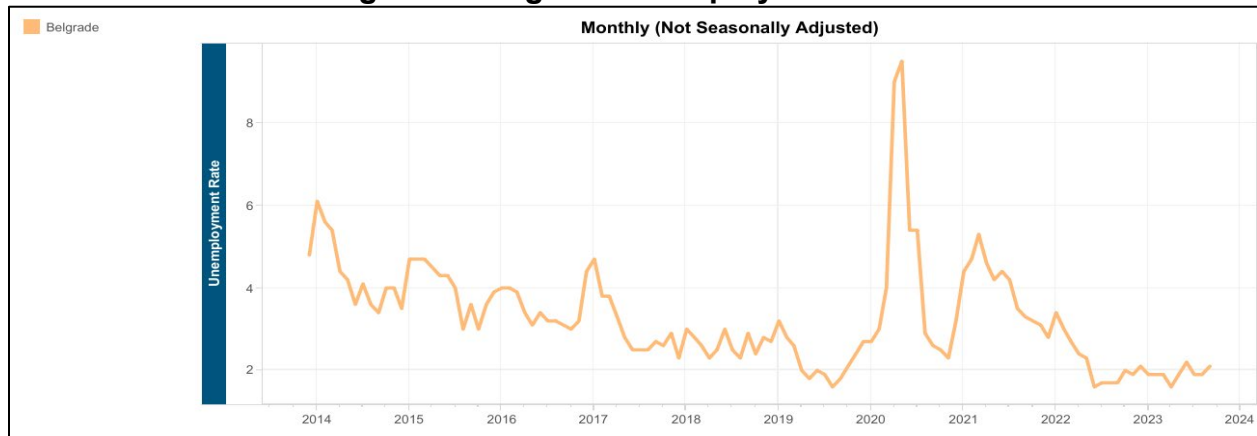
Figure 5: Town, County and State Unemployment Rate



Source: Maine Department of Labor

Figure 5, above, depicts the dropping unemployment trend until 2020, when the global pandemic caused unemployment rates to skyrocket until mid-2021. While the graph depicts a sobering rate of unemployment, it is significantly less than what many other states witnessed, nor did the trend last as long as in other places. Figure 6, below, shows Belgrade's unemployment rate, taken from the first month of each year. Belgrade saw the same spike in unemployment as the rest of Maine did, as well as a drastic drop and smaller ebbs and flows.

Figure 6: Belgrade Unemployment Rate



Source: Maine Department of Labor

The above analysis does not take into account the prominent seasonal employment in Belgrade. There are a significant number of businesses, such as summer camps, hotels, and restaurants, that rely on seasonal employment. There is currently no state or federal mechanism for tracking seasonal employment.

Labor Market

In 2010, there were an estimated 1,729 people in the labor force in Belgrade. That number decreased by 95 people in 2020 to 1,634.

Belgrade is designated as one of the municipalities serving the Augusta Micropolitan Area, otherwise known as the Augusta Labor Market Area. This designation is defined by the U.S. Office of Management and Budget. A micropolitan area is an area with at least one urbanized area of at least 10,000 people but fewer than 50,000 persons and the adjacent towns that have a high degree of social and economic integration, with the core integration being measured by commuting ties. It's been identified by those in the community that residents in Belgrade identify as those that go to Waterville for services or those that go to Augusta for services. That determination is based on the individual's location in Belgrade as well as personnel connections to either of those larger services areas. Table 5 below highlights Belgrade's contribution to the Augusta and Waterville LMA.

Table 5: Labor Force and Employment in Belgrade and Augusta Labor Market Area

Year	Location	Civilian Labor Force	Employment	Unemployment	Unemployment Rate
2022	Augusta Micro	40,144	39,073	1,071	4.1%
	Waterville Micro	21,941	21,252	689	3.1%
	Belgrade	1,648	1,612	36	2.2%
2020	Augusta Micro	39,944	38,152	1,792	4.5%
	Waterville Micro	22,411	21,326	1,085	4.8%
	Belgrade	1,634	1,563	71	4.3%
2015	Augusta Micro	40,684	39,064	1,620	4.0%
	Waterville Micro	22,656	21,548	1,108	4.9%
	Belgrade	1,701	1,632	69	4.1%
2010	Augusta Micro	41,635	38,534	3,101	7.4%
	Waterville Micro	22,776	20,750	2,026	8.9%
	Belgrade	1,729	1,609	120	6.9%
2008	Augusta Micro	41,779	39,703	2,076	5.0%
	Waterville Micro	22,822	21,504	1,318	5.8%
	Belgrade	1,768	1,688	80	4.5%

Source: Maine Department of Labor

Table 5 depicts Belgrade's unemployment rate is a reflection of both of the Labor Market Area's, with a few variations and usually trending slightly lower. Belgrade is a net

contributor of workers to the regional economy as are all small towns in the area. Augusta and Waterville are the only net importers of workers.

Employment

The American Community Survey sorts the labor force into five categories. The category of “management, business, science and art” is the largest in both the fields that it encompasses as well as the persons in the category for Belgrade. This category includes management, business, and financial occupations; computer and mathematical occupations; architectural and engineering occupations; life, physical, and social science occupations; community and social service occupations; legal occupations; educational instruction and library occupations; art, design, entertainment, sports, and media occupations; health diagnosing and treating practitioners and other technical occupations; and finally health technologists and technicians. Due to how many occupations are included in this category, it is the reason for such a high number of employees in the category.

Table 6: Occupational Profile for Belgrade Workers

Occupation	2010	% of Total	2020	% of Total
Management, Business, Science, Art	598	40.8%	568	41.3%
Service	202	13.8%	259	18.9%
Sales and Office	245	23.5%	342	24.9%
Natural Resource, Construction, and Maintenance	156	10.6%	87	6.3%
Production, Transportation, and Material Moving	166	11.3%	118	8.6%

Source: Maine Department of Labor

Belgrade’s workforce can also be broken down by the industry of employment. This is not as specific as describing a person’s actual job. For example, a job in the manufacturing category may include secretaries, managers, sales staff, and skilled workers all together. Breaking industries down in this way provides information to gauge which sectors of the economy are doing well and expanding. An additional advantage is that the Maine Department of Labor uses this classification for its annual updates.

Due to Belgrade proximity to the Augusta, it is likely that a large number of those employed in Belgrade are state employees. However, given the various types of state jobs, it is not possible to determine which occupational profile or industry profile would include state employees.

Table 7: Industry Profile for Belgrade Workers

Industry	2010	% of Total	2020	% of Total
Agriculture, forestry, fishing & hunting, mining	19	1.3%	0	0%
Construction	150	10.2%	49	3.6%
Manufacturing	83	5.7%	107	7.8%

Wholesale Trade	68	4.6%	74	5.4%
Retail Trade	159	10.8%	265	19.3%
Transportation & warehousing, and utilities	52	3.5%	28	2.0%
Information	54	3.7%	0	0%
Finance & insurance, real estate, rentals and leasing	63	4.3%	56	4.1%
Professional, scientific, and management. And administrative waste management services	26	1.8%	150	10.9%
Educational services, health care and social assistance	497	33.9%	489	35.6%
Arts, entertainment and recreation, and accommodation and food services	76	5.2%	42	3.1%
Other services, except Public Administration	137	9.3%	55	4.0%
Public Administration	83	5.7%	59	4.3%

Source: Maine Department of Labor

The above table indicates the largest industry for Belgrade workers is the educational services, health care and social assistance industry by a significant amount. The retail trade and the professional, scientific, and management and administrative waste management services categories had the most growth from 2010 to 2020, both growing by approximately 9%. The other services-- construction, information, and agricultural categories -- saw significant decline, with the agricultural and information categories losing all of their employees.

While all of the categories experienced changes through the years, to completely lose two industries is interesting. Despite this, the changes in categories that Belgrade is experiencing is similar to what neighboring communities and the greater Augusta Labor Market Area are seeing. These changes are indicators for local and regional economic growth. For example, the manufacturing category is in the headlines when a mill or plant closes, and retail is in the news when a store opens or closes. Belgrade's strength is in the educational and health fields. Fortunately, both sectors are expected to continue to grow as Central Maine seeks to expand offerings to adapt to changing populations and to become a draw for professionals. Belgrade and its workforce are positioned to take advantage of predicted economic trends.

Inflow and outflow counts gathered by the U.S. Census are helpful in that they show where residents of an area work. In the case of Belgrade, a survey responses indicate that 1,352 residents of Belgrade leave the town to work. It also shows that 92 residents live and work in Belgrade, while another 534 come into Belgrade for employment. Again, these counts are based on surveys, thus they are dependent upon survey respondents.

See *Image 1* below for details.

Image 1: Inflow and Outflow Counts for Belgrade

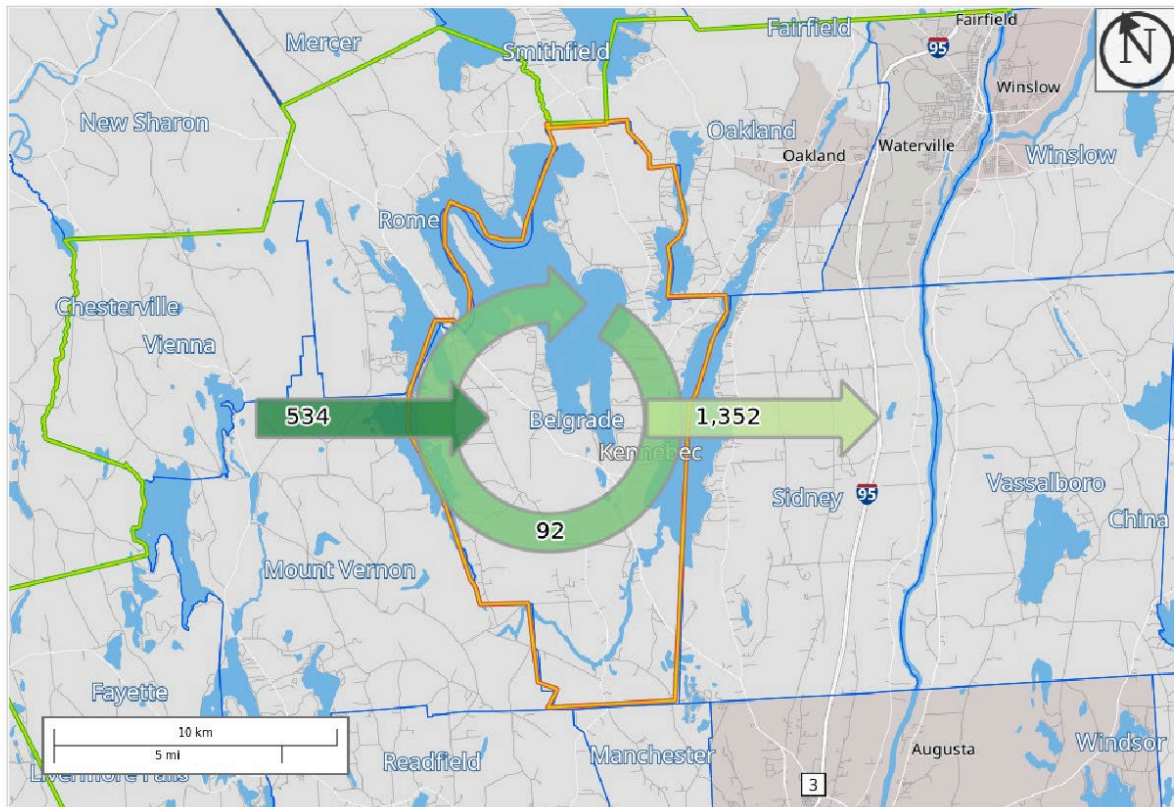
Inflow/Outflow Report

All Jobs for All Workers in 2020

Created by the U.S. Census Bureau's OnTheMap <https://onthemap.ces.census.gov> on 10/27/2023

Inflow/Outflow Counts of All Jobs for Selection Area in 2020

All Workers



Map Legend

Selection Areas

- Selection Area
- Remainder Area

Inflow/Outflow

- Employed and Live in Selection Area
- Employed in Selection Area, Live Outside
- Live in Selection Area, Employed Outside
- Note: Overlay arrows do not indicate directionality of worker flow between home and employment locations.



Local Business Climate

The retail/commercial economy of Belgrade is comprised of small businesses primarily in the service and retail sectors to serve both the year-round and seasonal residents of Belgrade. The commercial and retail enterprises are in one of two sections of town, either the Village or the Depot. The businesses in the Village are primarily comprised of restaurants, seasonal or temporary lodging, and small stores. The Depot houses the original Hammond Lumber Company location, started in 1953 and now employing over 120 people across the company's various locations. Also located in the Depot portion of town are several marinas and a convenience store.

The following list of business was derived from information provided by the town as well as the Comprehensive Plan Committee. This table is not intended to be an exhaustive list of businesses in Belgrade. This table reflects statistical data; it does not take into account the numerous home businesses that surely exist but offer limited outside employment or services. Many of these businesses are solely for an extra income and primarily utilize web-based sales.

Business	Industry	Location
Belgrade Lakes Farmers Market*	Local goods	Main Street
Belgrade Lakes Seafood and Dairy Bar*	Dining	Main Street
Christy's County Store	Convenience	Augusta Road
Day's Store*	Convenience	Main Street
Hello, Good Pie Co. Bakery and Gourmet Kitchen	Baked Goods	Main Street
H.J. Blakes for Goodness Sakes*	Dining	West Road
Sadie's Boathouse Restaurant*	Dining	Marina Dr
Dockside Physical Therapy	Healthcare	Depot Road
Sunset Grill	Dining	West Road
Village Inn and Tavern*	Dining	Main Street
Water Dance Farm Stand	Produce	Augusta Road
Balloons and Things	Party Supplies	Main Street
Gagne & Son Concrete	Construction	Old Route 27 Road
Hammond Lumber	Construction	Hammond Drive
Mind, Body, Soul Wellness Center	Holistic Healing	Main Street
North Belgrade Gun Shop	Firearms	Route 8
Remedy Salon & Spa	Spa	Main Street
A Second Life	Consignment Store	Manchester Road
Belgrade Lakes Reservation Center	Lodging	
Castle Island Camps	Lodging	Castle Island Road
Lakeside Cottage Rentals	Lodging	Marina Road
Lakeside Inn in Belgrade Lakes	Lodging	Maine Street
Loon Ridge of Belgrade	Lodging	Augusta Road
Partridge Cottage	Lodging	Davenport Road
Woodrest Cottages	Lodging	McGrath Pond Road
Belgrade Boat Shop	Recreation	Oakland Road
Belgrade Lakes Golf Club	Recreation	Water Road
Belgrade Boat Storage and Marine Repair	Recreation	Augusta Road
Belgrade Lakes Marine & Storage	Recreation	Augusta Road

Great Pond Marina*	Recreation	Marina Road
White Willow Retreat for Dogs	Pet Care	Augusta Road
Country K9 Too	Pet Care	Manchester Road
All Purpose Storage	Storage Facility	Manchester Road
The Maine Place	Gift Shop	Main Street
Sparkles Art Studio	Classes, Gift Shop	Main Street
Brightside Marine	Repairs, Restorations	Hulin Road
All Seasons Tree Service	Arborist	West Road
Town of Belgrade	Municipal	Augusta Road

**Seasonal Business*

Regulation of Economic Development

Belgrade currently has a Commercial Development Review Ordinance that is applicable to the construction or placement of any new building or structure for non-residential use with a footprint greater than 1,200 square feet or the expansion of an existing non-residential structure. It is also applicable to the change on an existing nonresidential use, in whole or in part, to another nonresidential use, the construction or expansion or paved areas or other impervious surfaces more than 5,000 square feet, and facilities for the storage of bulk fuel, chemicals or other flammable or hazardous substances that exceed 1,000 gallons.

Some concerns that residents have historically had revolved around the development of the historic Village area and the effect that it would have on the visual and ecological standards that the town has long held itself to.

Economic Growth Projections

Historically, Belgrade's economic growth has followed a similar path as much of the region with the exception of the dependence on tourism. The seasonal industries provide a range of employment opportunities, oftentimes for those under the standard working age such as high school students who work only during the summer. These positions are often at recreational locations such as marinas, golf courses, camps, and seasonal restaurants, of which Belgrade has a plethora of.

One of the many side-effects of the COVID-19 pandemic is the increase in residents who work from home. While these positions existed prior to 2020, there was certainly a boom during and after the pandemic. This has led to an increase in demand for access to stable and adequate internet access as well as the commonality of shared workspaces.

As discussed in the Community Profile chapter, it is predicted that Belgrade will see a 9.1% population growth rate, or 289 new residents by 2040. This population growth will affect everything from jobs to housing. As the demographics of Belgrade change, the town will also need to adapt to commercial opportunities to compete in the region to maintain existing residents and draw new residents.

Analysis

Economic activities provide goods and services used by the residents of the community, as well as local jobs. At the same time, they can have undesirable impacts on neighboring properties and the environment, such as noise, dust, litter, traffic, visual degradation or loss of privacy. Mitigating these impacts will protect both parties and ensure that the community's existing character is maintained.

Residents may not feel that large-scale development is appropriate for Belgrade and will not support it. However, the growth in demand for jobs, concern over commuting pressure, and the lack of opportunities in town suggest that the need for locally based measures be taken.

Belgrade operates primarily as a tourist economy. There are multiple marinas, camps, and seasonal businesses that thrive during the months of May-October. There are also businesses that are year-round, primarily restaurants and some construction field businesses.

To maintain the idyllic and historic nature of the town, Belgrade will need to maintain a balance of encouraging growth and providing services, while keeping with the existing and desired qualities of the town.

Housing



Housing supply and prices in Belgrade are key determinant factors for future growth in the town, as well as for more diversity in town. A mixture of housing types encourages a variety of residents in age, gender, family composition, and economic standing.

While local government is not, and should not be, in the business of providing housing to residents, many local policies influence the style, price, and location of housing. Towns have historically been responsible for ensuring that their residents have safe, sanitary, and secure homes, and do what they can to keep the cost of housing down. While municipalities have little control over the supply of housing, it is possible for municipalities to have some impact. Programs are available, primarily through grants, such as if a large portion of housing is substandard. If housing prices rise to a point where homes are not affordable either to purchase or build, and rental rates are also not affordable, that will present a major challenge to the community. This chapter gives a holistic view of the housing supply of Belgrade.

You may notice that the population number varies between 3,250 and 3,148. This is because 3,250 is from the Decennial Census and the 3,148 is from the 2021 American Community Survey (ACS) and is an estimate. It has been used in certain charts because the data was calculated based on this number from the ACS. To change the population and recalculate the data would be inaccurate. It is important to understand this because it could be construed as a mistake, and it is not. These discrepancies have been annotated in several places.

Housing Stock

Belgrade's demographic profile documents a steady decline in the average household size as well as a steady increase in average age. While at first glance, this may indicate that fewer units of housing are required, this actually translates to a need for more units.

Based on projections by the Maine State Economist, Belgrade's population is expected to grow by 9.1%, or 289 residents, by 2040. At that point, the population of Belgrade is estimated to be 3,539. When divided by the current average household size of 2.45 for Belgrade, a population of 3,539 residents

would require approximately 1,445 housing units.

While the U.S. Census currently notes there are 2,267 housing units in Belgrade, approximately 885 of those units are for seasonal, recreational, or occasional use. With the subtraction of the seasonal units from the total unit count of Belgrade, the estimated housing count for year-round residents is 1,382. Therefore, the projected population growth would require an additional 60 units by 2040.

Belgrade is a prime location for people who work either in the Augusta or Waterville Micropolitan areas. Both areas are within easy commuting distance and already serve as service centers for Belgrade. Other nearby towns are experiencing commercial growth; that includes First Park Business Park in Oakland and the downtown revitalizations in Augusta and Waterville.

As discussed in the Community Profile chapter, it is important to mention that population projections are just that, projections. These estimates are subject to many outside factors, some of which are impossible to predict. An example of one such factor was the COVID-19 pandemic. With the changes the pandemic wrought, it will take some time for population projections and demographic analyses to determine the impact and extent of the changes. Several changes that will need to be monitored for the effect they have include: the prevalence of remote work, multi-generational family groups, and the relocation from urban to rural living.

Regardless of changes, both known and unknown, population projections are a starting point and worthy of consideration when planning for the future. As such, they are considered in this Plan.

To some extent, statistics representing household size relate to the type of housing as well as the quantity of housing units needed. Younger, single, seniors, and couple/partner households tend to reside in smaller homes, apartments, and 55+ communities. Homes with larger lot sizes tend to attract couples who intend to add children to the home or existing family residential units. With the growing trend of the “Baby Boomer” generation retiring and downsizing from family homes, it can be anticipated that the market for larger family homes will be reduced in favor of smaller, more efficient housing, or “right-sized housing” that would allow that generation to age in place.

Based on the professional expertise of members of the Belgrade Comprehensive Planning Committee, Belgrade is somewhat of an outlier in this situation. Current committee members work in the real estate industry and report that it is just as equally common that the “Baby Boomer” generation is not necessarily downsizing, in fact Belgrade is seeing a trend in the older generations buying larger homes. This may be for year-round multi-generational housing or to have the space available for visitors. While an important trend to note, it is equally important to note that this is anecdotal evidence and not something that can be verified by town data.

Both the United States Census and the American Community Survey record housing units and their associated characteristics. Table 1, below, highlights discrepancies between the 2020 Census and the 2021 American Community Survey datum.

Table 1: Housing Comparison

	2010 Census	2020 Census	2021 ACS
Population	3,189	3,250	3,218
Total Housing Count	2,198	2,267	2,212
Occupied Housing Units	1,265	1,394	1,278
Vacant Housing Units*	933	873	934

Source: 2010 & 2020 Census, 2020 ACS

**Vacant includes seasonal housing*

As with other chapters of this plan, in some cases the 2021 American Community Survey was used for calculations rather than the 2020 Census Data. In a couple of situations, the

2020 Census was not published, and switching back and forth between data sources would be inaccurate. Data sources will be notated for tables and charts.

Table 2 shows the development of housing types and occupancy characteristics since 2000.

Table 2: Housing Type and Occupancy Characteristics

	2000	2010	2015	2020	2021
Total Housing Units	2,007	2,198	2,137	2,212	2,293
Occupied Housing Units	1,178	1,265	1,266	1,278	1,308
Vacant Housing Units	829	863	871	934	985
Seasonal Housing Units	786	735	783	842	885
Mobile Homes	142	137	128	140	168
Owner Occupied	1,008	1,078	1,118	1,212	1,225
Renter Occupied	170	187	148	66	83
Single Unit Housing	1,782	1,824	1,923	2,038	2,089
Two or Multi Unit Housing	83	132	107	34	36

Source: American Community Survey

Housing numbers most significantly increased from 2000 to 2010, growing by 87 units in the 10-year period despite a recession occurring during some of that time. The number of mobile homes in Belgrade dropped from 2000 through 2015 before significantly rising to 168 in 2021.

The number of vacant units is of concern. The United States Census defines a vacant unit as a housing unit that is unlive in at the time of the interview, unless it is a temporary absence such as for illness or vacation. It also includes a unit which is entirely occupied by persons who have another residence elsewhere, a common occurrence in Maine where such residents are colloquially known as “snowbirds.” These are typically older residents who live in warmer climates during the winter months.

There is no data directly addressing how many renters live in houses versus apartments. However, there is data on how many housing units there are in a building or house. According to the ACS survey, there are 36 dwellings with two or more units in Belgrade. Several of the units may be counted solely, or duplicated, in the owner-occupied count for situations in which the homeowner lives on the premises but there are attached units.

Occupancy Characteristics

Average family size is classified as people who are living together and are related, as opposed to average household size, which is all residents of a housing unit, related or not. Table 3 shows the changes in the average family size in Belgrade since 2010.

Table 3: Average Family Size

Average Family Size	
2021	2.86
2020	2.73

2015	2.74
2010	3.09

Source: American Community Survey

The average household size in 2021 for owner-occupied housing units was 2.51 whereas the average household size of renter-occupied units is 1.51. Smaller households, especially those in rental units, tend to be in flux more often than larger households. Based on the ACS count of 36 rental units, it would equate to approximately 55 residents, a small proportion of Belgrade residents when compared to the 1,225 owner-occupied units which accounts for 3,075 residents.

Seasonal Housing

Belgrade has a large number of seasonal housing units. Almost 1/3 of the housing units in town are classified as for seasonal, occasional, or recreational use. Of 985 vacant units in Belgrade, 13 were classified as for sale, 25 were classified as sold, not occupied and another 62 were vacant. The remaining 885 units were seasonal. As discussed in the Community Profile chapter, the seasonal changes in demographics play a huge role in Belgrade.

A trend that has seemingly grown through the years of the Covid-19 pandemic (2020-2021) is the conversion of seasonal homes to year-round residences. While also anecdotal knowledge, it is believed that many of these homes were converted in order to allow the owners a location to live away from more dense population sectors. Again, this is not data that is tracked at the town level, as such, it is known through the experience of members of the Comprehensive Planning Committee.

Assessing Profile

The current number of real estate accounts in Belgrade is 2,365 with 738 vacant. Of those accounts, 58% of the total assessed value of Belgrade are waterfront properties, and 42% are non-waterfront.

Table 4: Tax Exemptions

Tax Exemptions	
Type	Quantity
Homestead	938
Veterans	107
Blind	2

Source: Town of Belgrade

The town last went through a revaluation in 2012.

Housing Condition

There is minimal statistical data on the age and condition of Belgrade's housing stock. Both the census and the ACS contain questions on when each house was built as well as if the house has modern plumbing, heating, electric and various other utilities. These

counts are based on a statistical sample; these samples are so small, especially for a town the size of Belgrade, that the figure is more of a guess than a true data set. It is common in Maine for seasonal homes, commonly called a “camp” to not contain electricity, central heat and even plumbing. This can further skew what data is available and not provide a realistic picture of housing conditions.

A census tally of substandard living conditions is intended to identify substandard housing conditions. According to ACS data, Belgrade does not have a problem with substandard housing. However, there are 10 units considered to be over-crowded based on having more than one person per room, excluding bathrooms and kitchens.

Like many towns in Maine, the age of homes in Belgrade spans a significant length of time with an estimated 380 homes being built prior to 1939. We know there are multiple homes constructed prior to 1900 that are still occupied. The age of housing structures can often be used as an indicator of conditions. While some older homes are structurally sound, elements such as plumbing, wiring, insulation, and heating are often inadequate and must be upgraded. Homes built prior to the lead paint ban in 1978 must be remediated. According to the United States Environmental Protection Agency, up to 87% of homes built prior to 1940 have some sort of lead-based paint. Homes built in more recent decades are more likely to conform to modern building codes and best practices. In Belgrade, 380 homes, or 16.6%, were built prior to 1939.

Table 5: Age of Housing Units

Year Structure was Built	# of Units	Percent of Total
1939 or Prior	380	16.6%
1940-1949	104	4.5%
1950-1959	208	9.1%
1960-1969	92	4.0%
1970-1979	321	14.0%
1980-1989	351	15.3%
1990-1999	270	11.8%
2000-2009	446	19.5%
2010-2019	121	5.3%
2020 or later	38*	N/A

Source: American Community Survey

**Number is based off building permits issued by town*

Table 4 shows a relatively even spread of housing age.

While we can presume that there were some homes built in 2020 through 2022 that data is not available via the census or the town. Data is available for 2023 and on.

Table 5 compares the age of the housing stock of Belgrade to several neighboring communities. Belgrade has significantly more units built before 1959 compared to other towns.

Table 6: Housing Stock Comparison

Year Structure was Built	# of Units				
	Oakland	Sidney	Belgrade	Readfield	Manchester
1939 or Prior	257	216	380	238	200
1940-1949	69	32	104	23	52
1950-1959	30	78	208	51	60
1960-1969	87	126	92	46	113
1970-1979	76	306	321	346	175
1980-1989	120	401	351	164	228
1990-1999	249	374	270	191	141
2000-2009	191	401	446	167	138
2010-2019	138	256	121	47	43
2020 or later	0	0	0	24	0

Source: American Community Survey

Price and Affordability

Price and the subsequent affordability of housing is a significant factor in the economic development of a town. Housing prices are not something that can be controlled by a municipality; they are influenced by local, state, and federal trends such as interest rates, job availability, and more. If supply and demand are not in sync, it can result in insufficient available housing and unaffordability for prospective workforce members, and it can push current residents out of town because they cannot afford to maintain their current home expenses or incur even greater expenses, including property taxes, insurance and utilities.

The growth management goal for affordable housing states that 10 percent of new housing should be affordable. A housing unit is considered affordable if a household whose income is at or below 80 percent of the Area Median Income (AMI) can live there without spending more than 30 percent of their income (including insurance, utilities, heat, and other housing-related costs). This is true for both renters and owners.

How the growth management goal is attained is left up to the town. In other words, that 10 percent could be stick-built homes, mobile homes, rental properties, or elderly apartments.

The determination of whether housing is affordable begins with a discussion of cost. The Census provides good (though sample-sized) data regarding prices of housing in Belgrade (see table 6 below). This price is derived through owners' estimation of their homes' value, meaning it does not necessarily match up with actual recorded sales prices, assessor evaluation, or real estate appraisals. As such, this information is a good starting point; however, the margin of error is significant and should be taken into consideration.

According to the American Community Survey, the median value of owner-occupied housing in Belgrade was \$218,800 in 2010 and the 2020 median home price for owner-occupied units was \$222,300.

Table 7: Value of Owner-Occupied Housing

	2000	2010	2020
Median Value*	\$99,400	\$218,800	\$222,300
Less than \$50,000	29	40	18
\$50,000-\$99,999	313	52	24
\$100,000-\$149,999	181	113	181
\$150,000-\$199,999	82	257	265
\$200,000-\$299,999	41	291	404
\$300,000-\$499,999	20	166	162
\$500,000-\$999,999	4	50	131
\$1,00,000 or more	4	84	27

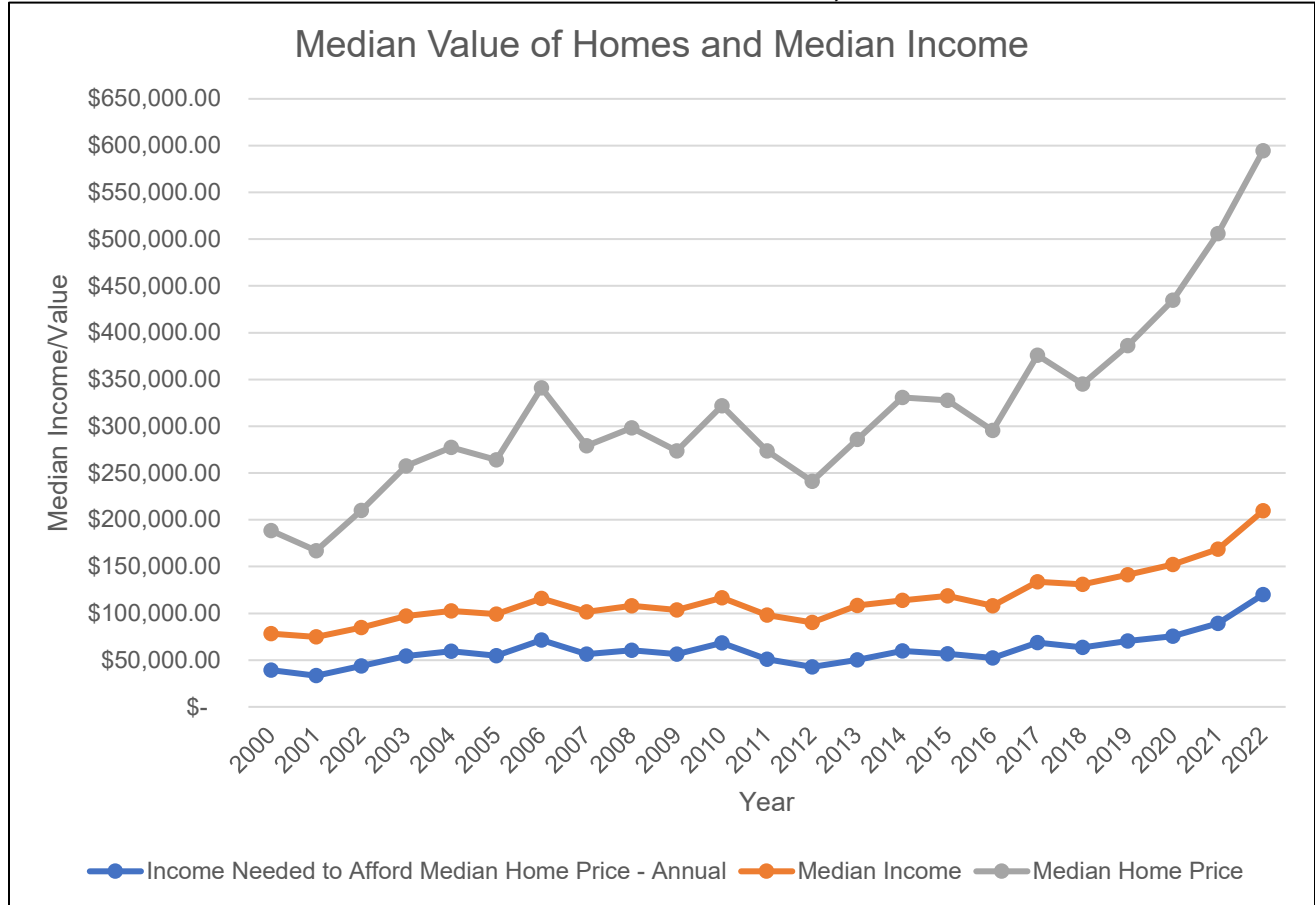
Source: American Community Survey

**Value is the respondent's estimate of how much the property would sell for should it be listed for sale at the time of the survey.*

As mentioned above, it is important to keep in mind that the estimated value of homes in the above tables is supplied by the respondent and does not represent the true appraised value or what the dwelling would actually sell for. The prices attributed to home value in 2020 also do not encompass the exorbitant increase in real estate costs that Maine saw throughout 2021 and 2022.

Maine State Housing Authority (MSHA) tracks actual sales data. According to that agency the median price (actual sale) for a home in Belgrade in 2022 was \$385,000. The lowest median home price occurred in 2001 when homes sold for an average of just \$92,250. Belgrade, like most municipalities, saw the effect of the recession that hit in 2008 with a drop in median home prices through 2010. There have been rises and falls in value before the market stabilized and began to steadily rise from 2018 to present. Figure 1 below compares the median home price in Belgrade since 2000 with the town's median income as well as the income that is needed to afford a home at the median price.

Figure 1: Comparison of Median Price of Homes, Median Income, and Income Needed to Afford Median Value Home, 2000-2022



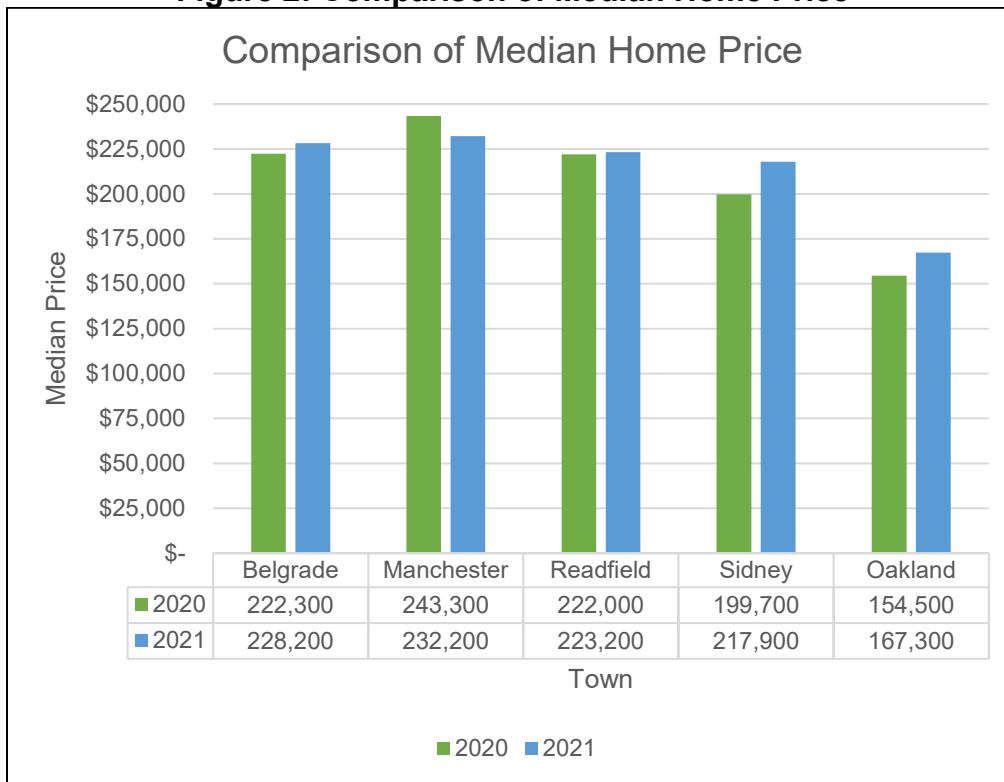
Source: Maine State Housing Authority

The data shows that while the fluctuations of the median income and the income needed to afford the median home price mimic each other, there is a growing separation in the two variables. Additionally, the median home price is increasing at a much more significant rate since 2018.

The median home price for all of Kennebec County, according to MSHA, was \$243,000 in 2021 and jumped to \$265,000 in 2022. The median home price for Belgrade is over \$100,000 greater than the average for Kennebec County.

The median home price in Belgrade is most comparable to the neighboring town of Readfield. In 2020, the difference in the two communities' median prices was negligible. Although Readfield's price increased in 2021, it was less than how much Belgrade's increased. The median home prices in 2020 and 2021 has been reliably higher than both Sidney and Oakland, and slightly lower than that of Manchester. Of the five municipalities that are compared, Manchester is the only community in which the median home price decreased.

Figure 2: Comparison of Median Home Price



Source: American Community Survey

Provision of affordable housing options are assisted by MSHA programs. MSHA provides some state and federal options for many types of buyers and renters. Maine State Legislature enacted several new bills with provision to attempt to remediate the affordable housing problem statewide. In Belgrade, those provisions must be codified no later than July 1, 2024.

Household Income

According to data compiled by MSHA, the median home price in Belgrade of \$228,200 is considered unaffordable based on the 80% of median income rule mentioned above. MSHA calculates an affordable home at various income levels, factoring in interest rates and other variables, and using the rule of thumb that a homeowner or renter should pay no more than 30 percent of his/her monthly income in housing costs (including utilities).

Data from MSHA calculates the annual household median income in 2021 in Belgrade as \$79,366. The annual median income needed to afford the median priced home, according to MSHA, is \$89,256, or \$42.91 an hour based on a 40-hour work week. The difference in income and housing cost is \$9,890. The average cost of a home would need to be approximately \$299,900 to be afforded by those earning the annual median income. 56.5% of households in Belgrade cannot afford the cost of a median priced home at the current median price.

Table 8: Belgrade's Estimated Household Incomes

Total Households: 1,308	Approximate Number of Households
Less than \$10,000	.8%
\$10,000 to \$14,999	1.6%
\$15,000 to \$24,999	5.3%
\$25,000 to \$34,999	7.1%
\$35,000 to \$49,999	6%
\$50,000 to \$74,999	25.3%
\$75,000 to \$99,999	17.8%
\$100,000 to \$149,999	19.6%
\$150,000 to \$199,999	5.7%
\$200,000 or more	10.7%
Median Income	\$77,161

Source: American Community Survey

By these standards, of the 92 homes sold in Belgrade, 34 were considered affordable and 58, or 63%, are not affordable to households earning the median income. That is 5% higher than Kennebec County, where 58.3% of households cannot afford the median house cost.

This means Belgrade homes are not affordable for 824 households out of the 1,308 households currently living in town. Lower-income and younger households tend to rent rather than own, so measures of home values are less impactful in some ways. However, the high cost of home ownership in Belgrade may inhibit population growth.

Rental Housing

The table below shows changes over the last three decades in the cost and affordability of rental housing in Belgrade.

Table 9: Month Rental Cost

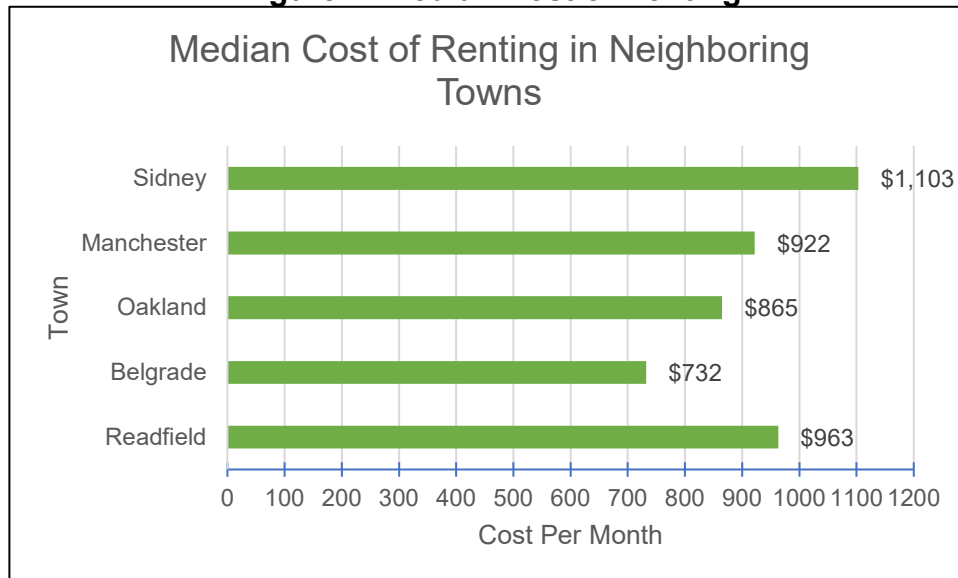
	2010	2020	2021
Median Monthly Rent Specified Renter-Occupied Units	\$751	\$1,281	\$732
Less than \$500	68	0	0
\$500-\$999	113	16	46
\$1,000 - \$1,499	0	33	0
\$1,500 - \$1,999	0	0	0
\$2,000 - \$2,499	0	0	0
\$2,500 - \$2,999	0	0	0
More than \$3,000	0	0	0
No Rent Paid	6	17	28
Rent as a Percent of Household Income			
Less than 20%	33	40	44
20-30%	45	0	0

30% or more	84	9	11
Not Computed	25	17	28

Source: American Community Survey

The above data is provided by the American Community Survey. Comparatively, data provided by MSHA shows that for a two-bedroom rental unit with utilities, rent averaged \$985 per month in Kennebec County in 2020. The yearly income needed to afford a rental fee of \$985 would be \$39,397, while the average yearly income of a renter was \$32,358. 57.7% of households could not afford a rental unit at the median cost. The MSHA statistics are not broken down by municipality, as they are organized by county and labor market area only.

Figure 2: Median Cost of Renting



Source: American Community Survey

Belgrade's median cost of rent is significantly lower than that of the neighboring towns. All surrounding towns are included in either the Augusta or Waterville micropolitan labor market areas. Based on data from MSHA, rentals in the Augusta LMA have not been considered affordable since 2015, and rentals have been unaffordable for the Waterville LMA since 2003.

Housing Location Trends

Belgrade's character is defined by its three neighborhoods the Depot area, Village area and North Belgrade. The Depot area is considered the region of town where one of the original train depots was located and is generally considered to be the southern tip of Belgrade. The Village area of Belgrade is the western portion of town and contains several landmark businesses, seasonal recreation businesses, and serves as the town's commercial center. North Belgrade is in the northern portion of Belgrade and follows the corridor of State Routes 8 and 11. North Belgrade residents generally consider themselves to be a part of the Waterville Micropolitan area while the Depot and Village consider themselves to be a part of the Augusta Micropolitan area.

Existing housing is dispersed fairly evenly throughout the town, with the highest density located in the Village area. Statewide, the trend for development of new housing has been characterized by the term “suburban sprawl.” There is an undeniable trend of small suburban towns seeing the population grow while the population of cities shrinks. This trend has affected Belgrade. Belgrade has large swaths of land available for development should ownership patterns and economic conditions allow/encourage it.

Town records show 386 permits issued over the last 2 years with 224 permits issued for new homes and new plumbing and septic systems.

Table 10: Permits Issued

Year	Houses/Dwellings	Manufactured Homes	Internal Plumbing	Septic Systems	Seasonal Dwellings
2023	13	5	24	74	1
2022	17	3	41	46	0

Source: Belgrade Code Enforcement

The remaining 162 permits were for additions to existing homes or accessory structures. Accessory structures include structures such as sheds, garages and other non-residential buildings.

Projections

Referring to the population projections contained in the Community Profile, it is difficult to anticipate what demand for housing will look like. The community profile chapter describes a population growth of 289 residents in Belgrade by 2040. Based on the current average household size, that growth would dictate the need for 118 new housing units by 2040. Those projections do not take into account natural changes in population, or the changes wrought by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Household sizes cannot shrink indefinitely; in fact, data shows they are plateauing over the last 20 years. Even if household size continued to shrink an additional 5 percent over the next 15 years, the average will go to about 2.2 persons per household. An average household size of 2.2 and a growth of 289 residents would require 131 new housing units by 2040. A growth of 118 housing units by 2040 would be 7 per year, a growth of 131 units would be 8 per year. Both estimates are easily achievable.

Such a small rate of growth can pose a challenge to ensuring that a portion of new units are affordable. Maine’s growth management goal states that 10% of new housing should be affordable to households earning less than 80% of the median household income. It is up to the town to decide how that 10% will be dispersed, whether through conventional stick-built homes, mobile homes, rental units, or 55+ living. Under the current growth predictions of 7 or 8 new units per year, that would equate to less than one unit per year being affordable.

To accommodate affordable housing for families, units appropriate for seniors and assisted living situations, housing will need to be developed, or converted, with those goals in mind. The aging population of Belgrade will need specific housing situations to maintain residency in town.

Current Housing Regulations

The Town of Belgrade does not have any municipal zoning. The town has adopted the mandatory floodplain and shoreland ordinances as well as a minimum lot size ordinance. The minimum lot size ordinance gives a minimum lot size for residential and commercial use as well as individual private campsites. This ordinance also dictates setbacks, road frontage and lot coverage.

Outside of these three uses, there are no established restrictions on lot area and dimensions, except that a lot requiring subsurface wastewater disposal must meet the State Minimum Lot Size Law.

The State of Maine in 2023 enacted several bills to promote affordable housing. These bills are part of a nationwide trend to encourage affordable housing. As this legislation is mandated and overrides municipal home rule authority, Belgrade revised its ordinances as necessary to meet the requirements of the affordable housing legislation.

Any time a municipality's Comprehensive Plan is updated, it is always good practice to review and amend ordinances or regulations to ensure consistency throughout.

Transportation



This chapter describes the transportation system, identifies deficiencies within the transportation facilities serving Belgrade, and provides general recommendations for meeting the existing and future needs for those facilities. This chapter also addresses how Belgrade can provide the most cost-effective transportation choices, while the Future Land Use Plan and Local Economy chapters address how the town can manage development to make the best use of the system.

As Belgrade becomes more complex and interwoven with neighboring communities, the need for a high-quality transportation system becomes more and more critical. Businesses need transportation to move products and draw customers. Commuters need a way to get to their jobs out of town, and employers need a way to get out of town workers here. Families need transportation to schools, services, shopping, and recreation. And tourists and summer residents need a way to get here.

Belgrade's Highway System

The backbone of Belgrade's transportation system is the state highway system, designed to accommodate large volumes of motor vehicles. "State highways" also include the category of state aid roads, maintenance of which is only partially borne by the state. Belgrade's state highways are:

State Route 27: Route 27 is the major arterial road through Belgrade, running from southeast to northwest. Although not considered by the state as one of the principal components of the statewide network, the highway does receive heavy usage by commuters into Augusta, tourists to western Maine, commercial traffic, local residents, and visitors. Traffic at the Sidney town line is almost double that at the Rome end, indicating that about half the traffic ends up locally.

State Route 11: State Route 11 separates from Route 27 near the Depot and runs northward along the western shore of Messalonskee Lake toward Oakland. Route 11 is classified as a major collector. This category permits a slightly lower construction standard and lower priority for investment, generally based on less traffic volumes. Route 11 does receive more traffic on average than Route 27 through Belgrade Lakes village, mostly due to rapid recent growth. The roadway is much narrower than Route 27, although it was recently rebuilt north of Route 8.

State Route 8: Although Route 8 originates in Augusta, it does not separate from the rest of the system until North Belgrade, branching off toward Smithfield. From that point, Route 8 is a "state aid" road, meaning that the state is responsible for maintenance and improvement of the roadway, but the Town is responsible for winter maintenance.

State Route 135: Route 135 originates at Route 11 near the depot, crosses Route 27, and proceeds south into Manchester. Route 135 is a minor collector, which puts it even lower as a priority for improvement dollars. The Town would have to pay 1/3 of the cost of any significant improvements. Route 135 has seen a substantial increase in traffic

over the past decade, primarily due to the development of southern Belgrade and Manchester. The roadway is in fair physical condition.

Castle Island Road: Castle Island Road originates along Route 27 about 1.5 miles south of Belgrade Lakes and runs west to Mount Vernon. Although not assigned a route number, Castle Island Road is in the same category for maintenance responsibilities (minor collector) as Route 135 and receives about the same traffic volume.

Town of Belgrade Roads

Belgrade has approximately 34 miles of town ways. The Town is entirely responsible for maintenance of these roads. The Town maintains a road and paving management plan for the purpose of identifying priorities in maintenance and upgrades. The large majority of town road length is paved. The plan calls for re-paving every three years or so, but the variable cost of paving materials makes it hard to stick to that schedule.

The road maintenance reserve currently stands at \$885,528.08 as of May 2024.

The Town maintains a Road Maintenance Capital Reserve Account to even out annual appropriations. In 2023, the Town budgeted \$680,175.00 for road maintenance and paving projects, \$191,175.00 for general maintenance, and \$489,000.00 for winter maintenance, making the road system second only behind education as the largest budget component of the Town. However, \$0 of that came from the Reserve Fund, and the Town received \$46,756 in 2023 from Maine DOT local road assistance and over \$1.1 million a year in vehicle excise taxes, so little road funding comes from property taxes. The DOT funds have not changed in over 20 years, but local excise tax revenues have more than doubled. Vehicle excise tax revenue is not specifically appropriated for maintenance

A large number and mileage of local roads are private ways, where the users are directly responsible for maintenance. Most of these are in the form of camp roads. Private ways are extremely variable in their quality. The Town has no standards for construction or maintenance of private ways. Two significant problems have been identified with private ways: 1) they are sometimes not constructed to permit emergency vehicles passage, and are often not maintained in the winter, creating potential for delays in fire protection and public safety response. 2) Poorly constructed roads, especially leading into lakefront camps, generate serious runoff and erosion problems, leading to pollution and phosphorous loading in the lakes.

Bridges

Out of necessity, Belgrade's road system includes a number of water crossings. Many of these are small culverts that, are the responsibility of the town to maintain. Culverts must be cleaned and inspected regularly and replaced as necessary. Crossings that have a span of 20 feet or greater are the responsibility of the State. The Maine DOT inventories all bridges on a regular basis.

Table 1: State-Maintained Crossings

Local Name	Bridge ID #	Location	Notes
Crank Bridge	5254	Manchester Road	Built in 2003
Mill Bridge	3934	Smithfield Road	Built in 1947, in fair condition
Batchelders Road Crossing	3906	Manchester Road	Built in 1986, in satisfactory condition
Welman Bridge	2922	Manchester Road	Built in 1941, in satisfactory condition
Belgrade Lakes Bridge	2063	Main Street	Built in 1996, in good condition
Belgrade Bridge	2062	Augusta Road	Built in 1971, in satisfactory condition
Narrows East Bridge	0485	Castle Island Road	Built in 1986, in satisfactory condition

Source: Maine DOT Bridge Inventory

No work is contemplated on any bridges in the current published Maine DOT workplans. The location and maintenance responsibility of bridges is shown on the Transportation Map.

