



Brighton Plantation

2025 Comprehensive Plan



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	6
History of the Comprehensive Plan	6
Community Involvement	6
Implementation	7
Brighton Plantation Community Vision Statement	8
Chapter 1: Historic and Archeological Resources	9
Brief Overview of Brighton Plantation:	9
Brighton Plantation – Historical Narrative:	9
Maine Historic Preservation Commission Data:	10
Prehistoric Archeological Sites:	10
Historic Archeological Sites:	10
Brighton Plantation’s Historic Buildings/Structures/Objects:	11
Local Historic Sites and Places:	11
Threats to Local Historic/Archeological/Cultural Resources:	12
Cemeteries:	12
Scenic Areas:	13
Protecting Significant Historic and Archeological Resources:	13
Chapter 2: Brighton Plantation Community Profile.....	14
Chapter 3: Environmental Resources	20
Introduction.....	20
Natural Land Resources	20
Geology and Soils	20
Topography	21
Scenic Resources	21
Water Resources	21
Floodplains.....	21
Groundwater	22
Potential Groundwater Concerns in Brighton	22
Surface Waters	23
Rivers and Streams.....	24
Watersheds	26
Wetlands	27
Lakes and Ponds	27

Threats to Brighton’s Water and Natural Resources	34
Point and Nonpoint Source Pollution	35
Wildlife Habitat in Brighton.....	36
Brook Trout Habitat	37
Undeveloped Habitat Blocks, Connectors, and Conserved Land.....	37
Regulatory Protections	39
Local and Regional Coordination.....	41
Analysis	42
Chapter 4: The Local Economy.....	43
Introduction and Overview	43
Brighton’s Median Household Income	43
Local Labor Force and Employment.....	45
Labor Market Area	47
Commuting to Work	47
Job Types	49
Brighton’s Local Business Climate.....	50
Forestry and Agriculture.....	51
Unique Assets.....	51
Regulation of Economic Development.....	52
Summary of Analysis	53
Chapter 5: Brighton’s Housing Profile	54
The Housing Stock	54
Seasonal Housing.....	57
Housing Conditions.....	58
Price and Affordability	59
Household Income.....	62
Rental Housing	63
Housing Location Trends	64
Projections.....	64
Current Housing Regulations.....	66
Analysis and Key Issues.....	67
Chapter 6: Public Facilities and Services	68
Municipal Services.....	68
Brighton Plantation’s Municipal Government	68

The Municipal Office	68
Public Safety.....	69
Police Protection	69
Fire Protection.....	69
Ambulance Service	69
Health Care Facilities.....	70
Utilities	70
Brighton Plantation's Public Utilities Analysis.....	71
Solid Waste Disposal	71
Septic Waste Disposal	71
Public Works	71
Stormwater Management.....	71
Cemeteries.....	72
Town-Owned Lands	72
Education	72
Chapter 7: Fiscal Capacity	73
Fiscal Management	73
Accounting Practices	77
Tax Collection Rate.....	77
Summary and Findings.....	77
Chapter 8: Transportation	78
Maine DOT Road Classification.....	78
Brighton Plantation's Highway System	80
Traffic Volumes	80
Traffic Safety.....	81
Support Infrastructure for the Road System	81
Regulation for Development and Traffic Growth	82
Financial Stability.....	83
Regional and Statewide Trends	83
Scenic and Environmental Impacts.....	83
Trails	84
Summary of Analysis	84
Chapter 9: Agriculture and Forestry	86
Introduction.....	86

Agriculture in Brighton Plantation	86
Land Use Policies	87
Challenges and Threats to Farmland and Farms	88
Farmland and Open Space Tax Law Programs.....	88
Forestry in Brighton Plantation	90
Tree Growth Tax Law Program.....	92
Potential for Land Sale and Land Use Conflicts	94
Analysis	95
Chapter 10: Recreation	97
Existing Recreation Resources.....	97
Passive (Unorganized) Recreation.....	97
Active (Organized) Recreation	97
Trails System	98
Public Access to Water Bodies.....	98
Hunting.....	98
Regional Recreational Resources	99
Conserved Lands & Open Space	99
Public Use of Private Land	99
Needs & Opportunities.....	99
Analysis and Key Issues	100
Chapter 11: Existing Land Use.....	101
Introduction.....	101
Characteristics of Brighton’s Land & Settlement Patterns	101
Residential Land Uses	102
Subdivision Developments.....	102
Industrial and Commercial Development	104
Land Use Trends	104
Land Use Regulation	105
Non-Regulatory Measures.....	111
Forestry, Agriculture and Open Space	111
Floodplain Management Ordinance	112
Analysis	115
Recommendations, Policies and Strategies	116
HISTORIC RESOURCES	117