Traffic Controls

Traffic controls are infrastructure to help manage the flow of traffic. They range from STOP and YIELD signs to signals and raised islands.

Despite having state highways crossing the town, the traffic counts in Belgrade do not yet warrant many traffic controls. There is one flashing yellow “caution” signal at the intersection of Routes 27 and 135. Most intersections are controlled only by “stop” or “yield” signs. Several intersections have traffic islands at the junction – notably Route 135 with 8/11, and 8/11 with 27 – but these are vestiges of earlier designs, not modern traffic controls. Due to safety concerns at the intersection of Routes 8 and 11, the DOT erected a reflectorized median strip to channel traffic, but it was abandoned in 2013. It appears to have made some difference, combined with some shifting in alignment with the recent Route 11 improvements.

In Belgrade Lakes village, there are numerous pedestrian crosswalks. These have been put in rather casually over the years, however Maine Department of Transportation reconstructed the sidewalks in 2019 to meet modern safety standards.

Traffic Volumes

The volume of traffic is a measure of the intensity of road use and the potential for traffic delays, congestion, or unsafe conditions. Economic developers also use traffic volumes to determine potential customer base. Historic traffic count data, measured in Average Annual Daily Traffic, equivalent to vehicles per day, is compiled by Maine DOT.

Table 2: Traffic Counts

Location	AADT14	AADT17
IR 1375 (DEPOT RD) NW/O SR 8/11/27	1440	-
IR 1525 (KNOWLES RD) N/O IR 356(KNOWLES)	1040	-
IR 1525 (KNOWLES) E/O SR 135(MANCHESTER)	1180	930
IR 2076 (WINGS MILLS RD) W/O SR 135	830	780
IR 2254(TAYLOR WOODS) W/O SR 11(OAKLAND)	630	630
IR 2539 (BARTLETT RD) NW/O SR 135	630	480
IR 2589 (DUNN RD) SW/O IR 784 (WEST RD)	-	310
IR 2589 (WEST RD) NW/O IR 2667	-	680
IR 2589 (WEST RD) S/O IR 2667	-	580
IR 2589(WEST RD) S/O IR 1528(LAKE SHORE)	700	670
IR 2590 (POINT RD) N/O SR 27(AUGUSTA RD)	460	-
IR 2667 (CASTLE ISLAND RD) E/O IR 2589	1520	1350
IR 2667 (CASTLE ISLAND RD) W/O IR 2589	1540	1470
IR 2667(CASTLE ISLAND RD) @BR#0485(E BR)	1310	1320
IR 331 (MINOT HILL RD) E/O SR 135	760	720
IR 331 (WEST RD) W/O SR 135 (MANCHESTER)	790	910
IR 371 (MCGRATH POND RD) E/O SR 8	410	370
IR 799 (HORSE POINT RD) W/O SR 8	560	-
SR 11 NE/O SR 8 (SMITHFIELD RD)	2960	2630
SR 11(OAKLAND) NE/O IR 2254(TAYLOR WOODS	3540	-
SR 135 (MANCHESTER) S/O IR 331 (WEST RD)	1530	1450
SR 135 (MANCHESTER) SW/O SR 27 (AUGUSTA)	1510	-
SR 135 N/O IR 331 (MINOT HILL RD)	1410	1350
SR 135 NW/O SR 8/11	2400	2220
SR 27 (AUGUSTA) NW/O SR 135 (MANCHESTER)	5840	5700
SR 27 (AUGUSTA) SE/O SR 135 (MANCHESTER)	4510	-
SR 27 (MAIN ST) S/O IR 725 (HULIN RD)	3620	3970
SR 27 N/O IR 725 (HULIN RD) @BR# 2063	3290	3560
SR 27 NW/O IR 2667(CASTLE ISLAND RD)	3730	3650
SR 27 SE/O IR 2667 (CASTLE ISLAND RD)	4950	-
SR 8 NW/O IR 1334 @ SMITHFIELD TL	-	1340
SR 8(SMITHFIELD RD) N/O IR 1220 (WILDER)	1450	1580
SR 8(SMITHFIELD) N/O IR 2254(TAYLOR WOOD	1810	1950
SR 8/11 NE/O SR 135	4310	3890
SR 8/11 S/O SR 11	4300	-
SR 8/11 SW/O SR 135	2190	1980
SR 8/11/27 N/O IR 1375 (S JCT) @ RR XING	5750	5890
SR 8/11/27 S/O IR 1375 @ BR# 2062	6290	6490
SR 8/11/27 SE/O IR 2228(MILLS)@SIDNEY TL	6510	6570

Source: Maine Department of Transportation

Key For Table 2:

SW/O= southwest on	NE/O= northeast on	SR= state route
SE/O= southeast on	N/O= north on	IR= inventory road
S/O= south on	W/O= west on	EB= eastbound
NW/O= northwest on	E/O= east on	WB= westbound

Sidewalks

There are limited pedestrian options in town. The only sidewalks are located in Belgrade Lakes village. They have been in place for many years but were refurbished when MDOT widened Route 27 through the village in 2019. There have been conversations surrounding the installation of sidewalks and greenways to enhance Belgrade's walkability, however these are constrained by safety concerns due to busy roads and the inherent cost of installing said infrastructure.

Parking

Parking in Belgrade is traditionally provided by the business responsible for generating the demand. The exception is in Belgrade Lakes Village, where land is at a premium, businesses provide their own on-site parking. Belgrade's Site Review Ordinance contains a comprehensive set of standards for off-street parking for new development.

Minimal public parking is provided other than that associated with public facilities, such as the town office, school, and community center. Parking in Belgrade Lakes village is a continuing problem, however the Friends of Belgrade Lakes Village has recently completed a project to allow parking at the Village Green. On-street parking aisles are too narrow and spaces unmarked. Despite this step forward, the village area is constrained for space, leaving few options. Even converting a private lot into parking could damage the charm of the carefully developed village.

Traffic Safety

A critical element in management of the transportation system is the safe movement of traffic. Records are kept of vehicle accidents, and areas along the highway system are marked as High Crash Locations (HCL). Maine DOT defines HCLs as a roadway intersection or segment that experiences eight or more accidents in a 3-year period and has a Critical Rate Factor (CRF) of more than 1.00. The CRF is a measure of the actual number of accidents compared to the theoretical accident experience that would normally be expected in that situation.

The intersection of Augusta Road, Cemetery Road, and Manchester Road is the only location in Belgrade to have been designated a High Crash Location. From 2021 to the time of the writing of this plan, there were 10 total crashes with 6 injuries being reported.

There are several structural techniques that can "calm" traffic in a downtown. Shifting the curbing out into the roadway at pedestrian crossings is called a "neckdown" because

drivers feel they must slow down to fit through a tighter space (the driving lanes are actually the same width). Pedestrians, meanwhile, feel safer with a shorter distance to cross the road. Stamped pavement (imitation cobbles) and speed tables (not speed bumps) also cause drivers to slow. Street trees and other amenities make Main Street feel less like a highway.

Traffic and Development

The quality of the transportation system depends not only on its physical condition, but on the usage it receives. Government is generally responsible for the infrastructure itself, but in the past has not had much control over how it is used. Traffic levels are a function of the location of trip points (“traffic generators”); traffic conflicts (“crashes”) are often the unintended consequence of those locations. Major traffic generators in Belgrade, such as the Village area, the schools, and the Depot area, tax the capacity of roads. Impacts are different; in the downtown, high traffic locations result in congestion and slow travel; on Route 27, local traffic generators produce potential conflict points.

Noise and light pollution can occur adjacent to roads; however, the roads in Belgrade generally do not carry enough traffic to rise to a nuisance level. There has been some concern with noise from commercial vehicles in Belgrade Lakes village, where homes are close to the road, but there is little to be done about it. The use of speed tables in the village to calm traffic was briefly considered but rejected because of the noise potential. Light from development can also spill onto the roadways, creating a safety issue for motorists. Belgrade’s Commercial Development Ordinance contains standards limiting the light spilling from new development.

Town Ways

The Town maintains 35.26 miles of town ways. The function and condition of these roads varies, from downtown streets to narrow, rural roads. The Town maintains a complete inventory of these roads. Significant roads include:

- Dunn Road
- West Road
- Horsepoint Road
- Depot Road

The 2022-2024 road improvement and paving plan for Belgrade has 5.97 miles of town roads being paved. The 2025-2027 improvement and paving plan has a further 6.24 miles of town roads listed.

The budget for improvements to the road system is not part of the CIP but is set annually. The town received \$54,000 in 2025 from the Maine DOT URIP (Urban-Rural Investment Program) funding, which partially offsets this expenditure.

Transportation Choices

Even though in today's society, a huge majority of trips and miles travelled are by motor vehicle, there is still demand for alternatives. Some segments of the population (notably youth and some elderly) cannot use motor vehicles to get around, and the increasing costs and impacts of energy consumption argues for reduced automobile use into the future. While we do not anticipate an enormous shift in demand over the period of this plan, transportation systems take an enormous amount of time and money to put in place and require planning well in advance.

Common alternatives to the car or truck in densely developed areas are the rail or public transit service; however, Belgrade does not have enough development density to support either. The rail line from Lewiston to Waterville (Pan Am Railways) runs through the eastern edge of town, with a crossing at the Depot. This line does not carry passengers, only various industrial cargo and material. While it is possible that this line could see restoration of passenger rail service, the chances of a stop in Belgrade are remote.

Public transit, either commercial or public bus lines, is not available in Belgrade. Kennebec Valley Community Action Program's Transportation program provides limited services to residents and all transportation for those on MaineCare on an as needed and scheduled basis. In 2023 KVCAP transported 10 Belgrade residents 1,800 miles for various appointments. Neighbors Driving Neighbors is a regional initiative in which volunteers provide rides for residents of the communities of Belgrade, Vienna, Rome, Readfield, Fayette, and Mt. Vernon

A variation on public transit is carpooling or vanpooling. Some small towns have advocated for or developed park-and-ride parking lots, which allow commuters and others to consolidate their trips by sharing rides. In Belgrade, no park-and-ride is in place or proposed. This has not prevented residents from adopting their own practices. However, the census reports that roughly one in 14 Belgrade workers carpool to work. The attraction of carpooling is expected to rise consistently with the increase in gasoline prices. Employees at Bath Iron Works, located in Bath and Brunswick, commonly carpool with co-workers and sometimes purchase 15-passenger vans to transport coworkers.

Belgrade's 1998 and 2013 comprehensive plans noted good potential for a park-and-ride lot along Route 27 at some point. A park-and-ride lot could reduce traffic on the southern end of Route 27 and commuting costs. However, since the usual commute is just 10 minutes or so into Augusta, it may not be utilized. A lot located near Belgrade Lakes village could double as public parking during the weekends, but finding a location poses the same problem.

Bicycle travel in Belgrade is limited to on-street routes or cross-country trails. The town has a lot of potential to develop biking as both transportation and recreation through projects such as dedicated bike trails or dedicated lanes on roadways. Strategies could be as simple as facilities for bike storage at strategic locations. The town should identify bicycle-friendly destination points, such as the school, community center, and the village areas, and target them for bike facilities.

There are a large number of active cyclists in town. Route 27 is the only road with shoulders wide enough to accommodate bikes, but the volume of truck traffic may intimidate some people, and the village area is so constricted, cyclists must use the driving lane. Other local roads are not as busy but do not have adequate shoulder widths for bikes.

Bicycle touring is a large and growing component of tourism, especially in scenic areas such as Belgrade. Most of Belgrade's rural roads are narrow and the shoulders are too poor to permit safe biking (or walking), but traffic is low enough that it should not threaten bicycle touring by experienced riders. If interest exists, the town could designate a bike tour loop and post with signs to encourage use, possibly in conjunction with other lake towns.

There are no public airports in Belgrade. There is one private, unimproved airstrip off of Route 11. The nearest public airports in Waterville and Augusta are 12 miles and 13.5 miles away from Belgrade respectively.

A transportation system is a function of the usage it receives. Government has historically been responsible for maintaining the infrastructure, but until recently has not exerted much control over how (and how much) it is used. In urban areas, we are seeing how lack of attention to land use patterns has overburdened transportation systems, leading to increased costs for safety, congestion, and added capacity.

Traffic levels grow continuously – a function of the economy and lifestyles. The price of gas coupled with the recession of 2008 generated a pause in traffic growth of only a couple of years. Freight (truck) traffic continues to grow, a result of our increased standard of living (more consumer goods and food travelling longer distances) and an increasing reliance on roads by freight carriers.

In terms of road use, however, automobile traffic has the greater impact. Most trips originate in the residence and move to employment centers, schools, or shopping. Belgrade is an example of the “residential” end of traffic generators. Residential traffic is dispersed, characteristic of the town's pattern of development. There are few large businesses that draw a large number of employees or customers. The three largest are Hammond Lumber and Gagne Concrete, in the Depot, and the Municipal system. None of these are large enough to create congestion on their own. Belgrade Lakes has a cluster of small businesses and residents. Because of the road alignment, a good tourist day sees significant congestion.

Environmental Impacts of the Transportation System

We most often think of the transportation system as a means to move people and goods, and seldom consider how it affects our natural and built environment. We all know about air pollution, and how nice it would be if we drove less and in cleaner cars. But much closer to home is where we see how the transportation system produces both positive and negative impacts.

We think of Belgrade as a scenic town, but for most of us, scenery is only accessible via the transportation system. Route 27 and several minor roads provide panoramic views of lakes and bogs. There are no identified scenic overlooks or turnouts in Belgrade, though maybe there should be. Transportation improvements can often affect the built environment as well, with road widening impacting historic buildings, stone walls, or street trees, but there are no known issues with this in Belgrade.

By the very nature of its location and extent, the road system has great potential for impact on natural and environmental assets. In Belgrade, perhaps the most sensitive of these is the potential for stormwater runoff affecting lake water quality. Belgrade's Commercial Development Review Ordinance has strong standards to protect waterbodies from private construction activities as well as post-construction runoff (erosion control and stormwater management standards). 7 Lakes Alliance has completed over 600 erosion control projects since 1995, most along roadsides, especially private roads. Belgrade's road crew is trained and certified in "best management practices" for erosion control on road maintenance activities.

Transportation facilities can also impact wildlife habitat, including travel corridors. This can be particularly evident at stream crossings or near wildlife management areas. There are several wildlife areas in Belgrade adjacent to roads, but no recognized locations where wildlife movements have been impacted by existing roads. The town's road crew should continue to take training on environmentally sensitive road maintenance.

Analysis

- Runoff and erosion are serious problems that occur on many roads. 7 Lakes Alliance is working with road owners through educational and work projects.
- Belgrade has a Road Ordinance, which contains standards for roads proposed for Town acceptance. However, to be eligible for acceptance, a road must serve at least two year-round residences, so many camp roads would not qualify, even if they met the construction standard. The Town also has road standards in its Subdivision Ordinance, which apply to private roads as well as those proposed for acceptance; however, most camp subdivisions predate the ordinance.



TOWN of BELGRADE
**LONG POND
BEACH**

**Welcome to
Long Pond Beach**

Open Hours: Sunrise to Sunset

Please read and abide by the following:
NO LIFEGUARD ON DUTY—USE AT YOUR OWN RISK
SWIM ATTIRE REQUIRED
FOR HEALTH REASONS, SWIM DIAPERS MUST BE WORN
DIAPER CHANGING ONLY AT YOUR VEHICLE
NO LITTERING—CARRY IN, CARRY OUT
NO UNAUTHORIZED VEHICLES BEYOND THIS POINT
NO PETS ALLOWED
NO ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES
NO GLASS CONTAINERS
NO SMOKING
NO FIRES
NO CAMPING
NO REMOVING PLANTS, ROCKS OR ANY
OTHER FIXED OBJECTS

This area is maintained for your enjoyment.
PLEASE help by keeping it clean and report any
damage or vandalism to the Belgrade Town Office
at (207) 495-2268.

To report an emergency, Dial 911
POSTED BY ORDER OF THE BOARD OF SELECTPERSONS

**Enjoy our natural terrain park
at your own risk.**

Recreation is an essential element of Belgrade’s character. The plethora of lakes provides many opportunities for water-based recreation and the abundant undeveloped land provides opportunities to enjoy the open space. The town boasts a natural environment that provides an exceptional setting for outdoor recreation. But the town also strives to offer both organized and unorganized recreational opportunities, as well.

Most forms of recreation can generally be classified into one of two categories: organized, or “active,” recreation – examples include activities usually supported by developed facilities and programs, such as team sports and – unorganized, or “passive,” recreation, which includes activities that may have supporting facilities, but are more often independent or family pursuits; these are activities, such as hiking, that do not have structured programs.

Belgrade has a balance of developed recreational infrastructure, including cooperative recreation providers, as well as unorganized recreational opportunities, such as expanses of undeveloped open space and water-based recreation.

Organized or “Active” Recreation

Belgrade provides organized outdoor recreation opportunities for children and adults alike. Some of these offerings are school-sponsored, such as team sports in coordination with neighboring towns, while other offerings are through recreation programs through the Parks and Recreation Department. Table 1 below details the public facilities used for recreational activities.

Table 1: Public Facilities Managed by the Town of Belgrade

Public Facility	Offering/Location
Two public beaches	Swimming - Long Pond and Great Pond
Center for All Seasons	Community cultural and recreational hub - numerous offerings, detailed below
North Belgrade Community Center	Event and meeting rooms for rent. Community cultural and recreational offerings, especially for seniors
Belgrade Village Green	Gazebo, benches, bike rack - used for public and private events
Long Pond Beach	Water access to Long Pond, picnic tables
Peninsula Park	Water access to Long Pond
Hayden Park	Water access to Messalonskee Stream

Source: Town of Belgrade

The town maintains numerous public facilities for organized recreation. Ballfields and a basketball court are located at the Belgrade Central School. The four summer camps have recreation fields, but these are mostly limited to campers. The four parks in Belgrade offer opportunities for both organized and unorganized recreation.

Center for All Seasons: Built in 2002, the Center for All Seasons (the Center) is the recreational hub of Belgrade. It also provides space for community cultural activities. Located on the banks of Great Pond at 1 Center Drive in the Village, the Center provides a location for the Fire Department's annual Bean hole Supper, elections, charity fundraisers, after-school programs, Camp Golden Pond, an annual book sale, and pickleball, among other offerings.

The Center features a gymnasium, full kitchen, a meeting space, and a veranda with a breathtaking view of Great Pond. In fact, according to local history, this view inspired the setting for the play and movie "*On Golden Pond*" as the screenwriter spent his summers on Great Pond.

North Belgrade Community Center: Also serving as the Belgrade Senior Center, the North Belgrade Community Center, located at 508 Smithfield Road, is just north of the North Belgrade Village. It offers another local gathering place along with a small playground for young children. The North Belgrade Community Center hosts the Belgrade-Rome Special Needs Food Pantry, operated by volunteers, as well as a potluck supper on the second Sunday of each month. The North Belgrade Community Center can also be rented for events. The center is also now offering a variety of cultural and recreational offerings tailored for seniors.

Long Pond Beach: Long Pond Beach has a sandy beach and a park area. The park also has picnic tables, grills, and open space.

Programs Provided/Organized by the Parks and Recreation Department

Belgrade's Parks and Recreation was formed in 1976 and is run by a full-time Recreation Director and an Assistant Director. The Parks and Recreation Director is advised by the seven-member Parks and Recreation Board, made up of volunteers from the community. The Parks and Recreation Director is responsible for the administration of Belgrade's parks and its recreational offerings. The Parks and Recreation Department operates out of the Center for All Seasons, but also takes advantage of three of Belgrade's parks, two beaches, and the North Belgrade Community Center.

The Parks and Recreation Department strives to raise the quality of life for Belgrade residents, by providing gathering places, programming and events, and other offerings, such as the Village Green and gazebo and holiday events. In fact, many of the youth and adult recreational opportunities are provided by the Parks and Recreation Department. One of the most successful offerings is the summer concert series hosted in June through August featuring local musicians and bands.

Organized Youth Recreation

The Parks and Recreation Department offers a variety of youth programs, including:

- **After-School Enrichment Program (ASEP)** occurs each day after school and primarily serves elementary-age students from Belgrade Central School. The program includes a snack, homework time, structured games and free play monitored by staff members.
- **Kidzone** is offered during scheduled early release days and teacher in-service days as printed on the school calendar.
- **Vacation Camps** are offered during school vacations.
- **Camp Golden Pond** is a summer day-camp that serves children entering kindergarten through sixth grade. Held on the grounds of the Center for All Seasons, Camp Golden Pond offers opportunities for swimming, playing games, making crafts, weekly field trips, and more. The camp now offers a Counselor in Training program for youth in 7th-9th grades.
- **Sail Camp** is a new program as of 2025. Offered at the CFAS, the half day program is for middle and high school age registrants.

Organized team sports are available for school-aged children and are provided by both the RSU 18 and the Kenneth Workman Youth Sports Program.

The Kenneth Workman Youth Sport Program is a non-profit organization that organizes and provides youth sporting activities, such as T-ball, softball, baseball, basketball, soccer and more for youths of all ages.

RSU 18 includes Belgrade, China, Sidney, Rome, and Oakland. This regional school unit provides organized team sports, such as basketball, baseball, softball, tennis, and more.

Adult and Age Friendly Recreation

The Belgrade Parks and Recreation Department recognizes the importance of offering recreational activities for adults as well as youth. Their adult offering includes:

- Monday Morning Wake-up Walk
- Ping-pong
- Coffee and Conversation
- Pickleball
- Strength and Balance classes

Other adult recreational opportunities include hunting, fishing, hiking, snowmobiling, and boating, though these are unorganized activities and do not require programs or structure. They are detailed further below.

Belgrade does not offer any adult education classes; those offerings are available in nearby Waterville or Augusta. Belgrade has no formal partnerships with neighboring communities, however residents are able to register for offered programs and classes. Classes are also coordinated with the Health Center for advertisement and enrollment.

The Belgrade parks and recreation department has goals to install a handicapped accessible walkway to the town beach behind the Center for All Seasons. There are also

goals to expand the Center for All Seasons to offer showering facilities for staff, expanded storage, and the installation of pickleball courts.

Community Partners

Belgrade is fortunate to have a well-structured Parks and Recreation Department and a number of public facilities for organized recreation, in addition to partnering with other towns in Regional School Unit 18 to provide youth sports programs.

The Parks and Recreation Department is also beginning to partner with the 7 Lakes Alliance to facilitate getting residents to use the extensive trails offered by 7 Lakes Alliance. Residents of neighboring communities also make up about 25% of registered participants of the various organized offerings.

As Belgrade's population has shifted recreational opportunities have more extensively partnered with local senior groups and hosting programs that are all-ages friendly. This will continue to occur as Belgrade's overall population ages.

Private Entities that Provide Organized Recreational Opportunities

In addition to the assortment of organized recreation opportunities provided directly by the town or through collaboration with nearby municipalities, some recreational opportunities are available through private entities.

Table 2: Private Recreational Offerings

Facility	Offering/Information
Belgrade Lakes Golf Course	Privately owned, but open to the public
Camp Runoia	Girls camp
Camp Modin	Co-ed camp
Camp Laurel	Co-ed Camp
Pine Island Camp	Boys Camp

The championship-caliber Belgrade Lakes Golf Course is privately owned but open to the public. The scenic and peaceful 240-acre golf course, created by Harold Alfond, naturally fits the landscape. Alfond wanted to create "a golf club for the regular guy" with the Belgrade Lakes Golf Club. Not only did he achieve that goal, but the 18-hole public golf course soon became well-known for its stunning views and layout.

Unorganized or "Passive" Recreation

Unorganized recreation typically refers to outdoor facilities or properties that are open for public use but generally do not have structured hours or specific programs. This type of recreation ranges from community beaches and parks to solitary pursuits like hunting, fishing, and hiking. As Belgrade's public parks and public facilities are covered above, this section will highlight unorganized recreational activities.

Belgrade's natural environment provides an exceptional setting for outdoor recreation. Belgrade is the center of a large complex of lakes and forested hills, providing opportunities for residents and visitors. Outdoor recreation opportunities are an economic asset, drawing summer residents and day-trippers alike. Belgrade has four summer youth camps and, per the 2021 American Community Survey, 885 seasonal homes, many of which are here to take advantage of the town's recreational assets.

The Gawler Wildlife Management Area is approximately 364 acres in size, containing a variety of habitats. Access is limited to one road frontage, as such recreational use is hindered. A satellite lot of the Gawler WMA is the Hammond Lot, located at the south end of Messalonskee Lake, the list contains two endangered species and one of concern.

Water Access and Activities

The land in Belgrade is carved from lakes. Forming portions of Belgrade's boundaries are Great Pond, Long Pond, Messalonskee Lake (Snow Pond), Salmon Lake and McGrath Pond.

All of Belgrade's larger lakes are suitable for boating and swimming, though the shorelines of these waterbodies are mostly heavily developed and privately owned, which limits access, to a degree. Fortunately, all the lakes have at least one public boating access point. Belgrade boat launches are described as follows:

- **Great Pond:** Located south of Belgrade Lakes village near Great Pond Marina. This access point is owned by the Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry (DACF), and has a 20-foot wide, hard-surfaced ramp and 15 parking spaces.
- **Messalonskee Lake:** Located at the mouth of Belgrade Stream south of Belgrade Depot. This access point owned by DACF and has a 20-foot wide hard-surfaced ramp for carry-in access, as well as 16 parking spaces.
- **Salmon Lake:** Located on the west shore of Salmon Lake, near North Belgrade village, this access point is owned by the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife (DIF&W). It includes a hard-surfaced ramp and parking spaces for six boat trailers and four additional vehicles.

Additional public boat launches nearby include:

- **Long Pond in Mount Vernon.** This ramp is state-owned and just across the bridge on Castle Island Road.
- **Belgrade Stream in Mount Vernon.** This ramp is a state-owned carry-in launch.
- **Messalonskee Lake in Oakland.** At the northern tip of the pond.
- The Maine Atlas also shows a launch at the north end of McGrath Pond, but it is not listed in the State's database.

Belgrade is bounded on three sides by water, making it a popular place to access via boat. As such, there are at least three boat tie-ups available for visitors. Two of the tie-ups are public, (Day's Store and the 7 Lakes Alliance) on the Long Pond side and the one on the Great Pond side is at the Village Inn.

The town maintains two public swimming beaches, both located within the Belgrade Lakes. The beach on Long Pond (Lakeshore Drive) has about 50 feet of beach area and has restrooms and parking spaces. The beach on Great Pond is associated with the Center for All Seasons. Parking is available at the Center. The beach is about 200 feet long and is heavily used by the town's day-camp programs and residents.

Despite having many miles of waterfrontage within town boundaries, the vast majority is privately owned and not accessible to visitors and those who don't own the property or pay to use it. The lack of public access inhibits the widespread usage of the lakes.

Fishing

A draw for fishermen and women for over 100 years, the Belgrade Lakes offers a wide range of target species and methods. As with access for swimming and boating, water access for fishing in Belgrade is limited only by the privately owned and heavily developed shoreline, although the town has ensured accessibility to all the Belgrade Lakes. Because of the town's location among the Belgrade Lakes, fishing is an important activity for many.

Land-Based Activities

Land-based recreational activities consist of hunting, hiking, birdwatching, snowmobiling, cross-country skiing, cycling, and many more. These activities take place throughout town, but many depend in large part upon public access to tracts of undeveloped land. This access can be in the form of publicly owned or managed tracts of land but can also include easements or landowner agreements permitting public use of private land, such as with snowmobile trails. Continued access to these opportunities is contingent upon the continuing goodwill of landowners.

Development in rural areas and expanded posting of land could potentially limit future outdoor recreational opportunities in Belgrade unless steps are taken to preserve open space.

Trails System

While there is an abundance of undeveloped land in town, an established trail system is lacking within the town boundaries of Belgrade.

Snowmobile Trails: The non-profit snowmobile club, the Belgrade Draggin' Masters Snowmobile Club, maintains approximately 43 miles of snowmobile trails throughout town. In some situations, these trails may serve dual purpose and provide access for hiking, biking, cross country skiing, or snowshoeing. The trails are accessible to snowmobiles via the permission of private landowners. The Club hosts a Landowner Supper every year in April to show their appreciation for trail access. The supper includes a free meal and door prizes for the landowners.

The Club holds a trail day for trail maintenance and building bridges, as well as Club cookouts for members. The Club operates through volunteers and donations from local business owners.

Hiking Trails: There is a shortage of maintained hiking trails in town, but residents have access to the expansive 7 Lakes Alliance trail system through neighboring towns. Despite the home office of the 7 Lakes Alliance being in Belgrade, there are no trails owned by the group in Belgrade. In fact, there are no trails owned by any public entity in Belgrade.



There is a local resident who owns a large amount of property who has developed a trail system on his property that is multi-use and open year round. The Belgrade Lakes Golf Course allows cross-country skiing on the greens during the winter.

The Town owns two neighboring parcels of land located on the Dunn Road. While much of one of these parcels is dedicated to the Transfer Station, the approximately 96-acre swath of land is entirely undeveloped. Belgrade intends to harvest portions of the parcels in order to fund the development of multi-use trails for the public.

Public Use of Private Land

A sizable portion of outdoor recreation, including hunting, snowmobiling, and hiking, occurs on private land with the generous permission of private landowners. Maine has a strong tradition of allowing access to private land for recreational purposes, as well as traditional beliefs of how individuals should respect private land. Unfortunately, in some circumstances people have abused this tradition and caused property damage.

These ongoing abuses frequently cause private landowners to “post” their property. Under Maine law, landowners can hang signage or otherwise mark their property lines to not be crossed unless the user has been granted specific permissions from the

landowner. The result is that many areas are now off limits to the public. Another cause for land posting is development in rural areas.

Hunting

While Belgrade does have several professional hunting guide services in town, the town is better known for its abundant fishing opportunities due to its ideal location. A variety of types of hunting are allowed on the Gawler Wildlife Management Area, which is state-owned. Additionally, the marshy shorelines of the lakes in Belgrade offer an opportunity for duck hunters. Maine is part of the Atlantic Flyway; as such, there are numerous duck species that have open seasons.

Regional Recreational Resources

Towns surrounding Belgrade supply numerous recreational opportunities. The Kennebec Highlands, spanning Rome, Mount Vernon, Vienna, and New Sharon, have over 10 miles of trails for various uses. Snow Pond community trails in Oakland are well known for bird-watching opportunities and mountain biking. “A” Trail and Mountain trail in Rome and Vienna offer mountain bikers a challenging ride with the reward of wide spanning views of the chain of lakes.

Conserved Lands

There are many public and private tracts of land in Belgrade, used for multiple purposes, including conservation and/or public recreation. Table 3 lists conserved land areas and ownership.

Table 3: Conserved/Preserved Properties in Belgrade*

Property	Entity	Acreage**
Bickford/Sunrise	Maine Farmland Trust	102 & 22
Great Pond Boating Access/Marlin K Stuckey et al	Maine Bureau of Parks and Land	7
Conserved land on Great Pond	7 Lakes Alliance	41 & 12
Conserved land on Rt 27	7 Lakes Alliance	38
Gawler WMA- Sawyer Lot	MDIF&W	15
Gawler WMA	MDIF&W	38
Gawler WMA	MDIF&W	42
Gawler WMA	MDIF&W	47
Gawler WMA	MDIF&W	47.9
Gawler WMA	MDIF&W	51.8
Gawler WMA	MDIF&W	50
Gawler WMA	MDIF&W	48.8
Gawler WMA	MDIF&W	39.3
Ray Hammond Memorial Forest	Maine Woodland Owners	82
Conserved land	7 Lakes Alliance	38
Cayer Parcel	7 Lakes Alliance	24

Gawler WMA- Bartlett Parcel	MDIF&W	95
Gawler WMA- Messalonskee Lake Bog	MDIF&W	75
Messalonskee Lake Boat Access	Maine Bureau of Parks and Lands	80
Conserved land	7 Lakes Alliance	27 (only partially in Belgrade)
Salmon Lake Access/Stevens Lot	MDIF&W	3
Messalonskee Lake Boat Access- Ethel Bates	Maine Bureau of Parks and Lands	1
Conserved land	7 Lakes Alliance	3
Long Pond/Synercap Corp	Maine Bureau of Parks and Lands	43 (only partially in Belgrade)
Messalonskee Lake Boat Access/Patrick and Isabel Tardiff	Maine Bureau of Parks and Land	80

Source: Maine Conserved Land & Beginning with Habitat

**List may not be complete*

***Acreage represents the reported acreage*

Belgrade has a significant holding of formally conserved or preserved lands, not including properties enrolled in the Open Space, Farmland, Forest Farmland, or Tree Growth Tax Law Programs. The 7 Lakes Alliance is a partner in conservation and owns approximately 11,000 acres in Belgrade. Other partners in conserving land in Belgrade are detailed under Community Partners, below.

Currently, the open spaces commonly used for recreational purposes are a mixture of publicly and privately owned lands. For example, the Belgrade Draggin' Masters Snowmobile Club secured access to numerous privately owned parcels over the course of many years, though access is exclusive to snowmobiles.

Belgrade does not currently have an open space fund for the acquisition of property. The town has a strong history of partnering with the 7 Lake Alliance, local lake associations, and other conservation groups to conserve land.

Community Partners in Preserving Land

The Town of Belgrade's efforts to preserve and conserve land, provide recreational opportunities, and continue to offer desired recreation are an effort that spans multiple entities. Interested parties include:

- Maine Farmland Trust
- New England Forestry Foundation
- Belgrade Lakes Association
- 7 Lakes Alliance
- Cemetery Committee
- Lakes and Natural Resources Committee
- Parks and Recreation Department

Analysis and Key Issues

As Belgrade evolves and changes, consideration must be given to desired recreational opportunities compared with existing recreational offerings. Currently, Belgrade has done an exceptional job of providing plentiful recreational opportunities for residents of all ages. As the demographics of the town are trending toward an older population with fewer youths, the town should consider if their age-friendly offerings are adequate to meet future demand.

Belgrade has excellent prospects, both for organized and unorganized recreational opportunities. For the organized recreation, the existing facilities and active Parks and Recreation Department can continue to provide desired recreational opportunities. For the unorganized recreational opportunities, Belgrade's lakes, open space, and relationships with the 7 Lake Alliance will also continue to provide recreational destinations. In these areas, it is merely a matter of anticipating demand and coordinating activities.

Agriculture & Forestry



Introduction

Farming, be it large or small, has long been the backbone of Maine communities. There are numerous benefits to locally produced food, although it is an asset often overlooked and taken for granted.

In addition to food production generated from known sources, local farms instill community and rural character, provide open space, offset rising taxes, and typically are aesthetically pleasing.

Currently, if not provided locally, most of the food Maine residents consume is imported from either the western United States or from foreign countries. As a result, the food supply could be interrupted or threatened for any number of reasons. Production from local farms makes substantial contributions to a community's food needs daily but becomes more valuable in times of high costs and supply disruption.

Due to the dramatic expansion of industrial agriculture, family farms are quickly becoming a relic of the past across America. Between 1974 and 2002, the number of corporate-owned U.S. farms increased more than 46 percent. Between 2005 and 2006, the United States lost 8,900 farms (a little more than one farm per hour). Another threat is development; according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, 3,000 acres of productive farmland in America are lost every day to development.

On a more local level, American Farmland Trust's 2020 national study, *Farms Under Threat: The State of the States* found that only 4.8 percent of Maine's total agricultural land is currently protected, the lowest percentage of any New England state. This same study estimated that one of the most significant threats to farmland in Maine is low-density residential development.

Importance of Local Farms

There are many driving factors for supporting local farms or farming related businesses. Supporting the local economy is one of the factors, as is food safety. The trend of local farms disappearing affects not only food supply and quality but also the local economy; as family farms are bought out, the businesses they helped support disappear. This results in shops, restaurants, and other businesses closing, while communities shrink, which forces people to drive an hour or more for shopping or other necessary services. Activities such as agritourism are growing quickly, especially in Maine, and give farms income from shopping, educational, and experiences.

Equally important, farm, and forested land also provide a buffer against high taxes. Dozens of fiscal studies have demonstrated that farm and forest land have a higher ratio of tax revenue-to-service demands than any other form of commercial or residential development. Although open land pays minimal in taxes, it requires even less in services

from the town, especially compared with a house on the same tract of land. While the farmland may require fire protection and road access, it would not require education, recreation, a transfer station, or any other services which contribute to the town's annual expenditure. It makes sense that undeveloped land subsidizes the "tax base" that towns so often pursue.

Finally, food security is an ever-increasing concern. As a perishable commodity, most foods cannot realistically be stashed away in case of an emergency. The way in which food is made available is critically dependent on fossil fuels and an intact transportation system and recently, it has become evident that both fossil fuel and the transportation system are not immune to issues. For this reason, many towns and cities are actively pursuing and encouraging plans to increase local food production.

To combat food insecurity, Maine's Climate Action Plan, "Maine Won't Wait," has established goals to increase the amount of Maine-produced food consumed in the state, and to increase the total amount of land conserved statewide to 30 percent by 2030.

The benefits of local farms and farmland are too numerous to cover in their entirety. In addition to the details above, other advantages include climate and environmental benefits such as reducing emissions associated with developed land, and preserving the climate sequestration benefits that can result from farmers using climate-friendly agricultural practices on the land.

Agriculture in Maine

In Maine, agriculture and forestry provide the traditional economic backbone and the original engine that drove the local economy, and in many ways, they still do. Farm Credit East's Northeast Economic Engine report, completed in 2020, calculated that Maine's agriculture industry contributes over \$3.6 billion in economic impact and supports approximately 27,000 jobs statewide. In Belgrade, even today dozens of families rely on employment in the agricultural or forestry industries, or revenue from their own fields or woodlots. Farm and forest land also provides open space, wildlife habitat, and aesthetics, all which Belgrade residents consider elemental to their community's rural character.

Of note, Maine has ranked number one in the United States for wild blueberry production since the 1950s. As of 2020, Maine ranked third in the production of maple syrup and ninth for potato production.

Table 1: Major Land Uses in Maine

Census of Agriculture	2007	2012	2017
Farms (number)	8,136	8,173	7,600
Approximate total land area (acres)	19,745,809	19,739,717	19,740,213
Farmland (acres)	1,347,566	1,454,104	1,307,613
Farmland in total land area (percent)	6.8	7.4	6.6
Cropland (acres)	529,253	477,343	472,508
Cropland in farmland (percent)	39.3	32.8	36.1
Cropland used as pasture (percent)	7.0	2.1	2.4
Cropland irrigated (percent)	3.9	6.5	6.7
Harvested cropland (percent)	74.4	84.0	76.3
Woodland (acres)	660,679	773,652	685,529
Woodland in farmland (percent)	49.0	53.2	52.4
Woodland in pasture (percent)	4.0	3.5	3.1
Permanent pasture and rangeland (acres)	62,014	81,707	62,369
Pastureland in farmland (percent)	4.6	5.6	4.8
Land in house lots, ponds, roads, wasteland, etc. (acres)	95,620	121,402	87,207
Land in house lots, ponds, roads, wasteland, etc. in farmland (percent of total farms)	7.1	8.3	6.7

Source: USDA, Economic Research Service, 2023

The USDA breaks down the major land uses for Maine's farmland based on type of commodity produced (Table 1). Even though agriculture is not the thriving industry it once was in Maine, from the data in Table 1, it is evident that Maine is still very much a farming state. While the number of farms has decreased since 2007, the approximate total acreage changed little in the decade between 2007 and 2017.

The data in Table 1 shows that the type of farms have changed. Most notably, the acreage used for cropland decreased by 11 percent, cropland used as pasture decreased by 66 percent, and irrigated cropland increased by 72 percent.

Agriculture in Kennebec County

The USDA conducts a county-by-county census of farms every five years. As of the 2017 Census of Agriculture (most recent data), there were 7,600 farms in Maine; a decrease of 573 or 7 percent since 2012, which showed 8,173 farms in the state. However, the Census of Agriculture showed 642 total farms in Kennebec County, a six percent increase since 2012, with 23 percent growing crops and 77 percent raising livestock, poultry, and related products (eggs, milk, wool, other animals, and animal products).

The 2017 Census of Agriculture data showed that in Kennebec County, the land area accounting for farmland was 82,132 acres, an increase of five percent since 2012, and

the average farm size was 128 acres, which is a decrease of one percent since 2012. The Census of Agriculture can break down farms by type and production by ZIP code. Not surprisingly, farm production in Belgrade mirrors that of Kennebec County.

Table 2: Kennebec County's Standing in Agricultural Sales

Top 5 counties in agricultural sales, 2017		Total receipts percent of State	Total receipts 1,000 dollars
Total receipts			
1. Aroostook County		30.3	201,974
2. Somerset County		12.6	83,931
3. Washington County		10.4	69,253
4. Penobscot County		7.6	50,915
5. Kennebec County		7.3	49,007
State Total			666,962

Source: USDA, Economic Research Service, 2023

Out of the 16 counties in Maine, Kennebec County ranked fifth out of the top five counties for agricultural sales in 2017. While Kennebec County is certainly not the center of Maine agriculture, local farms still contribute significantly to both the local and regional economies. The average farm in the region boasts an average market value of products sold at around \$76,000. Furthermore, many of these farms contribute to the labor market by providing employment.

From equipment repair to agriculture supply stores and veterinarian services, farming and agriculture create a diverse economic base for the region. The economic impact of agriculture extends even further; agritourism provides alternative opportunities for the public to interact with and observe farming activities. As of 2012, there were 270 farms participating in agritourism in Kennebec County. Farming can bring communities closer through farm days, harvest suppers, Maine Maple Sunday, and farmers' markets. These opportunities drive collaboration and education and increase connections between farms and their communities.

Farms in Belgrade

The principal farming enterprises in Belgrade have historically been flowers and produce. Latest trends in Maine and elsewhere indicate that small, specialty farms, also known as micro farms, are growing in numbers, and replacing large, commodity-based farms.

Farms of all sizes, including smaller to mid-sized but in particularly large farms, require prime farmland, hired labor, transportation infrastructure, and support services -- a mixture hard to find and maintain in Maine, whereas micro farms require only a local market for their products. These small farms can be managed part-time on small parcels of land, they can diversify into niche and value-added products, and they are flexible enough to shift products when necessary. The recent public emphasis on "local" and "organic" is an effort to highlight the importance of small farms. Examples of small farms

are local vegetable stands, pick-your-own strawberries, maple syrup producers, and nursery operations.

While the average farm size in Kennebec County has decreased by one percent, per the 2017 Census of Agriculture, the number of farms has increased by six percent, representing the trend toward smaller scale farms. This trend toward smaller farms and micro farms is apparent in Belgrade, as well. There are fewer large-scale commercial farms and an increased number of smaller, niche farms and hobby farms in recent years.

Table 3: Local Farms in Belgrade

Farm Name	Product/Specialty
Water Dance Farm	Produce & Organic goods
Sunrise Farm	Meat & Produce
Ladd Farm	Christmas Trees

Source: Town Website, Real Maine

Agriculture is not a driving force in Belgrade's economy or workforce. There are scattered small hobby farms in town but no large scale production exists. As such, there is minimal threat to these activities other than waning interest in the industry.

Winterberry Farm has recently changed ownership and is now operating as Water Dance Farm. Despite this, the previous owner of the property had entered into an agricultural easement with the Maine Farmland Trust and the Belgrade Regional Conservation Alliance which will preserve the property as farmland in perpetuity.

Farming Infrastructure

Prime farmland is defined as land that is superior to produce food, feed, forage, and other crops. Prime farmland has the soil quality (as designated by the USDA Soil Conservation Service and identified through soil taxonomy), growing season, and moisture supply required to economically produce sustained high yield of crops when treated and managed according to acceptable farming methods. Prime farmland soils produce the highest yields and farming in these areas may result in less damage to the environment.

The *Prime Farmland & Soils Map* included in the appendix of this Plan delineates the extent of this soil in Belgrade. Within Belgrade Soils 2,311.9 acres have been identified as Farmland of Statewide Importance with 348 acres within large agriculture parcels. This does not include those soils potentially identified by the County Soil and Water Conservation District as being locally important for agriculture or forestry practices.

Prime Farmland soil is one of many principal factors important for preserving agriculture (along with accessibility to markets, capital, and many other factors). And while producers at all scales acknowledge the importance of Prime Farmland soils and Soils of Statewide Importance, less emphasis is placed on them with the paradigm shift toward the new style

of farming and micro farms on much smaller amounts of land. However, this does not negate the need to protect and preserve land with these important natural characteristics and soil types, as they are a finite resource.

The availability of markets at which to sell agricultural produce is particularly important for the new style of small producers who do not have access to commodity markets and operate too close to the margin to afford wholesalers or middlemen. Local farmers' markets, roadside stands, pick-your-own, and nursery/greenhouses are examples of local marketing styles necessary for today's farmers.

The Belgrade Farmer's Market opens each Sunday through the summer and features locally grown and made products such as baked goods, flowers, produce, and dairy and meat items. The farmer's market enjoys strong patronage throughout the summer from year-round residents and visitors alike. One unique amenity is that the market can be accessed by those on boats, the market is hosted in close proximity to public boat slips.

There are several tree farms in Belgrade, one at Camp Runoiya and scattered across town. There is one farms that supplies Christmas trees.

Growing Farmer Population

Currently, the biggest challenge Belgrade farmers are faced with is likely the same challenge every farmer is encountering -- making enough money to pay for expenses and finding adequate labor. This challenge has several contributing factors, including the average age in Maine is mid-40s and Maine has the oldest population in the country. That means fewer young people for farming careers. This is exacerbated by the fact that fewer young people are learning vocational trades, and more are choosing traditional college educations. With most of the population being middle-aged, few young people, and fewer still who are interested in farming, the difficulty in finding labor is no surprise. This is coupled with the fact that farming is physically hard work with long hours and pay that doesn't typically compensate for the arduous number of hours worked.

Table 4: Farm Workers

Characteristics of principal farm operators*			
Average operator age (years)	56.4	57.0	
Farm operators with farming as their principal occupation (percent)	43.5	48.5	
Men (number)	6,093	5,792	
Women (number)	2,043	2,381	

Source: USDA, Economic Research Service, 2023

And, as detailed further in the Housing chapter of this plan, the availability of workforce housing, rental housing, or other affordable housing options is another limiting factor for finding and retaining labor. This is compounded by the scarcity of those housing options in the more rural parts of Belgrade. The Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry (DACF), Maine Farmland Trust (MFT), and the Maine Organic Farmers and

Gardeners association (MOFGA) advocate for farming-friendly communities through a variety of land-use policies and farmland protections, and by promoting and building the population of farmers.

The Agricultural Resource Development Division of the DACF provides a variety of programs, resources, and information that help individual businesses in agriculture flourish and succeed despite the challenges of farming in Maine. A few examples include a grants and loans webpage, information on exhibitor opportunities, energy efficiency opportunities, training and education programs, Market Promotion and Special Events Program, and more. The DACF also has information and programs available on its webpage for the consumer, such as Explore, Experience, Discover, and Connect with Maine Farms, Maine Agritourism, State Fairs, Maine Maple Sunday, Open Farm Day, and Farmers' Markets.

The Maine Farms for Future Program is another notable example of a program provided by DACF's Agricultural Resource Development Division. This program provides grants to farm business owners to conduct research and strategic business planning that brings about changes aimed at long-term, maintainable, farm profitability, and net worth.

Belgrade residents support local producers, mainly by buying local goods.

Land Use Policies

Aside from the state mandated Shoreland Zoning Ordinance, Belgrade does not have a zoning or land use ordinance to regulate farming or forestry practices in certain areas within the town. While the Shoreland Zoning Ordinance sets standards for farming operations, the town has no other means of protecting existing farms or farmland, nor can it prohibit farming practices in any location.

Several organizations in Belgrade are actively working to protect farmland and forestland. They are detailed below:

- **Kennebec Land Trust (KLT)** while not overly active in Belgrade, works cooperatively with landowners and communities to permanently protect and conserve forests, shorelands, fields, and wildlife habitat. This is done by donation, fee purchases, and conservation easements. KLT offers educational programs and field trips for schools and other interested organizations, on relevant natural history, land stewardship, and conservation themes. KLT has also created miles of trails and conducts ongoing monitoring and land management.
- **Maine Farmland Trust** is a member-powered, statewide organization that protects farmland, supports farmers, and advances the future of farming. It strives to protect Maine farmland and to revitalize Maine's rural landscape by keeping agricultural lands working and helping farmers and communities thrive. It accomplishes this by working with farm families and collaborating with other partners, such as statewide groups, local and regional land trusts, and municipalities. Maine Farmland Trust has permanently protected one farm in

Belgrade through an Agricultural Conservation Easement – the Cobb Heritage Farm. Maine Farmland Trust offers three programs aimed at protecting farmland: Farmland Protection and Access Program, Policy and Research Program, and Maine Farmlink Program.

- **Land for Maine’s Future (LMF)** is the primary state-administered funding vehicle for conserving land for its natural and recreational value. Types of land conserved by this program include mountain summits; shorelines of rivers, lakes, and ponds; coastal islands; beaches; forests; grasslands; wildlife habitat; farmland; and wetlands. Land acquired is from willing sellers only. The LMF pursues a mission defined by the public, providing a tangible return to all who cherish Maine’s landscape (from hunters, hikers, and snowmobilers to birdwatchers), and leverages federal and private funding for state priority purchases.

Farmland Protection Efforts

The 2014 Comprehensive Plan noted that in spite of Belgrade’s farming history, large-scale farms have disappeared. In their place, small-scale farms, and backyard farms have popped up, typically on much smaller acreages than required of their predecessors. This is a trend that continues today.

There are several regulatory measures Belgrade could take to further promote agriculture and farming in appropriate areas of town, if desired. These include developing a “Right to Farm” ordinance that can implement setback and buffer requirements for new developments that abut agricultural uses and can require residential developers to notify potential new homeowners when a property abuts a farm and that farmers have the right to engage in farm practices.

Another provision the town could consider is Maine’s Voluntary Municipal Farm Support Program. Through this program, towns are allowed to develop a system of “farm support arrangements” with eligible farmland owners. The farmland owners voluntarily apply and may then be formally accepted by the town’s legislative body. If accepted, they may be granted a 20-year agricultural conservation easement to the town in exchange for full or partial reimbursement of property taxes on their farmland and farm buildings during that 20-year period.

The state has many provisions available to farmers for their protection and to aid them in continuing operation of viable farms. One such provision is Maine’s Agriculture Protection Act (commonly known as the Right to Farm Law) that protects farmers from complaints regarding odors, noise, and other aspects of farming operations.

The state also offers multiple tax programs aimed at improving and protecting the businesses of agriculture and forestry. There are three current-use tax programs that relate to forestry or agriculture in Belgrade: Farmland Tax Law, Open Space Tax Law, and Tree Growth Tax Law (Tree Growth will be addressed later in this chapter). The Maine Legislature declared in the Farm and Open Space Tax Law (Title 36, MRSA, ‘1101

et. seq.), that “it is in the public interest to encourage the preservation of farmland and open space land in order to maintain a readily available source of food and farm products close to the metropolitan areas of the state.” These programs are detailed below.

- Farmland Tax Law: This tax law was adopted to encourage the preservation of farmland and open space land and to protect farmland and open space land from competing with higher-valued uses. The farmland program provides for the valuation of farmland based on its current use as farmland, rather than based on its fair market value for other potential uses. This reduced land value results in lower property tax bills for owners of farmland. Lower taxes are designed to function as an incentive to preserve Maine’s farming communities. In addition to reducing the farmland owner’s tax burden, the municipality avoids costs associated with development and state subsidies are positively impacted.
- Open Space Tax Law: This law provides for the valuation of land based on its current use as open space, rather than its highest and best use. To qualify for open space classification, land must be preserved or restricted for uses providing a public benefit. This classification encourages landowners of open, undeveloped land to prevent or restrict its use from development by conserving scenic resources, enhancing public recreation, promoting game management, or preserving wildlife, and/or wildlife habitat. This is mutually beneficial, as the landowner’s proportionate tax burden is reduced, the municipality avoids costs associated with development, and state subsidies are positively impacted.

Table 5: Parcels of Land in Belgrade Enrolled in the Farmland Tax Law

	2010	2022	% Change
Number of Parcels	5	12	140%
Acres First Classified	0	0	0%
Farmland Acres	457	584	27.8%
Parcels Withdrawn	0	0	0%
Total Farmland Valuation	\$100,430	\$209,916	109%
Woodland Acres	156	225	44.2%
Total Woodland Valuation	\$32,136	\$63,449	97.4%

Source: 2010 & 2022 Municipal Valuation Return Statistical Summary

Table 6: Parcels Of Land In Belgrade Enrolled In The Open Space Tax Law

	2010	2022	% Change
Number of Parcels	7	18	157%
Acres First Classified	34	48	41.2%
Acres Withdrawn	0	0	0%
Total Acres	185	557	201%
Total Valuation	\$118,700	\$858,877	394%

Source: 2010 & 2022 Municipal Valuation Return Statistical Summary

Both Tables 5 and 6 show a positive percent increase in the number of parcels enrolled in the state’s current use tax law from 2010 to 2022. For the Farmland Tax Law Program,

the number of parcels increased by seven, but the acreage increased by nearly 28 percent.

The number of parcels enrolled in the Open Space Tax Law Program increased 157% in the past 12 years, while the amount of acreage enrolled increased 201%. Notably, none of the categories in either table showed a decrease.

There are also many publicly sponsored programs to support local agriculture, including the Maine State Grange, University of Maine's Sustainable Agriculture program, and the Farmlink Program through Maine Farmland Trust, which matches prospective farmers in search of land with retiring farmers in search of successors, to name a few. Additionally, the DACF has put a great deal of effort into marketing local agriculture, from promotions like Maine Maple Sunday and Open Farm Days, to support farmers' markets and institutional buying.

Threats to Farmland and Farms

Farmers are faced with many challenges in owning and running an operational farm. Challenges include finding laborers, the limited amount of land with Prime Farmland Soil and Soils of Statewide Importance to produce the highest maximum yield, availability of local markets, development pressure, and many more.

One example of development pressure is from commercial solar projects. According to an analysis conducted by Maine Audubon, of the 185 solar development proposals that were reviewed and approved by the Maine Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) as of June 2021, 90 percent intersected with land identified by the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) as Prime Farmland Soils and Soils of Statewide Importance. The consumption of land with the finite types of soils that produce the highest yield for farming presents another challenge to farming.

Belgrade does not have large tracts of agricultural and forested land. While there are privately owned parcels that are large, few, if any, are actively managed to produce forest products. These large parcels are undeveloped by the owners and likely to remain so.

Forestry

Forests provide many values to the Belgrade community besides just supplying a source of wood and income to landowners, residents, and local sawmills. Forested areas collect water in the landscape by intercepting precipitation thereby reducing the volume and rate of runoff as well as reducing soil erosion and phosphorus loading in lakes, streams and ponds. Forests also retain soil moisture across a broad landscape that may otherwise be subject to larger seasonal flooding and its associated erosion problems. Additionally, forests purify the air, provide habitat and travel corridors for wildlife, and provide outdoor recreational opportunities.

Belgrade's tree coverage, depicted in the *Tree Canopy Map* in the appendix, shows a significant forested area across the town. Small tree plantations, many of which sprung

from the Civilian Conservation Corps era, are scattered throughout the town and are often adjacent to agricultural land use. Wooded areas are functionally divided into coniferous softwoods, deciduous hardwoods, and mixed forests. Wooded areas may also include tree plantations, managed and unmanaged forests, and some developed areas where a closed canopy obscures the view of urbanization and suggests a relatively lower density of development.

Table 7 below shows the forestry harvest data from 1991 to 2020, along with totals and averages from each category. Perhaps the most notable column is the “Change of Land Use, Acres” category. From 1991 to 1999, there were only six changes in land use. From 2000 to 2008, the acres converted to different land use increased dramatically, coinciding with the housing bubble at the time. From 2009 to 2013, only 9 acres were converted to different land use. From 2014 on, the trend of converting acres to a different land use continued to increase, albeit somewhat erratically with only 2015 having no conversion to a different use over that span.

Table 7: Timber Harvest Information

Year	Selection harvest, acres	Shelterwood harvest, acres	Change of land use, acres	Clearcut harvest, acres	Total Harvest, acres	# of Reports
1990 - 1994	2,483	230	31	14	2,758	95
1995 - 1999	3,018	186	17	10	3,231	108
2000 - 2004	2,991	113	150	28	3,282	82
2005 - 2009	1,911	345	25	-	2,281	91
2010 - 2014	1,938	481	3	-	2,422	79
2015 - 2020	2,655	580	7	1	3,313	102
Total	14,996	1,935	233	53	17,287	557
Average	2,499	323	39	13	2,881	93

Source: Data compiled from Confidential Year End Landowner Reports to Maine Forest Service, Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry

The statistics in Table 7 show that the number of clearcut acres have decreased steadily over the years as forestry practices changed between 1990 and 2020 to become more environmentally friendly. After the period of 2000-2004, there was a decrease in land use changes, as well.

Tree Growth Tax Law Program

As of 2022, 106 parcels in Belgrade were classified as Tree Growth properties under the State’s Tree Growth Tax Law Program (Table 8), accounting for 5,611 acres. This program, like the Farmland Tax Law Program and Open Space Tax Law Program, provides landowners an opportunity to have their land valued for its productivity rather than its market value.

Over the course of the last decade, there has been a 1.9 percent increase in the number of parcels participating in this program and a decrease of three percent of total acres enrolled in this program. Other notable data includes a decrease in softwood acres enrolled by eight percent, and a decrease in hardwood acres by 6.5 percent. Fewer acres were withdrawn in 2022 than in 2012 and no parcels were withdrawn in 2022.

Table 8: Belgrade Parcels Enrolled in the Tree Growth Tax Law Program

	2010	2022	% Change
# Of Parcels	104	106	1.9%
Softwood Acres	877	806	-8%
Mixed Wood Acres	3,483	3,479	0.1%
Hardwood Acres	1,418	1,326	-6.5%
Parcels Withdrawn	2	0	-100%
Acres Withdrawn	100	4	-96%
Total Acres	5,779	5,611	-3%
Total Value	\$1,139,993	\$1,597,388	40%

Source: 2010 & 2022 Municipal Valuation Summary

In contrast to the Farmland Tax Law and the Open Space Tax Law programs, the State reimburses municipalities for a portion of lost tax revenues from properties enrolled in the Tree Growth Tax Law Program. Additionally, local participation is typically higher because this tax law allows multiple uses on the designated property, as long as the parcel remains primarily used for the growth of trees to produce forest products that have commercial value. As with the Farmland Tax Law and the Open Space Tax Law programs, land withdrawn from the Tree Growth Tax Law Program before maturity is subject to financial penalties.

Belgrade owns two parcels of land on the Dunn Road. With a combined acreage of approximately 96 acres, the parcels contain the Transfer Station and the now retired landfill. A Forest Management Plan was developed for the property in 2016. With management goals including the development of a trail network and the preservation of wildlife habitat, there are many possibilities for the parcels.

Analysis

Belgrade's economic history lies in farming and forestry, trends that shaped the population and landscape and are still visible today. While there has been an undeniable shift in the style and types of farming from these early years, it is also undeniable that agriculture and forestry are still an essential factor in Belgrade today.

With the increasing trend of small farms, micro farms, and buying locally produced food, there are steps the town could take to support, promote, and encourage these farms. Belgrade should investigate ways to be more permissible in allowing agritourism that would be greatly beneficial to the farming community.

Natural and Water Resources



Natural Resources

Belgrade is fortunate to be surrounded by large expanses of lakes that form the lifeblood of the town and region. Belgrade's natural resources are responsible for significant portions of the town's economy, productive forests, and clean water for recreation and drinking. Arguably, the most important resource in the town is its large lakes and corresponding wetlands. It is important not to take these resources for granted and to encourage the preservation and protection of them for years to come. These lakes serve as the economic engine driving a large portion of the local economy through eco-tourism, recreation, and sporting opportunities.

One of the functions of this plan is to ensure that growth and development can occur concurrently with the preservation and conservation of the natural environment. It is possible; however, it requires foresight. Some forms of development have greater potential for negative environmental impacts, resulting in some locations in the municipality that are more suitable for development than others. It is in the town's best interest to ensure that future development is in accordance with best management practices and in locations to allow maintenance of the natural assets that are so valued by residents and visitors.

This chapter identifies and documents Belgrade's natural and water resources and identifies the physical limitations that the natural environment imposes on the planning process for future development.

Land Resources

Geology And Soils

Belgrade's soils, and the rock below, influence the topography, the type of vegetation and, therefore, wildlife and available options for development, farming, and forestry.

The advance and retreat of glaciers long ago have molded Belgrade's landscape. As glaciers advanced, the ice mass scoured the ground. As they retreated, they left a mixture of sand, silt, clay, and stones.

Flat, well-drained land is good for both farming and development, and there is an inherent conflict between competing land uses that farming, because of low economic returns, usually loses. The State plumbing code lists soils that are unsuitable for subsurface waste disposal. The plumbing code concentrates on those soils in which septic systems will not function because water is too near the surface, or the slope is too steep. Soils with water too near the surface are:

Biddeford silt loam
Leicester stony loam

Monarda silt loam
Peat and Muck

Walpole fine sandy loam
Limerick silt loam

Belgrade's Soils Map (Appendix) shows soils by type and location. Maps of these soils involve a degree of generalization. A mapped area of poor soil does not by itself exclude development; however, it does make potential developers aware of challenges.

Regardless of soil type, when cleared of vegetation, all soils are subject to accelerated erosion. Eroding soil contributes to the degradation of water quality. Silt can reduce visibility, harm fish populations, and contribute phosphorus and other destabilizing nutrients into waterbodies. Phosphorus is a naturally occurring nutrient that, when present in high concentrations, can cause algal blooms. Eroding soil and unmanaged stormwater runoff have been documented as the primary source of increased phosphorus levels in Maine's lakes, resulting in instances of reduced property values and recreational opportunities.

The United States Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service maps soil type and publishes them to use in mapping. The type, quantity, and quality of minerals and organic particles are what determine a soil type. In different sizes and ratios, these particles form soil types that may be well-suited for a variety of uses, and ill-suited for others. Some soil is particularly fertile, making it particularly well suited for agriculture. Some types are a very stable combination of sand, silt, and clay particles, making it ideally suited for building homes, businesses, and roads. Some other types of soil, especially those that are saturated for an extended part of the year, are unsuitable for development, while at the same time providing great environmental value. The Maine State Plumbing Code takes these ratings into account when determining which soil types may or may not be suitable for subsurface wastewater disposal systems. While Belgrade has large areas where the soil is not suitable for development, there are large tracts, formed by glacial activity during the last ice age, that contribute to the town's economy in other ways.

Two types of geologic formations formed by glacial activity found in Belgrade are eskers and moraines. Eskers are long gravel ridges, up to 100 miles, that formed when gravel and sand accumulated in tunnels in glaciers. When the glaciers retreated, the gravel was left. Moraines are an accumulation of sediment and other material that formed a ridge that marks the end of the ice sheet. These features show where glaciers paused or moved forward at various points in time.

The esker system in Maine is considered one of the finest in the United States with the Belgrade Esker System being one of the very best. The Belgrade system also contains a series of kettlehole ponds and wetlands forming several rare and exemplary natural habitats, which will be discussed later on. A major threat to the esker system is gravel and sand mining. Most of the esker has already been lost to extraction, the few portions that remain are worthy of conservation.

Topography

Much of Belgrade is considered to be in the Kennebec Highlands, with the developed portion of Belgrade is primarily located in a low-lying area between Great Pond and Messalonskee Lake. The slope percentage of land plays an important role. Development

on slopes greater than 15% accelerates stormwater runoff velocity, erosion, and sedimentation, particularly in sensitive watersheds. The Plumbing Code limits the installation of septic systems to land with an original slope of 20% or less. Steep slopes also present problems for the construction of basements, septic systems, roads, and storm drainage systems.

Areas of steep slopes (greater than 25%) are scattered across Belgrade. Development on slopes this steep can lead to environmental problems, including erosion, removal of vegetation, and the subsequent pollution of water bodies from sediment run-off. Locations with lesser or even no slopes pose a different challenge to development. These areas are typically associated with poor draining soils or floodplain soils. These soils also present poor construction conditions for similar reasons as steep slopes.

The topography of the land is responsible for the array of lakes and drainage basins or watersheds. A watershed is the area of land within which all precipitation drains to a single water body. The delineation of watersheds (Water Resources Map) shows how water runs off the land, where it accumulates, and how it collects into larger bodies of surface water.

Since planning for lake water quality is closely integrated with watershed planning, information on watersheds can be found in the analysis of each waterbody.

Slopes and Landslide Risks

Landslides and slumping are a known hazard in Maine. Soil creep is the most common type of slide, but many other types, such as flows, spreads, and rotational slumps are possible. Landslides are most likely to occur along river corridors (especially cut banks), bluffs with active erosion, and areas with unconsolidated surficial materials, especially the Presumpscot formation. Events are also more likely to occur in areas where the base of the slope has been undermined, such as where roads have been cut into hillsides or development sites. Areas that have not been manipulated by humans can also fail after significant events such as intense storms or water-saturated soils in the spring. As climate change brings more extreme weather events, the risk of landslides will increase. Landslides are most likely to occur in spring and early summer due to snowpack melt and/or spring rains. But they can happen at any time of year when significant amounts of water flow through an area. (see ["Maine Landslide Guide" by Lindsay J. Spigel \(digitalmaine.com\)](http://digitalmaine.com))

While steep slopes constrain development, they can be beneficial due to the value these slopes bring to the aesthetic beauty of the town. The scenic views from these slopes are an asset valued by town residents and should be preserved and protected from development.

Scenic Resources

As with much of Maine, the local topography is a primary component of scenic resources. While it is said the quality of a scenic vista is “in the eye of the beholder,” it is often the case that varied topography and overlooking perspectives rank consistently high. While the relatively flat topography of Belgrade does not lend itself to high peaks and deep valleys, the abundance of wetlands and lakes gives as many opportunities for scenic views as in mountainous areas.

On Route 27 in the Depot area of town, there is an excellent view looking northeast through Belgrade Stream, across the large freshwater marsh system and on to Messalonskee Lake. There are many such vistas across the community, and they are a part of the draw Belgrade’s lakes have.

There are several locations in Belgrade that serve as unofficial viewpoints. Some of these are sites that, while available for passersby to stop, are not a maintained location, nor are they always a safe location. The Belgrade Lakes Golf Course provides golfers with panoramic views of the region; however, this is only for those who are utilizing the course.

Floodplains

A floodplain is an area adjacent to a waterbody that is subject to periodic flooding. Belgrade’s 100-year floodplains are depicted on the *Critical Natural Resources Map* in the Appendix. A 100-year flood is one in which there is a 1-percent chance of flooding in any given year. The 100-year designation is significant because federal law requires local regulation of 100-year floodplains. Belgrade has an approved local Floodplain Management Ordinance, which is enforced, consistent with state and federal standards, and requires periodic reviews and updates.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency is responsible for mapping floodplains in the United States and managing the National Flood Insurance Program. The last floodplain mapping for Belgrade was conducted in 2011 with the Flood Insurance Rate Maps becoming effective in 1985.

The existing maps for Belgrade distribute land into two zones:

- Zone A – Areas with a 1% annual chance of flooding and a 26% chance of flooding over the life of a 30-year mortgage
- Zone AE – This is classified as a Special Flood Hazard Area by FEMA. This indicates that the area will be inundated by the flood event have a 1 percent chance of being equaled or exceeded in any given year.

Belgrade has multiple areas indicated to be in Zone A.

The town of Belgrade has developed a floodplain ordinance. Article II of the Floodplain Management Ordinance mandates that prior to any construction or other development, including the placement of manufactured homes, a Flood Hazard Development Permit must be obtained from the town Planning Board.

WATERSHEDS

A watershed is a natural drainage basin that collects precipitation and sends it to a body of water through an interconnected system of streams, brooks, and other wetlands. Unmanaged or improper human activities in any part of a watershed can negatively affect the water quality of the waterbody into which the watershed drains.

All of Belgrade lies within the Lower Kennebec Watershed. This basin spans 2,195,636 acres across Central Maine. This watershed contains much of the Kennebec River from Wyman Lake down to where it meets the tidal waters near Richmond. The Lower Kennebec Watershed is also broken into subwatersheds, of which Belgrade lies entirely within the Belgrade Lakes-Messalonskee Stream watershed, which covers 133,852 acres. This sub watershed is also broken down further into 4 minor watersheds, 3 of which make up Belgrade:

Table 1: Watersheds in Belgrade

Minor Watershed	Acreage
Long Pond	27,853
Messalonskee Lake	33,875
Salmon Lake-Great Pond	34,666

Source: Lakes Environmental Association

The Salmon Pond-Great Pond watershed area includes four municipalities with the largest land area lying in Belgrade (54%) and Rome (35%). Of the direct watershed area, approximately 70% of the land area is forested with another 16% comprised of freshwater wetlands, especially the north and south ends of Great Pond. Following those uses, 10% of the watershed is estimated to be developed with the final 4% used for agricultural purposes.

Development in the greater Messalonskee Stream – Belgrade Lakes watershed is significant and expected to continue. The shores of lakes in the watershed are comprised of marinas, year-round homes, seasonal residences, summer camps and other businesses.

The Messalonskee Lake, Long Pond and Salmon Lake watersheds are all considered to be direct watersheds most at risk from new development. Lakes are given this label when they are a public water supply OR identified by the Maine Department of Environmental Protection as being in violation of class GPA water-quality standards or as particularly sensitive to eutrophication, the enrichment of a water body with nutrients, based on:

- Current water quality
- Potential for internal recycling of phosphorus
- Potential as a cold-water fishery
- Volume and flushing rate, or
- Projected growth rate in the watershed.

While no surface waters are formally utilized as drinking water for residents of Belgrade, there are instances where summer homes have small pumps to draw water from lakes for residential use.

Groundwater

Groundwater typically comes from one of two sources -- water flowing through cracks and fissures in the bedrock, and from sand and gravel aquifers. Local groundwater is the source of drinking water for all residents who are not serviced by public drinking water systems along with local businesses. Groundwater is also a potential future source for public drinking water supplies. All groundwater should be protected from contamination by oil, chemicals, or other sources.

Last updated in 2020, the Maine Geological Survey shows numerous aquifers in Belgrade. Several of the largest aquifers stretch from Great Pond southeast to almost the Kennebec River in Augusta. These are rated at 10-50 gallons per minute and all contain numerous pockets of non-plugging within. There are three other smaller aquifers along the eastern and northern shores of Great Pond, all rated at 10-50 gallons per minute. Gallons per minute is the rate at which water percolates into the ground and is dependent on the porosity of the soil and bedrock.

There are significant risks to the larger aquifers in Belgrade due to the current land use. Sitting directly above the aquifer is the Depot region of town, which contains most light commercial activities and the rail line. There are also numerous above and underground storage tanks in town containing petroleum products. There are always risks associated with chemical storage tanks, both above and below ground. Leaks are possible due to the age of tanks, the effects of weather, damage through weather events, or even accidental or intentional tampering.

In addition, there are a number of sand and gravel pits present in the town, and these can be indicators of underground aquifers. The rapid permeability of soil around sand and gravel aquifers can allow pollutants to travel through the soil and into groundwater. Stormwater runoff containing chemicals, leaks from underground tanks, material spill along roadways, malfunctioning septic systems, and improper disposal of hazardous materials all threaten groundwater quality. Land around these pits should be treated as potential aquifers and protections implemented until such a time that further study indicates no aquifer is present.

The Drinking Water Program is a division of the Maine Center for Disease Control. The Drinking Water Program promotes the establishment of Wellhead Protection Planning for public water supplies. Plans are prepared by the well owners but should be implemented with the cooperation of the town. A minimum 300-foot radius of restricted land use around a wellhead (more for larger systems) is recommended, although most existing water supplies do not have this level of control or protected area. The DWP provides source water assessments for public water supplies in Maine towns, as well as maps showing potential threats to public water sources (Public Water Sources Map in the Appendix).

In Belgrade, there are 16 public drinking water systems. A drinking water supply is considered public if it has at least 15 service connections, bottles water for sale, or serves at least 25 individuals for at least 60 days out of the year. The following is a summary of public water supplies in Belgrade as reported by the DWP.

Table 2: Public Water Sources in Belgrade

Public Water Sources		
<i>NC-Transient NTNC</i>	<i>Non-Community, Non-Transient</i>	<i>C-Community</i>
System Name	System Type	Source
RS 18 Belgrade Central School	NTNC	560' Bedrock Well - 12/26/2001 @ 12GPM
Camp Modin	NC	470' Bedrock Well - 1980's @ 25GPM
New England Golf and Tennis Camp	NC	200' DR Well - 1991 @ 20GPM
Camp Runoia	NC	384' DR Well - 9/12/2003 @ 40GPM
Center for All Seasons	NC	50' Drilled Well in a Pit
Castle Island Camps	NC	51' Drilled Well - Circa 1929 @ 10GPM
The Village Inn	NC	200' Drilled Well
Sunset Grille	NC	165' DR Well
Woodland Condo Association	NC	300' BR Well - 5/23/19 @ 5GPM
Belgrade Lakes Seafood	NC	85' Drilled Well
Belgrade Lakes Golf Club	NC	624' Bedrock Well - 4/23/98 @ 15GPM
Hammond Lumber Company	NTNC	304' Bedrock Well - 1/13/00 @ 17.5 GPM
Becket Academy Learning Center	NTNC	400' Bedrock Well - 6/26/04 @ 5GPM
Belgrade Health Center	NC	270' Bedrock Well 11/15/05 @ 25GPM
Sandy Cove Association	NC	100+' Drilled Well
Camp Modin – Pioneer Bunkhouse	NC	440' Bedrock Well 8/19/14 @ 40GPM

Source: Maine Drinking Water Program

The Department of Health and Human Services, Bureau of Health, Division of Health Engineering, oversees the Drinking Water Program (DWP), based on the Federal Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA). The SDWA requires each state to complete an assessment for each public water source, which identifies and describes conditions that may threaten the quality of water available. The DWP is responsible for these assessments through the Maine Source Water Assessment Program (SWAP), which includes current and potential future risks to public water supply sources.

The assessment evaluation is based on the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) approved evaluation methodology. Categories evaluated include risk based on:

- Well type and geology;
- Existing and future risk of acute contamination; and

- Existing and future risk of chronic contamination.

While no drinking water source is completely free from threats to water quality, some wells, by nature of their construction and the geology of their site, are more at risk than others. For example, dug wells and springs test positive for coliform bacteria more frequently than drilled wells; thus, drilled wells are evaluated as being a lower risk for contamination.

In addition to manmade conditions, there is potential for numerous natural elements to contaminate private well water, causing health concerns. Three known environmental contaminants present in Belgrade are Arsenic (As), Uranium (U), and Radon (Rn). All are known hazardous substances that can be found in almost any drinking water supply throughout Maine, with certain towns having a higher documented concentration than others. All three compounds are naturally occurring in the environment, although Arsenic can also be the result of human activities, such as industrial and agricultural practices. The state and town can offer guidance for residents on dealing with these environmental contaminants.

Emerging well water contaminants that are not naturally occurring are Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS). Historically, these manmade chemicals were used in many different applications and products. Because of how slowly they breakdown and their persistence in the environment, they have earned the name “forever chemicals.” PFAS have been documented in agricultural sites, drinking water supplies, landfills, wastewater, sludge and septage spreading sites, and remediation and cleanup sites. As these contaminants are a newer concern than Radon and Arsenic, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has yet to determine a Maximum Contamination Level (MCL). Standards, guidelines, and remediation measures are still becoming available to Maine residents.

In 2018, residents in the area of Oakland, Cemetery, and Augusta roads reported increased levels of chloride in their well water. Attributed to improper storage of salt by the town and state nearby, this has led to wells testing well above the chloride public drinking water standard. The Town of Belgrade and the State of Maine have entered into an agreement to provide each affected residence with a reverse osmosis system. There will be a program established to provide funding for maintenance of each unit. This will be discussed more in the Public Facilities Chapter.

SURFACE WATERS

Belgrade’s lakes have long contributed to the town’s social, economic, and cultural history and development. These bodies of water are key contributing factors to recreational opportunities, important ecosystems, and habitats, drinking water and development opportunities. This region of Maine is known as the Belgrade Lakes region. Comprised of a group of seven lakes that are all connected and eventually flow into the Kennebec River, they provide critical habitats and recreational opportunities.

There are five significant bodies of surface water in Belgrade making up a large portion of the Belgrade Lakes chain. Long Pond forms much of the western border of Belgrade and is made of two distinct basins, northern and southern ponds. Great Pond forms almost all of the northern border of the town and connects to Long Pond by a small channel. The eastern border of Belgrade is delineated by Ellis (Salmon Lake) Pond, McGrath Pond, and Messalonskee Lake.

The state designates waterbodies encompassing 10 acres or more as Great Ponds. Great Ponds and their shorelands are subject to special regulations through Shoreland Zoning and Maine's Natural Resources Protection Act. The state has one standard of classification for both Great Ponds and natural lakes and ponds less than 10 acres in size; this classification is GPA. The water quality attainment goal for Class GPA waterbodies is that they are suitable for drinking water, recreation, fishing, hydro-electric power generation and as natural habitat for fish and other aquatic life. If a water body is not meeting its attainment goal, it is described as a "nonattainment" lake.

Many land-use practices can impact surface water quality. Improperly functioning or unsuitably located systems for sanitary waste may cause bacteria to contaminate surface waters. Poor agricultural practices can result in nutrient enrichment of ponds and lakes (e.g., phosphorus). Construction creates erosion and siltation, potentially reaching waterbodies. Any improperly managed land use or land-based activity can accelerate degradation of water quality. The first step in managing the community's surface waters is to understand the systems, their existing quality, and factors that influence their quality.



Boat on Messalonskee Lake

All water bodies are required by state law to be locally protected through the Shoreland Zoning Ordinance. Belgrade has a 250-foot shoreland area established under the state guidelines, along its larger wetlands, rivers, and streams. These restrictions affect what people may do with their land in the immediate vicinity of the shoreland to protect water quality. The *Water Resources Map (Appendix)* shows Belgrade's streams, lakes, ponds, and wetlands. As set forth in the town's Shoreland Zoning ordinance, in section 13A. Resource Protection District, areas classified as where development would adversely affect water quality, productive habitat, biological systems, or scenic and natural values. This encompasses areas:

1. Within 250 feet, horizontal distance, or the upland edge of freshwater wetlands and wetlands associated with great ponds and rivers which are rated "moderate" or "high" value by Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife.
2. Flood plains along rivers, defined by the 100-year flood plain as designated on the FEMA Flood Insurance Rate Maps or Flood Hazard Boundary Maps, or the flood of record, or in the absence of these, by soil types identified as recent flood plain

soils.

3. Areas of two or more contiguous acres with sustained slopes of 20% or greater. Areas meeting these criteria shall be in a subdistrict designated Resource Protected-Slope District.
4. Areas of two (2) or more contiguous acres supporting wetland vegetation and hydric soils, which are not part of a freshwater wetland as defined, and which are not connected to a water body during normal spring high water.
5. Land areas along rivers subject to severe bank erosion, undercutting, or river bed movement.
6. Areas designated by federal, state, or municipal governments as natural areas of significant to be protected from development.

Also, in the Shoreland Zoning ordinance section 13 is E. Stream Protection District. This district includes all land areas withing 75 feet horizontal distance of the normal high-water line of a stream, exclusive of those areas within section A. If that stream and its 75-foot buffer is located withing the 250-foot buffer as described in section A, it is then regulated the same as the associated water body or wetland.

Lakes and Ponds

Water Quality Assessment is based off a number of factors that are explained below. Each factor is a key determinant of the health of species dependent on the lake as well as a guide for future development and protection measures.

Table 3: Water Quality Assessment

Water Quality Assessment	
Transparency	Transparency is a measure of how clear the lake water is. Factors that reduce water clarity are algal blooms, zooplankton, water color, and silt, with algae being the most abundant.
Chlorophyll	This test measures the green pigment found in all plants, including microscopic plants such as algae. For this reason, it is used to estimate algal biomass; the higher the chlorophyll content, the higher the algae in the lake.
Phosphorous	This is one of the major nutrients plants need for growth. While it is often the limiting factor in aquatic plant growth, high phosphorous levels are often a sign of pollutants entering the waterbody. As levels of phosphorous increase, the amount of algae increases, resulting in reduced water quality.
Color	This measure refers to the amount of dissolved organic acids such as tannins and lignins, which make water look tea-colored. The unit of measure for color is Standard Platinum Units or SPU. Color reduces the lake's transparency and increases phosphorus readings.
Alkalinity	This is the measure of the capacity of the water to neutralize acids, or the buffering capacity. A lake's ability to buffer acids is affected by the natural geology of the surrounding area, and the presence of naturally

	available bicarbonate, carbonate, and hydroxide ions. It is measured in mg/L.
pH	Similar to alkalinity, pH is the measure of acidity of the water. How acidic or basic the water is will determine which plant and animal life will be present. The measure of acidity is on a scale of 1-14 with 7 indicating neutral acidity. A one-unit change in pH represents a 10-fold change in the concentration of hydrogen ions (H ⁺), which determines the acidity of the water.
Conductivity	Specific conductivity measures the ability of the water to carry an electrical current and is directly related to the dissolved ions (charged particles) in the water. Conductivity is measured in microSiemens per centimeter. This quality is used to calculate fish yield estimates. Specific conductivity will increase if there is an increase in pollutants entering the waterbody, usually in the form of runoff from urban or residential areas and roadways.
Dissolved Oxygen	Adequate levels of dissolved oxygen (DO) in waterbodies is essential to most life in the lake. DO is an important indicator of water quality and it influences water chemistry. DO levels are strongly affected by water temperature: warmer water is less dense and its ability to hold oxygen is reduced.
Flush Rate	The average time required to completely renew a lake's water volume (lake volume divided by outflow rate).

Source: Maine Lakes Association

Long Pond

Long Pond is 2,557 acres with a perimeter of 31 miles. Long Pond is divided into two distinct basins, north and south. The northern basin is fairly developed, especially along Route 27. There are also numerous camp roads containing both seasonal and year-round residences and one cottage style campground that is located at the neck between the north and south basins. The southern basin is less developed, with much of the shoreline comprised of wetlands. Long Pond is in a watershed of the same name comprising an area of 27,853 acres. Only about 1/3 of the Long Pond watershed is in Belgrade.

Long Pond – MIDAS 5272

Surface Area: 2,557 Acres

Maximum Depth: 106 ft

Mean Depth: 35 ft

Fisheries Management: Coldwater & Warmwater

Key Species:

Landlocked Salmon (*Salmo salar*)

Brook Trout (*Salvelinus fontinalis*)

Invasive Species: Northern Pike (*Esox Lucius*)

Table 4: Long Pond Water Quality Assessment Comparison

Variable	State Average	Long Pond
Transparency	5.3M	6.3 M

Chlorophyll	5.7 ppb	4.8 ppb
Phosphorous	11.2 ppb	8 ppb
Color	20.1 SPU	16 SPU
Alkalinity	11.11 mg/L	12.3 mg/l
pH	7.23	6.98
Conductivity	52.6 µS/cm	44 µS/cm
Flush Rate*	1-1.5	2.99-3.5

*flush rate is per year

Long Pond is managed as a cold-water and warm-water fishery, home to a documented 20 fish species, including Brook Trout (*Salvelinus Fontinalis*), Landlocked Salmon (*Salmo salar*), Brown Trout (*Salmo trutta*), and numerous species of panfish. There are numerous aquatic plant species such as Common Cattail (*Typha latifolia*), Pickerel weed (*Pentedaria cordata*) and Fragrant Water lily (*Nymphaea odorata*). The Maine Loon Project has been conducting surveys counting Common Loons (*Gavia immer*) for over thirty years. A Loon survey on Long Pond has been conducted for the past four years, counting 32 adult loons in 2022 down from 42 in 2021. One species of crayfish has been identified, the Virile crayfish (*Orconectes virilis*) and one species of freshwater mussel has been documented, the Eastern Floater (*Pyganodon cataracta*). One Bald Eagle nest (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) was documented in 2023 on the west shore of the southern basin of the pond.

Long Pond is listed on the Maine DEP Impaired Lakes Priority List as of March 2023. Long Pond is not solely contained within Belgrade, adding an additional challenge to management. The municipal border of Belgrade runs from the channel connecting Long Pond to Great Pond south to the inlet. The remaining shoreline comprises the borders of Mt. Vernon and Rome.

Long Pond is accessible through a state-owned boat launch at the southern basin located near Castle Island. While still a popular recreation destination, much of the shoreline is undeveloped, approximately 70%.

Great Pond

Great Pond is considerably more developed, most likely due to less shoreline being comprised of wetlands. The pond covers 8,533 acres with a perimeter of 46.1 miles. Great Pond is in the Salmon Pond-Great Pond watershed, which covers 34,666 acres with the majority of that within the boundaries of Belgrade, with small amounts in Rome and Smithfield.

Great Pond – MIDAS 5274

Surface Area: 8,533 Acres

Maximum Depth: 69 ft

Mean Depth: 21 ft

Fisheries Management: Coldwater & Warmwater

Key Species:

Brown Trout (*Salmo trutta*)

Invasive Species: Variable-Leaf Milfoil (*Myriophyllum heterophyllum*), Northern Pike (*Esox Lucius*)

Table 5: Great Pond Water Quality Assessment Comparison

Variable	State Average	Great Pond
Transparency	5.3M	2.4M
Chlorophyll	5.7 ppb	3.9 ppb
Phosphorous	11.2 ppb	14 ppb
Color	20.1 SPU	47 SPU
Alkalinity	11.11 mg/L	9.0 mg/l
pH	7.23	7.10
Conductivity	52.6 µS/cm	30 µS/cm
Flush Rate*	1-1.5	.43

*flush rate is per year

Great Pond is home to a large variety of species. The Pond is managed as a coldwater and warmwater fishery due to the populations of Brown Trout. The lake is more suited to a warmwater fishery due to the homothermos nature and relatively shallow nature. Other fish species that have been documented in the lake include Rainbow Smelt (*Osmerus mordax*), Fallfish (*Semotilus corporalis*), and Yellow Perch (*Perca flacesecns*). There are a number of common plant species present -- Pickerel Weed (*Pontedaria cordata*), Fragrant Water Lily (*Nymphaea odorata*), and Pipewort (*Eriocaulon aquaticum*). In addition to plant life, there are two species of freshwater mussels present, the Eastern Elliptio (*Elliptio complanate*) and the Eastern Floater (*Pyganodon cataracta*). There are also two species of crayfish documented, the Rusty Crayfish (*Orconectus rusticus*) and Virile Crayfish (*Orconectes virilis*). The last loon count was in 2022, by volunteers with the Maine Loon Society, documented 76 adult loons and 3 chicks. There is one identified Bald Eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) on the northern edge of the lake.

Great Pond lies in the Salmon Pond – Great Pond watershed, which is comprised of 34,666 square miles. The shoreline is much more developed compared to Long Pond. There is one marina located on Great Pond, as well as several summer camps. Much of the shoreline is privately owned with a mixture of year-round and seasonal residences. There is one public access launch that is maintained by the state of Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry. The launch is fully hardscaped and has ample parking.

Salmon Lake (Ellis Pond)

Salmon Lake – MIDAS 5352

Surface Area: 695 Acres

Maximum Depth: 57 ft

Mean Depth: 23 ft

Fisheries Management: Coldwater & Warmwater

Key Species:

Brown Trout (*Salmo trutta*)
 Rainbow Smelt (*Osmerus mordax*)
 Invasive Species: Northern Pike (*Esox Lucius*)

Table 6: Salmon Lake Water Quality Assessment Comparison

Variable	State Average	Salmon Lake
Transparency	5.3M	5.0M
Chlorophyll	5.7 ppb	6.6 ppb
Phosphorous	11.2 ppb	15 ppb
Color	20.1 SPU	16 SPU
Alkalinity	11.11 mg/L	18.7 mg/l
pH	7.23	7.17
Conductivity	52.6 µS/cm	65 µS/cm
Flush Rate*	1-1.5	.54

*flush rate is per year

Salmon Lake was once a thriving salmon fishery; however, due to algal blooms in the 1930s, it suffered a significant decline in water quality. Work in the 1970s and 1980s was used to develop a restoration plan and watershed protection plan. This plan and the practices it has put into place have helped restore the water quality significantly; however, neither the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife nor Lake Stewards of Maine document an existing population of salmon.

The Brown Trout fishery is exemplary due to a healthy smelt population. The warmwater fisheries revolve around the populations of Black Crappie (*Pomoxis nigromaculatus*), Largemouth Bass (*Micropterus salmoides*), and Smallmouth Bass (*Micropterus dolomieu*). Salmon Lake also has a remarkably diverse aquatic plant life makeup with over 40 plant species identified. These include multiple species of waterweed (*Elodea spp.*), spikerush (*Eleocharis spp*), and more. There are no recorded species of crayfish or mussels present. The 2022 Loon count found 4 adult loons and no chicks present. One Bald Eagle nest was counted in 2023.

Salmon Lake is in the Salmon Lake-Great Pond watershed and forms part of the border of Belgrade and Oakland. Salmon Lake is accessible through a smaller hardscaped launch located off Route 8 in Belgrade. While there are several seasonal cottage rental businesses and two summer camps on the southwestern shore of Salmon Lake, there is less development on the northwestern shore leading to the channel connecting Salmon to McGrath.

Messalonskee Lake (Snow Pond)

Messalonskee Lake – MIDAS 5280

Surface Area: 3,691 Acres

Maximum Depth: 113 ft

Mean Depth: 33 ft

Fisheries Management: Coldwater & Warmwater

Key Species:

Brown Trout (*Salmo trutta*)

Rainbow Smelt (*Osmerus mordax*)

Invasive Species: Variable-Leaf Milfoil (*Myriophyllum heterophyllum*), Northern Pike (*Esox Lucius*)

Table 7: Messalonskee Lake Water Quality Assessment Comparison

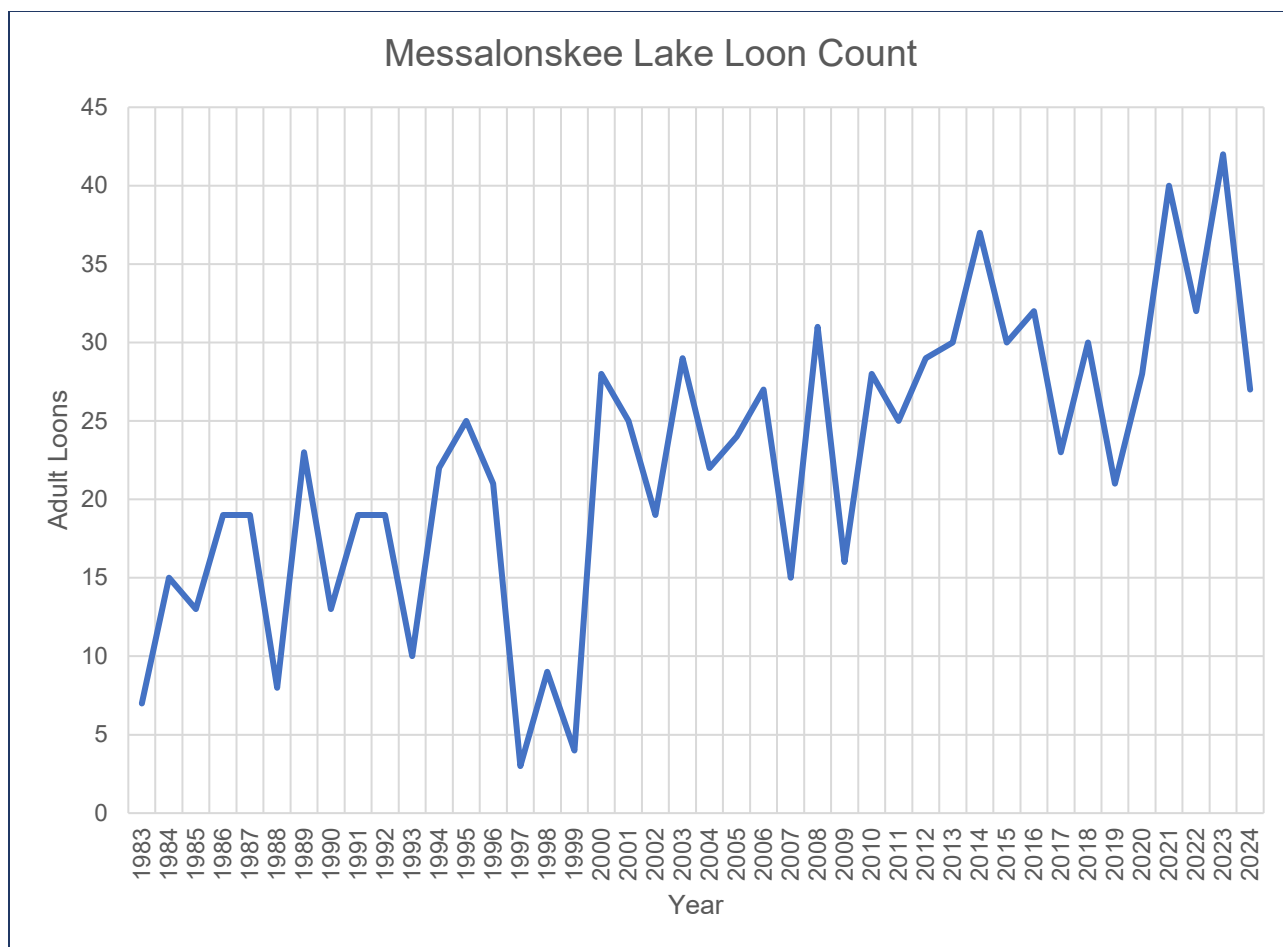
Variable	State Average	Messalonskee Lake
Transparency	5.3M	5.3M
Chlorophyll	5.7 ppb	4.0 ppb
Phosphorous	11.2 ppb	9 ppb
Color	20.1 SPU	25 SPU
Alkalinity	11.11 mg/L	11.8 mg/l
pH	7.23	7.10
Conductivity	52.6 µS/cm	50 µS/cm
Flush Rate*	1-1.5	1.59

*flush rate is per year

The second-largest of the Belgrade Lakes, Messalonskee Lake forms part of the town line of Belgrade, Sidney, and Oakland. While the principal fishery is warmwater species, there is some coldwater fishery potential, mostly due to the deep waters in the middle area of the lake. Messalonskee Lake is the lowest of the Belgrade Lakes chain, draining through the Messalonskee Stream to the Kennebec River in Waterville.

Landlocked Salmon (*Salmo salar*) and Brook Trout (*Salvelinus nigromaculatus*) are the principle coldwater fisheries, with Small (*Micropterus dolomieu*) and Largemouth Bass (*Micropterus salmoides*), Yellow (*Perca flavescens*) and White Perch (*Morone americana*), and various panfish supporting the warmwater fishery. Messalonskee Lake is known in the region for its Northern Pike (*Esox Lucius*) fishing. These fish can grow upward of 40 inches in length and have no natural predators.

The plant life is similar to that of the upper lakes in the chain, with the addition of the invasive Variable Leaf Milfoil (*Myriophyllum heterophyllum*). There have been two eagle nests identified, one in the southwestern corner of the lake and another on an island in the northern, narrower portion. Messalonskee Lake is heavily developed with numerous summer camps, event centers and both year-round and seasonal residences. Also, just across Route 27 and the extensive marsh system at the southern end of the lake is the Depot area of Belgrade, which contains the commercial manufacturing businesses of Hammond Lumber, and Gagne and Sons. There are two boat launches providing public access to Belgrade, one in the northern tip in Oakland and another in Belgrade, which is hand carry only, next to Route 27 in the far southern end. There were 27 adult loons and 4 juveniles counted in 2024.



Source: Lakes of Maine

McGrath Pond

McGrath Pond – MIDAS 5348

Surface Area: 467 Acres

Maximum Depth: 27 ft

Mean Depth: 16 ft

Fisheries Management: Coldwater & Warmwater

Key Species:

Brown Trout (*Salmo trutta*)

Rainbow Smelt (*Osmerus mordax*)

Invasive Species: None known

Table 8: McGrath Pond Water Quality Assessment Comparison

Variable	State Average	McGrath Pond
Transparency	5.3M	5.7M
Chlorophyll	5.7 ppb	3.2 ppb
Phosphorous	11.2 ppb	11 ppb
Color	20.1 SPU	15 SPU
Alkalinity	11.11 mg/L	22.9 mg/l

pH	7.23	7.26
Conductivity	52.6 $\mu\text{S/cm}$	79 $\mu\text{S/cm}$
Flush Rate*	1-1.5	.69

*flush rate is per year

McGrath Pond is the smallest of the Belgrade Lakes; as such, it has maintained a lower profile than its bustling neighbors. The pond is publicly accessible through a carry-in launch on the north end of the pond, as well as through the hardscaped launch on Salmon Lake, located off Route 8 in Belgrade; a navigable channel connects Salmon Lake and McGrath Pond. Historically, McGrath was a coldwater fishery; however, due to excessive nutrient loads, it is now predominantly a warmwater fishery. Brown Trout (*Salmo trutta*) are stocked by MIF&W, while populations of Smallmouth (*Micropterus dolomieu*) and Largemouth (*Micropterus salmoides*) Bass and Chain Pickerel (*Esox niger*) and Black Crappie (*Pomoxis nigromaculatus*) are abundant.

McGrath has similar plant life to its neighboring lakes, with the variation of more shallow water plants due to the pond's shallower nature. The loon count identified 10 adults in 2024 and 12 in 2023. There are no identified Bald Eagle nests on McGrath.

Whether due to its smaller size, or the lack of commodities available lakeside, McGrath has avoided commercial and recreational development for the most part. Camp Tracy and Woodrest Cottages lie on the western shore, with the remaining shoreline being developed by residences both seasonal and year-round.

Rivers and Streams

The largest stream in Belgrade, Belgrade Stream, connects Long Pond and Messalonskee Lake. There are significant spans of freshwater marshes at both the inlet and the outlet of the stream as well as the length. The much smaller Mill Stream connects Long Pond with Great Pond, cutting through Belgrade Village.

There are several perennial streams in Belgrade; however, because of the topography, they are often not the focal point. In addition to enhancing the scenic landscape, flowing water provides a unique habitat for numerous wildlife species and plays an essential role in the drainage of land areas during storms or snow melt. Streams also serve as the flushing and refill conduits for the larger, open waterbodies to which they are connected.

The Water Resources Map (Appendix) shows Belgrade's streams, lakes, ponds, and wetlands. Most streams are bounded by the Shoreland Zone or the Critical Resource Conservation District, as set forth in the Shoreland Zoning Ordinance. The Stream Protection District includes all land areas within seventy-five (75) feet, horizontally, of the normal high water mark of a pond or river or 250ft horizontally of a freshwater wetland.

The state has four classifications for freshwater rivers, streams, and brooks: AA, A, B, and C. The classification system should be viewed as a hierarchy of risk more than for use or quality assessment. Ecosystems that are more natural in their structure and

function can be expected to be more resilient to new stressors and to show more rapid recovery. The classifications are detailed below.

- **Class AA** involves little risk since activities such as waste discharge and impoundment are prohibited. The expectation to achieve natural conditions is high and degradation is unlikely.
- **Class A** waters allow impoundments and very restricted discharges, so the risk of degradation, while quite small, does increase since there is some small human intervention in the maintenance of the ecosystem.
- **Class B** has fewer restrictions on activities but still maintain high water-quality criteria. Class B is considered more at risk than a Class A stream. The risk is the possibility of a breakdown of the ecosystem and loss of use due to either natural or human-caused events.
- **Classes C** has the least restrictions on use and the lowest (but not low) water-quality criteria. Class C waters are still good quality, but the margin for error before significant degradation might occur in these waters in the event of an additional stress being introduced (such as a spill or a drought) is the least.

All brooks, streams, and rivers in Belgrade are class B. These waterbodies are suitable for drinking water supply, recreation in and on the water, fishing, industrial processes and cooling water supply, hydroelectric power generation, navigation and an unimpaired habitat for fish and other aquatic life.

Wetlands

Wetlands serve many important functions. As natural low points, they absorb floodwater, and they act as stormwater storage areas and surface water filtration systems. They also provide critical habitat for certain species of birds, fish and aquatic mammals, and are particularly important as breeding grounds. Wetlands are unique environments necessary for certain aquatic vegetation, as well as providing open space for some forms of recreational enjoyment or aesthetic appreciation. Wetlands are also crucial for preserving water quality since they have been proven to hold sediments, nutrients, and other pollutants from waters before they reach streams and rivers.

While a precise definition of a wetland is not universally accepted, making it difficult for local authorities to enforce the laws, wetlands share three essential elements. They all have non-permeable soils, a water table at or near the surface, and there is a presence of water-loving vegetation (rushes, cattails, red maple).

The National Wetlands Inventory maps and categorizes America's wetlands. These categories are broken down by size, fresh or saltwater, dominant vegetation type and acidity. While all are freshwater, Belgrade has wetlands where the dominant vegetation species are classified as Forested, Forested/Scrub, and Emergent species. Forested wetlands are classified as those with woody vegetation that is 6 meters tall or taller, Forested/Scrub wetlands are comprised of woody vegetation that is less than 6m tall, typically saplings, shrubs, or trees that have been stunted due to environmental

conditions. Emergent species are typically herbaceous perennials, excluding mosses and lichens.

Wetlands in Belgrade span all of the above classifications. Most are classified as forested or forested/scrub; however, there are large sections of emergent wetlands located primarily at the southern end of Messalonskee Lake and scattered along Belgrade Stream. The wetland system located at the southern end of Messalonskee Lake spans over 1,300 acres and provides critical habitat for several rare and uncommon species.

Among other standards, the Belgrade Shoreland Zoning Ordinance provides protection of wetlands through setback requirements consistent with the mandatory Shoreland Zoning Ordinance.

Vernal Pools

A vernal pool is defined as a naturally occurring, temporary to permanent inland body of water that forms in a shallow depression and typically fills during the spring or fall and may dry during the summer. Vernal pools contain no viable populations of predatory fish, and it provides the primary breeding habitat for wood frogs, spotted salamanders, blue spotted salamanders, and fairy shrimp. The presence of any one or more of these species is usually conclusive evidence of a vernal pool.

Vernal pools do not fall under the protection provided to wetlands by the Maine Natural Areas Program, a facet of the Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry that maintains a database of areas designated as ecological reserves. But, as of September 2007, significant vernal pool habitats are protected under the Natural Resources Protection Act (NRPA). A vernal pool is considered “significant” if it has a high habitat value, either because 1) a state-listed threatened or endangered species uses it to complete a critical part of its life history, or 2) there is a notable abundance of specific wildlife. This regulation protects areas within a 250-foot radius of the spring or fall high-water mark of a significant vernal pool, which is considered critical terrestrial habitat. Any activity on, in, or over these areas must be approved by the Maine DEP and requires either a Permit by Rule or individual NRPA approval.

Maine Natural Area Program has mapped significant vernal pools in some Maine towns, including Belgrade. There are two mapped vernal pools that are considered significant, one near the southern end of Great Pond and another in North Belgrade near Ellis Pond. With new attention to their importance in the ecosystem, the town should consider conducting a vernal pool survey and incorporating some protection for vernal pools into its development standards. Extra protection through Shoreland Zoning is a consideration for these sites, as well.