NATURAL AND WATER RESOURCES	118
LOCAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT	122
HOUSING	123
PUBLIC FACILITIES AND SERVICES	126
FISCAL CAPACITY	127
AGRICULTURE AND FOREST RESOURCES	128
RECREATION	129
Future Land Use Plan	131
Brighton Plantation's Comprehensive Plan Vision	131
Future Land Use Plan	131
Delineating Growth Areas	132
Current Land Use Patterns	133
Constraints and Natural Opportunities for Development	134
Land Use Districts and Their Relationship to Growth and Conservation	135
Anticipated Growth	136
Land Use Regulation and Monitoring	136
Comprehensive Plan Implementation	138
Future Land Use Policies and Strategies	139
Capital Investment Plan	141
Description of Existing Process	141
Why a CIP?	141
Financing the CIP	142
Shared Investments	142
CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS	143
Regional Coordination	144
Shared Resources and Facilities	144
Policy Conflicts and Coordination	145
Future Coordination Goals	145
APPENDICES	146
List of Acronyms	159

Introduction

History of the Comprehensive Plan

Maine's Growth Management Act, enacted in 1988, encourages municipalities to engage in long-range planning by outlining statewide goals and providing a framework for local Comprehensive Plans. While not required by law, Comprehensive Plans help guide development and conservation efforts, support local land use ordinances, and strengthen communities' eligibility for certain state and federal grants. The State recommends that Comprehensive Plans be reviewed and updated every 10 to 12 years to remain consistent with evolving data, regulations, and community needs.

For plantations like Brighton, adopting and maintaining a Comprehensive Plan is not required to retain plantation status or to pass or revise local ordinances. However, having a State-consistent plan offers legal protections and greater clarity in land use decisions, and it ensures that future growth aligns with the community's values and capacities.

Brighton Plantation adopted its first and only Comprehensive Plan in 1995. That plan provided valuable guidance for the community at the time but is now considered outdated by both local standards and the State of Maine. In 2024, Brighton initiated an update of its Comprehensive Plan with assistance from KVCOG (Kennebec Valley Council of Governments). This updated plan reflects current conditions, resident input, and Brighton's continued commitment to preserving its rural character, protecting natural resources, and supporting thoughtful, small-scale development that meets the needs of its residents.

Community Involvement

All Comprehensive Plan Committee (CPC) meetings were open to the public. When feasible, various stakeholders, boards, and commissions in the community were invited to participate in discussions on relevant chapters.

The CPC held a public information session on April 12, 2025, to present progress and gather feedback from residents. An effort was also made by committee members to engage with the public throughout the planning process. A comprehensive survey was distributed to all landowners in Brighton Plantation—147 residential and five commercial—by KVCOG. The survey was available both electronically and in paper format. It aimed to collect residents' thoughts, opinions, and concerns on a variety of topics including land use, housing, transportation, town services, municipal governance, and community values. Several open-ended questions allowed residents to provide unstructured feedback. A total of 33 responses were received, providing valuable insight into resident priorities. Full survey results and summaries are included in the Appendix of this Plan.

As draft chapters were completed, they were posted on KVCOG's website for public review and comment. Once all chapters were reviewed, associated goals, policies, and strategies were also posted for transparency and additional input. Brighton Plantation's vision statement was drafted and revised by the Comprehensive Plan Committee with direct public input, reflecting a shared commitment to preserving the community's rural character and natural resources.

This Comprehensive Plan was prepared by contract planner Melanie Weston of the Kennebec Valley Council of Governments (KVCOG), with input and edits from the Brighton Plantation Comprehensive Plan Committee, comprised of community members Michael Vernan, Christy Morgan, Scott Morgan, and Scott Mongeon. The maps included in this plan were produced by KVCOG planner Turner Allen.

Implementation

Nearly every chapter of this Comprehensive Plan includes policies, strategies, and specific recommendations, along with suggested timeframes and responsible parties. The success of this plan relies on Brighton Plantation's ability to carry out these recommendations in a way that fits the community's size, resources, and rural character. Implementation will primarily fall to the Planning Board and Plantation Assessors, with support from residents, volunteers, and regional partners as needed.

Brighton Plantation does not have full-time staff such as a Town Manager or Code Enforcement Officer. Therefore, implementation and oversight will be shared among the Planning Board, Assessors, and other community members willing to take an active role. In the 2025 community survey, more than half of respondents (51%) reported only a partial familiarity or no knowledge of local ordinances, highlighting the need for improved outreach and educational efforts. While previous plans have been only partially implemented, the updated plan reflects the community's renewed commitment to pursue practical, locally appropriate strategies that align with Brighton's vision.

To support implementation and monitor progress, the Planning Board and Plantation Administrator will continue to track building permits—currently recorded by hand and in Excel—and work toward digitizing past records. Though the number of permits issued annually is minimal, this tracking helps identify trends such as:

1. Locations of new residential structures.
2. Any redevelopment of existing structures.
3. Use of seasonal camps and any conversion to year-round residences.

A brief annual summary of permit activity and progress on major initiatives will be prepared by the Assessors and/or Planning Board and shared at the annual plantation meeting. This report will include observations on development patterns and notes on any challenges or opportunities related to the plan's goals.