LAND RESOURCES

Land Cover

Most of Belgrade is covered by forest. The large majority of forested land is privately owned and actively managed by private homeowners. Some parcels are entered into tax relief programs that require forest management plans, while others are not managed at all.

The combination of varying terrain and extensive water components results in an absence of large-scale commercial farming in the town. There are a handful of farms that sell goods at small local stores, farm stands and farmers markets. Despite the lack of any large-scale agricultural use, there are numerous areas of town that are classified as being prime farmland. These parcels of land are not concentrated in any area of Belgrade, with the largest parcels located along the Manchester Road and the Oakland Road.

WILDLIFE HABITAT

Belgrade is home to a diverse range of species, including several rare and endangered species. Whitetail deer, bald eagles, golden eagles, lynx, bobcat, osprey, moose, river otters, black bears, beavers, snowshoe hare, rare terns, and loons are all known to live in and around Belgrade.

The extent and quality of wildlife habitat is an indicator of not just the richness and diversity of the flora and fauna in Belgrade, but the overall health of the ecosystem. The availability of high-quality habitat for plants, animals, and fish is essential to maintaining abundant and diverse populations for ecological, economic, and recreational purposes.

The Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife (MDIF&W) administers a program called Beginning with Habitat (BwH) to identify significant wildlife habitat and critical natural areas under the National Resources Protection Act.

BwH, a collaborative program of federal, state, and local agencies and non-governmental organizations, is a habitat-based approach to conserving wildlife and plant habitat on a landscape scale. The goal of the program is to maintain sufficient habitat to support all native plant and animal species currently breeding in Maine. BwH compiles habitat information from multiple sources, integrates it into one package, and makes it accessible to towns, land trusts, conservation organizations, and others to use in a proactive approach to conservation. This information can be seen on Belgrade's Critical Natural Resources Map in the appendix, with descriptions of essential features below.

Significant habitats, as defined by MDIF&W, includes species appearing on the official state or federal list of endangered or threatened species, high- and moderate-value deer wintering areas, and high- and moderate-value waterfowl and wading bird habitats.

Before conducting any activities in, on, or over significant wildlife habitats, a National Resources Protection Act (NRPA) permit must be obtained. Activities include construction, repair, or alteration of any permanent structure; dredging, bulldozing, removing or displacing soil, sand, or vegetation; and drainage or filling. The standard for protecting significant habitats highlights mitigation and compensation. Actions must be

taken to A) avoid negative impacts on habitats, B) minimize the impacts if unavoidable, C) restore or rehabilitate impacted habitats, D) reduce an impact over time, or E) replace the affected habitat.

Deer Wintering Areas

Although White-tailed Deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*) are common in many other parts of Maine, the population is small in the Belgrade region. The summer habitat of the White-tailed Deer is commonly referred to as “edge habitat,” which includes farm fields, orchards, and open areas adjacent to forested lands. The habitat limitations for deer occur in the winter when there is heavy snow and extreme cold. Deer wintering areas (DWA) are defined as a forested area used by deer when snow depth in the open/hardwoods exceeds 12 inches; deer sinking depth in the open/hardwoods exceeds eight inches and mean daily temperatures are below 32 degrees Fahrenheit. Non-forested wetlands, non-stocked clear cuts, hardwood types, and stands predominated by Eastern Larch are included in DWAs only if less than 10 acres in size. Agricultural and development areas within DWAs are excluded regardless of size. Deer wintering areas that have yet to be confirmed through professional survey are considered “Candidate Deer Wintering Areas” until otherwise verified through a survey.

Belgrade has four deer wintering areas, with three located in North Belgrade and one in the western half of town next to Long Pond. There are no identified candidate deer wintering areas. Deer wintering areas are a particularly important resource in this area of the state because the high snow depth is a limiting factor for the deer population. The town should develop methods to protect both candidate and identified deer wintering areas.

Rare, Endangered and Valuable Species and Habitats

Beginning with Habitat compiles data on rare, endangered, and valuable species and habitats in Belgrade (see Critical Natural Resources Map in appendix). This information includes rare, threatened, or endangered wildlife, rare or exemplary plants and natural communities, essential wildlife habitats, and significant wildlife habitats.

Fish & Wildlife

Data from the Beginning with Habitat Program, managed by the Maine Natural Areas Program documents two bald eagle nests in the Belgrade area, a nest on the east shore of Long Pond, and a nest on the western shore of Messalonskee Lake.



Black Tern (*Chlidonias niger*)

The large marsh system at the south end of Messalonskee Lake has been classified as key Inland Waterfowl/ Wading Bird Habitat. This marsh supports numerous bird, plant, animal and fish species, including the endangered Black Tern (*Chlidonias niger*), seen to the left, and Least Bittern (*Ixobrychus exilis*), seen below. This area is one of only a dozen known nesting sites in Maine for the Black Tern. The Belgrade colony is one of the longest established and largest colonies in

Maine. The least bittern is a secretive species, with only 18 documented populations in Maine at the time of the last study.

Plants

Maine Natural Areas Program (MNAP) through Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation & Forestry (DACF) ranks species on both a global level and a state level. A 5-point ranking system from critically imperiled (1) to secure (5) facilitates a quick assessment of a species or habitat type's rarity. Each species or habitat is assigned both a state (S) or global (G) ranking on the scale of 1-5. Factors such as range extent, the number of occurrences, intensity of threats, as well as other factors, contribute to the assignment of state and global ranks. The definitions for state and global ranks are comparable but applied at different geographic scales; for example, something that is state-imperiled may be globally secure.



Least Bittern (*Ixobrychus exilis*)

There are no known rare or endangered plant species in Belgrade.

Undeveloped Habitat Blocks, Connectors and Conserved Land

Flora and Fauna species depend on undeveloped and undisturbed blocks of habitat specific to the species feeding, breeding, and behavioral or ecological needs. There is a distinct, direct relationship between the quantity and variety of wildlife and the size of their habitat. Of course, there is urban wildlife such as skunks and mourning doves that do not require significant portions of land to thrive. However, many other types of animals are much less conspicuous and depend upon unbroken stretches of forest for survival. As roads, farms, and houses intrude on the habitat of these creatures, the large habitat blocks become fragmented, displacing the wildlife that relies on them.

Referencing maps of Belgrade shows that not only are the majority of lots large and forested, but the majority of Belgrade is also privately owned and managed. The 7 Lakes Alliance is a regional land conservation organization and has entered over 10,000 acres of land in the Belgrade Lakes region into permanent conservation.

As land changes ownership and becomes more parceled and fragmented, there will be more of a need to actively regulate development and land-use activities to preserve the wildlife composition. Development in rural areas often causes these fragmentations, reducing the land's value as wildlife habitat. Wildlife travel corridors linking individual habitat blocks together are critical to accommodate animal movement. Ensuring wildlife travel corridors helps preserve the region's biodiversity and maintains rural community character. Limiting development at the edges of unfragmented habitat also helps maintain environmental integrity by giving forest-dwelling creatures a natural buffer.

Natural Areas

As stated in the topography portion of this chapter, Belgrade contains one of the finest examples of the Kettlehole Bog-pond ecosystems in the state of Maine. This ecosystem is characterized by flat peatlands in circular depressions, typically deeper than they are wide.

There is also an area of an Unpatterned Fen ecosystem. This system is similar to that of the Kettlehole Bog system, with the main differentiation being the presence of flowing water. This exposes the plants present to a higher level of nutrients, creating a more diverse system.

REGULATORY PROTECTIONS

In addition to state and federal standards to protect water quality, Belgrade's Shoreland Zoning Ordinance was last updated in 2018. As such, it complies with the Chapter 1000 Guidelines for Municipal Shoreland Zoning Ordinances. The Shoreland Zoning Ordinance delineates five districts for the purpose of protecting water resources.

Resource Protection District – The RPD includes areas in which development would adversely affect water quality, productive habitat, biological ecosystems, or scenic and natural values. This district shall include the following areas when they occur within the limits of the shoreland zone, exclusive of the shoreland zone, exclusive of the Stream Protection District:

1. Areas within 250 feet, horizontal distance, of the upland edge of freshwater wetlands and wetlands associated with great ponds and rivers which are rated "moderate" or "high" value by the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife (MDIF&W) as of 2018.
2. Flood plains along river, defined by the 100-year flood plan as designated on the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) Flood Insurance Rate Maps of Flood Hazard Boundary Maps, or the flood of record, or in the absence of these, by soil types identified as recent flood plain soils.
3. Areas of two or more contiguous acres with sustained slopes of 20% or greater. Areas meeting these criteria shall be in a subdistrict designated Resource Protection-Slope District.

4. Areas of two (2) or more contiguous acres supporting wetland vegetation and hydric soils, which are not part of a freshwater wetland as defined, and which are not connected to a water body during normal spring high water.
5. Land areas along rivers subject to severe bank erosion, undercutting, or river bed movement
6. Areas designated by federal, state, or municipal governments as natural areas of significance to be protected from development.

Limited Residential – encompasses those areas suitable for residential or recreational development. It includes areas other than those in the Resource Protection District, or Stream Protection District, and areas which are used less intensively than those in the Limited Commercial District, or the General Development District.

Limited Commercial – Includes areas of mixed light commercial and residential uses, exclusive of the Stream Protection District, which should not be developed as intensively as the General Development District. This district includes areas of two or more contiguous acres in size devoted to a mix of residential and low intensity business and commercial uses. Industrial uses are prohibited.

General Development District – The general development district includes the following types of areas:

1. Areas of two or more contiguous acres devoted to commercial, industrial, or intensive recreational activities including, but not limited to, the following:
 - a. Areas devoted to manufacturing, fabricating, or other industrial activities;
 - b. Areas devoted wholesaling, warehousing, retail trade and service activities, or other commercial activities;
 - c. Areas devoted to intensive recreational development and activities such as but not limited to amusement parks, race tracks and fairgrounds.
2. Areas otherwise discernable as having patterns of intensive commercial, industrial or recreational uses;
 - a. Portions of the general development district may also include residential development. However, no area shall be designated as a General Development District based solely on residential use.
 - b. In areas adjacent to great ponds and adjacent to rivers flowing to great ponds, the designation of an area as a General Development District shall be based upon uses existing at the time of adoption of this Ordinance. There shall be no newly established General Development Districts or expansions in area of existing general development district adjacent to great ponds, and adjacent to river with flow to great ponds.

Stream Protection District – The Stream Protection District includes all land areas within seventy-five (75) feet, horizontal distance, of the normal high-water line of a stream, exclusive of those areas within two hundred and fifty (250) feet, horizontal distance, of the normal high water line of a great pond or river, or within two hundred and fifty (250)

feet, horizontal distance, of the upland edge of a freshwater wetland. Where a stream and its associated shoreland area is located within two-hundred and fifty (250) feet, horizontal distance, of the above water bodies or wetlands, that land area shall be regulated under the terms of the shoreland district associated with that water body or wetland.

Belgrade's Ordinances are the first lines of protection for watersheds and water quality, since development and other human-related activities within a watershed are the largest contributors to degraded water quality. Development can be designed to minimize phosphorus runoff, by mandating best management practices (BMPs) for construction and Low Impact Development (LID) design criteria (*LID Guidance Manual for Maine Communities, Approaches for Implementation of Low Impact Development Practices at the Local Level*, 2007). LID describes land planning and engineering design approaches to manage stormwater runoff that mimics natural processes, resulting in the infiltration, evapotranspiration, or use of stormwater to protect water quality and associated aquatic habitats.

To preserve and protect water quality, it is imperative that ordinances regulating development are reviewed and updated regularly. Regular updates will ensure the most current standards and practices are included, such as LID and BMPs for phosphorus control and stormwater management.

THREATS TO RESOURCES

Sources of potential threats to water quality are too numerous to list extensively, but a few include increased and poorly managed development, impervious surfaces related to development, faulty or failing septic systems, agricultural fertilizers, poor stormwater management, erosion, and much more. Typically, the erosion related to poorly maintained camp roads and gravel driveways within watersheds are the biggest contributors to runoff and increased phosphorus intake in waterbodies.

The single greatest threat to water quality at present is the introduction of phosphorus into a waterbody through runoff within the watershed. Phosphorus is a naturally occurring element and a plant nutrient. Excessive phosphorus is responsible for causing nuisance algae blooms and excessive aquatic plant growth. When severe enough, algal blooms reduce dissolved oxygen levels and could result in fish die-offs.

The level of phosphorus entering a waterbody is a direct function of disruption in the watershed, primarily from human-induced activities. Since most of Belgrade is encompassed in lake watersheds, this can have a major constraint on development.

Increased impervious surfaces can cause runoff and result in erosion during precipitation events if not effectively managed. When the water runs off impervious surfaces, it collects pollutants that end up in stormwater drains or running across the ground and eventually find their way into waterbodies.

Faulty or failing septic systems in older or seasonal homes in the Shoreland Zone are another threat to water quality. Many seasonal homes that have been converted to year-

round use have septic systems that cannot adequately manage year-round use. Many older homes may have faulty septic systems. The state now has a requirement of filing a septic inspection report for any transfer of title within a Shoreland Zone. The purpose of this requirement is to provide proof of inspection to ensure subsurface waste disposal systems in Shoreland Zones remain in good working condition to prevent water quality degradation. While some towns require that a copy of the inspection report also be submitted to the town, Belgrade does not yet have such a requirement.

This requirement has limitations, however. One example is when a property within the Shoreland Zone is passed down generationally without the benefit of officially changing documented ownership, the requirement of a septic inspection is not triggered.

Fertilizer associated with agricultural activities can run off land into surface water, resulting in algal blooms. If severe enough, algal blooms can drastically reduce water quality. Additionally, what was traditionally considered a well-manicured lawn sloping down to a lakeshore is also a source of pollutants. Lawn maintenance, in particular the use of fertilizers, and lack of a natural vegetative buffer are increasingly known to cause water-quality degradation.

Work on public infrastructure near and in the water is managed to avoid erosion and sedimentation. Careful consideration must be given to the miles of ditching, and hundreds of road culverts that are town-maintained. Public supplies of salted sand are stored in a Maine DEP-approved building and erodible materials are stored away from drainage areas and waterbodies. Best management practices for activities such as culvert replacement, street sweeping, public works garage operations, and salt/sand pile maintenance are essential in protecting water quality. BMPs and strategies are gathered and utilized from many sources but primarily from Maine DOT.

Naturally Occurring

While Belgrade is known for its natural setting, there are natural elements that pose a risk to residents. Three known contaminants in the environment that may be present are Arsenic (As), Uranium (U), and Radon (Rn). All elements are known carcinogens or otherwise hazardous to humans and can be found in the air and drinking water. Some locations have higher concentrations due to the soil and bedrock. Arsenic is also produced due to manmade industrial and agricultural practices.

Of increasing concern is the threat of the introduction of invasive species. Unfortunately, Belgrade has become the epicenter of the invasive Northern Pike's (*Esox lucius*), left, presence in the state. This voracious predator was introduced illegally into the Belgrade Lakes in the 1970s, likely to create an exciting sport fishing opportunity. Pike are able to

grow over 40 inches long and can tip the scales at 30 pounds or more. This species is the largest freshwater fish in Maine. Northern pike are damaging to native populations not only due to their large size and fast growth rate, but also to their predatory nature. While



Northern Pike (*Esox lucius*)

young, the pike consume not only key forage fish species but also cornerstones of natural fisheries such as trout and salmon. Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife does not actively manage northern pike fishing; there are no bag limits or size limits on pike. Management plans have historically been contentious. Some anglers desire the hard fighting fish and encourage the release of smaller specimens to let them grow. The state encourages the removal of any northern pike caught, and anyone found releasing an invasive species could be subject to fines.

Several bodies of water in Belgrade are also home to variable water-milfoil (*Myriophyllum heterophyllum*), right. Messalonskee Lake, Belgrade Stream, and Great Pond are all known to have infestations of the weed. All forms of milfoil are aggressive growers and will quickly spread through a body of water. Once established, the plant will crowd out native species and, if not managed, will begin to change the quality of the waterbody and fish species that are able to survive. There are several programs working to slow the spread of milfoil in Belgrade. Local watershed associations provide a courtesy boat inspection service. This program deploys a mixed staff of volunteer and paid staff to boat launches to inspect boats, both motorized and non-motorized, trailers, fishing gear, and other equipment to check for the presence of invasive species as they both exit and enter the water.



Variable Water-Milfoil (*Myriophyllum heterophyllum*)

While Belgrade is not isolated from invasive populations of both plant and wildlife species, the introduction to new locations and spread within a body of water, while either intentional or accidental, is a threat to native populations. Measures should continue to be taken and supported to further protect the resources of Belgrade.

Manmade

Marinas, industrial contractors, and other locations that have generators, fuels, and chemicals on site all pose a level of risk to the environment and groundwater. As products

are used in the course of day-to-day operation, they are at risk of being impacted by storms causing runoff into adjacent bodies of water and in some cases produce leachate into aquifers. Belgrade's largest aquifer runs directly through the Depot area of Belgrade, which contains the largest commercial entities in town.

An ongoing and constantly emerging pollution concern is the presence of so called "forever chemicals." Forever chemicals refer to the group of man-made chemicals that include those known as PFAS. Studies have found accumulation of these chemicals in samples of water, soil, wildlife, and fish across Maine. A few common ways that PFAS has been introduced into the environment are in the spreading of sludge, septage and landfill material, as well as through the use of some fire-fighting foams commonly found at airports. Due to the long lifespan of these chemicals, they can build up in natural systems.

There are four sites that have been mapped by the Maine Department of Environmental Protection to have utilized sludge in Belgrade. All four are located in North Belgrade, off the Smithfield Road. There are two more locations where septage was applied to farmland, off the Penney Road. Numerous wells across town have been tested, with all results coming back under the adopted standard of 20 nanograms/liter. While overall, standards, guidelines, and remediation measures are still in the process of being developed and being made available to Maine residents, if a resident's well tests above the standard, there is a process to have a filtration system installed.

Point Source/Non-Point Source Pollution

Nonpoint Source Pollution cannot be traced to one sole source. Stormwater can come from anywhere, especially impervious surfaces. Stormwater is water that does not soak into the ground during a precipitation event, but flows on top of the ground instead, to a body of water. As this water travels across the surface of the ground, it collects pollutants such as petroleum products, heavy metals, fertilizers, and manure, which can originate from any location within a watershed. Where stormwater runoff erodes soil, the soil itself transports phosphorus into waterbodies.

Point source pollution sources in Belgrade include failing septic systems along the lake shores, logging operations, and gravel pits. Additionally, as Belgrade has such a long-standing history of water-based recreation, there are many seasonal residences and accessory structures built not only directly on the shoreline but in some cases in the water. These pose additional threats to water quality and are another source of runoff.

The community's focus on eliminating runoff into its lakes has revolved primarily around nonpoint source pollution. The 7 Lakes Alliance, a lake conservation group based in Belgrade, has for several years now received Non-Point Source Water Pollution Control Grants, aka 319 grants funneled through the Maine Department of Environmental Protection via the Environmental Protection Agency under the Clean Water Act, to address non-source pollution. The grants are matched by financial contributions from Belgrade's municipal government and private property owners to remedy runoff, typically

from camp roads and gravel driveways, into Belgrade's lakes. Additionally, the 7 Lakes Alliance and the individual lake associations participate in the LakeSmart program, which encourages lakeshore property owners to take steps such as planting buffers, defining walkways, and constructing infiltration steps that will reduce runoff from their properties.

Remediation Sites

Maine DEP files indicate there are three locations in Belgrade involved in a contamination remediation program. There is one site in the Brownfields Program as of the writing of this plan. Three sites are closed Voluntary Response Action Program locations, while the municipal landfill took place in the State's landfill closure program.

Table 9: Contamination Sites in Belgrade

Known Contamination Sites in Belgrade						
Site	Site Name	Address	Program	Status Date	Status	IC Control
REM03399	Gagne Precast	28 Old Rt. 27	VRAP	5/24/2023	Undertaking Post Closure Obligations	False
REM00032	Belgrade Municipal Landfill	Dunn Rd.	Landfill Closure	7/30/1993	Undertaking Post Closure Obligations	True
REM02707	Chandler Road Landfill	86 Chandler Road	Landfill Closure	10/18/2015	Undertaking Post Closure Obligations	False

Source: Maine Department of Environmental Protection

LOCAL AND REGIONAL COORDINATION

Belgrade is fortunate to have multiple local and regional partners who are dedicated to ensuring the enduring quality of the towns water and natural resources. There are numerous Pond/Lake Associations that through education, advocacy and volunteer efforts work to protect the waterbody and watershed against destructive or otherwise harmful impacts. These associations include:

- McGrath Pond and Salmon Lake Association
- Friends of Messalonskee
- 7 Lakes Alliance
- Belgrade Lakes Association

The 7 Lakes Alliance also works to purchase land and conservation easements throughout Belgrade to preserve land with a high ecological value. At the time of this update, over 10,000 acres in the Belgrade Lakes region has been entered into various permanent conservation easements or purchases.

ANALYSIS

- Belgrade's abundant natural resources play a vital role in the town's tourism- and resource- based economy.
- The town has implemented several restrictions that would prevent damage to land and water bodies.
- Aquifers in Belgrade were mapped in 2000. A number of land uses above or adjacent to the aquifer pose a significant threat of contamination.
- Belgrade adopted a subdivision ordinance that contains measures to protect ground and surface water.
- Belgrade has shoreland zoning; however, it does not have other zoning regulations in place.
- Belgrade is fortunate to have large unfragmented blocks of land needed for wildlife habitat. However, where most of this land is privately owned, the town should be active in its conservation efforts.

FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS

Climate change is expected to bring more extreme weather events that will worsen any existing deficiencies in stormwater management, erosion control, and development on steep slopes. This may cause damage to infrastructure or buildings in low-lying areas of town.

Existing Land Use



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Existing land use patterns and future land use considerations are key elements in a community's Comprehensive Plan. Each chapter of the Plan can be tied into both the Existing and Future Land Use sections. As such, relating the community's Vision Statement into the Existing and Future Land Use chapters and the Future Land Use Plan is a fundamental practice in ensuring alignment through the chapters.

A vision is only as good as a community's commitment to work toward it. This work has been broken down into a series of strategies, ranging from recommendations for regulatory changes to ideas for better interlocal and public-private collaboration. In addition to ideas, a plan for priorities and implementation must also be in place to support a successful vision.

Introduction

As a community grows, its character is defined by the use of its land area. The community's self-image as a small city, farm town, or a suburb is molded by the actions of its residents in the development of its various enterprises.

Most people live in a certain area because they appreciate the character of the community. However, a community's character can shift over time. The shift needs to be managed to ensure it remains desirable. This often means walking a fine line between enacting regulations and allowing personal preferences.

Trends that will not be welcomed, such as loss of open space, loss of productive farmland, increasing cost of public services, or lack of vitality in the village center, can be addressed through proper management of growth.

The Existing Land Use Chapter serves to review the land use patterns and development in Belgrade. Like many rural municipalities in Central Maine, Belgrade can be characterized as a rural, residential community within commuting distance to larger, regional hubs, including Bath/Brunswick, Waterville, and Augusta. Belgrade remains committed to maintaining the community character of the town while working to provide opportunities for the development of high-quality housing at affordable prices, ensuring the elderly can age in place, offering appropriate economic development opportunities, protecting natural resources consistent with the vision statement.

Characteristics of Belgrade

Belgrade is comprised of 37,075.20 acres, of which 27,680 acres is land and the remaining 9,401.60 is comprised of lakes, streams and other water bodies. As described in the community profile and housing chapter in detail, Belgrade has developed into three separate and distinct districts. Belgrade's development pattern is a history of the town itself. Settlements grew into villages, which were then augmented by the boom in lakefront living. Rural farms gradually turned into subdivisions under the influence of suburbanization, while large tracts, consisting of forest land and abandoned farms, remain undeveloped.

Belgrade is fortunate to have maintained many of its natural resources in good condition despite development. When considering future land use planning, it is imperative that the protection of these resources is incorporated whenever and wherever possible. The town has long relied on the Belgrade Lakes as an economic driver and a key component of the town's character.

Residential Land Uses

Residential land uses are scattered across town. There are concentrations of housing in the Village and Depot due to the historic settlement patterns. Belgrade currently does not have zoning requirements that would control what types and uses of structures could be developed in town. This has led to a mix of development in most areas of town, with commercial development neighboring schools and residences.

The Belgrade Lakes Village generally includes the area from the Center for All Seasons to the Mill Stream bridge. The bridge (between Great Pond and Long Pond) denotes the boundary with Rome, but development on the Rome side is considered part of the village. It contains a mix of residential and small commercial properties in close proximity and is a center of community activity in Belgrade.

This area has received considerable attention due to its development challenges. Over the last 10 years, a streetscape design/study addressed issues of aesthetics, traffic, and pedestrian flow, and the construction of the 7 Lakes Alliance offices and renovation of the Post Office property created much-needed public space and boat access. Sandwiched between Great Pond and Long Pond, the village is constrained and offers little space for new development. Route 27 to the south provides the only opportunity for expansion, though some of that area is occupied by the golf course.

The area known as Belgrade Depot is located along Route 27 between Belgrade Stream and Route 135. At the southern end of this area is the Hammond Lumber Company. In the village area along Depot Road are Belgrade Central School, Belgrade Public Library, and several residences. A youth baseball park is situated along Route 27.

North Belgrade is located along Route 8/11, east of Great Pond. The North Belgrade Community Center (a former school) is a defining element of the area. A one-time general store is now closed, and there are a loose cluster of homes and small businesses. Although not within the village, prominent in the immediate vicinity are several children's summer camps located on Salmon Lake and Great Pond that are accessed by way of Routes 8 and 27. Route 8 has less traffic than Route 27 through Belgrade Lakes and the Depot, so there is less opportunity for commercial development.

Subdivision Developments

Maine defines subdivision as:

The division of a tract or parcel of land into three or more lots within any five-year period that begins on or after September 23, 1971. This definition applies whether the division is accomplished by sale, lease, development, buildings or otherwise. The term

“subdivision” includes the division of a new structure or structures on a tract or parcel of land into three or more dwelling units within a five-year period, the construction or replacement of three or more dwelling units on a single tract or parcel of land, and the division of an existing structure or structures previously used for commercial or industrial use into three or more dwelling units within a five-year period.

For comparison, the state does not consider the following to be subdivisions:

1. Gifts [of land] to relatives.
2. Transfer to governmental entities.
3. Transfer to conservation organizations.
4. Transfer of lots for forest management, agricultural management, or conservation of natural resources.
5. Unauthorized subdivision lots in existence for at least 20 years.

The specific details relating to what constitutes subdivision and what does not are outside the scope of this plan. For a deeper understanding, review the enabling statutes (MRS Title 30-A §4401 et seq. Municipal Subdivision Law, and MRS Title 12, §682-B. Exemptions from Subdivision Definition).

There has been one subdivision created in Belgrade in the past 10 years. This could be due to construction costs, availability of already built housing, or desirable lots becoming available.

Historically engineering plans for subdivisions have been exorbitantly expensive, sometimes costing double what neighboring towns would cost. The subdivision ordinance also has strict standards making engineering costs greater than other towns. There are several previously permitted sub-divisions that have never been developed.

Industrial and Commercial Development

Belgrade never truly developed an industrial character. There, of course, was industry in the form of smaller mills; however, the strongest economic driver has always been tourism. The Belgrade Village developed in part to support the tourism industry. There are several bed and breakfasts, gift shops, and food service locations. The Depot area formed in relation to the train depot that was in Belgrade, bringing tourists and goods to Belgrade. The Depot has now become the most industrial portion of Belgrade and is home to several commercial businesses.

Belgrade also hosts numerous seasonal recreation-based businesses. There are several summer camps, some co-ed and some for only boys or girls, an award-winning golf course, rental cabins, and guide services. These types of business help drive the economy and bring visitors to the community.

Institutional and Service Sector

Belgrade has maintained its lake town culture and identity despite pressures from retail chains and fast service businesses. There are currently no chain restaurants or retail

locations in Belgrade. One national chain made an attempt to develop a presence in town; however, that was unsuccessful. The lumber supply store located in the depot is a draw for nearby residents to purchase construction and home goods, while the unique shops in the village let tourists and locals peruse and enjoy the historic and picturesque setting.

Belgrade maintains small-scale services appropriately sized to serve residents' basic recreational, cultural, and health needs. The Center for All Seasons hosts recreational and health classes, the Belgrade Library is open to lend books and hosts small events. The Belgrade Regional Health Center offers primary care options and other minor medical procedures. These services are localized in nature and do not have the capacity to serve a large population. Belgrade relies on the local service centers of Waterville, Augusta, and Winthrop for more expansive offerings.

Land Use Trends

New development in Belgrade has seen stable development from 2015 through 2020 with an increase in building permits occurring in 2021. New structures have been primarily residential and, on a lot-by-lot basis across town. Directing growth is challenging in Belgrade due to the lack of zoning and minimal regulatory and nonregulatory incentives.

Belgrade has only recently developed a septic permit tracking system. The permits issued prior to 2022 are on paper only and have not been digitized. For this reason, it is challenging to determine how development has aligned with the town's designated growth areas or consistency with the town's vision.

There have been 12 commercial developments since the last comprehensive plan. Six of those developments have been in the Designated Growth Area's and six have been outside.

Land Use Regulation

Existing Town of Belgrade land-use ordinances include the following:

- 1) Shoreland Zoning Ordinance, governing development along Belgrade's 56 miles of lake shore, plus Belgrade Stream and smaller tributaries.
- 2) Road Ordinance, regulating the design of new roads in town.
- 3) Commercial Development Review Ordinance, adopted to implement the 1998 Comprehensive Plan, regulates establishment or construction of commercial uses with permitting requirements and design/development standards. The ordinance contains somewhat different standards for Belgrade Lakes village (parking and buffers), but does not contain zoning elements.
- 4) Floodplain Management Ordinance, following federal mandate, regulates development within the 100-year floodplain.
- 5) Manufactured Homes and Mobile Home Park Ordinance, governs the construction and placement of mobile homes in Belgrade, and the design of mobile home parks.
- 6) Adult Business Ordinance sets standards for the permitting of any adult businesses that may want to locate in town.

- 7) Minimum Lot Size Ordinance sets minimum lot size dimensions for residential (40,000 square feet) and commercial (60,000 s.f.) uses, as well as frontage (200 feet) and other dimensional requirements for lots not in the shoreland zone.
- 8) Subdivision Ordinance, regulating subdivisions as required by State Law. The subdivision ordinance was last updated in 2020 and contains multiple legal and procedural errors and obsolete performance standards.
- 9) Multi Family Dwelling Ordinance controls the development of multiple residences on a lot and the application process.

While several of these ordinances were partially updated in the past year, overall, the ordinances could benefit from updating and refreshing.

As mentioned above, records of building, subdivision, and commercial development permits are not readily accessible. Belgrade employs a part-time code enforcement officer who works with community members in the issuance of building permits and advises the Planning Board and Town officials.

Non-Regulatory Measures

The Maine Growth Management Act requires towns to prepare Comprehensive Plans to designate areas preferred for new development, called “growth areas,” and areas where new development is not encouraged, termed “rural areas.” This approach directs new development to parts of town with amenities and capacity for growth and away from areas with environmental or other constraints. The purpose of the Growth Management Act is to prevent sprawl. Sprawl in rural areas increases the town’s expense in road maintenance and other municipal services. It also has a negative environmental impact on natural resources, such as habitat, biodiversity, water quality, and loss of farmland. Belgrade accomplished this in the previous version of the comprehensive plan.

There are other, non-regulatory options the town could consider, too. Encouraging walkability or creating bike lanes, where feasible, is a viable way to promote the village area. Belgrade created a town park in the Village in thanks to a donation of land. Creating or improving pocket parks or outdoor places for residents to gather not only revitalizes the downtown and encourages growth, but also creates a sense of community.

The town collaborates with several organizations and municipal committees in preventing sprawl, protecting natural resources, and directing development away from Belgrade’s rural areas. Non-regulatory measures to direct growth away from rural areas also preserve open space, farmland, and forestland.

Agriculture and Open Space

Belgrade did not develop a strong forestry and farming industry as neighboring towns did. As mentioned previously, much of the existing land is still covered in forest; however, it is only loosely managed and, on a lot-by-lot basis. There are numerous reasons to protect existing open space. One of the most important to Belgrade is the ongoing protection that these undeveloped areas provide to the lakes of Belgrade. Undeveloped land serves as

a buffer for the lakes from nonpoint source pollution, which is created when runoff creates erosion, sweeping phosphorus into water bodies. Enrollment in the Open Space, Farmland, and Tree Growth Tax Law are encouraged to reduce property tax valuations and preserve lots.

Floodplain Management Ordinance

The town participates in the National Flood Insurance Program and agrees to comply with the National Flood Insurance Act of 1968 (P.L. 90-488, as amended) as outlined in the Floodplain Management Ordinance, adopted in 2011. Maps are updated with federal data releases.

Population Projections

As detailed in the Community Profile and Housing chapters, population projections are of an undependable nature at best. While there may not be drastic swings in population make-up and growth, this does not mean there will not be changes. Currently, the greatest trends in population in Belgrade are the declining average household size and the increase in average age. Smaller families generally desire houses that fit family members. This has led to the traditional sprawling farmhouse becoming a less desirable housing stock. The aging population is presently an essential consideration. This demographic has a specific set of requirements, such as handicapped accessible homes, so residents can age in place, the construction of more one-story homes and appropriately sized homes. With the increase in residents, young and elderly, living alone, smaller homes will grow in demand. In short, the population may not be increasing, but the changes in the demographics of the population may result in the need for more homes and/or a different type of home.

Analysis

The town may need to examine the type of available housing stock to continue to provide adequate housing for existing senior residents so they can age in place. As of mid-2024, there are three residences with less than 1,300 square feet available for sale, which forces young adults and the elderly to look outside of Belgrade for housing. This may mean encouraging the construction of specific types of homes, such as one-story, handicapped-accessible, or elderly housing. Additionally, as of May 2024, the median sales price of a single-family home was \$570,000, well above what is considered affordable by those making near the median income.

The town's ordinances should be reviewed for consistency and relevancy following the approval of this Comprehensive Plan. There are similar recommendations to this in the Policies and Strategies tables.

Issues of Further Study and Discussion

- ❖ Would enacting zoning be beneficial and possible to accomplish?

- ❖ How can Belgrade promote the Village and Depot areas for new businesses as space becomes available?
- ❖ Commercial development are being developed in almost entirely new lots, with very few exceptions occurring in the village area.
- ❖ Commercial development in the past 10 years has been split in location in regards to the growth area. There have been 12 new developments with 6 occurring in the current designated growth areas and 6 occurring outside.
- ❖ The lack of public water and sewer poses a challenge for dense development.
- ❖ There are a number of reasons why there is a lack of age-friendly housing stock.

Public Facilities and Services



Municipal Services

The Town of Belgrade, by itself or in collaboration with neighboring towns and other partners, offers comprehensive public facilities and services to residents, workers, and visitors. This chapter details Belgrade's town government and how it provides public facilities and services to residents.

Belgrade has operated under general statutory authority with a Town Meeting-Selectboard-Manager form of government since 1989. In this form of government, the legislative and executive functions of government are fully separated. The town meeting serves as the legislative body, determining what laws should govern the town and where the money is to be spent. The Board of Selectpersons (or Selectboard) is the executive body, with a single chief administrator, the full-time town manager, to supervise daily operations. Half of the towns in Maine utilize this style of governance.

The Town Manager is employed full-time. Five full-time staff (Town Manager, Town Clerk, two Deputy Clerks and Treasurer) work at the town office along with a part-time Code Enforcement Officer and a contracted part-time assessor. The Board of Selectpersons serves as Belgrade's governing body on matters that are not statutorily required to be approved by the voters. The Board consists of five members elected to rotate 3-year terms with no limit on the number of terms. Each year the Board selects its own Chair, who serves for the ensuing year. The Selectboard appoints a 5-member Planning Board with up to two alternate members. Planning Board members are appointed for 3-year terms with no limit on the number of terms. The town also benefits from the services of a variety of other appointed committees.

The Town of Belgrade owns six principal buildings:

- Town Office, located at 990 Augusta Road/Route 27;
- Center for All Seasons, located at Center Drive, 0.5 mile south of Belgrade Lakes Village;
- Lakes Fire Station, located adjacent to Belgrade Lakes Village at 1 Augusta Road/Route 27;
- Maintenance Garage, 60 Oakland Road;
- North Belgrade Community Center, 508 Smithfield Road, and
- Transfer Station, 92 Dunn Road

The Belgrade Town Office is the base of operations for general government services. It includes offices for the Town Clerk, Tax Collector, Assessor, Town Manager, General Assistance Administrator, Treasurer, Code Enforcement Officer, Facilities Director/Sexton, as well as meeting space for the Town Selectboard and other municipal boards and committees. For elections, early voting takes place at the town office. In person voting on Election Day as well as the Annual Town Meeting are held at the Center for All Seasons. Five full-time staff (Town Manager, Town Clerk, two Deputy Clerks and Treasurer) work at the town office along with a part-time Code Enforcement Officer and a contracted part-time assessor.

The Belgrade town office building was constructed in 2015-2016. Due to consistent and regular maintenance, no major improvements are anticipated.

Law enforcement services are provided by the Kennebec County Sheriff's Department and the Maine State Police. Townspeople have long been satisfied with this arrangement; response times are good, and no problems have been observed. Dispatching is handled by the State of Maine.

In the year ending 2024, the Sheriff's office responded to 1,019 calls. The types of calls include, but are not limited to, domestic disturbances, burglary, theft, mental health crisis, assaults, child abuse, citizen assists, animal complaints, traffic complaints and traffic crashes.

Table 1: Belgrade Police Call Volume:

Responder	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
State Police	500	380	369	242	325
Sheriff's Department	1095	1106	1048	995	1019
TOTAL	1595	1486	1417	1237	1344

30 - 40 members at any time. There are two full-time employees: a licensed Paramedic and an Advanced Emergency Medical Technician. The department responds to all hazards, i.e. fire, smoke/CO, alarms, motor vehicle accidents, medical emergencies, trauma, water rescue, as well as storm responses to clear roads of trees and mark hazardous areas. The Department also responds to mutual aid calls with the neighboring towns of Manchester, Readfield, Wayne, Mount Vernon, Augusta, Waterville, Winslow, Oakland, Rome, Sidney, Smithfield, Fairfield, and Fayette.

Table 2 shows call volume in recent years. Call volume has risen significantly in the past five years.

Table 2: Belgrade Fire and Rescue Call Volume

	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Department Calls per Year	395	468	517	545	579

Source: Town of Belgrade

The Town currently maintains three fire stations to keep within the five-mile travel distance required by the insurance industry for preferred rates.

- The Richard "Rick" Damren Station, 449 Smithfield Road in North Belgrade;
- The William "Bill" Pulsifer Station, 1 Augusta Road in Belgrade Lakes Village; and
- The Robert "Bobby" Wadleigh Station, 214 Depot Road in Belgrade Depot.

The Town leases the North Belgrade and Belgrade Depot stations.

While all are undersized to serve the community, the most critically undersized is the centrally located Depot Station. The Depot station does not have access to running water and lacks any office space. Modern trucks are significantly larger than the vehicles that the station was built to house. Department members are unable to open the apparatus doors completely due to the width of the bays not accommodating the width of the trucks. Additionally, staff are not able to stay at the station during on-duty shifts, which can increase call response times due to the need to travel to the other side of town in an emergency. The lack of running water means that trucks and gear cannot be washed at this station.

The typical department member participates in 150-175 hours of service per year, this includes calls as well as training which occurs twice a month. Some active members attend over 200 hours while less active members attend fewer than 50 hours. Additional training is also required for members to obtain EMS licenses or Firefighter 1 & 2 certification. With a roster of 30-40 members, the annual training/call hours for the department total between 5250-7000.

The hours spent in training are partially responsible for the town's Insurance Safety Office (ISO) rating, which is generally a 06/06Y and considered a good rating for a rural town. This rating indicates the capacity of the Department is to put out fires. The ISO rating system ranks fire departments from one to ten, with those deemed more capable of putting out fires receiving a lower number. The ISO rating influences homeowner and commercial fire insurance rates.

The Belgrade Fire & Rescue Department currently maintains nine apparatus listed below (as of 2024):

- Depot Engine 63 – 2012 Kenworth pumper, 1,000-gallon tank and 1,250-GPM pump
- Lakes Engine 61 – 1992 Top Kick 1,000-gallon tanker, 1,250-GPM pump
- North Belgrade Engine 62 – 2002 GMC 1,000-gallon tank, 1,250-GPM pump
- North Belgrade Tanker 64 – 2012 Kenworth 3,000-gallon tank, 500-GPM pump
- Depot Tanker 65 – 2021 with a 3,000-gallon tank and 500-GPM pump
- Rescue 6 – 2015 Ram 5500, enclosed rescue truck used daily
- Forestry 66 – 2001 Chevrolet K3500, converted rescue used for wildland firefighting and tree/forestry-related issues, as well as storm calls to clear debris
- Unit 6 2024 Chevrolet Silverado 250 used as a back-up rescue vehicle for simultaneous rescue calls or when Rescue 6 is out of service and a utility vehicle is needed, i.e. picking up fire hose at a fire scene etc.
- Lund watercraft
- Side by Side UTV for off-road/wilderness rescues and a tank for forestry/wildland firefighting

Currently Rescue 6 and Engine 61 are due for replacement. All engines and tankers are on a 30-year replacement schedule based on age, usage and mileage. Rescue vehicles

require a shorter replacement time of about 10 years due to heavy use on an almost daily basis.

All fire department members are required to use Personal Protective Equipment that varies depending on the type of call. A full set of equipment for one member costs approximately \$5,000 as of 2024.

Current needs:

- The most urgent need is the construction of a new centralized fire station. The town has applied for a federal grant to cover 75% of the construction costs of a new fire station to replace the current Depot station.
- Within the next 10 years, the North Belgrade station may need to be replaced with a similar 2-bay station to house a tanker and a pumper; there would be a bathroom and running water, but no office or meeting space. The current North Belgrade station is not owned by the town, has no bathroom facility and sits close to the road with a steep apron, making vehicle access challenging.
- Municipal services will be adequate to meet the changes in population and demographics once a new station is constructed.

Belgrade partners with the neighboring town of Rome in sharing the cost of one EMT position as well as the costs of a cell tower. Likewise, Belgrade participates with 13 neighboring communities through mutual aid calls. Dispatch is handled through the Waterville Communication Center.

Ambulance Service

Belgrade contracts with Delta Ambulance for emergency medical services and transportation. Current call response time averages 8 minutes per call; however, response time can vary greatly based on the time of day, travel conditions, and other factors. Delta Ambulance has locations in Augusta and Waterville which provide coverage to numerous other municipalities in the region.

The town has several mutual aid programs in place. Belgrade employs two full-time personnel who respond to both fire and medical emergencies.

Table 3: EMS Ambulance and Mutual Aid Call Volume

2 Year	Number of Ambulance Calls
2020	272
2021	247
2022	218
2023	254
2024	273

Source: Delta Ambulance

Belgrade's Public Safety Analysis

The Belgrade Fire and Rescue chiefs predict that in the next 10 years there will be a much greater demand for full-time staff. As shown in Table 2, call volume has continually increased and that trend is expected to continue. Additionally, across Maine the rate of volunteerism is dropping leading to a smaller roster and fewer members able to respond throughout the day. Increasing OSHA regulations are requiring departments to replace equipment sooner, resulting in the need for more frequent training for on-call personnel. The increased time demands are also contributing to a decline in active member.

Belgrade has an agreement for Rome to pay half the salary & benefits of one full time Belgrade Fire & Rescue responder. As a result, the Department responds to all EMS calls for both towns when they are on duty. Belgrade is part of a growing regional mutual-aid agreement with the towns of Sidney, Oakland, Smithfield, Waterville, Fairfield, Winslow and Augusta. A formal mutual-aid group, the Lakes Region Mutual-Aid Group consists of Belgrade, Mount Vernon, Fayette, Readfield, and Wayne.

The Town of Belgrade has an active Emergency Operations Plan. This plan directs public safety responders (and town government in general) in the event of natural or man-made disasters such as ice storms or chemical spills. It also identifies equipment, facilities and training needed at the local level to adequately deal with such threats. The plan is coordinated with a similar plan for Kennebec County. The Fire Department is well-trained in the event of a hazardous material spill or other localized catastrophe.

The Town of Belgrade does not have designated emergency shelters but is exploring possible upgrades to the Center for All Seasons and possible utilization of the new fire station. The Town Office, Library and Center for All Seasons have been used as warming and charging centers in recent years.

Public Health and General Assistance

The town's Public Health Officer is responsible for monitoring all communicable diseases and advising residents about public health concerns. There are several public health concerns that have or may present significant issues to Belgrade citizens, such as the recent COVID-19 pandemic, brown-tail moth infestation, and possible contamination of our land and water. Local and regional health care facilities, public health, and social service programs adequately meet the needs of the community. Belgrade is home to one local health clinic (Belgrade Regional Health Center) and within a short drive to other services, including social services programs, larger, regional health care facilities and doctors in Waterville and Augusta. While some of the residents' health care needs can be met in the immediate area, advanced health care facilities are available by traveling to Bangor, Lewiston and Portland.

The Town Manager serves as the General Assistance Administrator and oversees public welfare.

The volunteer-operated Belgrade-Rome Special Needs Food Pantry serves an average of 55-65 clients per month, providing a week's worth of food twice each month. The Town

of Belgrade houses the food pantry within the North Belgrade Community Center; the Town of Rome contributes \$2,000 annually to its operations; and volunteers from Belgrade and Rome staff the program.

Utilities

There is currently no publicly owned water or sewer facilities in Belgrade. Due to distance from existing systems there are no plans in place or any likely extensions.

Central Maine Power Company provides electrical service throughout Belgrade. Many residences now have rooftop solar arrays. Consolidated Communication and Fidium Fiber provide a landline telephone service. Belgrade is now fully digital with telephone switching equipment including access to DSL (high speed internet service) in many locations. Cable television and cable Internet service are available in most neighborhoods currently serviced by Charter Communications/Spectrum. Only one cell tower provides service within the Town of Belgrade.

Solid Waste Disposal

The transfer station is located off Dunn Road and is run by a staff of four. The facility was built in 1986. Waste is transported to the Waste Management facility in Norridgewock. The cost of waste disposal in 2024 is \$101.01 a ton compared to \$91.35 a ton in 2023. The transfer station includes a recycling facility. In the fiscal year 2024, the station processed 996.28 tons of household trash, 136.81 tons of demolition material, 6 tons of tires, and about 123.22 tons of miscellaneous recyclables. Income from recyclables is about \$25,000 per year. A new warehouse/addition will be needed for the facility in the near future.

Currently, the waste management facilities and recycling operations meet the needs of residents. The availability of the recycling operation serves to reduce the community's reliance on waste disposal. Aside from a new warehouse/addition, mentioned above and included in the Capital Investment Plan, no improvements are necessary to meet future needs.

Septic Waste Disposal

Belgrade is served by private septic systems. When pumping of private septic systems is needed, the town is not involved in the disposal process. When pumping is needed for a private system, it is accomplished through a third-party licensed contractor.

Public Works

The Town of Belgrade does not have a dedicated Public Works Department. The town appoints a Road Commissioner who oversees maintenance of roads by independent contractors and participates in planning a three-year rotation of road paving, along with the Town Manager and Roads Committee. An independent contractor manages winter road maintenance (plowing, sanding, salt) and Maine Department of Transportation (DOT) maintains state roads.

Voters approved a reserve account, funded with \$500,000 from undesignated funds in 2023. This would be used in the event the Town needs to begin plans for its own public works department in the future. Some of these funds were expended in the summer of 2025 to purchase two acres, adjacent to the maintenance garage, for the future site of a Public Works Department.

Stormwater Management

Belgrade relies on culverts and ditches rather than on enclosed stormwater systems. Town road culverts and ditches are maintained by the town. State roads are maintained by the State of Maine Department of Transportation. Winter sand is the largest problem resulting in required maintenance. Future development is not anticipated to affect the current stormwater management system in Belgrade.

Cemeteries

There are seven cemeteries located in Belgrade. Only Pine Grove Cemetery is currently open for burials. The town's Facilities Maintenance Department, comprising three full-time, and several part-time employees performs mowing, trimming, and various other routine maintenance for all cemeteries. The town also employs a full-time Sexton.

Town-Owned Lands

The Belgrade Village Green was deeded to the Town in January 2020. Developed and donated by area residents Lynn and Phyllis Matson, the Village Green was once the site of a tee box on the golf course of the grand Belgrade Hotel, a popular summertime destination in the early 20th century. Located in Belgrade Lakes Village, the Village Green features a gazebo (with electrical power), stone seating, bike racks and benches, and a small parking lot. It is the setting for a popular summer concert series along with craft fairs and many special events, including private rentals.

Long Pond Beach sits along Lakeshore Drive, just a short walk from the Village Green. The beach offers easy entry for swimmers and kayakers into the cool, clear waters of Long Pond in the summertime and onto its frozen surface for skaters and ice fisherman in the winter. Picnic tables and a portable toilet are situated under the park's lakeside pine trees.

Peninsula Park is located on the northern end of Belgrade Lakes Village, jutting out into Long Pond from the Village dam. It is a popular spot for anglers, picnickers, and loon watchers.

Hayden Park sits alongside Messalonskee Stream, across from the Messalonskee Lake boat landing on Route 27 in the Belgrade Depot. It too offers a perfect place for fishing, picnicking, and relaxing.

All these properties are maintained by the Town Facilities and Maintenance department.

The parcels located on the Dunn road, also mentioned in the Recreation and Agriculture and Forestry chapters offers an excellent opportunity for the town to offer municipally

owned passive recreation. With the added value of the income gained from timber harvests, this parcel could greatly benefit the town for decades to come.

Education

Belgrade is part of Regional School Unit (RSU) 18 serving students in Oakland, Sidney, China, Rome, and Belgrade. Belgrade Central School serves the students of Belgrade and Rome in grades pre-K through 5. It is owned and maintained by the RSU. Grades 6-8 attend Messalonskee Middle school in Oakland. Grades 9-12 attend Messalonskee High School also located in Oakland.

Table 1: School Enrollment by Municipality

School Enrollment											
County/ Town	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	10 yr. Avg.
Kennebec County	17,221	16,965	16,957	16,798	16,981	16,790	16,621	15,842	16,140	16,150	16,646.5
Belgrade	522	522	485	484	463	454	448	425	451	448	470.20
Readfield	442	426	403	403	417	420	412	371	367	392	405.30
Manchester	383	374	400	388	368	362	332	334	354	372	366.70
Sidney	703	685	651	636	655	663	655	629	635	635	654.70
Oakland	1,007	972	936	963	949	941	932	884	903	915	940.20
Rome	140	132	130	124	130	140	139	136	147	135	135.5
China	719	683	698	688	685	663	671	647	658	677	678.9

Source: Maine Department of Education

Declining enrollment has been an issue in the past and threatens to increase the costs of education. Student enrollment has steadily declined over the last few years, reaching its lowest during the COVID-19 pandemic (2020). Currently, enrollment hovers around 448 students. Table 1 above shows declining school enrollment. The school system and buildings are owned and maintained by the RSU 18 school district. While there is no need for school expansion based on current student enrollment trends, there is also no need for school construction projects as the buildings are in acceptable condition. Additionally, due to the locations of the school buildings, opportunities do not exist for promoting or encouraging increased or new residential development around the school buildings, at present.

Leisure Services

Leisure services in Belgrade are provided by the Belgrade Public Library and the Belgrade Parks and Recreation department with programs offered through the Center for All Seasons, and the North Belgrade Community Center. The Center for All Seasons (CFAS) was constructed in 2002 and is the recreational hub for Belgrade. The CFAS is used for numerous programs as detailed further in the Recreation chapter. The North Belgrade Community Center doubles as the Belgrade Senior Center. Both are owned by the Town of Belgrade and are operated by Recreation Department staff and volunteers.

The Center for All Seasons is slated for repairs and expansion, in approximately 2025-2027. These modifications could include increased storage and office space, updated restrooms, shower facilities and expanded outdoor recreational options. The recreation department monitors and updates programming to meet the needs of a wide range of age groups.

The North Belgrade Community Center is an older building. However, it has not traditionally seen as much use as other municipal buildings and is still in good condition. In addition to senior programs, it houses the Belgrade-Rome Food Pantry and provides basement storage for the Belgrade Historical Society and Senior Resources Committee.

The Belgrade Public Library is located in a renovated former home in the Belgrade Depot. The Friends of the Belgrade Public Library purchased the property in 2012 and undertook the responsibility for renovating and maintaining the building as well as fundraising for annual operating expenses and a capital endowment fund. The town pays for staffing, programming and technology (computers for staff and patron use), and collection development. The library maintains a collection of approximately 8,000 items. It also participates in the Maine State Interlibrary loan program.

The building is ADA compliant, accessed by an exterior ramp. The collection within is fully accessible. Services for sight-impaired patrons can be accessed through the Maine State Library.

Land Use Planning and Regulation

Belgrade is a small town with a modest municipal budget. Aside from the part-time Code Enforcement Officer (CEO), the town currently has no plans to hire professional community planning and economic development assistance. Rather, Belgrade takes advantage of these services provided through their membership with the Kennebec Valley Council of Governments, on an as needed basis. In recent years, the town has benefited from highly motivated and experienced volunteers on the Planning Board, as well as assistance from Kennebec Valley Council of Governments. However, the Planning Board has increasingly been occupied with reviewing development proposals, and the demands of code enforcement work on the CEO have been mounting. The CEO spends a significant amount of time on permitting and enforcement.

Land Use Ordinances are listed in the *Existing Land Use* chapter. The town does not have a street tree program as part of any ordinance.

The town contracts for the services of a part-time professional Assessor's Agent who assesses new and substantially improved properties on an annual basis in addition to undertaking periodic reassessments of existing properties.

A town-wide revaluation was conducted in 2004 bringing the town up to 100 percent valuation. In the late 1990s rising land and housing prices challenged that nominal 100 percent category which by State law cannot fall below 70 percent of market-value

appraisal. The State mandates that assessments remain between 70% and 110% of current market value. Due to a dramatically changing real estate market the town implemented factoring of residential property values in 2012 and again in 2023 to maintain the 100 percent certification with the State of Maine. The Assessor's Agent has suggested a full revaluation by 2027.

Tax assessment in Belgrade appears to be adequately handled. No significant changes are recommended currently. The Town of Belgrade used ARPA funds to digitize the tax maps.

Summary of Public Services

Where feasible, the town has partnered with neighboring towns to reduce the cost of providing services to residents. The extent to which investments in facility improvements are directed to Belgrade's growth area is proportional. Belgrade's biggest expense, besides the school district, are the town roads, Primary public buildings such as the Town Office and fire department are in or adjacent to the growth areas that are already developed. While the transfer station is not in Belgrade's growth area, the building and equipment currently only require routine maintenance.

Belgrade's public facilities and services are quite satisfactory for a rural community. They range from a Town Office with its support facilities to a community library, a town beach, several cemeteries, a regional school system, a fire and rescue department, a transfer station for solid waste disposal and recycling, and two recreational facilities.

The effects of growth are seen in the need for careful capital improvement planning and annual budgeting. Growth-related impacts have increased costs for solid waste disposal, public facility needs and general government programs. Even though taxes have been kept stable over the past several years, unplanned growth may at any time trigger unexpected budgetary or capital improvement costs. Even planned growth must be coordinated with public service capacity.

Recommendations

- I: Policies and Strategies
- II: Land Use Plan
- III: Capital Investment Planning Process
- IV: Regional Coordination

Recommendations Part I: Policies and Strategies

This section of the Plan lists policies and strategies for each element of the plan. These recommendations are intended to address the issues raised in the review and analysis of the chapters in the *Community Assessment* section. The matrix also shows a suggested implementation timing and responsible party.

For this section, the implementation priority is divided into near-term, mid-term, long-term, and ongoing, defined as the following:

- **“Short term”** is presumed to be activities which can be completed within two years. These are primarily changes to Zoning and other ordinances and are easily achievable actions.
- **“Mid-term”** activities will be commenced and/or completed between two and five years after adoption of the plan. These consist of lower-priority activities or those which require additional planning or preparation to accomplish.
- **“Long-term”** activities are those which are more nebulous, and for which the path to implementation has not yet come into focus.
- **“Ongoing”** is used to identify strategies which are currently in place and should continue.

Implementation Mechanism and Evaluation Measures

Belgrade’s Select Board should consider an approach to implement and monitor the progress of the Comprehensive Plan. The town should continue tracking and monitoring growth and development by tracking and documenting permits issued. The Code Enforcement Officer (CEO), in conjunction with the Chairman of the Planning Board are instrumental in tracking permits issued, providing insight into current land use issues, analyzing the effectiveness of Belgrade’s ordinances, and tracking subdivision applications.

The Planning Board and town officials should mandate a regularly scheduled, comprehensive review of the Building Permit and Lot Size Requirement Ordinance to ensure it reflects the town’s changing needs. These reviews should be in conjunction with the annual town budget process.

The Planning Board will prepare a written report for each calendar year, containing the data from the permit tracking history. The report will be shared with the Select Board and Town Manager for review and discussion.

If the evaluation concludes that portions of the Comprehensive Plan and/or its implementation are not effective, the Select Board and Town Manager could propose changes.

Tracking the following applications is recommended:

- The location of new residential structures.
- The location of new commercial structures/land uses.
- Redevelopment of existing buildings for commercial/industrial uses.
- Conversions from seasonal camps to year-round residences.

POLICIES AND STRATEGIES

This section of the Plan lists general recommendations, in the form of policies and strategies, for each of the elements of the plan. These recommendations are intended to address the issues raised in the review and analysis of the elements in Section II, *Community Assessment*. The matrix also shows a suggested implementation timing and responsible party.

For the purpose of this chapter, the implementation priority is divided into near-term, mid-term, long-term, and ongoing:

- “Near-term” is presumed to be activities which can be completed within two years. These are primarily changes to Zoning and other ordinances, and easily achievable actions.
- “Mid-term” activities will be commenced and/or completed between two and five years after adoption. These consist of lower-priority activities or those which require additional planning or preparation.
- “Long-term” activities are those which are more nebulous, and for which the path to implementation has not yet come into focus.
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Minimum State Required Policies and Strategies
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Historic Resources

Belgrade has an active Historic Society that strives to preserve the town's valued heritage. Other buildings that are privately owned present a challenge in preserving and restoring. Some historic buildings have fallen into disrepair over the years. The town currently has no requirement above the state requirements for site assessment for historic artifacts.

State Goal: To preserve the State's historic and archeological resources.

Policies:	Strategies:	Implementing Party/Timeframe:
1. Protect to the greatest extent practicable the significant historic and archaeological resources in the community.	1.1 For known historic archeological sites and areas sensitive to prehistoric archeology, through local land use ordinances require subdivision or non-residential developers 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.	Ongoing – included in ordinances already
	1.2 Adopt or amend land use ordinances to require the planning board (or other designated review authority) to incorporate maps and information provided by the Maine Historic Preservation Commission into their review process.	Town Manager, Select Board, Planning Board, CEO Ongoing
	1.3 Work with the local or county historical society and/or the Maine Historic Preservation Commission to assess the need for, and if necessary, plan for, a comprehensive community survey of the community's historic and archaeological resources.	Ongoing – Work with Belgrade historic society and Town of Belgrade historian, survey is always in progress, structures may not always be listed with MHPC
2. Protect, preserve, and maintain historic items structures and locations in the community.	2.1 Conduct survey of historic structures, foundations, and cellar holes.	Town Historian with Historical Society In progress, Long Term
	2.2 Continue care and maintenance of cemeteries	Cemetery Committee, Sexton, Town Maintenance Ongoing, Long Term,
	2.3 Encourage residents and business owners to maintain the historic value and appearance of Belgrade	Town and Planning Board New, Long Term,

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State Goal: To preserve the State's historic and archeological resources.

Policies:	Strategies:	Implementing Party/Timeframe:
	2.3 Ensure that maps and data provided by the Maine Historic Preservation Commission is incorporated into existing review processes	Planning Board Ongoing, Short Term
3. Town, historian, historic society work together and share information	3.1 Encourage Historical Society, Town Historian, and municipal officers to coordinate information sharing across various platforms	Historical Society and Town Ongoing, Short Term,
4. Promote use of Center for All Seasons, Community Center, and Old Town House.	4.1 Encourage and host culturally or historically focused events to display Belgrade's heritage.	Town, Parks and Recreation Department Ongoing, Mid-Term,
	4.2 Partner with community organizations that have a cultural focus.	Town Historian Ongoing, Mid Term,

Local Economic Development

Belgrade local economy is an important contributor to the health and vitality of the town and is linked to many other areas of town policy. Like many other communities, Belgrade is facing trends that are unfavorable, such as rural location and lack of investment capital. But Belgrade has several assets as well – it's waterbodies, recreational opportunities, and good quality of life. The town should continue to promote these assets, cooperate with private businesses and regional economic players, and maintain a focus on suitable economic development to succeed in building a more robust economy.

State Goal: To promote an economic climate which increases job opportunities and overall economic well-being.

Policies:	Strategies:	Implementing Party/Timeframe:
1. To support the type of economic development activity the community desires, reflecting the community's role in the region.	1.1: If appropriate, assign responsibility and provide financial support for economic development activities to the proper entity (e.g., a local economic development committee, a local representative to a regional economic development organization, the community's economic development director, a regional economic development initiative, or other).	Selectboard Ongoing, Long Term,
2. To make a financial commitment, if necessary, to support desired economic development, including needed public improvements.	2.1: Enact or amend local ordinances to reflect the desired scale, design, intensity, and location of future economic development.	Planning Board Ongoing, Mid Term
	2.2: If public investments are foreseen to support economic development, identify the mechanisms to be considered to finance them (local tax dollars, creating a tax increment financing district, a Community Development Block Grant or other grants, bonding, impact fees, etc.)	Town & Planning Board Ongoing, Long Term
3. To coordinate with regional development corporations and surrounding towns as necessary to support desired economic development.	3.1: Participate in any regional economic development planning efforts.	Town and Selectboard Ongoing, Short Term
4. Maintain the desired economic character of Belgrade	4.1 Encourage development of new commercial facilities in appropriate areas.	Town & Planning board Not Started, Mid Term

Local Economic Development

Belgrade local economy is an important contributor to the health and vitality of the town and is linked to many other areas of town policy. Like many other communities, Belgrade is facing trends that are unfavorable, such as rural location and lack of investment capital. But Belgrade has several assets as well – it's waterbodies, recreational opportunities, and good quality of life. The town should continue to promote these assets, cooperate with private businesses and regional economic players, and maintain a focus on suitable economic development to succeed in building a more robust economy.

State Goal: To promote an economic climate which increases job opportunities and overall economic well-being.

Policies:	Strategies:	Implementing Party/Timeframe:
	4.2: Change how commercial development ordinance is utilized.	Town CEO & Planning Board Not Started, Short Term
	4.3: Advocate to maintain the values of the Town when considering the development and improvement of businesses	Town CEO & Planning Board Not Started, Short Term
5: Engage in regional collaboratives to advertise and showcase Belgrade as a regional destination to live, work, and play.	5.1: Town should consider joining various regional economic development, and chambers of commerce.	Town Manager Not Started, Short Term

Housing		
<p>Belgrade has a growing housing stock, mostly of a rural nature, despite designated growth areas in more developed parts of town, such as the village areas. Considering the changing demographic structure of the town, the town can anticipate need for more rental housing and senior housing. Affordability is definitely an issue for both owner-occupied and rentals homes, partly because of the tight market for them.</p> <p>State Goal: To encourage and promote affordable, decent housing opportunities for all Maine citizens.</p>		
Policies:	Strategies:	Implementing Party/Timeframe:
1. Encourage and promote adequate affordable and workforce housing to support the community's and region's economic development.	1.1: Maintain, enact or amend growth area land use regulations to increase density, decrease lot size, setbacks and road widths, or provide incentives such as density bonuses, to encourage the development of affordable/workforce housing.	Selectboard, Planning Board, CEO, Town Manager Near term
	1.2: Maintain, enact or amend ordinances to allow the addition of at least one accessory apartment per dwelling unit in growth areas, subject to site suitability.	Selectboard, Planning Board, CEO, Town Manager Near term
	1.3: Create or continue to support a community affordable/workforce housing committee and/or regional affordable housing coalition.	Selectboard, Planning Board, Town Manager Mid Term
	1.4: Designate a location(s) in growth areas where mobile home parks are allowed pursuant to 30-A M.R.S.A. §4358(3)(M) and where manufactured housing is allowed pursuant to 30-A M.R.S.A. §4358(2).	Selectboard, Planning Board, CEO, Town Manager Mid Term
2. To ensure that land use controls encourage the development of quality affordable housing, including rental housing.	2.1: Support the efforts of local and regional housing coalitions in addressing affordable and workforce housing needs.	Selectboard, Planning Board, Town Manager Near term, Ongoing
3. To encourage and support the efforts of the regional housing coalitions in addressing affordable and workforce housing needs.	3.1: Seek to achieve a level of at least 10% of new residential development built or placed during the next decade be affordable.	Selectboard, Planning Board, CEO, Town Manager Mid Term, Ongoing

Housing		
<p>Belgrade has a growing housing stock, mostly of a rural nature, despite designated growth areas in more developed parts of town, such as the village areas. Considering the changing demographic structure of the town, the town can anticipate need for more rental housing and senior housing. Affordability is definitely an issue for both owner-occupied and rentals homes, partly because of the tight market for them.</p> <p>State Goal: To encourage and promote affordable, decent housing opportunities for all Maine citizens.</p>		
Policies:	Strategies:	Implementing Party/Timeframe:
4. Engage and support development to encourage workforce and age-friendly housing options.	4.1 Investigate non-traditional housing opportunities (i.e. cluster developments and tiny homes)	Planning Board, CEO Mid Term
5. Ensure Belgrade's municipal ordinances regulating, related to, or impacting housing are reviewed regularly and kept up to date	5.1 Explore options where the development of multi-family housing would be appropriate and in keeping with the town's character.	Selectboard, Planning Board, CEO, Town Manager Short term
	5.2. Review, amend, and update all ordinances related to land use every five years.	Selectboard, Planning Board, CEO, Town Manager Mid-term, ongoing
6. Proactively support anticipated housing needs by modifying ordinances as appropriate to the character of Belgrade	6.2 Amend subdivision ordinance to allow at least 10% but no more than 20% of approved lots have smaller lot sizes	Selectboard, Planning Board, CEO, Town Manager Short term
	6.3 Prepare for the future requirement to abide by MUBEC Standards as town population increases	Code Enforcement Officer, Planning Board Mid Term

Transportation

Transportation is an essential element to the local economy and community. At its simplest, it provides access to jobs, services, and supplies. Without transportation and road access, a community could not exist. Belgrade's transportation system provides access both within the town and to larger market areas. The road network serves primarily motor vehicles and is generally in good condition, but with no close access to the interstate system. The town has no real pedestrian network, especially outside of the village area, and no direct access to public transportation.

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

Policies:	Strategies:	Implementing/Timeframe:
1. To prioritize community and regional needs associated with safe, efficient, and optimal use of transportation systems.	1.1: Develop or continue to update a prioritized improvement, maintenance, and repair plan for the community's transportation network.	Selectboard, Road Commissioner, Town Manager Ongoing
2. To safely and efficiently preserve or improve the transportation system.	2.1: Initiate or actively participate in regional and state transportation efforts.	Selectboard, Road Commissioner, Town Manager Ongoing
3. 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.		Selectboard, Planning Board, Lakes & Natural Resources Committee, CEO, Town Manager Ongoing
4. 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).	4.1: Maintain, enact or amend local ordinances as appropriate to address or avoid conflicts with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policy objectives of the Sensible Transportation Policy Act (23 M.R.S.A. §73); State access management regulations pursuant to 23 M.R.S.A. §704; and State traffic permitting regulations for large developments pursuant to 23 M.R.S.A. §704-A. 	Selectboard, Planning Board, Roads Commissioner, Town Manager Mid-term

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

Policies:	Strategies:	Implementing/Timeframe:
5. To promote fiscal prudence by maximizing the efficiency of the state or state-aid highway network.	5.1 Maintain, enact or amend ordinance standards for subdivisions and for public and private roads as appropriate to foster transportation-efficient growth patterns and provide for future street and transit connections.	Selectboard, Planning Board, Road Commissioner, CEO, Town Manager Mid-term
6. Engage and involve in existing transportation partnerships serving Belgrade	6.1 Seek out opportunities to have municipal representation at regional transportation forums to be a voice for Belgrade	RC, TM Ongoing
	6.2 Promote and partner with local ride-sharing and volunteer transportation collaboratives	SB, RC, TM Ongoing
7. Encourage clean and alternative transportation methods	7.1. Investigate opportunities to install Electric Vehicle charging stations at public places	SB, TM Short term
	7.2 Explore options for greenways, sidewalks, and carpooling opportunities.	SB, L&NR, TM Ongoing

Recreation

Belgrade is an unofficial hub for recreation, water sports, in the region. The town provides an abundance of opportunities for active and passive recreation through either organized programs or individual endeavors. Belgrade has many acres of preserved land coordinated through many different types of ownership and preservation. With such a broad range of opportunities, obviously there are several areas available for improvement.

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

Policies:	Strategies:	Implementing/Timeframe:
1. To maintain/upgrade existing recreational facilities and public water resources as necessary to meet current and future needs.	1.1: Create a list of recreation needs or develop a recreation plan to meet current and future needs. Assign a committee or community official to explore ways of addressing the identified needs and/or implementing the policies and strategies outlined in the plan.	SB, P&R, TM, L&NR Ongoing Short Term
2. To preserve open space for recreational use as appropriate.	2.1: 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.	SB, L&NR, TM, P&R Ongoing Long Term
	2.2: Work with an existing local land trust or other conservation organizations to pursue opportunities to protect important open space or recreational land.	SB, L&NR, P&R, TM Ongoing Long Term
3. To seek to achieve or continue to maintain at least one major point of public access to major water bodies for boating, fishing, and swimming, and work with nearby property owners to address concerns.	3.1: Provide educational materials regarding the benefits and protections for landowners allowing public recreational access on their property. At a minimum this will include information on Maine's landowner liability law regarding recreational or harvesting use, Title 14, M.R.S.A. §159-A.	SB, L&NR, TM Ongoing Short Term
4. Provide more public recreational opportunities on local trail systems	4.1 Work within existing partnerships and develop new partnerships to expand access, use, and educational opportunities on trail systems.	Town Manager, Selectboard, Trail Committee Near-Term
	4.2 Provide educational materials on tax benefits on allowing public access on conserved lands	Town Manager Near Term

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

Policies:	Strategies:	Implementing/Timeframe:
	4.3 Update and maintain information and maps on publicly accessible land	Town Manager Ongoing
5. Expand recreational opportunities in North Belgrade	5.1 Seek opportunities to expand water access in North Belgrade	Selectboard, Town Manager, Recreation Director Ongoing
6. Seek funding and expand on recreational services for residents	6.1 Offer water based recreational programs and services including storage of personal watercraft, rental of personal watercraft, and guided programs.	Recreation Department, Town Manager Ongoing
7.1 Reinvigorate work towards use of land near transfer station using existing master plan	7.1 Work within master plan and existing forest management plan to use land at transfer station to offer recreational opportunities	Town Manager, Trails Committee Near Term

Agriculture and Forest Resources

Forest and farmland provide multiple benefits. Farming in Maine overall is evolving from a commodity-based mass market industry to a locally based business, and this could be an important opportunity for the town. Forest management is supported by markets for wood products that are beyond local control, but since forest gains value from one year to the next, it can generally withstand temporary fluctuations.

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

Policies:	Strategies:	Implementing Party/Timeframe:
1. To safeguard lands identified as prime farmland or capable of supporting commercial forestry.	1.1: Consult with the Maine Forest Service district forester when developing any land use regulations pertaining to forest management practices as required by 12 M.R.S.A. §8869.	CEO and Planning Board Ongoing
	1.2: Consult with Soil and Water Conservation District staff when developing any land use regulations pertaining to agricultural management practices.	PB, CEO Ongoing
	1.3: Amend land use ordinances to require commercial or subdivision developments in critical rural areas, if applicable, maintain areas with prime farmland soils as open space to the greatest extent practicable.	SB, PB Mid Term
	1.4: Limit non-residential development in critical rural areas (if the town designates critical rural areas) to natural resource-based businesses and services, nature tourism/outdoor recreation businesses, farmers' markets, and home occupations.	Ongoing, Planning Board and CEO
2. To support farming and forestry and encourage their economic viability.	2.1: Encourage owners of productive farm and forest land to enroll in the current use taxation programs.	TM, Assessor Ongoing

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

Policies:	Strategies:	Implementing Party/Timeframe:
	2.2: Permit land use activities that support productive agriculture and forestry operations, such as roadside stands, greenhouses, firewood operations, sawmills, log buying yards, and pick-your-own operations.	PB, CEO Ongoing
	2.3: Include agriculture, commercial forestry operations, and land conservation that supports them in local or regional economic development plans.	SB, TM Ongoing
3. Support local producers	3.1 Investigate options to support local agricultural producers	Parks and Recreation Department, Town Manager Near Term

Natural and Water Resources

Belgrade's land and water assets provide a necessary buffer against environmental degradation and support for resource-based economic activity such as forestry. Water-based assets provide a basis for recreation and tourism, as well as sustaining life. Protection of these assets from over-development is an important function of this Plan.

State Goal for Natural Resources: 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.

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

Policies:	Strategies:	Implementing/Timeframe:
1. To conserve critical natural resources in the community	1.1: Ensure that land use ordinances are consistent with applicable state law regarding critical natural resources.	Lakes & Natural Resources Committee, PB, SB On-going
	1.2: Designate critical natural resources as Critical Resource Areas in the Future Land Use Plan.	Lakes & Natural Resources Committee, On-going
	1.3: Through local 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.	Lakes & Natural Resources Committee, PB On-going
	1.4: Through local land use ordinances, require the planning board (or other designated review authority) to include as part of the review process, consideration of pertinent Beginning with Habitat (BwH) maps and information regarding critical natural resources.	PB, CEO On-going
2. To coordinate with neighboring communities and regional and state resource agencies to protect shared critical natural resources	2.1: Initiate and/or participate in interlocal and/or regional planning, management, and/or regulatory efforts around shared critical and important natural resources.	Lakes & Natural Resources Committee, CEO On-going

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Policies:	Strategies:	Implementing/Timeframe:
	2.2: Pursue public/private partnerships to protect critical and important natural resources such as through purchase of land or easements from willing sellers	Lakes and Natural Resources Committee, Code Enforcement Officer Ongoing
	2.3: Distribute or make available information to those living in or near critical or important natural resources about current use tax programs and applicable local, state, or federal regulations.	Code Enforcement Officer, Planning Board Ongoing
3. To protect current and potential drinking water sources	3.1: Adopt or amend local land use ordinances as applicable to incorporate stormwater runoff performance standards consistent with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Maine Stormwater Management Law and Maine Stormwater regulations (Title 38 M.R.S.A. §420-D and 06-096 CMR 500 and 502). o Maine Department of Environmental Protection's allocations for allowable levels of phosphorus in lake/pond watersheds. o Maine Pollution Discharge Elimination System Stormwater Program 	PB, CEO On-going
4. To protect significant surface water resources from pollution and improve water quality where needed	4.1: Consider amending local land use ordinances, as applicable, to incorporate low-impact development standards.	SB, CEO, PB, Lakes & Natural Resources Committee, On-going

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Policies:	Strategies:	Implementing/Timeframe:
	4.2: Where applicable, develop an urban impaired stream watershed management or mitigation plan that will promote continued development or redevelopment without further stream degradation.	PB, Lakes & Natural Resources Committee, SB, CEO On-going
5. To protect water resources in growth areas while promoting more intensive development in those areas	5.1: Maintain, enact or amend public wellhead and aquifer recharge area protection mechanisms, as necessary.	PB, CEO Mid-term
	5.2: Encourage landowners to protect water quality. Provide local contact information through the municipal office for water quality best management practices (BMPs) from resources such as the Natural Resource Conservation Service, University of Maine Cooperative Extension, Soil and Water Conservation District, Maine Forest Service, and/or Small Woodlot Association of Maine.	Lakes & Natural Resources Committee, CEO, TM Ongoing
6. To minimize pollution discharges through the upgrade of existing public sewer systems and wastewater treatment facilities	6.1: Adopt water quality protection practices and standards for construction and maintenance of public and private roads and public properties and require their implementation by contractors, owners, and community officials and employees.	Planning Board, Code Enforcement Officer, Lakes and Natural Resources Committee Ongoing

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Policies:	Strategies:	Implementing/Timeframe:
7. To cooperate with neighboring communities and regional/local advocacy groups to protect water resources.	7.1: Participate in local and regional efforts to monitor, protect and, where warranted, improve water quality.	SB, PB, TM, Lakes & Natural Resources Committee, CEO Short-term, ongoing
	7.2: Provide educational materials at appropriate locations and online regarding aquatic invasive species.	Lakes & Natural Resources Committee, Ongoing
8. Maintain an interconnected system of undeveloped lands which sustains rural resource and recreation values	8.1 Prepare an open space plan including criteria for public land acquisition to provide direction and establish priorities for conserving an interconnected system of open space areas.	Lakes and Natural Resources Committee Ongoing
9. Protect the integrity and natural functions of valuable wetlands	9.1 Monitor the disturbance of forested wetlands, particularly those adjacent to water bodies and wetlands and not included in shoreland zoning, and request IF&W to evaluate those which have not yet been evaluated to determine their need for protection.	CEO and volunteers Ongoing
10. Recognize the Esker and Moraine geologic features as distinct glacial features and as an important aggregate resource	10.1 Determine if a gravel pit decommissioning plan can be included in the Commercial development review ordinance	Planning board, CEO
	10.2 Protect remaining esker and moraine features where possible and economically feasible.	Planning Board, CEO
11. Coordinate resource protection with neighboring towns and conservation groups, lake associations, and local advocacy group	11.1 Initiate and/or participate in interlocal and/or regional planning, management, and/or regulatory efforts around shared critical and important natural resources	Selectboard, Lakes & Natural Resources Committee, Ongoing

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Policies:	Strategies:	Implementing/Timeframe:
	11.2 Actively support the lake associations, land trust aimed at protecting and improving lake water quality and educating the public about appropriate techniques. Continue to annually support the Youth Conservation Corps.	Selectboard, Lakes and Natural Resources Committee Ongoing
12. Encourage municipal staff and committees to actively engage with local, state and federal partners.	12.1 Continue commitment to clean storm drains in the Belgrade lakes village	Public Works Ongoing
	12.2 Continue to ensure continued strong levels of protection to control phosphorus from all sources of new development and other land use disturbances.	Retain DEP's phosphorus control methods and erosion and sedimentation standards in land use ordinances, including roads, individual new homes (with flexibility for existing small lots), and significant earth moving disturbances. Require code enforcement inspection at critical time(s) to ascertain compliance. Ongoing
13. Ensure that Belgrade will continue to have a high-quality ground water resource of ample quantity for public and private drinking supplies	13.1 Track contamination sites and encourage citizens to share the results of problematic water-quality test results with the Town.	Designate the code enforcement officer as a contact and resource and establish a procedure for dealing with problems. Ongoing
	13.2 Use, and update as possible, existing data from DEP, DHS, and the Town's plumbing inspector regarding identified contaminated sites and sites which have underground tanks when reviewing development proposals to determine whether available ground water is already contaminated or likely to become so.	Planning Board, Ongoing

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Policies:	Strategies:	Implementing/Timeframe:
14. Continue to educate municipal staff and residents on best management practices and other opportunities to ensure Belgrade's natural and water resources are healthy and vibrant for generations.	14.1 Continue to train town road crews in DEP standards for erosion and sedimentation control and apply to all town owned road and facilities projects	Selectboard, Town Manager, ongoing
	14.2 Request Lake associations to provide information for distribution at the town office, promoting boater awareness of sensitive wildlife populations and habitats on the lakes.	Lakes & Natural Resources Committee, Town office
	14.3 Expand and update information provided at town hall to include pamphlets on tax law, conservation easements, road management, road runoff impacts on water quality and more.	Town Office
15. Ordinance updates and revisions	15.1 Continue to enforce the Town's floodplain ordinance and determine whether the shoreland zone should extend beyond 250 feet in areas where floodplain boundaries are greater.	CEO ongoing,
	15.2 Actively enforce existing regulations and determine whether additional protection is needed for wetlands and their buffers through regulation, voluntary landowner actions or initiative by nonprofit organizations.	CEO, Planning Board
	15.3 Promote landowner awareness and action by developing or obtaining and distributing information about the need to protect Essential, Significant, and other wildlife habitats, wetlands, and unusual natural features.	Lakes & Natural Resources Committee, and Town Office

Public Facilities and Services

Belgrade provides limited public services to its residents. The Town is responsible mainly for fire, emergency services, public works, and cooperates with the school district on education. The Town must to be very good at controlling its budget in order to offer services to residents. Cost-effective methods of service delivery are a top priority.

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

Policies:	Strategies:	Implementing/Timeframe:
1. To efficiently meet identified public facility and service needs.	1.1: Identify any capital improvements needed to maintain or upgrade public services to accommodate the community's anticipated growth and changing demographics.	Town Manager, Selectboard Ongoing
	1.2: Locate new public facilities comprising at least 75% of new municipal growth-related capital investments in designated growth areas.	Town Manager, Selectboard Long Term
2. To provide public facilities and services in a manner that promotes and supports growth and development in identified growth areas.	2.1: Encourage local sewer and water districts to coordinate planned service extensions with the Future Land Use Plan.	Planning Board, Code Enforcement Officer Long Term
	2.2: If public water supply expansion is anticipated, identify and protect suitable sources.	Planning Board, Code Enforcement Officer Mid Term
	2.3: Explore options for regional delivery of local services.	Town Manager, Selectboard Long Term

Fiscal Capacity

Belgrade is in acceptable financial condition, with no debt and sound financial management. In general, revenues have been reasonable stable in the last decade. The Town Manager and Select Board are committed towards achieving a balanced budget with respect to the municipal side and seek innovative and sustainable solutions to that end.

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

Policies:	Strategies:	Implementing/Timeframe:
1. To finance existing and future facilities and services in a cost effective manner.		Town Manager, Selectboard Short Term
2. To explore grants available to assist in the funding of capital investments within the community.		Town Manager, Appropriate Committee Ongoing
3. To reduce Maine's tax burden by staying within LD 1 spending limitations.	3.1: Explore opportunities to work with neighboring communities to plan for and finance shared or adjacent capital investments to increase cost savings and efficiencies.	Town Manager, Selectboard Long Term

Recommendations Part II: Future Land Use Plan

Overview

As the Comprehensive Plan vision relates to future land use, this section seeks to highlight the steady growth in Belgrade over the last decade, while plotting a path to preserve and improve the qualities residents appreciate and cherish. A balance must be struck between meeting the needs of residents and visitors and protecting Belgrade's abundant and critical natural resources and important historic landmarks. Belgrade's future land use requires continued focus to meet residential and commercial demands, as well as to preserve and secure valuable natural resources for future generations.

Future Growth

The Future Land Use Plan consists of a map and narrative describing Belgrade's future designated growth areas and rural areas. It includes recommendations and suggested changes for both regulatory and non-regulatory strategies to guide development in a desirable way. This Land Use Plan will build upon the 2013 Comprehensive Plan, and existing municipal ordinances.

An essential part of Belgrade's plan for the future, is its plan for growth. This Plan is based on many assumptions that support continued growth while striving to maintain the town's rural character and natural resources. Examples of assumed future growth include increased economic development, expansion of public services, new home construction, and increased job opportunities. The physical impacts that are a direct result of projected future growth and development are the primary focus of this chapter.

A crucial consideration for future growth is that public services are more costly to provide when development is spread throughout town, rather than to village areas or other high-density locations. This includes not just roads, but schools, buses, utilities, fire protection, and other public services. To prevent unnecessary expenditure and ensure sustainability, an equilibrium must be found between the existing growth trends of rural development and Belgrade's historic growth patterns. This can be achieved by guiding future development with careful intent and providing cost-effective public services. All of that is in keeping with the community's vision for providing a healthy mix of choices for learning, working, and playing, with the intent of preserving the town's natural resources. Another key consideration for locating new growth areas is that they should be a logical extension of existing growth areas. Care must be taken not to create a growth area so large that it would make the designation meaningless. The size must be limited and dictated by expected, future growth and natural constraints.

Future Land Use Plan Explained

The purpose of the Comprehensive Plan as a whole, and ultimately the Future Land Use Plan, is to highlight issues raised by the Town of Belgrade and its residents, determine desirable outcomes, and chart possible strategies to accomplish these outcomes in appropriate sections of this Plan. The Plan does not implement or direct any specific regulatory or policy changes, as that would be too narrow a focus, and outside the scope of the Plan. Implementation of the provisions of this Plan would be accomplished within the context of the town's established administrative procedures and policies -- for example, formal adoption of ordinance revisions, Selectboard consideration, and public participation.

When considering designating future growth areas, location is a priority. For example, the location of a growth area needs to make sense in relation to public services. Some services are directly location-sensitive, such as road access, while others are less location sensitive, such as proximity to fire stations, recreation areas, or schools. Ideally, development should be encouraged in locations that have easy access to public facilities, well-maintained roads, and preferably near schools and existing service centers. Secondary considerations when locating growth areas include proximity of wetlands, watersheds, or other natural restrictions.

If it is determined that new growth areas are necessary, they should be a logical extension of current, existing growth areas. Care must be taken not to create a growth area so large that it would make the designation meaningless. The size must be limited and dictated by expected, future growth and natural constraints.

Conversely, it is essential for the growth areas to be able to accommodate the anticipated growth of the town. If a growth area does not have the capacity in available land into which to direct projected growth, then the designation is also meaningless.

Properly managed land uses provide a layer of protection for Belgrade's numerous natural resources and the character of the town. The policies and strategies to manage future land use are detailed further in the Policies and Strategies of the Future Land Use Plan.

A fundamental strategy when promoting a designated growth area is to direct a minimum of 75 percent of municipal growth-related capital investments into these locations. This strategy demonstrates the town's commitment to using public investments and land use regulations to reduce or discourage development pressure in other areas, while encouraging it in the designated growth areas. It is important to note that road maintenance and other maintenance-type expenditures in designated rural areas would not count as a "growth-related" expenditure.

Belgrade's 2013 Comprehensive Plan Growth Areas

The growth area delineated in Belgrade's previous Comprehensive Plan included the Village District, the General Development District, and the Route 27 Corridor. The *Existing Land Use Map* shows the locations of both designated growth areas and rural areas.

- The Village District was intended for high-density residential development, intermingled with a variety of commercial and public development, including retail, services, community activities and economic opportunities for residents.
- The General Development District was intended for commercial enterprises and other high-density uses that provide employment, generate tax revenues, and offer local services. This area permits the broadest range of uses in Belgrade, while depending on the Commercial Development Review Ordinance to ensure that new development remains consistent with the town's desired character and environment.
- The Route 27 Corridor was intended to preserve rural aspects, scenic views, and safe travel along the Route 27 corridor. Safe and convenient travel along Rt. 27 is preserved by restricting the number of new access points; rural aspects and scenic views are maintained by reducing the visual aspects of new development. This district is designed to maintain rural character and promote safe, smooth traffic flow along Rt. 27 while preserving opportunities for compatible residential and commercial development.

Designating these locations as growth areas left the following locations as rural areas in Belgrade:

Residential/Mixed-Use
Critical Resource
Rural
Shoreland Zone

The 2013 Comprehensive Plan set forth a plan to direct development and growth in specific areas. These development goals are summarized as follows:

- High-density residential development, certain commercial development, and services were encouraged in the Village District,
- High-intensity commercial development, light industrial uses, commercial redevelopment, services, and other uses that generate tax revenue were encouraged in the General Development District,
- Protection of a main travel corridor by reducing new access points and still providing locations for new commercial and residential development.

Despite these efforts, in the last decade, most of the new development in Belgrade has been outside of the designated growth areas and located instead in the rural areas, in old farm fields, and along rural road corridors. These rural locations are exactly what the town wants to preserve, by strategically defining intended growth areas away from rural locations and to areas that are already more developed.

Since the 2013 Comprehensive Plan, Belgrade's growth has been comprised of residential and commercial land uses scattered throughout town, frequently with the two occurring right next to each other, causing potential for incompatibility issues. There has been one subdivision constructed in the past 10 years, with this development occurring outside of the growth areas.

Delineating Future Growth Areas

Belgrade's anticipated future growth is primarily in residential land uses. At the conclusion of the Housing chapter of this Plan, population projections and land consumption estimates were presented based on current trends, ordinances, and lot sizes. Since the town has not been successful in directing growth into the designated growth areas over the last decade, some of the boundaries for the growth area will remain the same as in the 2013 Comprehensive Plan while additional growth areas have been designated to accommodate projections.

However, due to limited available land for development in the growth areas, the town will need to remain vigilant in tracking, reviewing, and documenting permit locations. It is imperative that the Belgrade Planning Board, CEO, Town Manager, Comprehensive Plan Committee, and town officials remain attentive to all development trends.

If the existing designated growth area can no longer accommodate development, to ensure the utmost protection of natural resources, historical character, and rural integrity, the town *must* expand the designated growth areas. Consideration should be given to potential areas for future expansion should this situation occur.

An inventory of the existing growth areas is as follows:

- The most southerly growth area on the Rt. 27 corridor from Gagne's to the Cemetery Road has been expanded north along both sides of Rt. 26 to just south of Silas Burbank Drive. This portion of Belgrade is ideally located for growth as it is near schools, town office, the post office and other public facilities.
- The North Belgrade growth area located roughly from Taylor Woods Rd. north along Smithfield Road has 22 undeveloped lots and has been expanded further north on the eastern side of the road to include several other undeveloped parcels including one subdivision that has been permitted but never built. This area has had some permits issued by the Planning Board. This area is characterized by a reduced speed zone and is more densely populated. It has had abutting growth on lakefront properties that are outside the growth area.
- The Village District has 16 undeveloped lots available, not including one large lot that is in preservation status.
- Belgrade Road growth area has been created north from Just-a-mere Road north to the town line with Oakland. This region contains several permitted yet never developed subdivision and is close proximity to the services located in Oakland. Belgrade Road is a road commonly used by commuters and is capable of handling increased growth.

- A new growth area is being proposed at the intersection of Manchester Road and West Road. Currently there are several existing lots surrounding a partially built out subdivision. This would allow for increased density in an already developed area an easy access along commuter roads.
- The Dunn Road growth area will be enlarged across and south along the Dunn road to contain the lots off Hardwood Circle and Country Lane and another previously permitted subdivision just north of the intersection with White Tail Lane. These parcels are completely undeveloped and while somewhat of a distance from Belgrade public facilities except for the transfer station, are again along a heavily utilized commuter road.

For more accurate details on the exact location of the designated growth areas, please see the Future Land Use Map in the Appendix of this plan.

The designated growth area does not include any locations in the Shoreland Zone, Stream Protection or Resource Protection. The areas chosen for the designated growth area were selected only after significant consideration and deliberation and have been so designated because they are already predominantly developed or are areas where Town officials believe future growth should and could well occur.

Belgrade's future land use plan and the delineation of growth areas is in keeping with the community's vision because it builds upon the historical village and downtown areas, which preserves the town's character and historical identity. Encouraging residential growth in the designated growth area will meet housing needs and result in housing near existing amenities. If successfully implemented, future development in the designated growth area will prevent development in the rural areas and protect natural resources. However, it cannot be overstated enough that the town must vigilantly track the growth in these areas as they are near capacity.

Current Land Use Regulation and Patterns

Belgrade's land-use regulation is covered by the following ordinances:

- Shoreland Zoning Ordinance
- Minimum Lot Size Ordinance
- Multi-Family Dwelling Ordinance
- Subdivision Ordinance
- Commercial Development Review Ordinance
- Floodplain Management Ordinance

The town does not have traditional zoning or land use regulations besides the abovementioned ordinances, including district designations for certain land uses (i.e. commercial vs. residential), or districts with different minimum lot sizes. Belgrade's ordinances are detailed further in the Existing Land Use chapter, but summarized here:

- The Shoreland Zoning Ordinance breaks the town into five Shoreland Districts, each with its own intended purpose.

- The Minimum Lot Size Ordinance regulates minimum lot sizes, setback requirements, maximum building height, and minimum road and shore frontage requirements.
- The Multi-Family Dwelling Ordinance set allowable standards for the development of multi-family housing in Belgrade, including lot size, maximum dwelling units permitted, parking, setback requirements, and more.
- The Subdivision Ordinance regulates the division of land into subdivisions, as approved by the Planning Board.
- The Commercial Development Review Ordinance sets a procedure for the Planning Board when reviewing applications for the development of land and buildings for commercial, industrial, office, community and service uses, municipal, institutional, utility, and recreational uses.
- The Floodplain Management Ordinance regulates how land designated as floodplain can and cannot be used.

Combined, these ordinances work toward guiding and directing development so it will not conflict with natural resource protection, public health, safety, flood damage prevention, and economic well-being. Existing land use controls are intended to preserve the rural and historical character of the town with the intention of directing growth into appropriate, predetermined locations, and away from rural areas.

Belgrade's Village and Depot were the initial settlements of the town. Today, the Village District is the most densely settled location. Development densities in the Village District are governed by on-site sewage disposal and well constraints, as they are elsewhere through town.

Development in Belgrade's Growth Area's

Belgrade's designated growth areas are appropriate in size and consists of locations with a variety of allowable uses in each. Because Belgrade has not tracked permits issued, it is not currently possible to determine if most of the recent growth has occurred in the designated growth areas. This is an ongoing change the Town is making and improving on past practices.

The designated growth areas are defined by existing dense development patterns and infrastructure. They provide locations for a variety of residential, commercial, and municipal land uses. Proposed areas currently designated for growth on the *Future Land Use Map* are:

Village District:

Belgrade's one remaining village area, as depicted on the *Future Land Use Map*, is the most densely developed part of town. It was initially defined by this existing dense development pattern and infrastructure. Currently, it contains a mixture of residential, commercial, recreational, and public land uses. The configuration of the Village District has been shaped since Belgrade's early days when settlements were predominantly established near mills and people traveled mostly by train. The Village District has

multiple road junctions, with several primary roads into and out of the district. The Village District seeks to maintain the existing character and land-use mix.

The Village District designation strives to promote a compact and dense (rather than sprawling) pattern of development, by allowing mixed land-use patterns. This district seeks to ensure proposed development and land uses are compatible with existing land uses, while maintaining the historical integrity and village character. The Village District provides services attractive to visitors and tourists, attracting both residents and visitors. They also provide centralized hubs of residential and commercial development for the community.

Designating the Village District as a growth area is in line with the community's vision as this area is the ideal location for the town's continued growth of mixed-uses, including commercial and residential land uses at a higher density than in other locations. Development in this area, if done properly, will minimize sprawl in rural areas and protect natural resources.

General Development District:

This District, shown on the *Future Land Use Map*, is designated to establish areas for high-impact commercial uses, which may not be as compatible with other land uses, such as residential and recreational activities. It is located to provide an area suited to such development due to site conditions such as soil types, slopes, proximity to highway access, and public water and sewer services. This district includes areas already under commercial use.

General Development Districts recognize the value and convenience for Belgrade citizens to have ease of access to commercial enterprises and other high-intensity uses. These land uses also provide employment, generate tax revenues, and offer local services. These Districts provide for growth within defined and established centralized areas as opposed to unplanned sprawl. While permitting the broadest range of uses in Belgrade, the Commercial Development Review Ordinance standards continue to ensure that new development remains consistent with Belgrade's desired character and environment.

The General Development District reflects the community's vision in that it provides a location for economic development opportunities. It is also located to protect the virtue of residential development from incompatible land uses on neighboring lots.

Location of the General Commercial District: General Development Districts are located near Belgrade Depot, and in North Belgrade, where commercial activities are already concentrated. District boundaries are drawn to encompass additional land for expansion of the commercial base.

Due to the rate of new development in Belgrade since the 2013 Comprehensive Plan, a future need to expand the growth area is imminent to accommodate future growth, while still protecting natural resources and rural character. Areas for future expansion are

detailed in Delineating Future Growth Areas, above. If growth is adequately directed into the existing designated growth areas, expansion would provide the town with capacity in which to direct proposed development and align with the community's vision for the future of Belgrade.

Constraints and Natural Opportunities for Development

There are two basic categories of constraints on development: environmental constraints and public service constraints.

Environmental constraints are covered in the Natural Resources chapter of this Plan. The main constraints are wetlands, steep slopes due to erosion potential, groundwater protection, and floodplains. The *Topographic Map*, *Water Resources Map*, and *Critical Natural Resources Map* in the Appendix of this Plan show the locations of many of these constraints.

Wetlands and steep slopes are not a significant concern in Belgrade, as there are not many of these in developable areas. However, both floodplain and groundwater aquifers are located along the Rt. 27 Corridor and in North Belgrade. Approximately half of the area of growth areas designated in the 2013 Plan and this Plan are located directly over a large aquifer. While this is not automatically a reason to disqualify the determined growth area, concentrating development and the subsequent impervious surfaces increases the risk of groundwater contamination and negative effects to the aquifer. The town's Floodplain Management Ordinance is intended to protect the floodplain from development, but there is nothing to protect the aquifer. An ordinance that was intended to protect the aquifer would likely only control the types of commercial and/or industrial development that used chemicals that could potentially seep into the groundwater.

While certain soils are preferable for septic systems and for supporting foundations, poor soils can be engineered to support development, though this is more costly. The *Soil Map* in the Appendix shows the pattern of soil throughout town.

Public service constraints are a concern because developers often don't take them into consideration and assume the town will provide the service, which results in increased taxes. Examples include rural road maintenance, fire protection, and no municipal sewer and water service.

Aside from the constraints detailed above, there are no extraordinary natural constraints in the designated growth areas that would limit their potential for development.

There are, however, numerous natural opportunities for development in the designated growth areas, including historic growth patterns, numerous road junctions, existing development, and infrastructure. The designated growth area consists of locations with suitable land for development and is home to many if not all public facilities. The growth area is the most developed part of town, and any expansion adjacent to this area would be logical and in line with the community's vision.

Land Use Districts Outside of the Designated Growth Areas

Belgrade Ordinance's identify and describe six land-use districts outside of the designated growth areas, outlined in the 2013 Comprehensive Plan. These districts are detailed below.

- **Three Classifications of Shoreland Areas:** The overall purpose of these designations is to protect water quality, productive fish and wildlife habitat, and scenic and natural areas.
 - **Shoreland District** includes all shoreland areas within 250 feet, horizontal distance, of the normal high-water mark of great ponds, and are suitable for residential and recreational development. It includes areas other than those in the Resource Protection District or the Stream Protection District.
 - **Resource Protection District** includes areas in which development would adversely affect water quality; productive, biological ecosystems; or scenic or natural values. This district shall include the following areas when they occur within the limits of the shoreland zone, exclusive of the Stream Protection District, except that areas which are currently developed and areas which meet the criteria for Limited Commercial District need not be included within the Resource Protection District.
 - Areas within 250 feet, horizontal distance, of the upland edge of freshwater wetland and wetlands associated with great ponds and rivers, which are rated "moderate" to "high" value waterfowl and wading bird habitat, including nesting and feeding areas, by the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife (MDIF&W) that are depicted on a Geographic Information System (GIS) data layer maintained by either MDIF&W or the Maine Department of Environmental Protection as of December 31, 2008. For the purposes of this paragraph "wetlands associated with great ponds and rivers" shall mean areas characterized by non-forested wetland vegetation and hydric soils that are contiguous with a great pond or river and have a surface elevation at or below the water level of the great pond or river during the period of normal high water. "Wetlands associated with great ponds or rivers" are considered part of that great pond or river.
 - Floodplains along rivers and floodplains along artificially formed great ponds along rivers, defined by the 100-year floodplain as designated on the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) Flood Insurance Rate Maps or Flood Hazard Boundary Maps, of the flood of record, or in the absence of these, by soil types identified recently as floodplains soils.
 - Areas of two (2) or more contiguous acres with sustained slopes of 20% or greater.
 - Areas of two (2) or more contiguous acres supporting wetland vegetation and hydric soils, which are not part of a freshwater wetland as defined, and which are not surficially connected to a water body during the period of normal high water.

- Land areas along rivers that are subject to severe bank erosion, undercutting, or riverbed movement.
- **Stream Protection District** includes all land area within 75 feet, horizontal distance, of the normal high-water line of a stream, exclusive of those areas within two hundred and fifty (250) feet, horizontal distance, of the normal high-water line of a great pond, or river, or within two hundred and fifty (250) feet, horizontal distance, of the upland edge of a freshwater wetland. Where a stream and its associated shoreland area are located within two hundred and fifty (250) feet, horizontal distance, of the above water bodies or wetlands, that land area shall be regulated under the terms of the shoreland district associated with that water body or wetland.

One classification of Rural District: The purpose of the rural district designation is to ensure that proposed development and land uses are compatible with the preservation of Belgrade's open, rural character and are protective of sensitive natural resources and visual/scenic qualities. The rural district includes land presently characterized by low-density development, forests, abandoned fields, and farms. This District seeks to protect the existing open space, forestry, agricultural and residential uses, and to restrict commercial activity.

The land-use districts not included as growth areas are designated to protect natural resources, public drinking water supplies, and the character of the town by directing development into appropriate areas.

Anticipated Growth

At the conclusion of the Existing Land Use and Housing chapters of this plan, growth and population projections and land consumption estimates were presented based on current and historic trends, ordinances, and lot sizes. Population projections indicate an increase of 289 residents by 2040. This growth will undeniably create a need for additional housing, more specifically, housing in line with the growing trend of smaller-sized households, single-family households, and increasing population age.

Detailed more thoroughly in the Housing chapter, the most likely scenario for Belgrade is no population change in terms of numbers but decreasing household sizes resulting in a need for more housing units of the right size to accommodate smaller household sizes. Currently, Belgrade has a total housing stock of 2,293 housing units, approximately 934 vacant housing units with 885 seasonal housing units (classified at time of Census). Due to housing unit prices and general shortages of housing units in the region, Belgrade could likely add 10 or more housing units to its housing stock and there would still be a need for additional housing.

However, it is important to bear in mind the *style* and *type* of housing unit to be added to the housing stock. What appears to be in highest demand are housing units for seniors looking to downsize, single-person households, or small families just starting out. There appears to be less need currently for large, 3- to 4-bedroom houses on large lots. The

ideal locations for new housing would be either the Village District or the General Development District, both of which are in the designated growth area.

Since it is unlikely that housing construction will cease entirely, if it is assumed that 10 new houses are built in the planning period, depending on where the houses are built, very different scenarios result. It is also unlikely that all new houses would be built on minimum lot sizes. The minimum lot size in Belgrade is 40,000 sq. ft. in all areas of town and requires a minimum of 200 feet of road frontage.

As residential growth is more challenging to direct than commercial growth, new houses will likely continue to be built in the rural areas of Belgrade, as well. The minimum lot size in the rural area is 40,000 square feet, as it is throughout town. Without zoning or land use regulations, Belgrade has little regulatory oversight over any future development, regardless of location.

New commercial and industrial developments are more difficult to predict, though somewhat easier to direct than residential land uses. Since Belgrade does not have public water and sewer, there are fewer non-regulatory strategies for directing commercial and industrial growth. Belgrade has already taken important measures in preparing for this by providing locations for commercial establishments that allow for all levels of impact to prevent incompatibility issues. Belgrade's designated growth areas strive to encourage new development in locations close to existing public services rather than in rural areas and close to other built-up areas in town. The most likely scenario for new commercial businesses coming to Belgrade would be for them to locate in empty or underutilized lots, based on recent trends.

Depending on the level of intensity and impact, new commercial development could locate in any part of the designated growth area. If the commercial business is low-impact and in keeping with the village character, it could be directed to locate in an existing building in the Village District.

To ensure continued oversight and the use of the most up-to-date standards for commercial and industrial development, the Commercial Development Review Ordinance should be reviewed and updated on a regular basis.

The challenge in the creation of this Plan is to work with the current rate of development and to manage it in such a way as to reduce the impacts it will have on both the town's rural character, natural resources, and on Town services. The best way to accomplish this is by encouraging new development to locate close to existing public services and near each other, rather than in rural areas. Belgrade's designated growth areas fit the criteria for directing new development into more densely settled areas and close to existing town services, but the town needs to find a way to successfully encourage new development to locate in the designated growth areas, either through regulatory or non-regulatory measures, to realize the town's vision.

The strategies listed in the Policies and Strategies Table are in keeping with the community's vision in that they promote community character by encouraging appropriate growth in the more densely settled parts of town, and promote options for a blend of retail, commercial, and service locations. By directing residential, commercial, and industrial development into appropriately designated growth areas and away from rural locations, Belgrade is preserving its physical, ecological, and natural resources.

Comprehensive Plan Implementation

Belgrade's Selectboard should consider an approach to implement and monitor the progress of the Comprehensive Plan. One option is creating and appointing a standing Comprehensive Plan Implementation Committee that will work in coordination with the Town Manager and Selectboard. The Town Manager should meet biannually with the Comprehensive Plan Implementation Committee to review the Comprehensive Plan to evaluate implementation and progress.

As the committee works toward implementation of the Strategies identified in this Comprehensive Plan, implementation progress should be reviewed in the following specific categories:

- The degree to which the Future Land Use plan strategies have been implemented,
- The percent of municipal growth-related capital investments in designated growth areas,
- The location and amount of new development in relation to the community's designated growth areas, rural areas, and transition areas (if applicable),
- The amount of critical natural resources, critical rural, and critical waterfront areas protected through acquisition, easements, or other measures.

If the evaluation concludes that portions of the current plan and/or its implementation are not effective, the Comprehensive Plan Implementation Committee could propose changes. To ensure adequate communication, progress, and focus, the Board of Selectpersons, Town Manager, and Comprehensive Plan Implementation Committee should meet and review the Plan regularly.

Future Land Use

Belgrade will maintain the same future growth areas designated in the previous plan, which are the Village Districts of the Lakes Village, Depot and North Belgrade. Collectively, these districts amount to a sizable area that encompasses land roughly along the State Route 27 corridor. These growth areas were designated in the 2013 Comprehensive Plan and are still not at capacity.

State Goal: 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.

Managing land use also protects natural resources, of which Belgrade has many. The policies and strategies of managing the town's future land use are detailed in the Land Use Chapter, but presented here in summary:

Policies:	Strategies:	Implementing/Timeframe:
1. To coordinate the community's land use strategies with other local and regional land use planning efforts.	1.1 Assign responsibility for implementing the Future Land Use Plan to the appropriate committee, board or municipal official.	Comprehensive Plan Implementation Committee, Ongoing
	1.2 Meet with neighboring communities to coordinate land use designations and regulatory and non-regulatory strategies.	Planning Board, Code Enforcement Officer Mid Term
2. To support the locations, types, scales, and intensities of land uses the community desires as stated in its vision.	2.1 Using the descriptions provided in the Future Land Use Plan narrative, maintain, enact or amend local ordinances as appropriate to: a. Clearly define the desired scale, intensity, and location of future development; b. Establish or maintain fair and efficient permitting procedures, and explore streamlining permitting procedures in growth areas; and c. Clearly define protective measures for critical natural resources and, where applicable, important natural resources. d. Clearly define protective measures for any proposed critical rural areas and/or critical waterfront areas, if proposed.	Planning Board, Code Enforcement Officer, Selectboard Ongoing

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Policies:	Strategies:	Implementing/Timeframe:
	2.2 Periodically (at least every five years) evaluate implementation of the plan in accordance with Section 2.1.	Comprehensive Plan Implementation Committee Ongoing
	2.3 Investigate development of village master plans for each 3 village areas.	
	2.4 Consider the implementation of Commercial Design Standards	Planning Board, Code Enforcement Officer Long Term
3. To support the level of financial commitment necessary to provide needed infrastructure in growth areas.	3.1 Direct a minimum of 75% of new municipal growth-related capital investments into designated growth areas identified in the Future Land Use Plan.	Town Manager, Planning Board, Selectboard Long Term
	3.2 Include in the Capital Investment Plan anticipated municipal capital investments needed to support proposed land uses.	Town Manager, Selectboard Mid Term

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Policies:	Strategies:	Implementing/Timeframe:
4. To establish efficient permitting procedures, especially in growth areas.	4.1 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 M.R.S.A. §4451.	Town Manager, Selectboard Ongoing
5. To protect critical rural and critical waterfront areas from the impacts of development.	5.1 Track new development in the community by type and location.	Code Enforcement Officer, Planning Board Ongoing
6. Offer opportunities for education surrounding land use topics	6.1 Engage the community in a conversation on instituting zoning and educate on options surrounding zoning.	Planning Board, Selectboard, Code Enforcement Officer Mid Term
7. The Town should implement the Future Land Use Plan as guidance in review of new developments and permits.	7.1. Incorporate the Future Land Use Plan into new or amended land use ordinances.	Town manager, selectboard, Planning Board Ongoing
	7.2 Maintain and expand municipal GIS system to track development applications and approvals for the town. Incorporate GIS Map Layers developed as part of the Comprehensive Plan. This may include periodic review and update of the map layers, printing of selected map products, etc.	Town Manager, Code Enforcement Officer Ongoing

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Policies:	Strategies:	Implementing/Timeframe:
8. Ensure that local ordinances are up to date and utilize standards that are appropriate for the community.	8.1 Conduct a systematic review of existing ordinances and revise and/or combine existing ordinances in conformance with recommendations of this plan. In addition to recommendations in other chapters, the following items should be incorporated: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Assess compliance with Commercial Development Review Ordinance and establish process for ongoing review of compliance. b. Develop regulatory procedures to ensure that existing septic systems are not polluting lakes and streams. c. Develop new standards for commercial wind power generation and other over-height structures. 	Planning Board, Code Enforcement Officer Ongoing
	8.2 Adopt provisions which ensure open space protection in rural areas (i.e. cluster development; open space set asides or contributions to a Conservation Land Acquisition Reserve account; incentives such as density bonuses; and transfer of development rights)	Planning Board, Code Enforcement Officer Mid-Term
	8.3 Strengthen existing wording around gravel pit operations to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Encourage redevelopment of pits for other uses 	Planning Board, Code Enforcement Officer Short Term

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Policies:	Strategies:	Implementing/Timeframe:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> b. existing requirements for gravel pits (within the Commercial Development Review Ordinance) should be reviewed to verify that Belgrade gravel pits are in compliance - particularly the reclamation requirements. c. For gravel pit operations, consider a bond or other financial guarantee for reclamation costs. 	
9. Provide support for Code Enforcement and Ordinance Compliance	9.1 Address ongoing and new concerns regarding development and compliance with local ordinance.	Town Manager, Selectboard, Planning Board Ongoing
10. Ensure ongoing fairness and efficiency of the town's development processes	10.1 Provide training for Planning Board members on ordinance and permit requirements and processes. Ensure new Planning Board members attend Maine Municipal Association planning board training, or equivalent training.	Town office staff Ongoing
	10.2 Planning Board agendas will be published in advance. Agendas and minutes will be posted on website in a timely manner. Records of decisions and permits issued will be filed and indexed.	Code Enforcement Officer Ongoing

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Policies:	Strategies:	Implementing/Timeframe:
	10.3 Ensure all existing permit approval standards are met by applicants, including phosphorous control, storm water, soil erosion control and visual screening standards. Phosphorous and storm water control plans to be developed by a Maine professional engineer, certified geologist, certified soil scientist or other appropriate certified professional.	CEO, Ongoing
	10.4 The Planning Board and CEO will meet bi-annually with Town Manager and Board of Selectmen to review policies, procedures, and to discuss challenges faced implementing the ordinances.	Planning Board, CEO, TM, SB Near Term
11. Coordinate growth and development efforts with neighboring towns.	11.1 Encourage periodic meetings with Rome, Sidney and other towns, as needed, to discuss development issues and planning efforts.	Planning Board, CEO Near Term
12. Assure that scenic views, historic landscapes, tree lined roads, and rural character are protected	12.1 Amend land use ordinances to regulate the size, lighting, number, color, and height of signs, & streetlights especially in rural areas and areas where a sign or light may impact scenic views	Planning Board, Code Enforcement Officer Mid Term

Recommendations Part III: Capital Investment Planning Process

Capital Investment Plan

This Comprehensive Plan strongly supports programming and scheduling of capital improvements as part of the town's annual budgeting and administrative process. A Capital Improvements Plan (CIP) is a process for identifying public facilities, infrastructure and equipment that will require major investment over the coming years either due to growth or due to capital deterioration. The CIP determines the priority, and when each investment will be necessary and how to pay for it. This Capital Investment Plan establishes an approach for the development of a formal Capital Improvements Plan. The plan is important because it alerts both municipal officials and citizens about future expenses and allows the town to find the most cost-effective way to fund the improvement.

The CIP Process:

The Capital Investment Plan will include items identified in this plan which are called capital expenses. A capital expense is defined as having a cost that is not a maintenance or operating expense. Belgrade has done very basic capital planning for its municipal facilities in the past. Within the past year, the town has developed a prioritized list of anticipated capital needs.

As the coordinator for all the town's activities, the Town Manager is responsible for the CIP. However, the Town Manager must rely on the other town staff and committees to submit needs and cost estimates, and to set priorities. Thus, the CIP process should ideally be prepared alongside the annual budget, so that a portion of the annual budget is set aside to fund the CIP. This can be in the form of contributions to a reserve fund, one-time appropriations, or commitment to pay interest on a loan.

Belgrade's CIP should continue to be developed by the Select Board, by incorporating the guidelines needed to reach the goals of the initial project list presented in the plan.

Why a CIP?

The development and maintenance of a Capital Investments Plan allows Belgrade to forecast upcoming major expenses with minimal surprises. Developing a CIP presents the town the opportunity to:

- Engage in a reasoned discussion about priorities.
- Prepare a pre-planned list that better enables Belgrade to take advantage of unexpected opportunities, such as grants, low interest rates and price drops.
- Forecast, plan, and mitigate property tax impacts.

Financing the CIP:

A source of funding for each item has been identified. The less certain the item is, the more speculative the funding can be.

Annual appropriations: While funding a major purchase in a one-time annual appropriation can be disruptive to the budget, it works for lower-priced equipment or when a continuing monetary stream can be tapped for regular needs.

Undesignated fund: In keeping with good accounting principles, the town maintains at least 90 days of expenses in undesignated funds by year end. Use of undesignated funds would be cause for a special town meeting where the expense would need to be approved by a majority of voters. Reserve accounts: Funds from reserve accounts are allocated, voted on, and approved by the specific expenditure. As in past practice, Belgrade continues to use both reserves (saving for a number of years for a future purchase). Bonding: Belgrade (borrowing over time for immediate or planned purchase) for both of these techniques allow the cost of major expenditures to be spread out over time.

Grants: Grants are generally competitive and, therefore, not assured. A grant is acceptable for “wish list” items, but not for essentials. A grant search should be part of the annual CIP update process.

Sale of surplus equipment: Equipment could be traded in toward the purchase of replacement equipment. It’s known to be an option but never been utilized.

Outside contributions: In some cases, other organizations may join with the town to contribute to a project of joint benefit. This may include other towns or organizations, such as for new pickleball and basketball courts or hiking trails. While these funding sources may be more reliable than grants, it requires coordination with timetables outside of the town’s control. In Belgrade, most donations are for specific programs or events.

Financing of the CIP may come from a mix of sources, but the most important element is to ensure the impact on the annual town budget is spread out over time. Under this Plan, the major impacts will come from both Capital Improvement Funds and bonding.

Belgrade has sufficient borrowing power. The town would rather make purchases outright, using capital improvement funds, where feasible. Belgrade utilized a bond in 2015 in order to construct the new town office. Additionally, every three years the town secures a bond for its paving plan, in 2025 the bond amount was \$690,000. In recent years, the town has secured a Tax Anticipation Note (TAN) to help cover expenses until property taxes are collected. Belgrade did not utilize these funds in 2023 or 2024; however, we anticipate needing to draw from the TAN in 2025. Belgrade anticipates bonding for the development of a new fire station.

Shared Investments

Belgrade has historically been proactive in planning for future expenses and collaborating with neighboring towns to maximize opportunities. For example, Belgrade has a mutual aid agreement in place with the town of Rome to provide fire and rescue services. Rome also contributes to one-half the salary and benefits for one full-time firefighter-rescue position in Belgrade and share the use of a cell tower. Recently installed new repeater where the cost was split between town

In addition, Rome residents pay a per bag fee to utilize the transfer station. The fee then becomes revenue that is allocated back into the transfer station. Belgrade also partners with surrounding communities to offer a food pantry, and recreational opportunities at the North Belgrade Community Center and the Center for All Seasons, as detailed in the Recreation chapter.

Belgrade is in an interlocal agreement, sharing ownership of three dams with the neighboring towns of Rome, Oakland, Sidney and Mount Vernon. Based upon the percentage of shoreline, Belgrade is responsible for 48% of the cost of the dams and for administering the funds contributed by the five neighboring towns.

Capital Improvement Projects

Priority Level:

Department	Project/Need	Priority	Estimated Replacement Timeframe	Estimated Cost	Primary Funding Source
Fire Department	Tanker Truck	H	2027-28	\$1,000,000	Capital Fund
Fire Department	Construction of Fire Department	H	2025-26	\$7,000,000	Grants, Bond
Fire Department	Replace Engine 61 with new front-line pumper (1992)	H	2026-2028	\$800,000	Capital Reserve
Fire Department	Replacement of Rescue 6 (2015)	H	2026-2028	\$400,000	Capital Reserve
Fire Department	Replacement of N. Belgrade station with basic 2 bay station to house pumper and tanker.	L-M	2034	\$800,000	Bond, Grants
Fire Department	Replacement of Engine 63 (2012) and Tanker 64 (2012)	L	2042	\$925,000	Capital
Public Works	Town Garage facilities installation	M-H	2025-2026	\$25,000	Capital Fund
Public Works	Road Maintenance & Paving Funding	M	2025	\$1,000,000	Capital Fund, Bond

Transfer Station	Replace siding on Recycle Center with vinyl.	L-M	2029-2034	TBD	Capital Fund
Transfer Station	Purchase 50-yard compactor container.	L-M	2029-2034	TBD	TBD
Transfer Station	Replace facility backup generator.	L-M	2029-2034	TBD	Capital Fund
Transfer Station	Build physical structure to house recyclable materials.	L-M	2029-2034	TBD	Bond
Transfer Station	Three phase power	M-H	2025	TBD	Capital Fund
Recreation	Center for All Seasons expansions/repairs: Expanded office space, improved restrooms, new HVAC system, paving, pickleball & basketball courts and more	M-H	2025-2027 or after engineering and architectural survey	Est. \$4,000,000	Bond, Fundraising, Capital Fund, Grants
Recreation	Center for All Seasons hire engineer/architect to develop plans for building renovation and grounds improvements.	H	2025	\$150,000	Capital Fund (50% Facilities, 50% Recreation)
Recreation	North Belgrade Community Center: pave parking lot, replace ADA ramp, generator, doghouse roof(s)/bulkhead cap, CCTV	M-H	2025-2026	\$90,000	Capital Fund
Facilities	North Belgrade Fire Department: catch basin, paving	L-M	2026-2027	\$13,500	Capital Fund
Facilities	Sand/Salt Shed: roof/wall repair	M	2025	\$30,000	Capital Fund
Facilities	Town Office: card swipe system, expand kitchen	L-M	2026-2030	\$58,000	Capital Fund
	Demolish 8 & 10 Dalton Properties to expand Recreation Department offerings	L-M	Unkn	Unkn	Grants

Recommendations Part IV: Regional Coordination

The Regional Coordination section of the Comprehensive Plan emphasizes the importance of collaboration between Belgrade and neighboring municipalities, regional organizations, and other stakeholders. Effective regional coordination is essential for addressing issues that transcend municipal boundaries and for leveraging shared resources and expertise.

Goals of Regional Coordination

1. To promote cooperative planning and development strategies that enhance the economic, social, and environmental well-being of Belgrade and its neighbors.
2. To address common challenges, such as transportation, housing, environmental protection, and public services, through collaborative efforts.
3. To engage residents and stakeholders from multiple municipalities in the planning process to ensure that diverse perspectives are considered.

Existing Regional Partnerships

Belgrade currently engages with several regional entities, including:

1. **Regional Planning Organizations:** Describe any ongoing relationships with regional planning boards or councils that facilitate cooperative planning efforts.
2. **Shared Services Agreements:** Outline any joint service agreements for public safety, public works, or other municipal services that streamline operations and reduce costs for participating towns.
3. **Collaboration on Specific Projects:** Highlight any recent or ongoing projects that involve collaboration with neighboring towns, such as infrastructure improvements, land use planning, or joint marketing initiatives.

Priorities for Future Regional Coordination

1. **Transportation Planning:** Work with neighboring towns and regional organizations to create a comprehensive transportation plan that addresses public transit needs, road maintenance, and upgrades to key thoroughfares.
2. **Economic Development Initiatives:** Collaborate on regional economic development strategies to attract businesses and investments that benefit multiple communities, including joint marketing campaigns and business development programs.
3. **Environmental Sustainability:** Partner with regional agencies to develop strategies for environmental protection, land conservation, and managing shared natural resources, such as watersheds and recreational areas.

Strategies for Enhancing Regional Coordination

1. **Regular Inter-Municipal Meetings:** Establish a schedule of regular meetings with neighboring towns and regional partners to discuss shared interests, address challenges, and plan collaborative initiatives.
2. **Joint Planning Workshops:** Conduct joint workshops to engage community members and stakeholders from multiple municipalities in the planning process, promoting understanding and cooperation on regional issues.
3. **Resource Sharing:** Explore opportunities for sharing resources, such as equipment, technology, and personnel, to increase efficiency and reduce costs for all municipalities involved.
4. **Information Exchange:** Develop a system for ongoing information exchange among towns regarding planning updates, funding opportunities, and best practices to keep all parties informed and engaged.

By prioritizing regional coordination, Belgrade can maximize its effectiveness in addressing shared challenges, enhancing service delivery, and promoting sustainable development. This collaborative approach ensures that the town remains resilient and adaptable in the face of changing community needs and regional dynamics.

Further information and details on specific regional efforts can be found in the analysis chapters of this plan. For this comprehensive plan, several of the recommendations contain a regional component. The following is an incomplete listing of those strategies:

Local Economy

- Policy 1. To support the type of economic development activity the community desires, reflecting the community's role in the region.
 - Strategy 1.1: If appropriate, assign responsibility and provide financial support for economic development activities to the proper entity (e.g., a local economic development committee, a local representative to a regional economic development organization, the community's economic development director, a regional economic development initiative, or other).
- Policy 3. To coordinate with regional development corporations and surrounding towns as necessary to support desired economic development.
 - Strategy 3.1: Participate in any regional economic development planning efforts.

Housing

- Policy 1. Encourage and promote adequate affordable and workforce housing to support the community's and region's economic development.
 - Strategy 1.3: Create or continue to support a community affordable/workforce housing committee and/or regional affordable housing coalition.
- Strategy 2: Support the efforts of local and regional housing coalitions in addressing affordable and workforce housing needs.
 - Policy 2.1. Support the efforts of regional housing coalitions or groups with similar purposes in addressing affordable and workforce housing needs.

Transportation

- Policy 1. To prioritize community and regional needs associated with safe, efficient, and optimal use of transportation systems.
- Strategy 2: To Safely and efficiently preserve or improve the transportation system.
 - Strategy 2.1 Initiate or actively participate in regional and state transportation efforts.
- Strategy 6: Engage and involve in existing transportation partnerships serving Belgrade.
 - Seek out opportunities to have municipal representation at regional transportation forums to be a voice for Belgrade.
 - Promote and partner with local ride-sharing and volunteer transportation collaboratives.

Recreation

- Strategy 4: Provide more public recreational opportunities on local trail systems.
 - Strategy 4.1: Work within existing partnerships and develop new partnerships to expand access, use, and educational opportunities on trail systems.

Agriculture & Forestry

- Strategy 2: To support farming and forestry and encourage their economic viability.
 - Policy 2.3: Include agriculture, commercial forestry operations, and land conservation that supports them in local or regional economic development plans.
- Strategy 3: Support local producers
 - Policy 3.1: Support and encourage local agriculture producers.

Natural and Water Resources

- Policy 2. To coordinate with neighboring communities and regional and state resource agencies to protect shared critical natural resources.
 - Strategy 2.1: Initiate and/or participate in interlocal and/or regional planning, management, and/or regulatory efforts around shared critical and important natural resources.
 - Strategy 2.2 Pursue public/private partnerships to protect critical and important natural resources such as through purchase of land or easements with willing sellers.
- Policy 7. To cooperate with neighboring communities and regional/local advocacy groups to protect water resources.
 - Strategy 7.1: Participate in local and regional efforts to monitor, protect and, where warranted, improve water quality.
- Strategy 11: Coordinate resource protection with neighboring towns and conservation groups, lake associations, and local advocacy groups.
 - Policy 11.1 Initiate and/or participate in interlocal and/or regional planning, management, and/or regulatory efforts around shared critical and important natural resources.

Public Facilities and Services

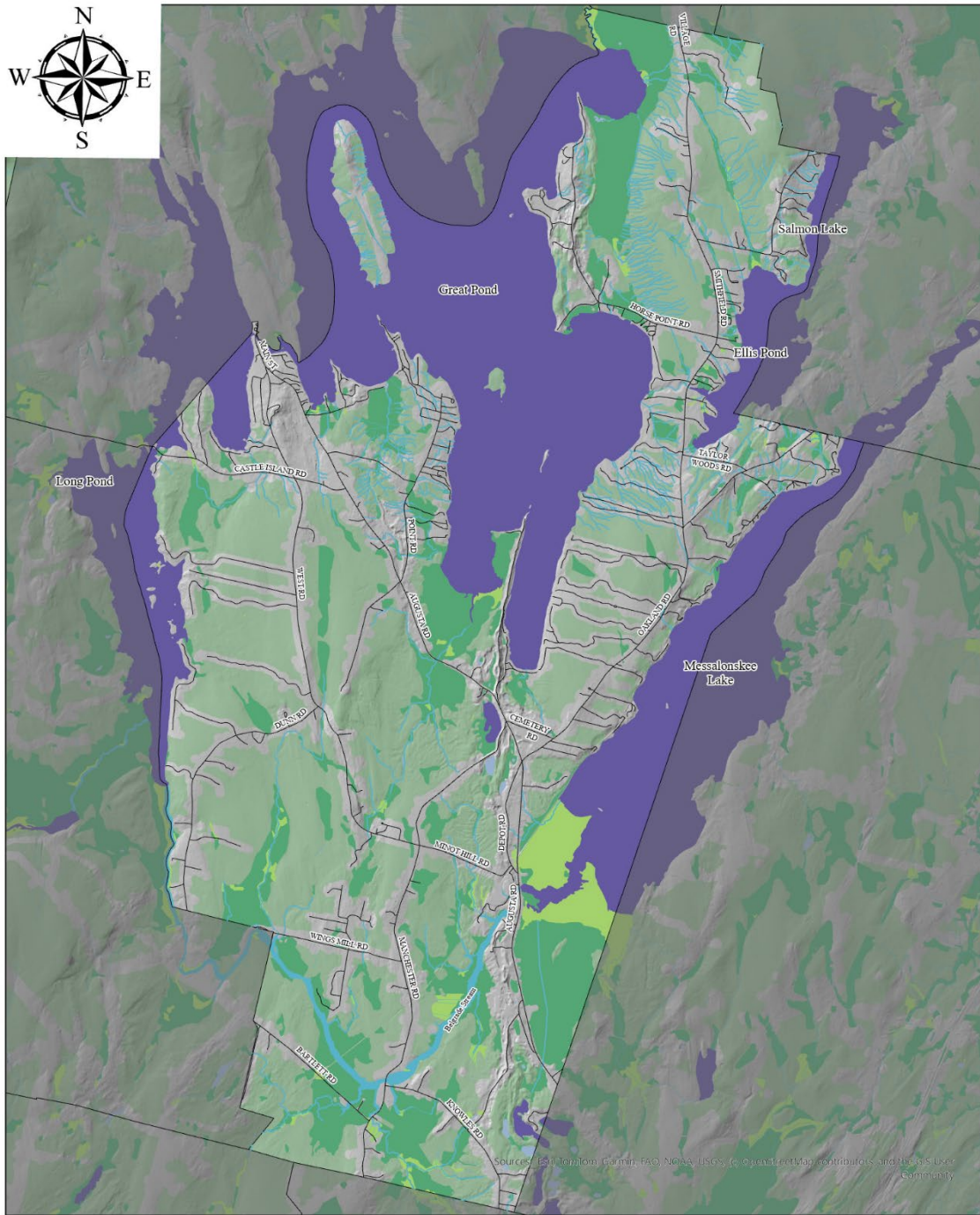
- To provide public facilities and services in a manner that promotes and supports growth and development in identified growth areas.
 - Policy 2.3: Explore options for regional delivery of local services.

Future Land Use Plan

- Policy 1. To coordinate the community's land-use strategies with other local and regional land-use planning efforts.
 - Strategy 1.2: Meet with neighboring communities to coordinate land-use designations and regulatory and non-regulatory strategies

APPENDICES

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Map Legend

- Roads
- Streams
- Undeveloped Land
- Freshwater Emergent Wetland
- Freshwater Forested/ Shrub Wetland
- Freshwater Pond
- Lake
- River

Town of Belgrade
Kennebec County, Maine

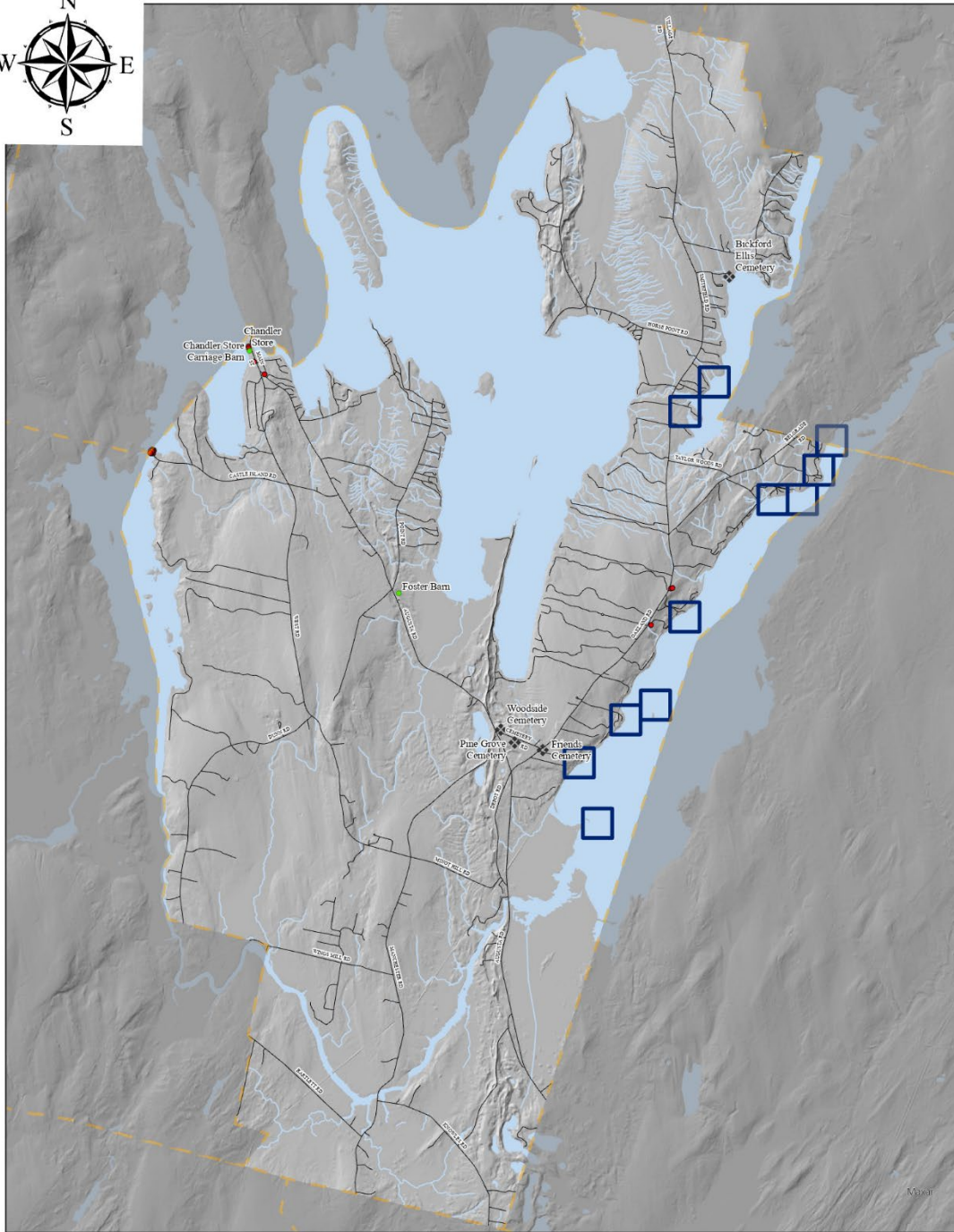
Base Planning Map
Comprehensive Plan 2025

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Boundary data is based on digital sources and may differ from ground-based observations.
Data sources: Maine Office of GIS, Maine DOT, USGS, Beginning with Belgrade
Created: 09-2023 by TA

0 2,500 5,000 7,500 10,000 Feet

0 0.5 1 1.5 2 Miles

KENNEBEC VALLEY
COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS
Regional service, local results



Map Legend

- Roads
- Streams
- Lakes, Ponds, Rivers
- Listed Historical Properties
- Eligible Historic Properties
- ⊠ Cemeteries
- ⊠ Known Prehistoric Archaeological Sites

Town of Belgrade Kennebec County, Maine

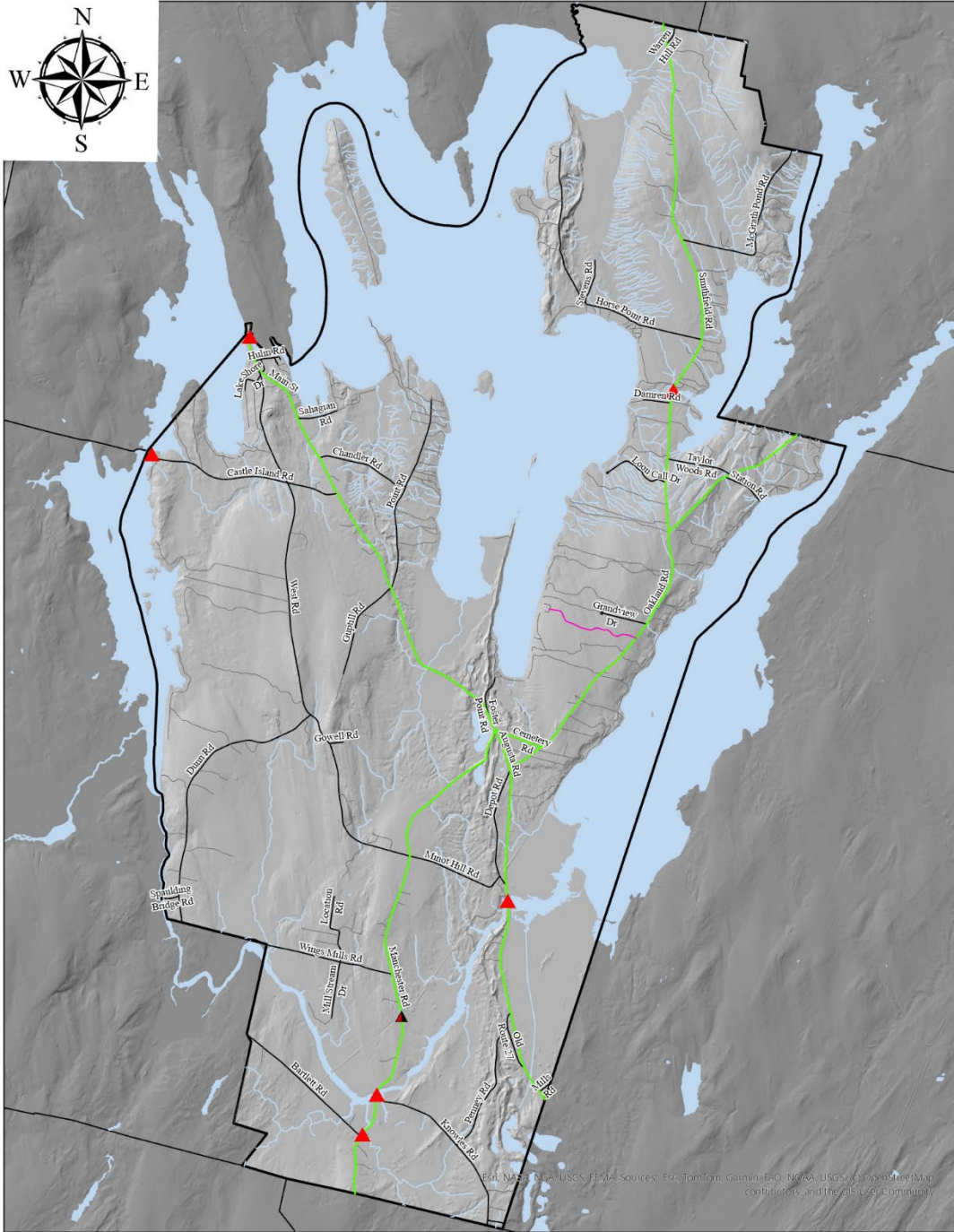
Historic Resources Comprehensive Plan 2025

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Created: 09-2025 by TA.

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Feet

0 0.5 1 1.5 2
Miles





Map Legend

Roads	 Waterbodies
— Local	— Streams
— Private	
— State Aid	Bridges
— Walkway	▲ State
	▲ Railroad

Town of Belgrade
Kennebec County, Maine

General Transportation
Comprehensive Plan 2025

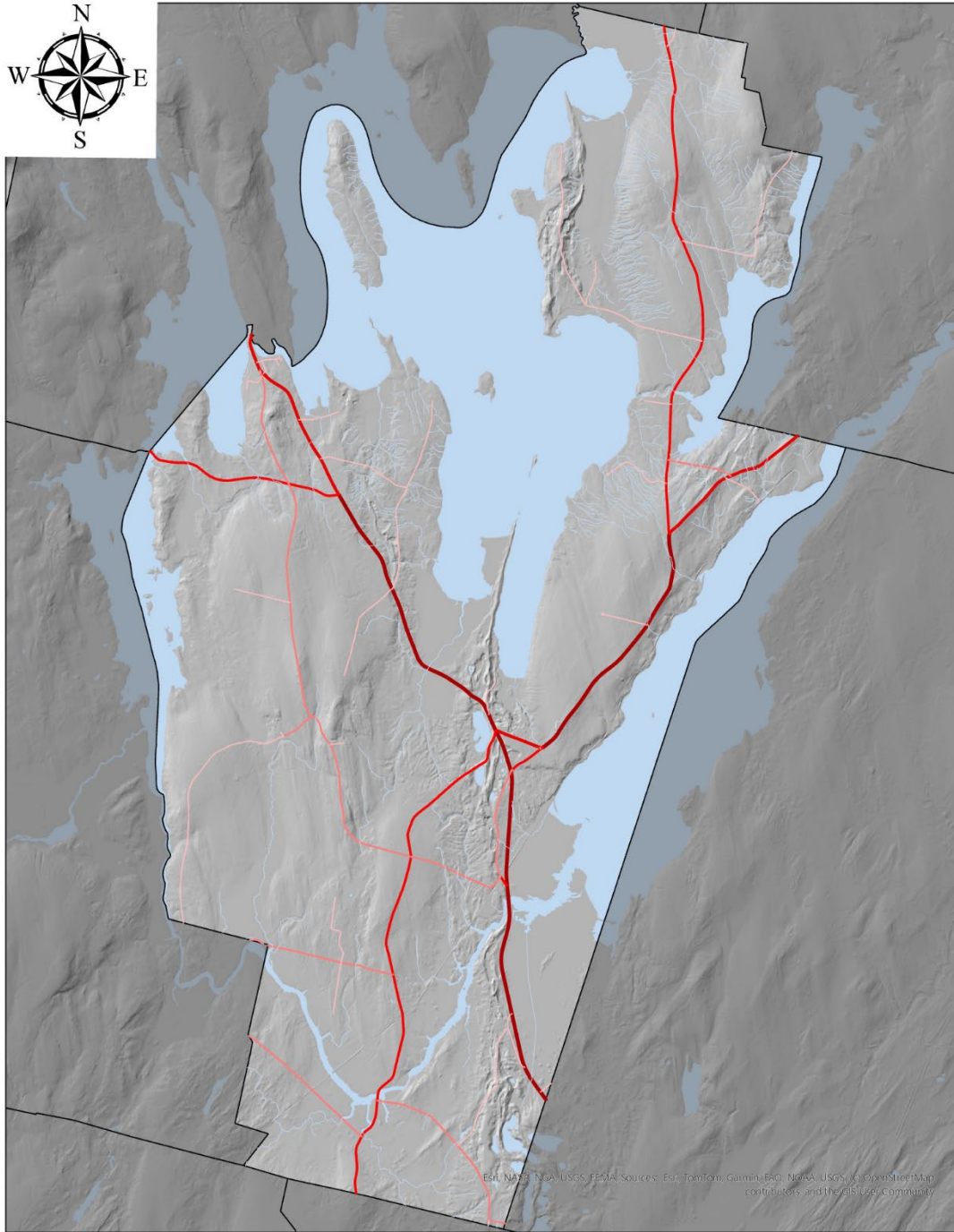
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 Data sources: Maine Office of GIS, Maine DOT, USGS
 Created: 07/2023 by TK

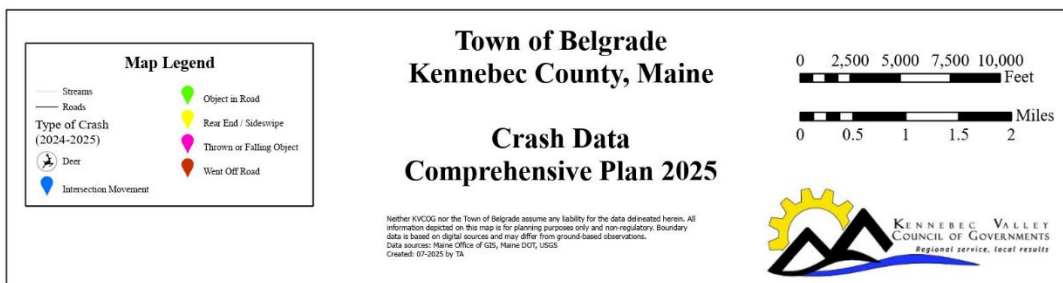
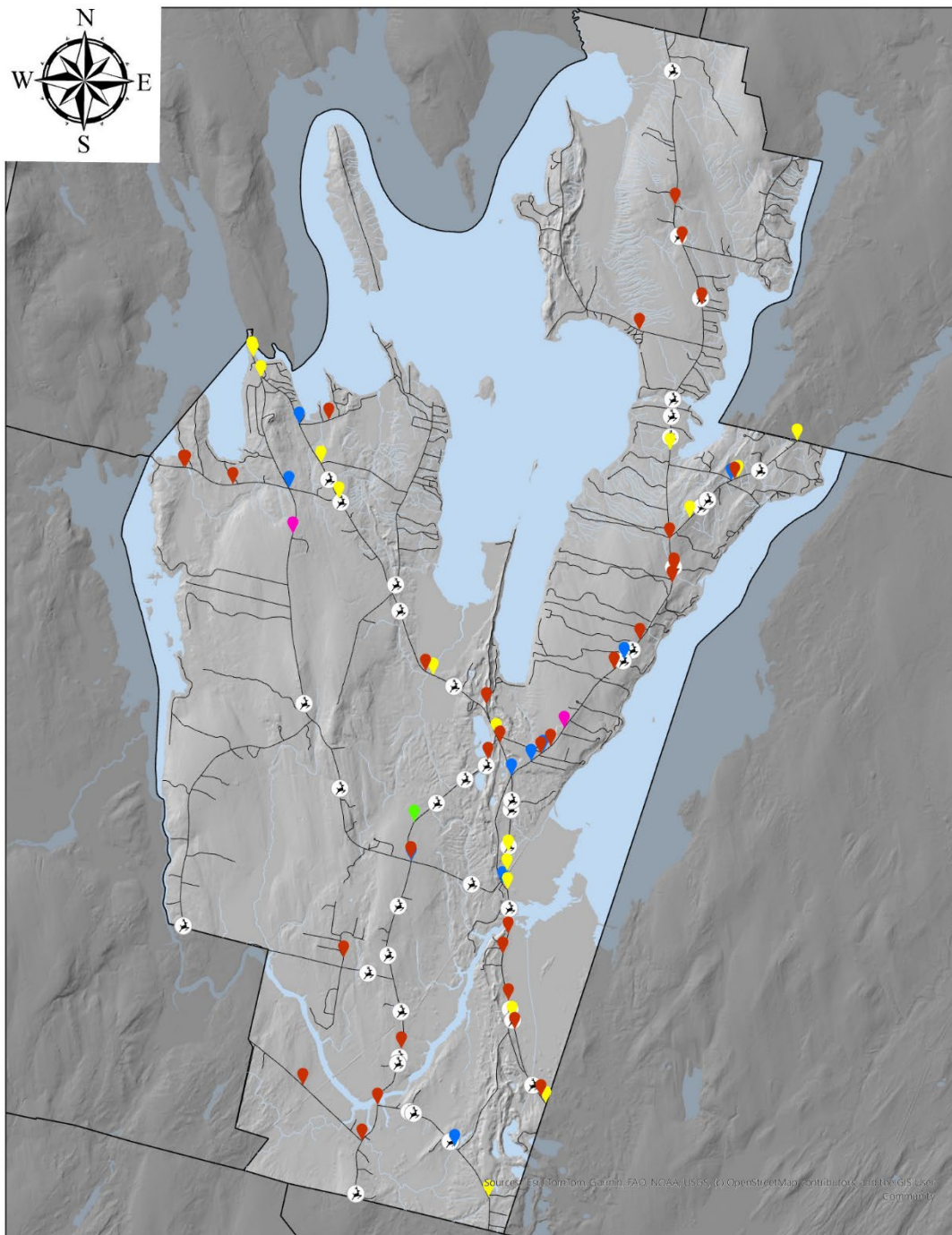
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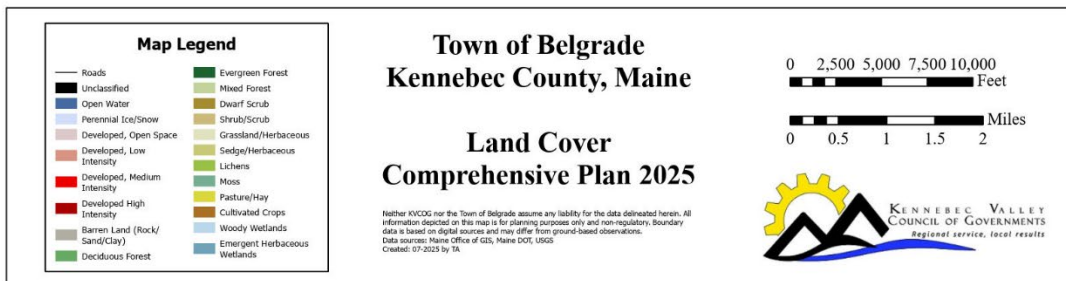
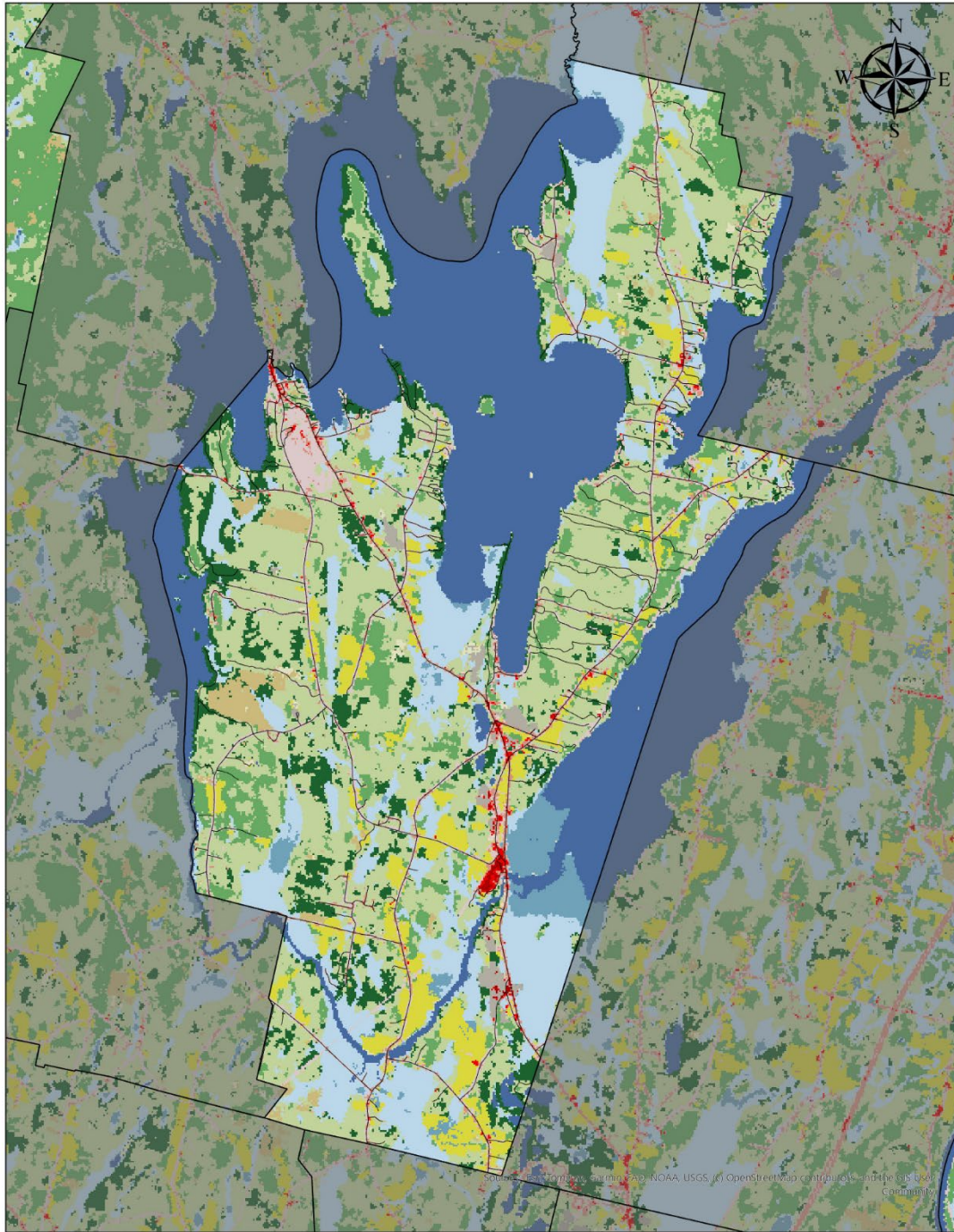
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 Miles

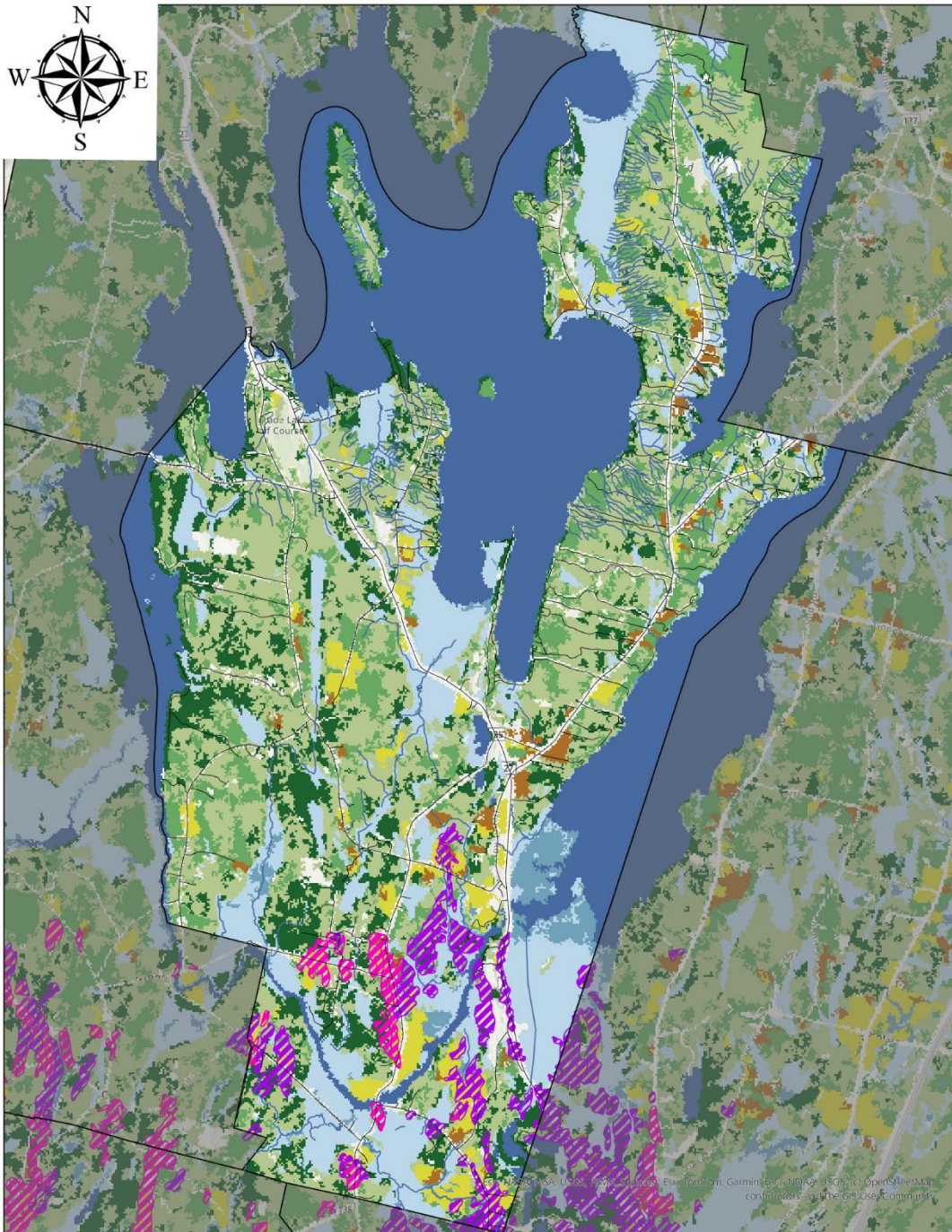


KENNEBEC VALLEY
COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS
Regional service, local results









Map Legend

- Streams
- Roads
- All areas are prime farmland
- Farmland of statewide importance
- Open Water
- Deciduous Forest
- Evergreen Forest
- Mixed Forest
- Hay/Pasture
- Cultivated Crops
- Woody Wetlands
- Emergent Herbaceous Wetlands

Town of Belgrade
Kennebec County, Maine

Agriculture and Forestry Resources
Comprehensive Plan 2025

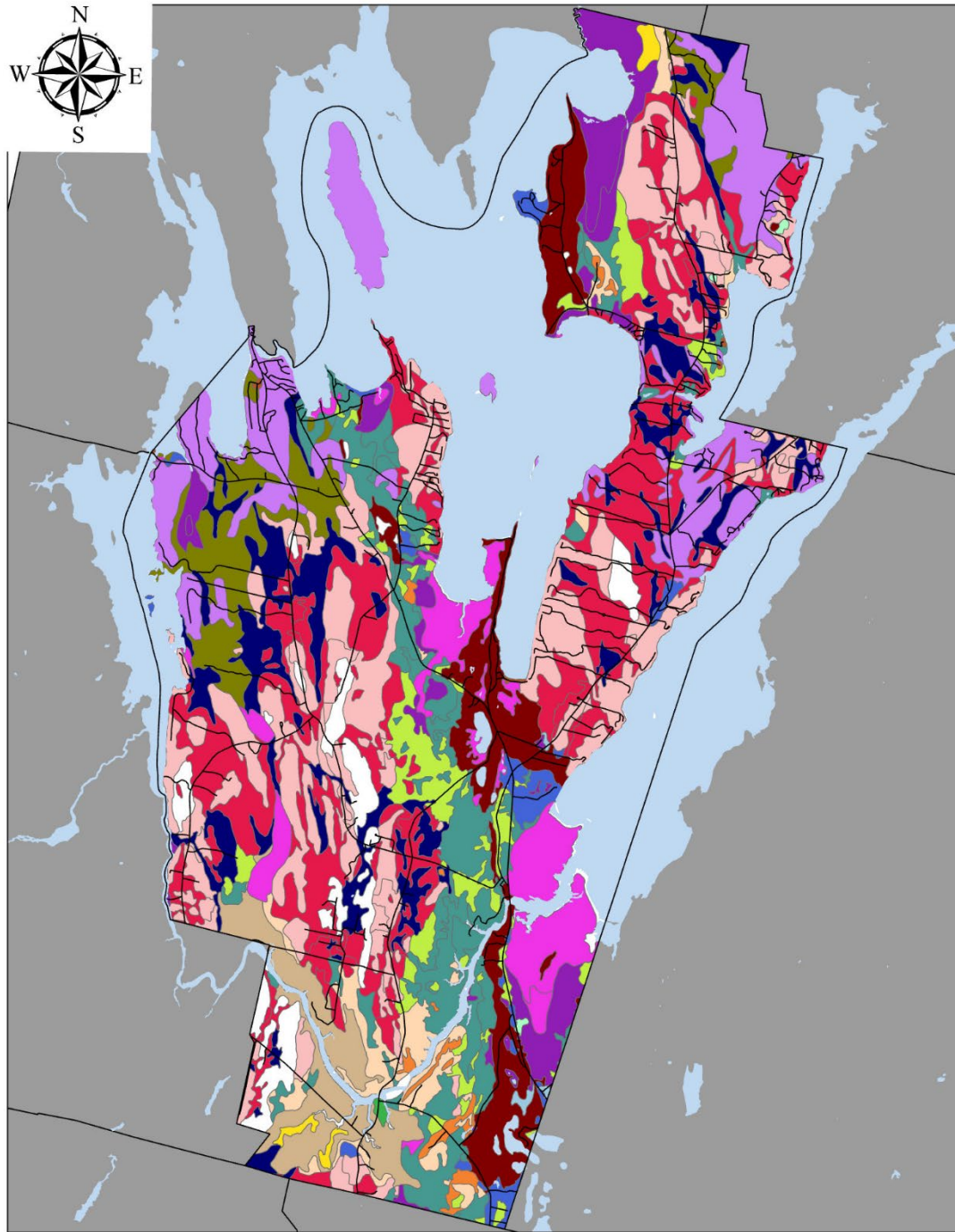
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 Data sources: Maine Office of GIS, Maine DOT, USGS, Maine Farmland Trust.
 Created: 07-2025 by TA

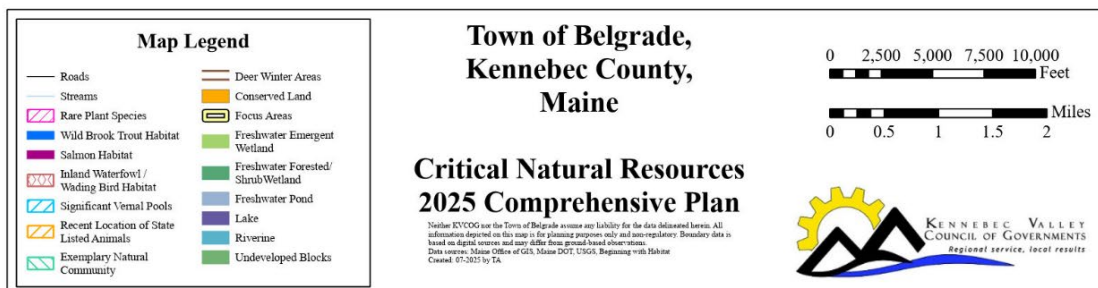
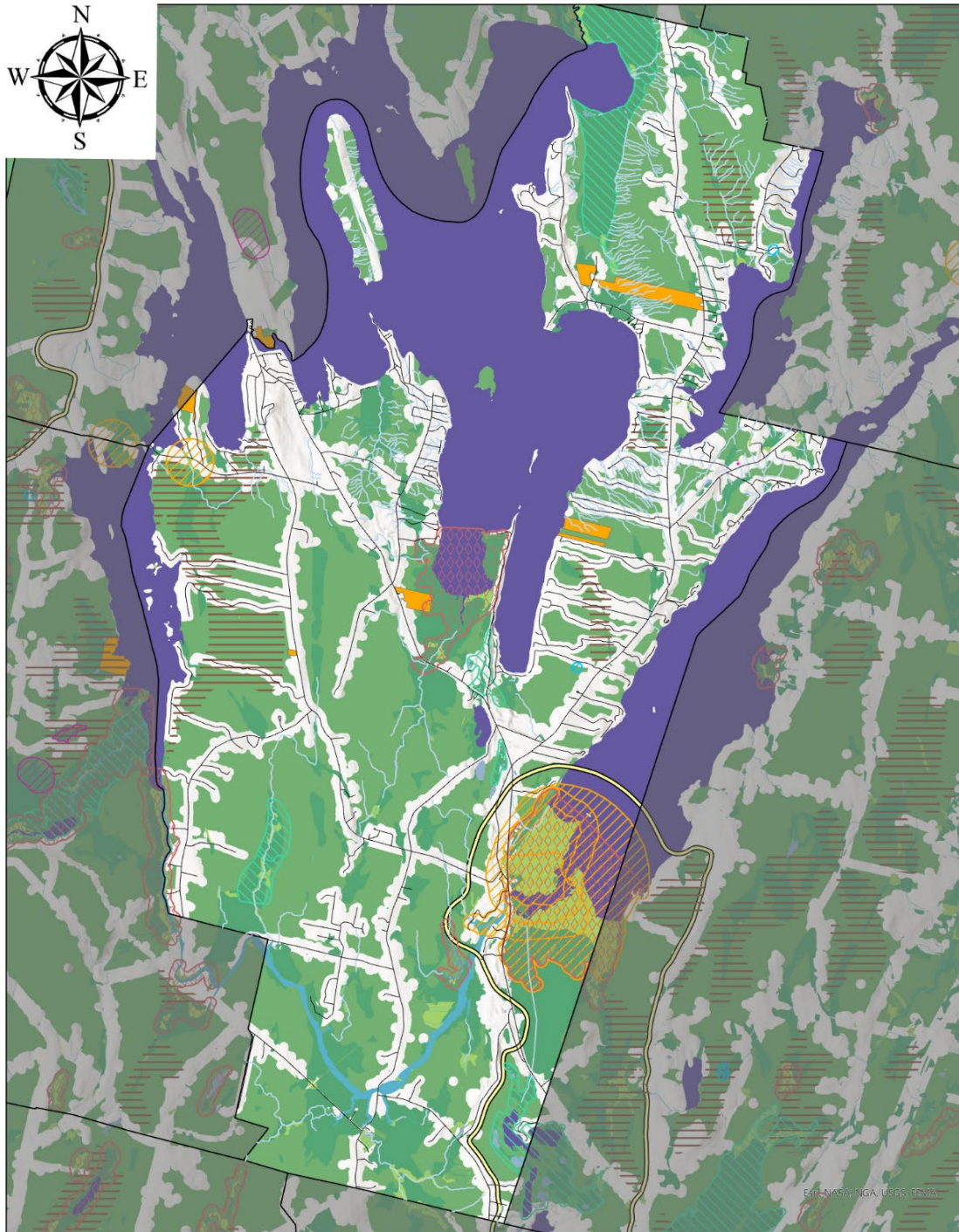
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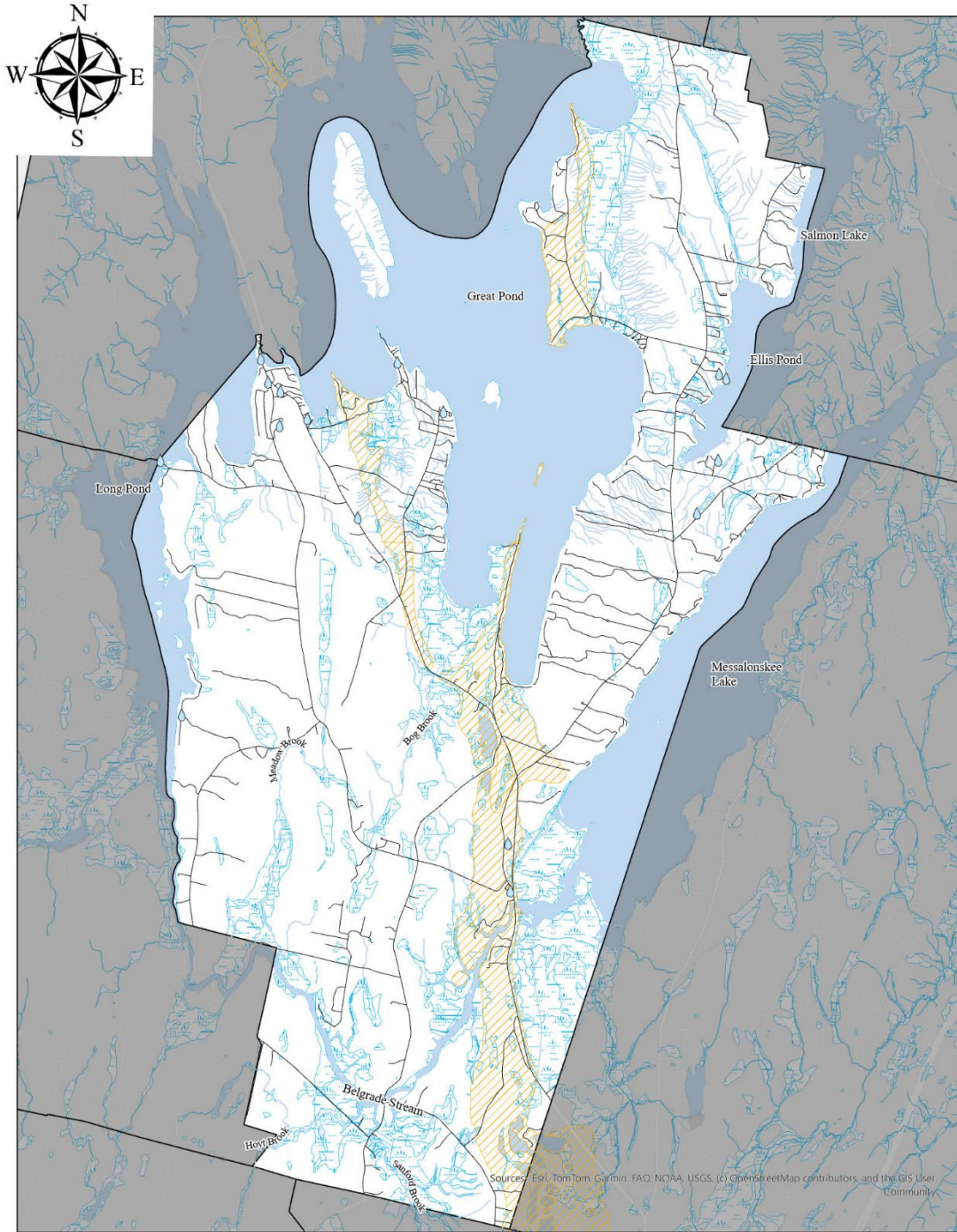
0 0.5 1 1.5 2
 Miles



KENNEBEC VALLEY
COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS
Regional service. local results







Map Legend

- Roads
- Class B Streams
- ▨ Aquifers
- Lakes, Rivers, Ponds
- Wetlands
- Public Water Sources

Town of Belgrade Kennebec County, Maine

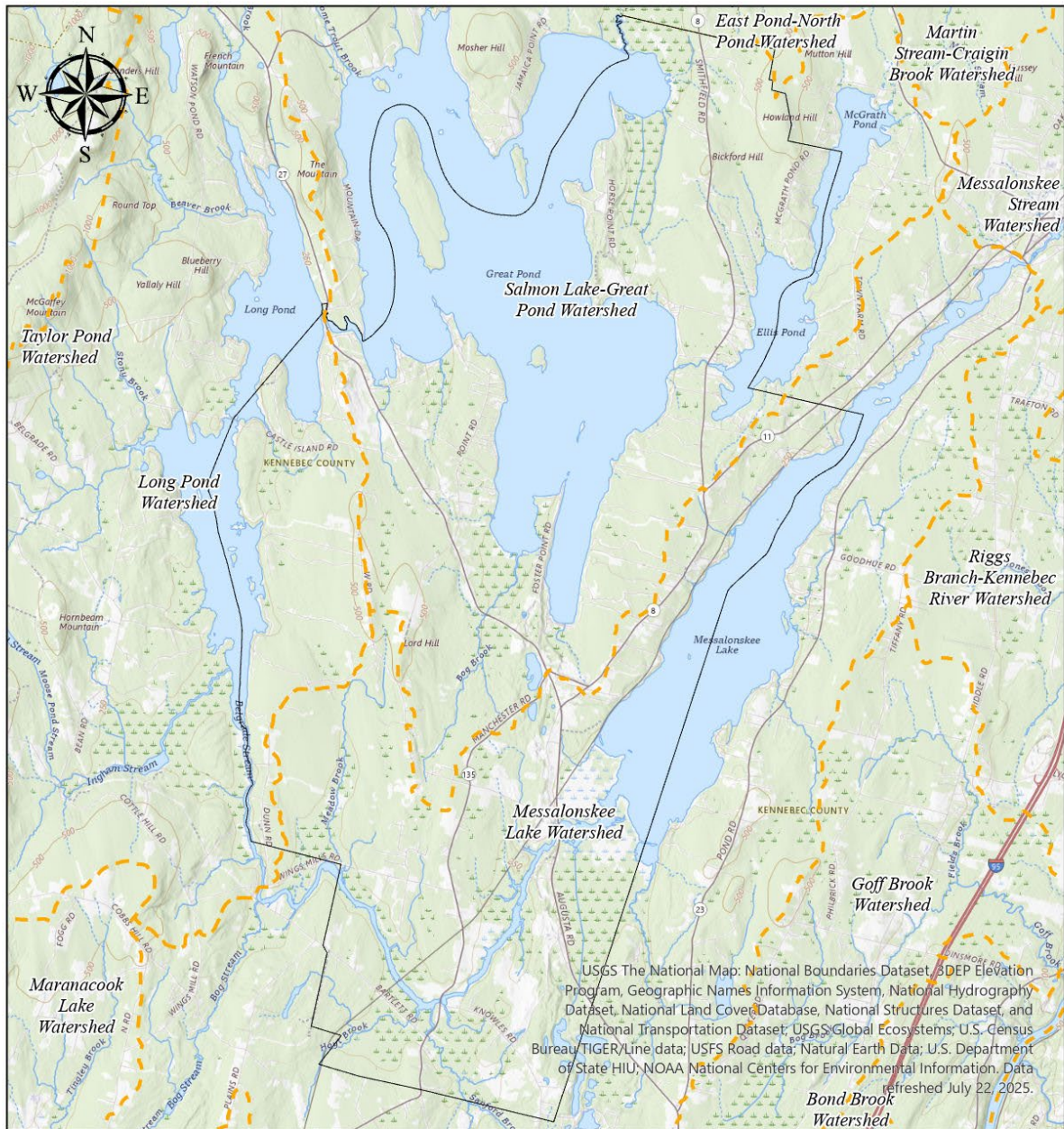
Water Resources Comprehensive Plan 2025

Neither KVCOG nor the Town of Belgrade assume any liability for the data delineated herein.
All information depicted on this map is for planning purposes only and non-regulatory.
Boundary data is based on digital sources and may differ from ground-based observations.
Data sources: Maine Office of GIS, Maine DOT, USGS, Beginning with Belton
Created: 09-2023 by JA

0 2,500 5,000 7,500 10,000
Feet

0 0.5 1 1.5 2
Miles





Map Legend

Belgrade Town Boundary

Watersheds

Town of Belgrade

Kennebec County, Maine

Base Planning Map

Comprehensive Plan 2025

Neither EVCOG nor the Town of Belgrade assume any liability for the data disseminated herein. All information depicted on this map is for planning purposes only and non-regulatory. Boundary data is based on digital sources and may differ from ground-based observations.
Data sources: Maine Office of GIS, Maine DOT, USGS, Beginning with Belgrade
Created: 09-2023 by EA

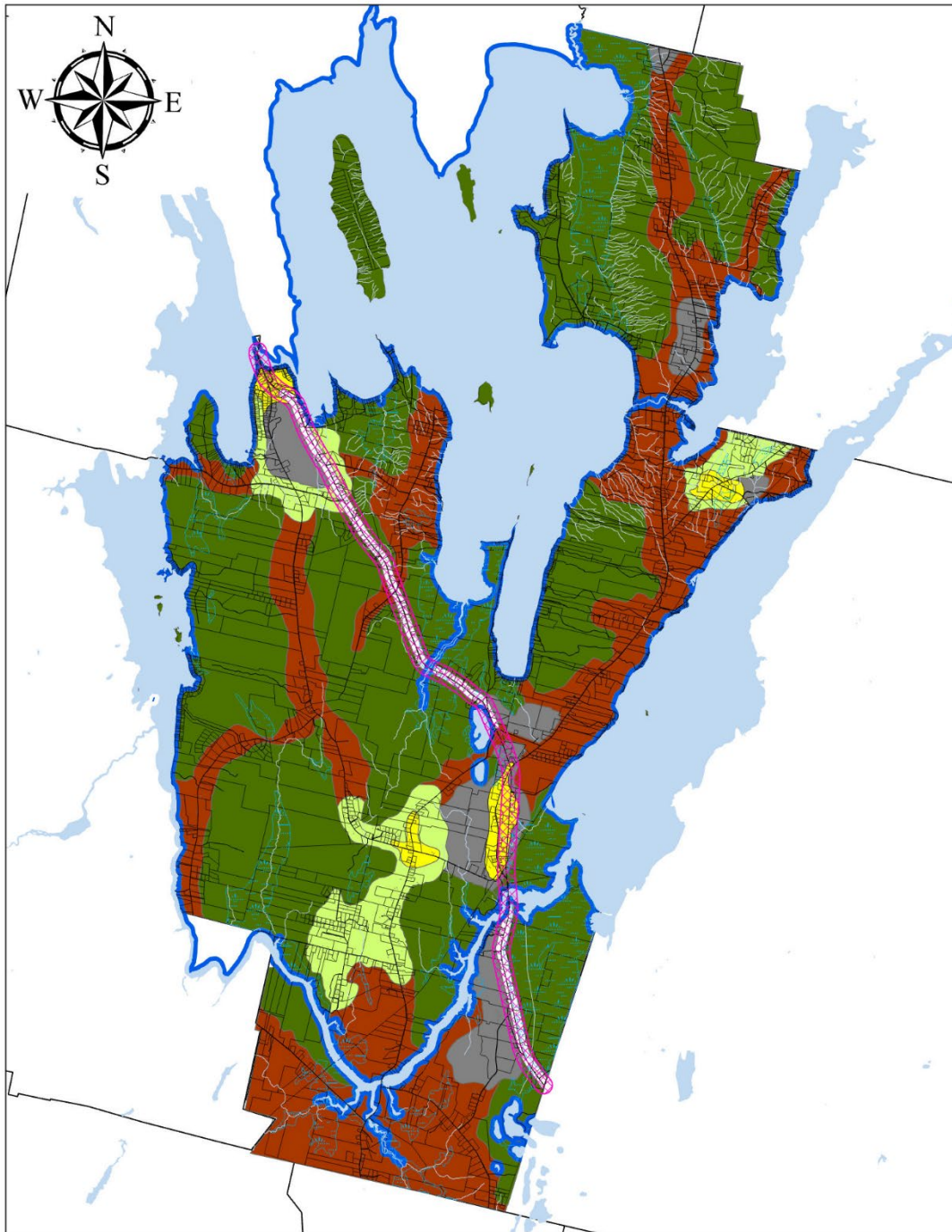
0 12,000

Feet

0 2

Miles

KENNEBEC VALLEY
COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS
Regional service, local results



Map Legend

— Roads	■ Resource Conservation District
— Streams	■ Residential District
— Wetland	■ Shoreland Zone
— Waterbodies	■ Village District
— Parcels	■ Village Residential District
— Route 27 Corridor	■ General Development

**Town of Belgrade
Kennebec County, Maine**

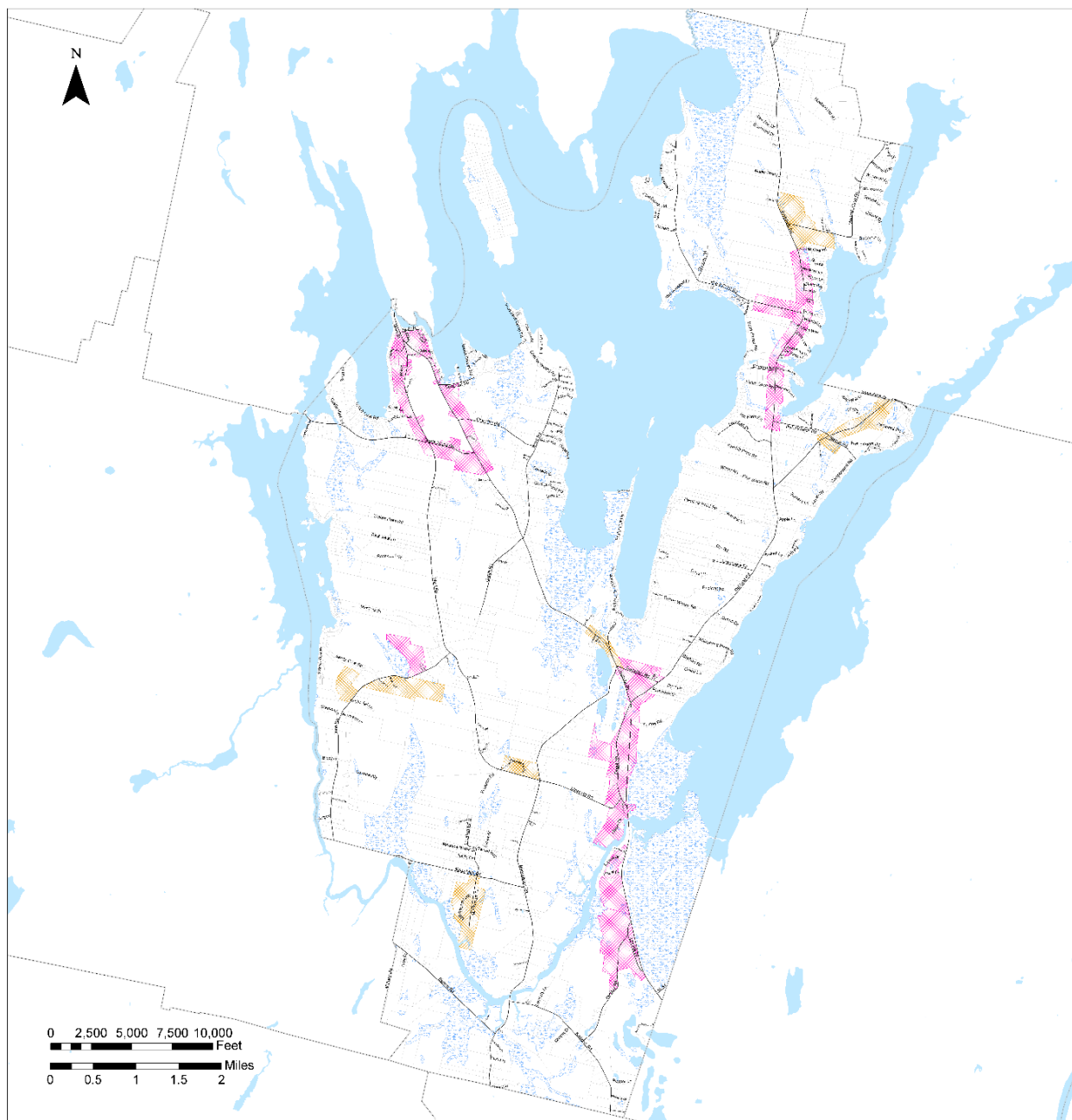
**Existing Land Use
Comprehensive Plan 2025**

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Data sources: Maine Office of GIS, Maine DOT, USGS
Created: 07/2025 by TA

0 2,500 5,000 7,500 10,000 Feet

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Town of Belgrade
Kennebec County, Maine
Future Land Use Plan Map
2025 Comprehensive Plan



Neither KVCOG nor the Town of Belgrade assume any liability for the data delineated herein.
 Boundaries depicted on this map are for planning purposes only. Boundary data is based on digital
 sources and may differ from ground-based observations.
 Data Sources: Maine Office of GIS, Maine DOT, USGS, Town of Belgrade
 Created 10-2024 by JO

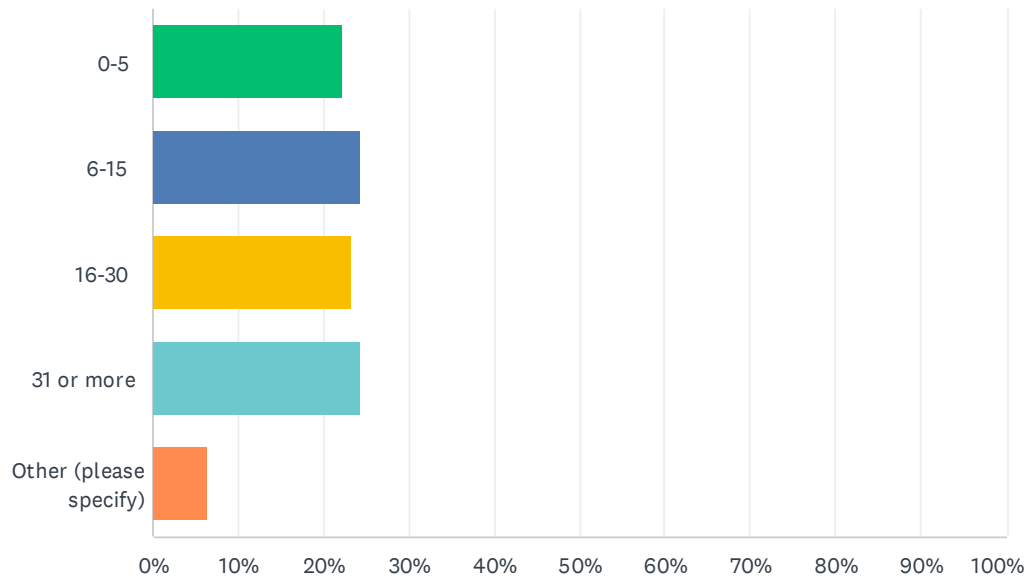
Map Legend	
	Town Boundary
	Town Roads
	Private Roads
	Waterbodies
	Wetland
	2025 Growth Areas New Growth Area
	Existing Growth Areas
	Lot Parcels

List of Acronyms

ADA = American with Disabilities Act
ACS = American Community Survey
BTIP = Biennial Transportation Improvement Program
BwH = Beginning with Habitat Program (MDIFW)
CEO = Code Enforcement Officer
CIP = Capital Investment Plan
CRF = Critical Rate Factor
DACF = Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry
DWA = Deer Wintering Area
DWP = Drinking Water Program
GPA = Great Pond Standard
HCL = High Crash Location
LID = Low Impact Development
LMA = Labor Market Area
KVCAP = Kennebec Valley Community Action Program
KVCOG = Kennebec Valley Council of Governments
MDEP = Maine Department of Environmental Protection
MDIFW = Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife
MDOL = Maine Department of Labor
MDOT = Maine Department of Transportation
MHPC = Maine Historical Preservation Commission
MNAP = Maine Natural Areas Program (MDOC)
MRSA = Maine Revised Statutes Annotated
MSHA = Maine State Housing Authority
MUTCD = Manual Uniform Traffic Control Devices
NRPA = Natural Resources Protection Act
RSU = Regional School Unit
SDWA = Federal Safe Drinking Water Act
SWAP = Maine Source Water Assessment Program
TIF = Tax Increment Financing

Q1 How many years have you lived in Belgrade?

Answered: 95 Skipped: 0



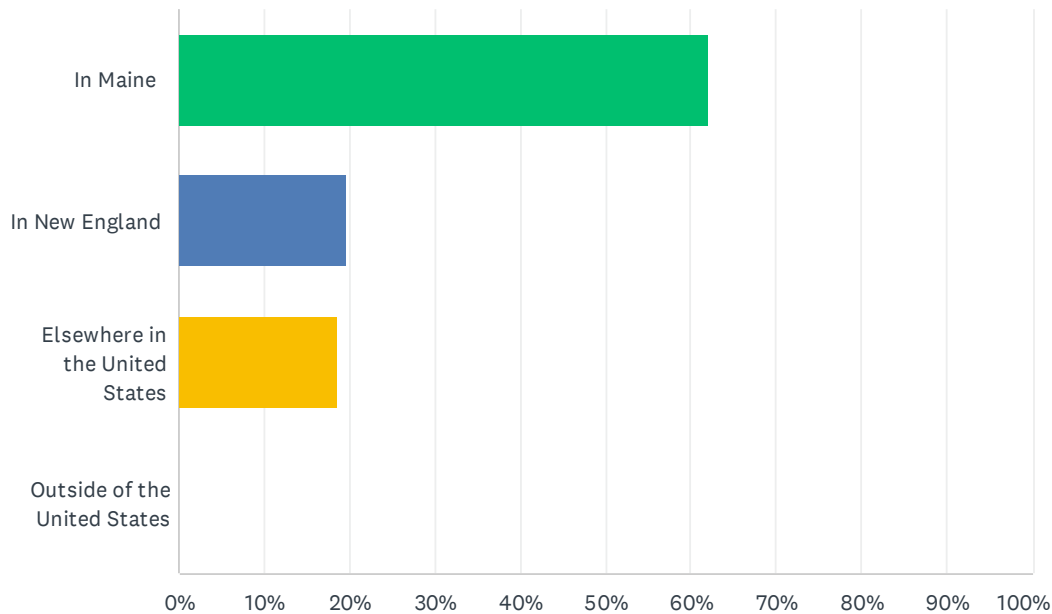
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
0-5	22.11%	21
6-15	24.21%	23
16-30	23.16%	22
31 or more	24.21%	23
Other (please specify)	6.32%	6
TOTAL		95

#	OTHER (PLEASE SPECIFY)	DATE
1	Mostly in the summer months	10/20/2024 4:15 PM
2	45	10/2/2024 4:05 PM
3	Generationally	9/3/2024 10:08 PM
4	All my life 47 years	9/3/2024 8:13 PM
5	Have been coming to our family's camp for 50+years.	9/3/2024 3:14 PM
6	Have seasonal camp due to job in Louisiana	9/3/2024 2:01 PM

Q2 Where did you live prior to Belgrade?

Answered: 92 Skipped: 3

Town of Belgrade Comprehensive Survey

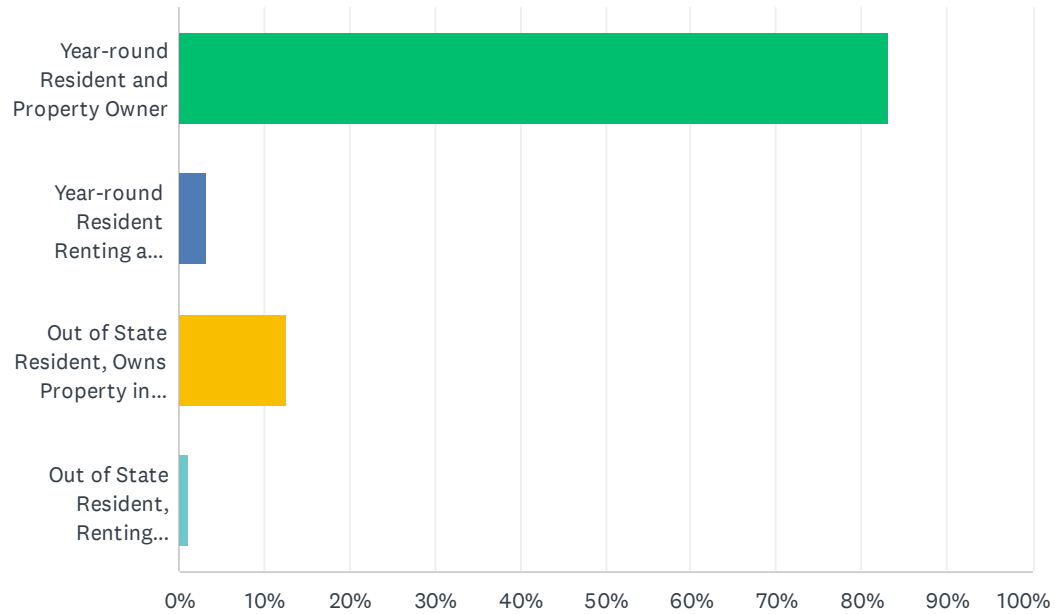


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
In Maine	61.96%	57
In New England	19.57%	18
Elsewhere in the United States	18.48%	17
Outside of the United States	0.00%	0
TOTAL		92

Q3 What best describes you?

Answered: 95 Skipped: 0

Town of Belgrade Comprehensive Survey

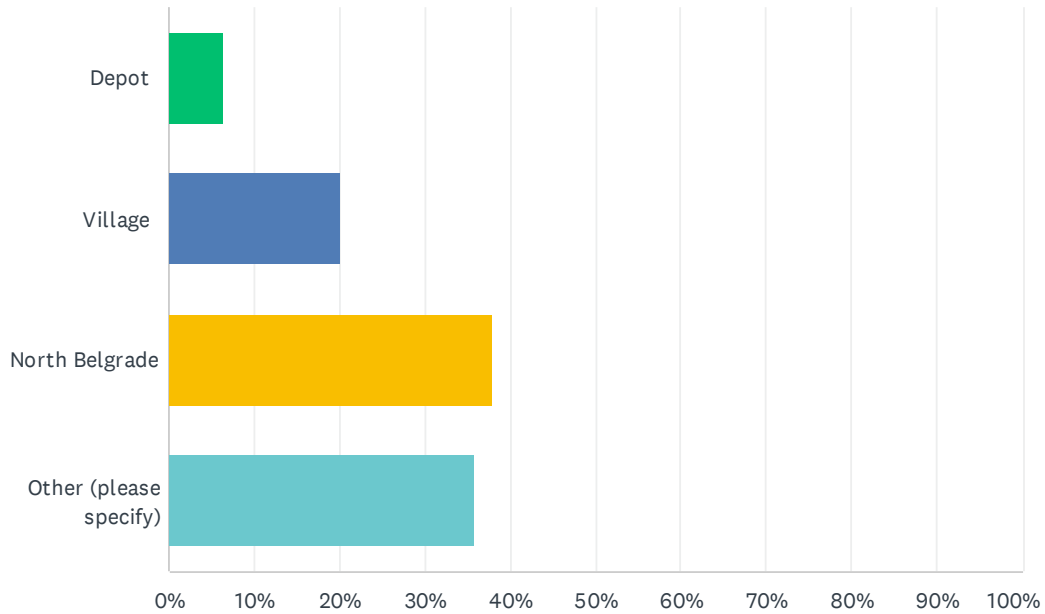


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Year-round Resident and Property Owner	83.16%	79
Year-round Resident Renting a Residence	3.16%	3
Out of State Resident, Owns Property in Belgrade	12.63%	12
Out of State Resident, Renting Property in Belgrade	1.05%	1
TOTAL		95

Q4 Where in Belgrade do you live?

Answered: 95 Skipped: 0

Town of Belgrade Comprehensive Survey



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Depot	6.32%	6
Village	20.00%	19
North Belgrade	37.89%	36
Other (please specify)	35.79%	34
TOTAL		95

#	OTHER (PLEASE SPECIFY)	DATE
1	Woodland Camp area	11/20/2024 7:40 PM
2	Chandler Road	11/18/2024 10:46 AM
3	Pinkham's Cove	10/29/2024 9:41 PM
4	Hardwood circle	10/24/2024 9:07 AM
5	West Rd.	10/15/2024 1:22 PM
6	Castle Island Road	10/11/2024 9:48 PM
7	Augusta Road	10/8/2024 10:22 AM
8	Hemlock Pt Road	10/6/2024 11:20 AM
9	Southwest, Knowles Rd	10/3/2024 5:42 PM
10	Off Point Road	10/3/2024 10:13 AM
11	Chandler Road	10/2/2024 4:05 PM
12	East-West Ln	10/2/2024 2:42 PM
13	Guptill Road	10/2/2024 2:38 PM
14	Closer to Augusta	10/2/2024 12:54 PM
15	Belgrade	10/2/2024 12:10 PM

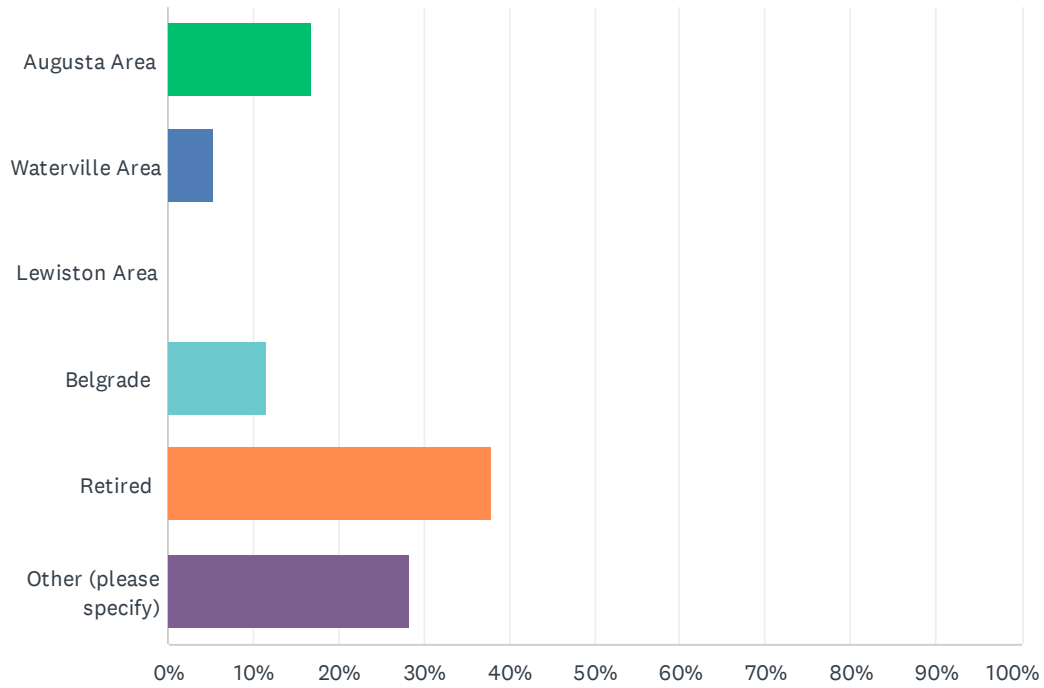
Town of Belgrade Comprehensive Survey

16	Rt8/11	9/29/2024 4:43 PM
17	Rte 27, across from All around fence	9/4/2024 9:26 PM
18	Belgrade	9/4/2024 7:45 PM
19	Great Pond	9/4/2024 2:45 PM
20	Point rd	9/4/2024 8:18 AM
21	Lakeside	9/4/2024 7:53 AM
22	Chandler Road	9/4/2024 4:16 AM
23	Rome	9/3/2024 9:41 PM
24	Knowles road	9/3/2024 8:37 PM
25	Wings mills dam area	9/3/2024 8:29 PM
26	Point rd	9/3/2024 8:15 PM
27	Dunn Road	9/3/2024 8:03 PM
28	Rt. 135	9/3/2024 6:59 PM
29	West rd	9/3/2024 5:33 PM
30	Castle View Ln	9/3/2024 4:14 PM
31	Louisiana now, was in North Belgrade	9/3/2024 2:01 PM
32	RT # 135	9/3/2024 1:10 PM
33	Hoyts Island	9/3/2024 12:56 PM
34	8-11 road	9/3/2024 12:48 PM

Q5 Where do you work?

Answered: 95 Skipped: 0

Town of Belgrade Comprehensive Survey



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Augusta Area	16.84%	16
Waterville Area	5.26%	5
Lewiston Area	0.00%	0
Belgrade	11.58%	11
Retired	37.89%	36
Other (please specify)	28.42%	27
TOTAL		95

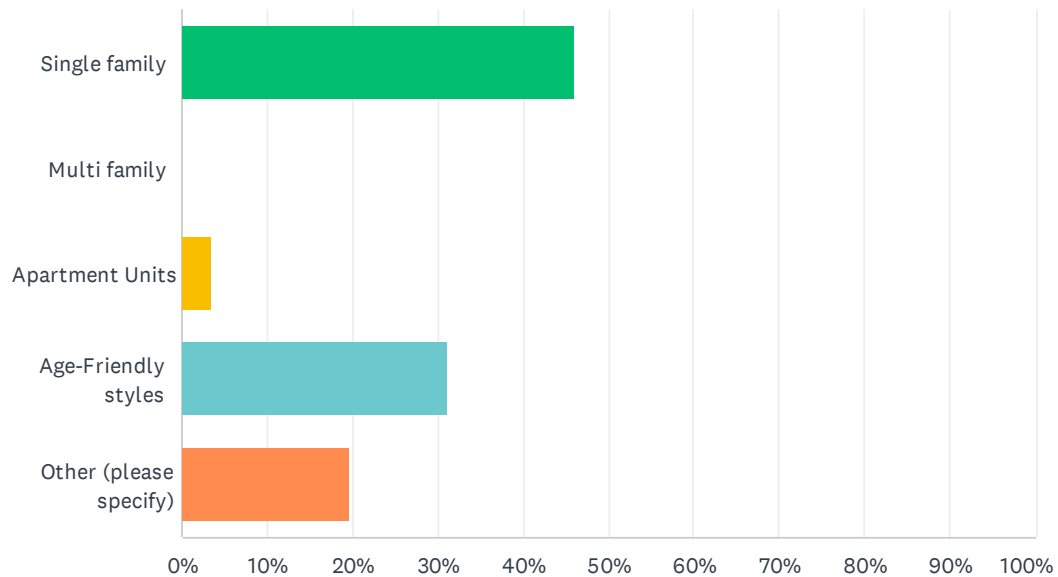
#	OTHER (PLEASE SPECIFY)	DATE
1	F/t telecommute	10/29/2024 9:41 PM
2	Smithfield	10/24/2024 1:31 PM
3	I work remotely for an out-of-state employer.	10/20/2024 4:15 PM
4	From home	10/6/2024 11:20 AM
5	Brunswick	10/3/2024 8:33 PM
6	Remote	10/3/2024 5:23 PM
7	All over	10/2/2024 8:19 PM
8	Retired	10/2/2024 2:42 PM
9	Out of state	10/2/2024 12:10 PM
10	Portland	9/22/2024 8:10 AM
11	Westbrook and remotely	9/5/2024 6:30 PM
12	Farmington	9/4/2024 8:18 AM

Town of Belgrade Comprehensive Survey

13	Remote from home	9/3/2024 11:21 PM
14	Fairfield	9/3/2024 8:49 PM
15	Manchester	9/3/2024 8:37 PM
16	Smithfield	9/3/2024 8:13 PM
17	Don't work	9/3/2024 8:13 PM
18	Farmington	9/3/2024 8:03 PM
19	Cornville	9/3/2024 7:21 PM
20	Remote	9/3/2024 6:32 PM
21	Remote	9/3/2024 6:23 PM
22	From home	9/3/2024 5:54 PM
23	Gardiner	9/3/2024 3:03 PM
24	Remote from home	9/3/2024 2:59 PM
25	Massachusetts	9/3/2024 2:45 PM
26	Louisiana	9/3/2024 2:01 PM
27	Winthrop	9/3/2024 1:10 PM

Q6 What type of housing do you feel Belgrade needs more of?

Answered: 87 Skipped: 8



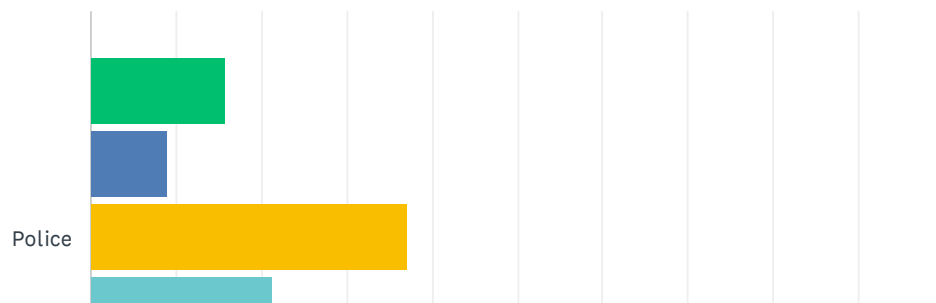
Town of Belgrade Comprehensive Survey

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Single family	45.98%	40
Multi family	0.00%	0
Apartment Units	3.45%	3
Age-Friendly styles	31.03%	27
Other (please specify)	19.54%	17
TOTAL		87

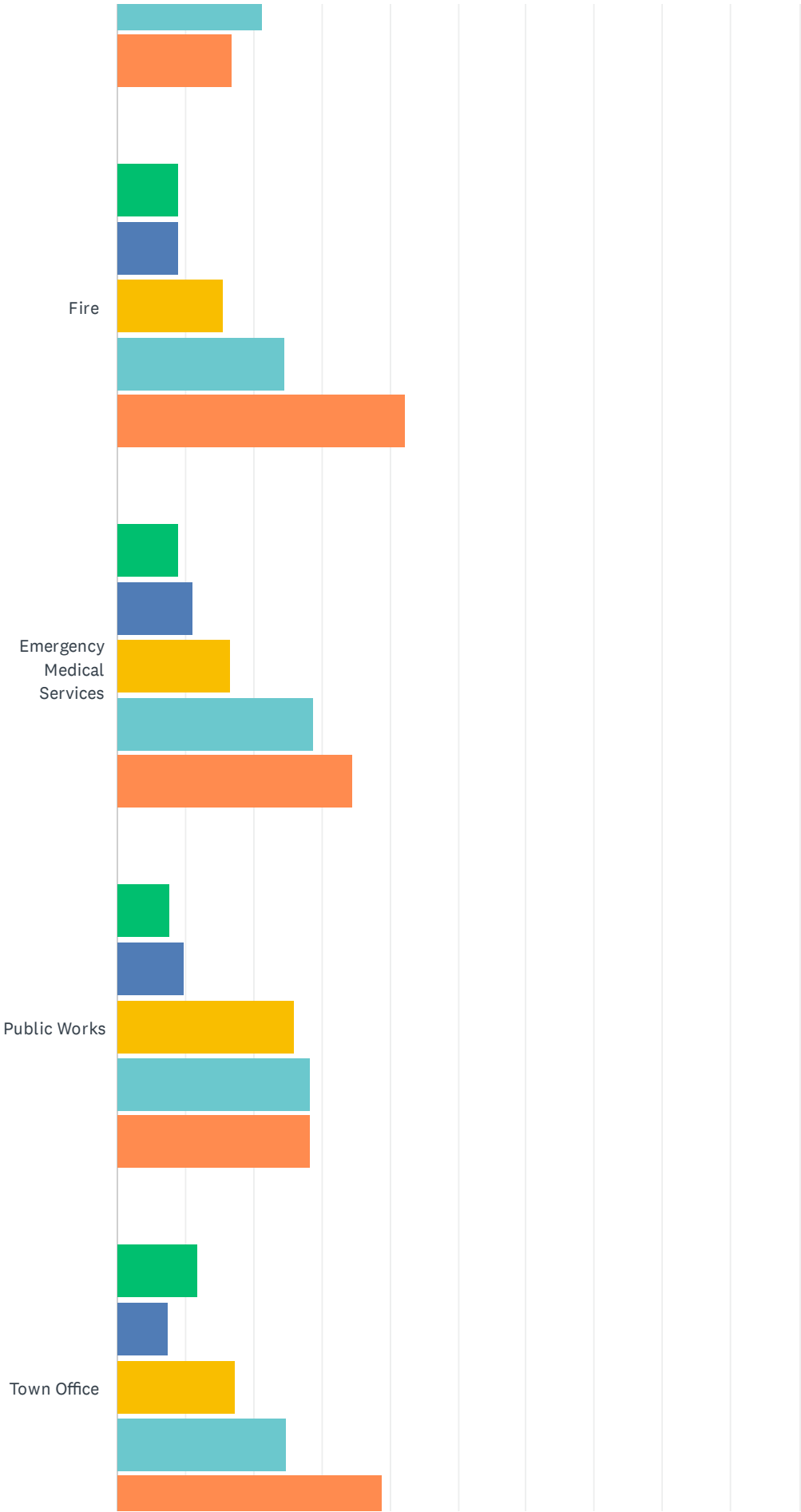
#	OTHER (PLEASE SPECIFY)	DATE
1	None	11/18/2024 10:46 AM
2	Consider a live, work, "play" community town center complex,	10/27/2024 6:06 PM
3	None	10/3/2024 8:33 PM
4	Hannaford	10/3/2024 5:23 PM
5	All new housing, but particularly rental and workforce housing so that people who work in our community can also live here.	10/3/2024 10:13 AM
6	Belgrade needs more quality housing options; particularly the last three (this question should have allowed for the selection of more than one answer).	9/22/2024 8:10 AM
7	None	9/4/2024 4:16 AM
8	We think it's nice as is.	9/3/2024 11:21 PM
9	Low-income housing.	9/3/2024 10:08 PM
10	Duplexes	9/3/2024 9:51 PM
11	Multifamily but duplexes	9/3/2024 8:32 PM
12	With the housing market the way it is, some working class family budget friendly options are NEEDED	9/3/2024 8:13 PM
13	Affordable single family homes	9/3/2024 6:09 PM
14	None, I think we have enough housing.	9/3/2024 5:19 PM
15	?	9/3/2024 3:02 PM
16	None	9/3/2024 2:01 PM
17	All of the above, in the appropriate areas	9/3/2024 1:07 PM

Q7 How would you rank the following services in Belgrade?

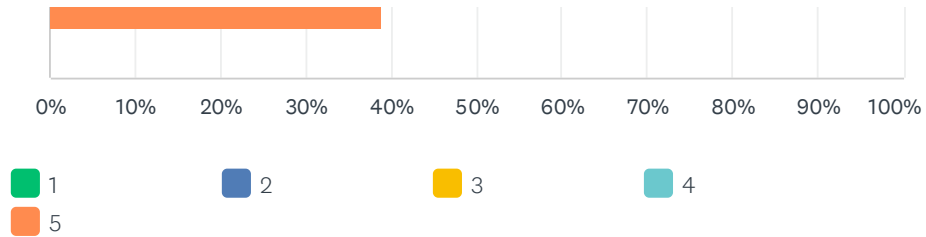
Answered: 93 Skipped: 2



Town of Belgrade Comprehensive Survey



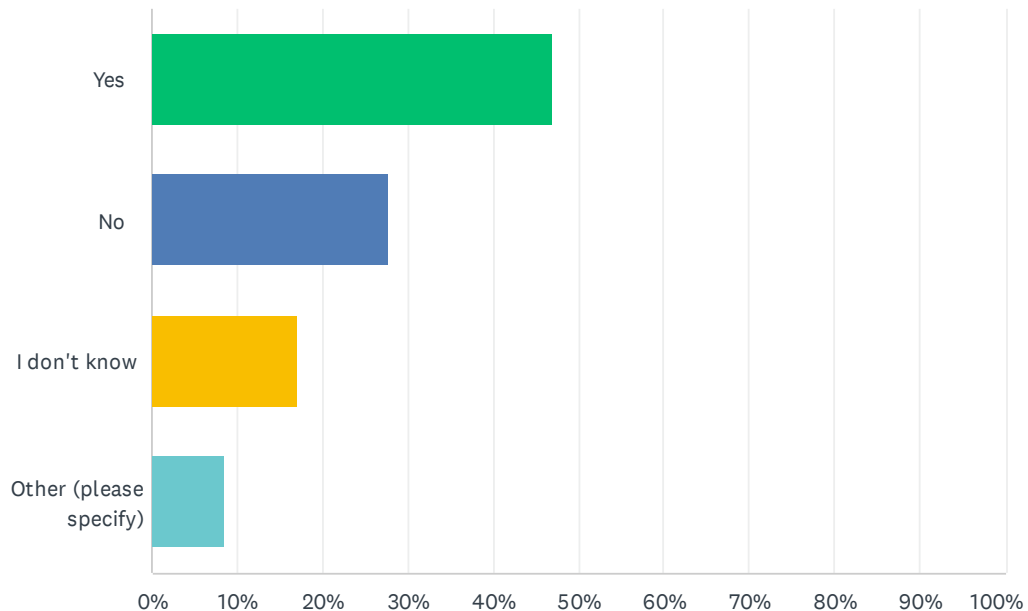
Town of Belgrade Comprehensive Survey



	1	2	3	4	5	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
Police	15.73% 14	8.99% 8	37.08% 33	21.35% 19	16.85% 15	89	3.15
Fire	8.89% 8	8.89% 8	15.56% 14	24.44% 22	42.22% 38	90	3.82
Emergency Medical Services	8.89% 8	11.11% 10	16.67% 15	28.89% 26	34.44% 31	90	3.69
Public Works	7.61% 7	9.78% 9	26.09% 24	28.26% 26	28.26% 26	92	3.60
Town Office	11.83% 11	7.53% 7	17.20% 16	24.73% 23	38.71% 36	93	3.71

Q8 Should Belgrade consider implementing zoning to manage future growth and development?

Answered: 94 Skipped: 1



Town of Belgrade Comprehensive Survey

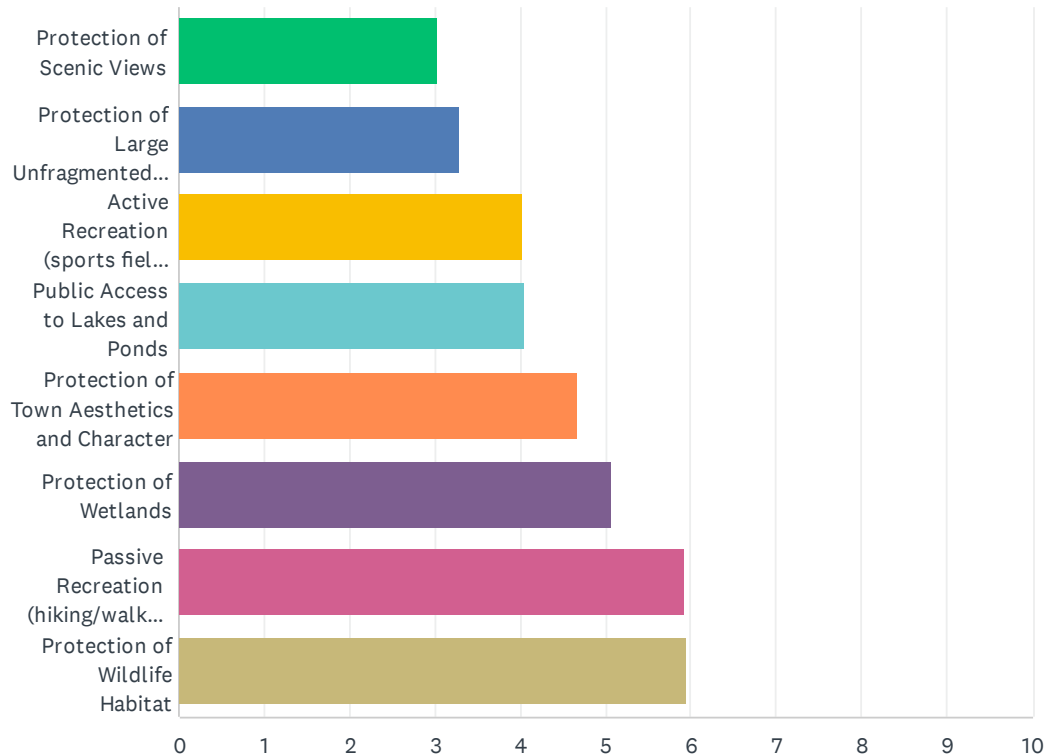
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	46.81%	44
No	27.66%	26
I don't know	17.02%	16
Other (please specify)	8.51%	8
TOTAL		94

#	OTHER (PLEASE SPECIFY)	DATE
1	Tough question, but mixed use is good for residents who run businesses. I didn't really care to have a business district or we'll be beset with dollar generals and dunkins	10/29/2024 9:41 PM
2	Yes hannafor	10/3/2024 5:23 PM
3	Depends on issue, over regulated now	9/12/2024 6:59 AM
4	I can't answer this because I don't know what that would me to the town.	9/4/2024 5:57 PM
5	Only if this "zoning" specifically limits people from out-of-state from building. It's one way to combat gentrification impacting locals.	9/3/2024 10:08 PM
6	Honestly if there was a way to offer waterfront property to residents of Maine prior to allowing it to out of state that would be great	9/3/2024 8:55 PM
7	Depends on where in town Village? North Belgrade? Depot?	9/3/2024 8:03 PM
8	Yes to clean up the shitholes	9/3/2024 6:59 PM

Q9 Please indicate how important each of the following categories are to you:

Answered: 95 Skipped: 0

Town of Belgrade Comprehensive Survey



	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	TOTAL	SCORE
Protection of Scenic Views	0.00% 0	5.26% 5	6.32% 6	9.47% 9	13.68% 13	21.05% 20	17.89% 17	26.32% 25	95	3.02
Protection of Large Unfragmented Tracts of Land	4.21% 4	2.11% 2	5.26% 5	10.53% 10	13.68% 13	29.47% 28	18.95% 18	15.79% 15	95	3.29
Active Recreation (sports fields & courts, organized teams)	9.47% 9	11.58% 11	18.95% 18	7.37% 7	4.21% 4	12.63% 12	5.26% 5	30.53% 29	95	4.03
Public Access to Lakes and Ponds	17.89% 17	5.26% 5	7.37% 7	8.42% 8	10.53% 10	11.58% 11	23.16% 22	15.79% 15	95	4.05
Protection of Town Aesthetics and Character	14.74% 14	6.32% 6	11.58% 11	17.89% 17	21.05% 20	9.47% 9	13.68% 13	5.26% 5	95	4.66
Protection of Wetlands	11.58% 11	11.58% 11	18.95% 18	21.05% 20	20.00% 19	4.21% 4	10.53% 10	2.11% 2	95	5.08
Passive Recreation (hiking/walking trails, nature preserves)	30.53% 29	24.21% 23	10.53% 10	9.47% 9	6.32% 6	7.37% 7	8.42% 8	3.16% 3	95	5.92
Protection of Wildlife Habitat	11.58% 11	33.68% 32	21.05% 20	15.79% 15	10.53% 10	4.21% 4	2.11% 2	1.05% 1	95	5.94

Q10 What is one thing you would like the Town to offer to residents? (i.e., a services, recreational opportunity, amenity)

Answered: 54 Skipped: 41

Town of Belgrade Comprehensive Survey

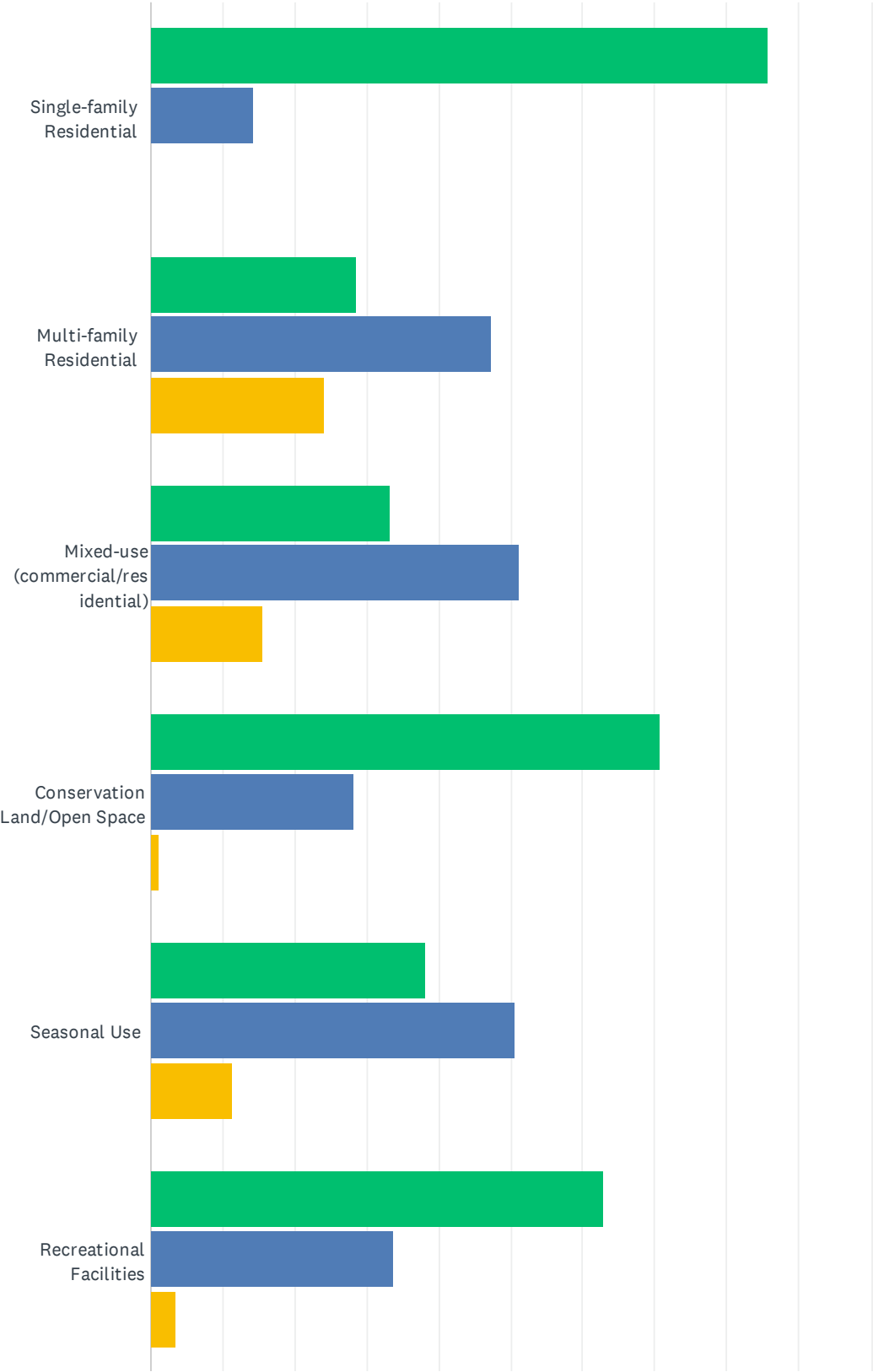
#	RESPONSES	DATE
1	?	11/20/2024 7:40 PM
2	Lower Real Estate Taxes	11/18/2024 10:46 AM
3	Lower taxes so we can stay in our home. Better enforcement on the lake so we don't fear for our safety when we're on the water.	10/29/2024 9:41 PM
4	A small store in North Belgrade.	10/29/2024 4:27 PM
5	To: provide essential services; In A Way That: a minimum of essential personnel provide the services to residents; So That: local property taxes are managed prudently and additional residential services utilize competitive local private sector service providers.	10/27/2024 6:06 PM
6	Consistent decisions regarding re-building and remodeling of existing properties, through, for example, Informational meetings about what is permitted and what is prohibited.	10/20/2024 4:15 PM
7	Elderly/family friendly walking trails in the woods	10/15/2024 1:22 PM
8	Ice hockey rink; tennis courts	10/11/2024 9:48 PM
9	More water access with parking. The town beach at long pond is over parked by people from the "private beach".	10/8/2024 10:22 AM
10	More recreational for seniors	10/6/2024 11:20 AM
11	Keep taxes low. Eliminate services and wasteful spending. Eliminate library,	10/3/2024 8:33 PM
12	Low Taxes	10/3/2024 5:42 PM
13	A Hannaford	10/3/2024 5:23 PM
14	I think our Rec department does a wonderful job. I cannot think of anything else I would like. We really appreciate the school age children's programming. It helps make our town a great place to raise a family.	10/3/2024 10:13 AM
15	Brown tail moth spraying	10/3/2024 10:03 AM
16	A nice long walking path. Not hiking through woods across tree roots, etc but a safe place to get in a good walk.	10/2/2024 6:06 PM
17	Decrease property tax for people over age 65.	10/2/2024 4:05 PM
18	Recreation: Weekly Cribbage games for those of us who are unable to participate in the more active offerings of the recreation department.	10/2/2024 2:42 PM
19	Grocery store other than Christy's or Days. Maybe a Tradewins or IGA? Walmart is the closest we have. Ugh..	10/2/2024 12:54 PM
20	Meal/food services for the indigent	10/2/2024 12:10 PM
21	More housing for seniors. Incentives for local builders to build one floor homes.	9/29/2024 4:43 PM
22	The Town should continue to promote and support activities and businesses in the village, as the town center, consistent with a Maine lake side and island community. This is possible to do while balancing environmental and watershed concerns.	9/22/2024 8:10 AM
23	Full function Traffic light at rt 27 and rt 135, near Christie's.	9/12/2024 6:59 AM
24	A real Grocery store! Better access to the public swimming area on Great Pond. It's difficult for elderly and smaller children to navigate those stairs.	9/11/2024 12:38 PM
25	I love the farmers market!!! I would love if it was able to run year round!	9/6/2024 7:40 PM
26	Outdoor tennis court, exercise gym, outdoor basket court	9/5/2024 6:30 PM
27	Access to great pond	9/5/2024 7:58 AM
28	Dog park	9/5/2024 1:04 AM
29	Garbage pick up	9/4/2024 9:26 PM

Town of Belgrade Comprehensive Survey

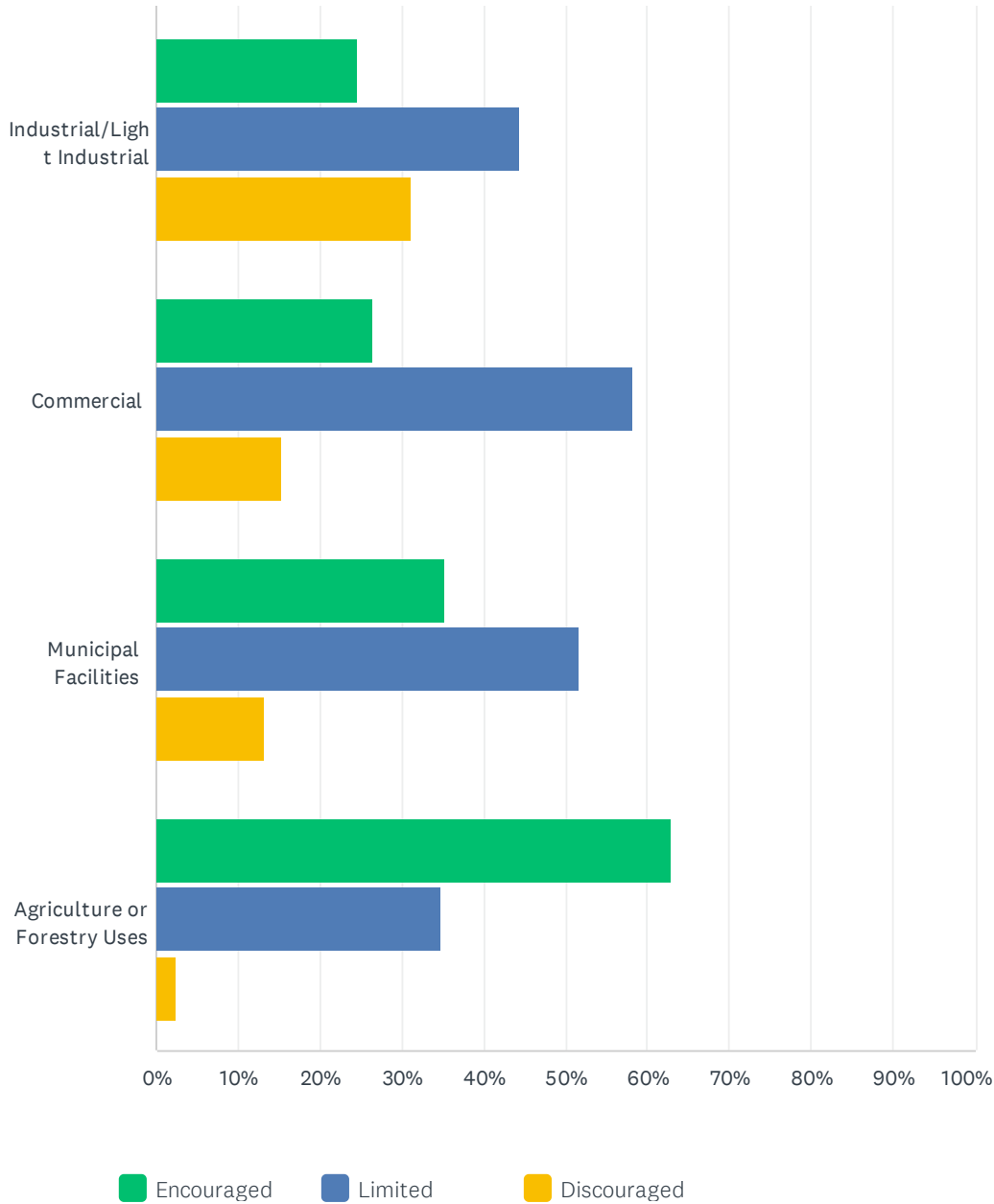
30	Improved water quality on the lakes. The lakefront homes contribute a lot in taxes and the lakes draw tourists.	9/4/2024 6:00 PM
31	I would like to see more ways that people that don't live on the lake can have a chance to swim and put non-motorized toys in the water-paddle boards, for instances. I would like to see the North Belgrade Community Center used more. One idea is to rent it out for a small fee for local towns people to have a yard sale once a year.	9/4/2024 5:57 PM
32	More public lake access	9/4/2024 9:46 AM
33	Nothing, stop trying to please everyone. Be more business like. Amenities are for the private sector.	9/4/2024 8:18 AM
34	Walking Paths ...	9/4/2024 6:10 AM
35	Nothing	9/4/2024 4:16 AM
36	I think that greater public access to the lakes is needed. We live in a beautiful lakes region with miles of shore, yet each lake seems to have only one (and in many cases, very small) public swimming area. It makes me sad that residents who do not own shorefront property have such limited options.	9/3/2024 11:21 PM
37	We need more beaches in this town. Specifically North Belgrade. We have absolutely no beaches here, and for those not privileged enough to own lakefrontage, it's awful on hot days. Why should I have my tax money go to lake preservation (7Lakes) if I have no access to those noted lakes? It's not fair. Where do we poor North Belgraders go? Smithfield is a closer drive than overcrowded Belgrade Lakes, yet that's the only area in our town with 1 or 2 public beaches. Both beaches in Belgrade Lakes have terrible parking, rocky/mucky beach areas, and swimmers itch at All Seasons. Can we please stop wasting money on a third firestation and get a public beach? It's what ALL the locals want. In 2022 or 2023 we had \$400,000 in unused carry-over money, you're saying we can start saving and fundraising as a town to get beach land in North Belgrade? Please don't forget the North.	9/3/2024 10:08 PM
38	Just be nice to newcomers. We are here because we want to .	9/3/2024 9:41 PM
39	Would like to see that town residents got offered waterfront properties well before out of state people are. Not based on pay Get it then	9/3/2024 8:55 PM
40	More rec programs for children. Access to public swimming pool More areas for people without water access to be on the water- sand beach- picnicking	9/3/2024 8:49 PM
41	Add a boat landing to great pond	9/3/2024 8:37 PM
42	Teen center/grocery store	9/3/2024 8:32 PM
43	An actual grocery store thats not over priced open year round	9/3/2024 8:13 PM
44	Old home days - North Belgrade side	9/3/2024 7:58 PM
45	Less taxes. Stop trying to be Augusta and be a small town again.	9/3/2024 6:59 PM
46	Community pool.	9/3/2024 6:23 PM
47	A play area for children. Whether it be sports fields or a large playground, the town doesn't have a good area for children to congregate.	9/3/2024 5:19 PM
48	Pickleball courts at the rec center	9/3/2024 4:24 PM
49	Center for All Seasons, coffee, doughnuts , card games at 10am for elderly citizens	9/3/2024 4:14 PM
50	Hannaford!	9/3/2024 2:59 PM
51	A senior center and more library hours	9/3/2024 2:45 PM
52	pickleball courts	9/3/2024 2:31 PM
53	Lower taxes especially for waterfront and better assessment in comparison to neighbor properties, lower school tax portion of budget,	9/3/2024 2:01 PM
54	It seems to me our taxes are high enough without adding services, ie costs.	9/3/2024 1:07 PM

Q11 Please indicate whether the following land use types should be encouraged, limited or discouraged:

Answered: 92 Skipped: 3



Town of Belgrade Comprehensive Survey



Town of Belgrade Comprehensive Survey

	ENCOURAGED	LIMITED	DISCOURAGED	TOTAL
Single-family Residential	85.71% 78	14.29% 13	0.00% 0	91
Multi-family Residential	28.57% 26	47.25% 43	24.18% 22	91
Mixed-use (commercial/residential)	33.33% 30	51.11% 46	15.56% 14	90
Conservation Land/Open Space	70.79% 63	28.09% 25	1.12% 1	89
Seasonal Use	38.20% 34	50.56% 45	11.24% 10	89
Recreational Facilities	62.92% 56	33.71% 30	3.37% 3	89
Industrial/Light Industrial	24.44% 22	44.44% 40	31.11% 28	90
Commercial	26.37% 24	58.24% 53	15.38% 14	91
Municipal Facilities	35.16% 32	51.65% 47	13.19% 12	91
Agriculture or Forestry Uses	62.92% 56	34.83% 31	2.25% 2	89

Q12 What type of business do you feel would benefit Belgrade?

Answered: 62 Skipped: 33

#	RESPONSES	DATE
1	Shipping/printing/copying type storefront...like a Post Office Etc/UPS/Fedex...	11/20/2024 7:40 PM
2	None	11/18/2024 10:46 AM
3	More food production, ie farms; reliable, quality restaurants; small businesses.	10/29/2024 9:41 PM
4	North Belgrade needs a small grocery store!	10/29/2024 4:27 PM
5	Clean manufacturing, limited-warehousing; tourism/hotel industry.	10/27/2024 6:06 PM
6	Personal service type business (example is a yoga/exercise studio), a small business center where individuals who work remotely could access printers and other items that they may not have at home. For example, currently the library has the only publicly-available printer. If there was a small business office/center open to all, it would encourage home and remote type businesses.	10/20/2024 4:15 PM
7	Depends on whether if adopt zoning. If commerical development to continue to be located in residential neighborhoods, should be narrowly limited to those not creating a nuisance (e.g. noise, light pollution, no threat to drinking water, aesthetically designed, light traffic, etc.) and reducing property values. If future commercial/industrial development to be concentrated and limited to non-residential neighborhoods by means of zoning, development regulations can be relaxed.	10/15/2024 1:22 PM
8	A Village Store that is open year round	10/8/2024 10:22 AM
9	Grocery Store	10/7/2024 12:23 PM
10	Restaurants, health care	10/6/2024 11:20 AM

Town of Belgrade Comprehensive Survey

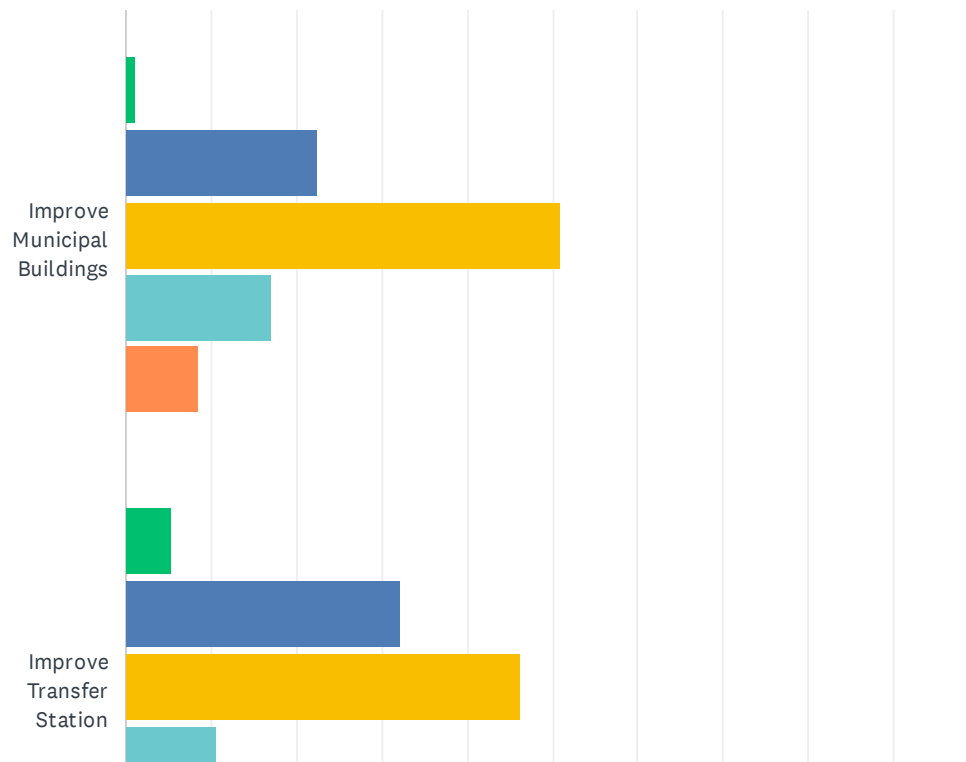
11	Eating establishments. It would be nice to have a good, more upscale place for special meals.	10/5/2024 8:41 PM
12	Dining, Arts,	10/5/2024 2:37 PM
13	BANK !!! Businesses in town need easier and closer access to a bank not an atm	10/4/2024 11:56 AM
14	Micro-brew, restaurant, farm stands , craft retail	10/3/2024 8:33 PM
15	Grocery store, Upscale restaurant, something like Bigelow brewery	10/3/2024 5:42 PM
16	Grocery store - Hannaford	10/3/2024 5:23 PM
17	Additional business that support full time residents, such as child care facilities.	10/3/2024 10:13 AM
18	Dog groomer Fast food/ take out and delivery Grocery store Convenience store	10/3/2024 10:03 AM
19	Places for year round residents to use. We don't mind going to Waterville or Augusta for most groceries and drug store needs.	10/2/2024 6:06 PM
20	I honestly don't know.	10/2/2024 2:42 PM
21	Grocery store	10/2/2024 12:54 PM
22	Tax paying, low impact, socially responsible employers	10/2/2024 12:10 PM
23	Eco tourism, small year round grocery store featuring local produce and products . Having a small pharmacy would help locals and visitors alike.	9/29/2024 4:43 PM
24	Businesses consistent with Belgrade's brand - restaurants, boating, marine, watersports, hiking, nature, etc. combined with other businesses that create an economic base which attracts residents, visitors, other businesses.	9/22/2024 8:10 AM
25	Banking, restaurants, and small manufacturing/distribution. Employment ops	9/12/2024 6:59 AM
26	A Grocery store.	9/11/2024 12:38 PM
27	Restaurants	9/5/2024 7:58 AM
28	Grocery Store, mini golf with ice cream store, dog park	9/5/2024 1:04 AM
29	Local owned businesses	9/4/2024 7:45 PM
30	Most any small business to increase the tax base and provide employment opportunities.	9/4/2024 6:00 PM
31	Commercial, we have Hammond Lumber, and 'Turkey's Saw Mill and Gagne and Son's to name a few. They all pay taxes.	9/4/2024 5:57 PM
32	mid range restaurant	9/4/2024 2:45 PM
33	Casual lunch	9/4/2024 9:46 AM
34	Local oriented vs high price tourist business.	9/4/2024 8:18 AM
35	No big box stores! Small family businesses	9/4/2024 7:53 AM
36	Hospitality	9/4/2024 6:26 AM
37	Small Business	9/4/2024 6:10 AM
38	Small local business	9/4/2024 4:16 AM
39	Breakfast, Grocery, Delivery, Entertainment (Arts)	9/3/2024 11:35 PM
40	coffee shop with inside seating, small year round grocery/pharmacy, small hardware store, another year round restaurant,	9/3/2024 11:21 PM
41	We need stores and restaurants in North Belgrade to come back.	9/3/2024 10:08 PM
42	A gym	9/3/2024 9:55 PM
43	Another nice restaurant or coffee shop year around	9/3/2024 9:41 PM
44	Elderly care - skilled and non skilled	9/3/2024 8:55 PM
45	More food options including more ethnic varieties Grocery store!! Nail salon	9/3/2024 8:49 PM

Town of Belgrade Comprehensive Survey

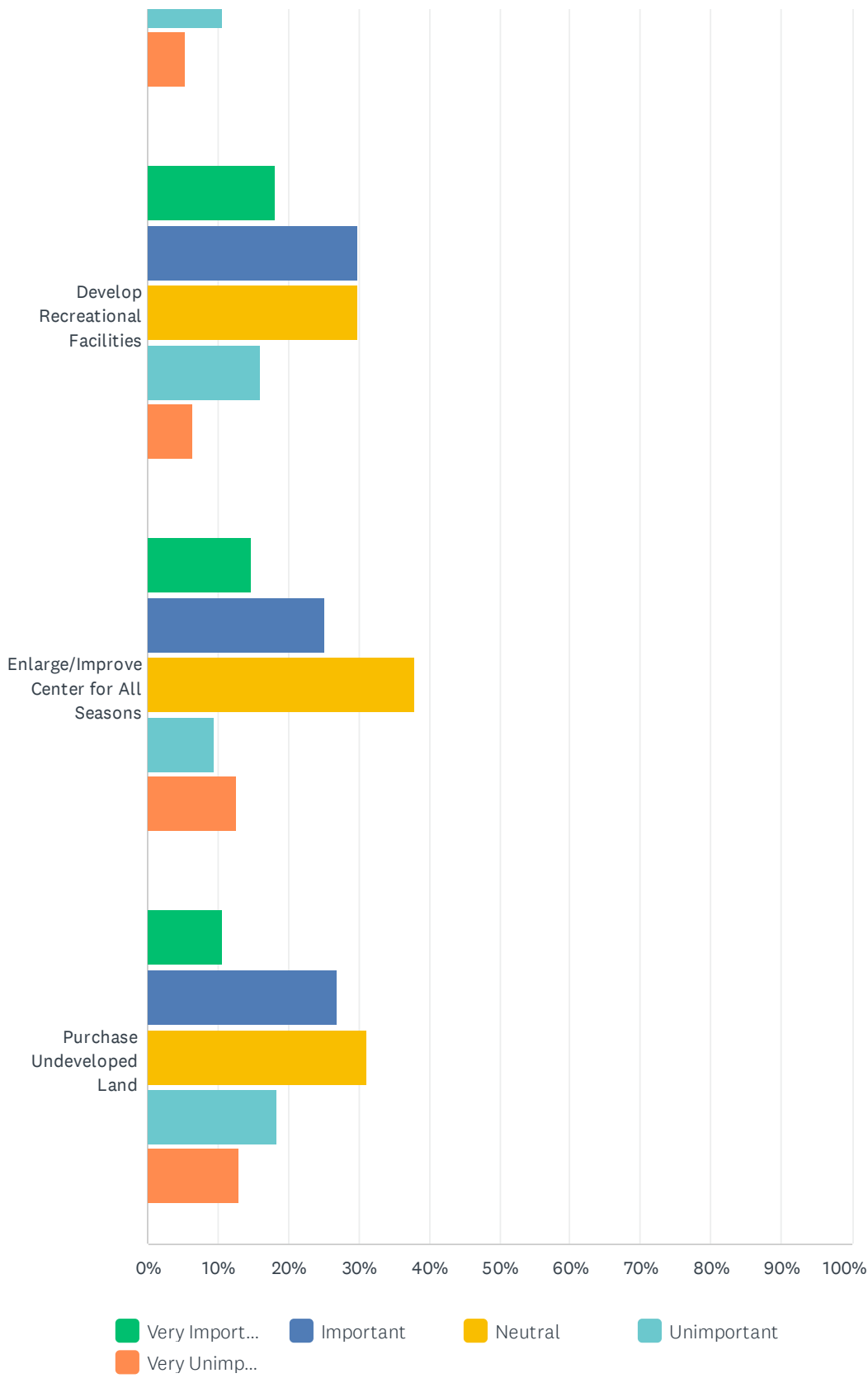
46	Fine the way it is	9/3/2024 8:37 PM
47	Recreational	9/3/2024 8:29 PM
48	Dollar general	9/3/2024 8:13 PM
49	Grocery	9/3/2024 8:13 PM
50	Small local businesses and merchants	9/3/2024 8:13 PM
51	Small pharmacy	9/3/2024 8:03 PM
52	Retail & Restaurants	9/3/2024 6:09 PM
53	A gym or fitness facility, more year round restaurants, camp grounds	9/3/2024 5:33 PM
54	Car wash	9/3/2024 5:19 PM
55	Another Year round restaurant	9/3/2024 4:24 PM
56	Restaurant on the water	9/3/2024 4:14 PM
57	Professional/Medical	9/3/2024 3:14 PM
58	Large grocery store	9/3/2024 3:02 PM
59	Grocery store besides Days (caters to tourists) & Christy's (great stop & shop but mornin needed) - let's keep the \$ in our town	9/3/2024 2:59 PM
60	Year round pizza/ sub shop, liquor store, another restaurant	9/3/2024 2:45 PM
61	more restaurants; hardware	9/3/2024 2:31 PM
62	Ones that accentuate our obvious strengths.	9/3/2024 1:07 PM

Q13 Please indicate how important each of the following capital improvement categories are to you.

Answered: 95 Skipped: 0



Town of Belgrade Comprehensive Survey



Town of Belgrade Comprehensive Survey

	VERY IMPORTANT	IMPORTANT	NEUTRAL	UNIMPORTANT	VERY UNIMPORTANT	TOTAL
Improve Municipal Buildings	1.06% 1	22.34% 21	51.06% 48	17.02% 16	8.51% 8	94
Improve Transfer Station	5.38% 5	32.26% 30	46.24% 43	10.75% 10	5.38% 5	93
Develop Recreational Facilities	18.09% 17	29.79% 28	29.79% 28	15.96% 15	6.38% 6	94
Enlarge/Improve Center for All Seasons	14.74% 14	25.26% 24	37.89% 36	9.47% 9	12.63% 12	95
Purchase Undeveloped Land	10.75% 10	26.88% 25	31.18% 29	18.28% 17	12.90% 12	93

Q14 What problems would you like the Town to address?

Answered: 60 Skipped: 35

#	RESPONSES	DATE
1	Protecting the water quality through shoreline ordinances, enforcement, and regulating AirBnB/VRBO rentals	11/20/2024 7:40 PM
2	Maintain roads better, right now I'm seeing alot of issues with the roads in and around Belgrade.	11/18/2024 10:46 AM
3	Traffic light from MeDOT at corner of Rt 135 and Rt 27. This is a dangerous intersection. Very difficult seeing past Christie's parking lot for north bound traffic while stopped on Cemetery Rd.	10/30/2024 3:16 PM
4	What feels like wanton spending, pursuing expensive solutions like a water district for smaller scale problems.	10/29/2024 9:41 PM
5	Unsafe drivers! Cars crossing the center line, tailgating, speeding. Would love a 4-way stop sign by Christy's.	10/29/2024 4:27 PM
6	Smart, controlled growth utilizing commercial tax rateables to keep low residential property taxes.	10/27/2024 6:06 PM
7	Zoning, in the sense that the Town could engage in positive outreaches to make sure that developers, contractors, property owners, real estate agents, etc., all have a common understanding of building and usage of property, which is permissible or not permitted.	10/20/2024 4:15 PM
8	1. Nuisances and other negative impacts of commercial development being allowed in residential neighborhoods 2. Phosphorous runoff from entire Belgrade watershed of lakes, not just shoreland areas. 3. Uniform enforcement of all town ordinances, not just Shoreland Zoning 4. High turnover of town staff at town office.	10/15/2024 1:22 PM
9	-Enforce lake front zoning -Water quality -Improve safety for biking/pedestrians on town roads	10/11/2024 9:48 PM
10	The parking at the Public Beach on Long Pond should NOT be used by people next door at the deeded "private beach"	10/8/2024 10:22 AM
11	Top priority to protect the lakes from pollution, over-use, over-building, tree clearing.	10/7/2024 12:23 PM
12	Mail delivery stuffing mail box instead of delivering to house.	10/6/2024 11:20 AM
13	The speed and volume of the traffic through the village.	10/5/2024 8:41 PM
14	Parking in the village and at the post office. (New lot at village green might help...) attract a bank to locate in town	10/4/2024 11:56 AM
15	Do not take over land that pays taxes and convert to town owned property that pays no taxes. Do not over restrict waterfront owners rights	10/3/2024 8:33 PM

Town of Belgrade Comprehensive Survey

16	Roads, boat launch on Great Pond s/b way better.	10/3/2024 5:42 PM
17	Housing affordability for young families. Increasing enforcement of shore land zoning rules to protect our lakes. Limiting the enrollment of non-Belgrade children at summer rec.	10/3/2024 4:57 PM
18	I would like to see the town embrace the development of more housing and more density in a thoughtful way. People often worry about the "character" of our town, but that needs to be balance with creating a sustainable residential base which includes housing options for all income levels. Research has shown that the only way to bring down housing prices is to create more supply. Belgrade was an expensive town to buy a house in (worth it, but expensive) and I would like to see our community be more accessible to people in a wide range of income brackets. I would also love to see more housing that appeals to elders who want to live independently so they can transition out of their large homes and help allow movement in the housing market.	10/3/2024 10:13 AM
19	Brown tail moths	10/3/2024 10:03 AM
20	High taxes for seniors on fixed income.	10/2/2024 4:05 PM
21	No comment.	10/2/2024 2:42 PM
22	Not sure	10/2/2024 12:54 PM
23	Illicit marijuana growers.	10/2/2024 12:10 PM
24	Making sure that Belgrade is valued for its land and quality of life year round and not simply its waterways	9/29/2024 4:43 PM
25	I would like to see the Town address use of committee work/membership to address personal agendas and preferences. Promote a more neutral approach that represents all members. While this survey represents a good start, its design lacks contextual integrity. For example, the ranking questions: I would rank protecting the towns aesthetics and character as very high. However; for me that means the town as picturesque, bustling small lake village, busy with residents, tourists, a boaters gathering Day's Store, the Village Inn, and other businesses. Others might view the definition of aesthetic as a strictly residential village with no businesses.	9/22/2024 8:10 AM
26	Real Estates taxes and budget	9/12/2024 6:59 AM
27	Stop letting Hammond buy historical properties to tear them down! Stop allowing so many gravel pits, they are ugly, dirty and destroy perfectly good pieces of property where a house or two could be built.	9/11/2024 12:38 PM
28	Inspection of septic systems every three years. Large fines if not remediated Mandatory pumping of septic tanks 3-5 years.	9/5/2024 7:58 AM
29	Not everyone has lakefront property or a boat to be on the water. I'd like to see a boardwalk along the water to see birds and wildlife	9/5/2024 1:04 AM
30	Put in a crosswalk at Maine Wood Treaters and find a way to slow down the traffic there.	9/4/2024 6:00 PM
31	I think the town does a good job.	9/4/2024 5:57 PM
32	rental property issues	9/4/2024 2:45 PM
33	To many full time employees. In the past few years full time positions have doubled	9/4/2024 2:42 PM
34	Transfer station signs ask for transparent trash bag, which don't really exist. Please make expectations more reasonable.	9/4/2024 9:46 AM
35	Shift taxes to non homestead or commercial property	9/4/2024 8:18 AM
36	We are too snobby. We cater to the rich out of state money and the normal hard working middle class can't thrive. We can only survive.	9/4/2024 6:30 AM
37	People walking in the roads	9/4/2024 6:10 AM
38	None. I like the way things are.	9/4/2024 4:16 AM
39	We've been in Belgrade for three years now and love it so much! We think it's pretty great as is. The only two things we'd change if we could are public access to lakes and more year round shopping/dining. Thanks for asking!	9/3/2024 11:21 PM

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40	Over-regulation by the town against business owners and locals' property.	9/3/2024 10:08 PM
41	Again, only allowing they'll give residence of Belgrade to buy one from properties before non-maine residence	9/3/2024 8:55 PM
42	So many roaming animals. Dogs constantly off leashes. Animal control is not very helpful-very little is done to animal owners who consistently violate the laws. Wish there was a big trash pick up day- like other towns do- people can put all their large items out for pick up	9/3/2024 8:49 PM
43	Not sure	9/3/2024 8:37 PM
44	The eye soar at the old town office location.	9/3/2024 8:29 PM
45	Animal control but not pick on the ones who are trying go to the ones that's dogs are at large killing small animals. Cats that are spraying on things including on your front porch and house!!!	9/3/2024 8:13 PM
46	Road management.... lack of speed limit signs on Many roads and many signs being blocked due to lack of management	9/3/2024 8:13 PM
47	New fire department , full time EMS providers 24 hours a day.	9/3/2024 8:03 PM
48	The quality of our lakes - our lake will turn just like North Pond if we don't manage wetlands and watersheds	9/3/2024 7:58 PM
49	Voting location. Using the Center For All Season disrupts programming and displaces the children that attend Kidzone and the ASEP.	9/3/2024 7:21 PM
50	Taxes are too high you are taxing retired and fixed income residence out. Have tried to hire too many useless people.	9/3/2024 6:59 PM
51	Improve snow removal and road conditions in winter months	9/3/2024 6:09 PM
52	The disconnect of the town, meaning the village is typically always seen as Belgrade and a majority of the rest of Belgrade is a second thought	9/3/2024 5:33 PM
53	The marina on the stream on Hulin road. It's an eyesore and an impediment to both land traffic and boat traffic trying to access docks to doorways.	9/3/2024 5:19 PM
54	Speed on Castle Island Rd and possible bike path addition	9/3/2024 4:14 PM
55	The crowding at the green in Belgrade Lakes, parking at the town beach area.	9/3/2024 3:03 PM
56	Open gym for center for all seasons - residents not able to have access inleas you rent	9/3/2024 2:59 PM
57	Power outages, time to start underground electricity so trees won't fall On the wires	9/3/2024 2:45 PM
58	violations of codes/ordinances re lot development, destruction of easements (i.e., Sawyer property on Woodland Camp Rd.); protection of wetlands.	9/3/2024 2:31 PM
59	High taxes due to school budget percentage	9/3/2024 2:01 PM
60	The sanding of our streets, limit it in areas that drain directly into our waters.	9/3/2024 1:07 PM

Q15 Any other thoughts or comments you feel the Town should be aware of?

Answered: 46 Skipped: 49

#	RESPONSES	DATE
1	Q#7 rankings, not clear on what 1-5 represents.	10/30/2024 3:16 PM
2	Question 7 rated 1(low) to 5(high), while question 9 was opposite, so 1 most important. We need increased participation at town meeting and better information in advance. I often miss town meeting because I'm elbows deep in projects on a precious spring Saturday, but when I do attend, I find that I didn't have the right information to make an informed decision on	10/29/2024 9:41 PM

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warrants. It would also be helpful if town meeting minutes specified the nature of warrants that are moved at council meetings, rather than or in addition to, by the warrant number. Also, Mary Vogel deserves some kind of prize or trophy for the ends she's trying to hold together at town hall.

3	Really unsafe driving is the most serious issue to me right now, with 3 kids learning to drive. I've been in 3 car accidents since I moved to Maine in 2016, none of which were my fault. Something needs to be done.	10/29/2024 4:27 PM
4	Your request for input is greatly appreciated to sustain Belgrades historical heritage in these modern times that reinforce Maine's motto "life as it should be".	10/27/2024 6:06 PM
5	I would consider posting larger, more prominent signage on Route 27 in the Village area that warns everyone to slow down.	10/20/2024 4:15 PM
6	Need for some sort of public transportation	10/11/2024 9:48 PM
7	Limit SIZE of bass fishing tournaments. The petroleum haze over the water is eye-watering and choking for hours after the beginning of the large events	10/7/2024 12:23 PM
8	We need zoning to provide orderly growth and development.	10/5/2024 8:41 PM
9	We love Belgrade!	10/4/2024 11:56 AM
10	Spend less money and be more frugal with taxpayers money	10/3/2024 8:33 PM
11	We need to stay balanced, middle of the road to keep taxes as low as possible. Not everyone has a lot of money.	10/3/2024 5:42 PM
12	I am so appreciative of all the hard work you do! We love it here and know that the community is vibrant because of the involvement of people like you. I look forward to when our family is a bit older and I have the time to be more involved. Keep up the great work!	10/3/2024 10:13 AM
13	None I can think of.	10/2/2024 2:42 PM
14	Hard to rank city services with out best to poor scale to know which number is what.. Road salt going into wells along oakland rd.	10/1/2024 8:38 AM
15	Surveys like this are important and send the right message about trying to hear multiple viewpoints.	9/29/2024 4:43 PM
16	Question 7 has description of rankings (1-5 which is high, which is low). The Town will be unable to use the results of this question. Part of the historical and iconic brand and appeal of Belgrade is the Belgrade Lakes Village. It attracts both year-round and summer residents to this area. To continue to be a viable community it is important to preserve and support businesses and amenities in the village center. I have heard some town leadership suggest shifting the town center to the Depot Road area. I have heard some mention that Belgrade should become a bedroom community of Augusta. Without our picturesque village center, which includes offering business amenities and an aesthetic we will lose attractiveness to both residents and visitors who make up our taxpayer base. We should promote the continuation of a strong presence in the village, support the local business that are already struggling, and encourage business development in the village. As for being a bedroom community of Augusta, I would argue that Augusta does not have the economic base (including employment and salaries) to support the real estate values in this community. We need to find a balance that allows Belgrade to have economic independence in it's taxpayer base - both residential and business.	9/22/2024 8:10 AM
17	Please do something to bring a grocery store to Belgrade!	9/11/2024 12:38 PM
18	Continue to encourage and support seasonal activities and events	9/5/2024 6:30 PM
19	Give the seasonal residents a voice in town operations. They pay taxes but are not allowed to vote on town issues.	9/5/2024 7:58 AM
20	Is the pool at the CFAS available for summertime swimming for residents or just for campers?	9/5/2024 1:04 AM
21	I would like to know what you are proposing. I don't want an mini MA orNJ	9/4/2024 9:26 PM
22	I think Belgrade should keep with the recreational/outdoorsy lifestyle we have. It could be nice to have more boat launches to some of the lakes. I love our town and how it's mostly local business and it should stay that way.	9/4/2024 7:45 PM

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23	None.	9/4/2024 6:00 PM
24	Financial balance	9/4/2024 2:45 PM
25	Have a nice day	9/4/2024 9:46 AM
26	Question #9 does not work in this app. Full valuation of property is pushing out local folks unable to keep up with out of state incomes. Belgrade has become NY, Conn, PA, NJ. No longer for Mainers. As a life long resident of the area It's a shame to see the quaint town turn into rude out of state entitled seasonal people from away	9/4/2024 8:18 AM
27	The milfoil program is a joke. I put my boat in at multiple launches throughout the state and these kids that are being hired to check boats are not doing the job they are being paid for. They just write down the boat numbers and the last lake you were in and walk away. I rarely ever get an actual weed inspection.	9/4/2024 6:30 AM
28	I think the Town should address those that are financially unstable & struggling... Offer help instead of turning people away!!! I am personally aware of a few instances 😞	9/4/2024 6:10 AM
29	None.	9/4/2024 4:16 AM
30	The town I grew up in once did a grant program to help folks clean up the exteriors of rundown houses/buildings. Most properties in town are well-kept, but it would be nice to be able to help/encourage those who's properties need some renovating.	9/3/2024 11:21 PM
31	This town has been so negatively impacted by the increase in rules, regulations, and codes. As an actual local, it's literally turning Belgrade into a city like Waterville, but ironically, unlike Waterville, some of the louder people-from-away in this town are very against small businesses, even though that's Belgrade's roots. Is this what we want? No, it's making life harder for locals.	9/3/2024 10:08 PM
32	Continue lunch program for kids and help seniors	9/3/2024 8:55 PM
33	Love raising my kids in Belgrade.	9/3/2024 8:49 PM
34	None	9/3/2024 8:37 PM
35	Again animal control	9/3/2024 8:13 PM
36	Growth is good but necessarily commercial growth. I support the CFAS but if we are going to put \$ into improving it and enlarging it we should have more things offered to the town. More classes in fitness crafts etc in evening hours so all can participate.	9/3/2024 8:03 PM
37	Campers - with no septic on land. Need to have proof campers are being pumped and not discarding human waste	9/3/2024 7:58 PM
38	Taxes are too high. Need to get out of the school union . And stop hiring people that do not work.	9/3/2024 6:59 PM
39	There is a huge concern on the drastic increase on home prices as the town is pricing out the working class and catering more towards out of staters that can typically afford the home prices, this is very concerning	9/3/2024 5:33 PM
40	Development of bike trails, snow mobile trails	9/3/2024 4:14 PM
41	Taxation without voting rights is annoying for summer residents.	9/3/2024 3:02 PM
42	Reducing speed in front of ball fields - danger for people entering & exiting	9/3/2024 2:59 PM
43	More places for the non lakefront owners to swim. Public access, and places for them To park.	9/3/2024 2:45 PM
44	See above re Sawyer property	9/3/2024 2:31 PM
45	Offer more on the north belgrade end instead of improving the belgrade lakes area.	9/3/2024 1:40 PM
46	That better outreach from our government and appointed officials, there is a great deal of dissatisfaction but very little vocalization, that I feel the Town should be aware of.	9/3/2024 1:07 PM