Given Brighton's scale, a formal workshop process may not be necessary each year; however, the annual plantation meeting offers an opportunity for discussion, reflection, and community input. Adjustments to policies or strategies can be proposed at that time. Any significant changes to the plan or ordinances should follow proper public review and engagement.

This flexible, community-based approach will ensure the plan remains relevant and actionable. A full review of the Comprehensive Plan is recommended every 10 to 12 years, with the next comprehensive update targeted for 2035, unless changing conditions warrant an earlier revision.

Brighton Plantation Community Vision Statement

The community vision statement serves as the foundation for Brighton Plantation's Comprehensive Plan. It reflects the values, priorities, and aspirations of residents, guiding decision-making and future growth in a way that aligns with the unique character of the Plantation. Developed through public input, committee discussion, and survey responses, the vision statement provides a shared roadmap for preserving what residents love most about their community while preparing thoughtfully for the years ahead.

Survey results indicated that residents highly value Brighton's low population density, rural character, and natural resources. Those themes were central in shaping the community vision. Brighton Plantation's vision statement reads as follows:

Our vision for Brighton Plantation is to protect and preserve the natural beauty and ecological integrity of our forests, waterways, and landscapes, while respecting the property rights of all landowners. We are committed to maintaining the unique rural character of our community by ensuring that development remains in harmony with the environment. Through careful stewardship, sustainable land practices, and a focus on organic growth, we strive to foster a resilient community that can provide basic municipal services to its citizens without compromising the area's natural resources. We believe in promoting thoughtful, gradual development that aligns with the values of the Plantation, its residents, and environmental character of the area. At the same time, we are dedicated to ensuring that Brighton Plantation remains a self-sustaining, independent community, preserving its status and autonomy. Ultimately, Brighton Plantation strives to create a future where the landscape is preserved, property rights are respected, municipal services are provided, and development is carefully managed to maintain the rural character for generations to come.

Chapter 1: Historic and Archeological Resources

Brief Overview of Brighton Plantation:

Brighton Plantation, originally settled in the late 18th century, has a rich history marked by economic struggles, a reliance on the logging industry, and a steady population decline. Once home to a thriving community, its peak population of 748 in 1850 dwindled over the years, leading to its reorganization as a plantation in 1895 and the eventual surrender of its municipal status in 1949. Today, the historic village's remnants—such as the church, cemetery, and schoolhouse—stand as a testament to its past, with the intersection of US Routes 151 and 154 serving as the focal point of this quiet, enduring community.

Brighton Plantation – Historical Narrative:

In 1786, Massachusetts disposed of large tracts of unsettled land in Maine (at the time a territory of Massachusetts) by lottery. William Bingham, a wealthy Philadelphia banker, drew several townships and purchased others, giving him a total of one million acres. In 1816, the inhabitants of one of those townships (then numbered township 2) petitioned the Commonwealth of Massachusetts to incorporate the plantation of North Hill. At the time of the incorporation, there were about fifty families settled in North Hill. In 1827, the name of the town was changed from North Hill to Brighton through an Act by the Maine legislature.

Brighton reached its peak population in 1840 at 803 residents. The largest industry in Brighton Plantation, and the surrounding area, during the 19th century, was wood and the logging business. Brighton had a sawmill, gristmill, several schoolhouses, several stores, a post office, a church, a doctors office, and a hotel.

However, the town struggled with poverty. An 1895 Portland Daily Press article described Brighton as such, “Up in Somerset County is a tract of land, far from being fertile or productive of the prolific crops raised in many other portions of the Pine Tree State...The inhabitants of this much-out-of-the-way place have for many years struggled hard against the gaping jaws of Old Poverty and many have been the law suits the town has endured on account of its paupers...In 1850 the population of Brighton was 748 and has deceased each decade until in 1890 it was 454. It is reported that there are 37 paupers in that town.” Because of the declining population and the inability of the town to care for its poorest residents, the incorporation of the town was repealed in March 1895. A month later in April 1895, the town was organized into a plantation. The “paupers” at that time were then cared for “by the oldest incorporated town adjoining which will collect from the State the expense incurred.”

The closest adjoining town is Athens. Brighton Plantation and Athens had already established a close relationship since their founding, a symbiotic relationship that continues today with Brighton residents relying on Athens for many services not offered in the Plantation.

Brighton Plantation surrendered their municipal status in 1949. At the time the plantation had a population of 103. An infestation of birch borer required heavy cutting to save the remaining timber in the area leaving most of the employees in the plantation out of work and few jobs remaining.

Today, the municipal office is in the last remaining one room schoolhouse that was in operation until about 1960. There is still evidence of the historic village of Brighton Plantation where US Routes 151 and 154 intersect. There you'll find the church, village cemetery, and several other historic buildings that are privately owned. The intersection remains much unchanged though the layout of the road was changed by DOT in the last few decades.

Maine Historic Preservation Commission Data:

According to the Maine Historic Preservation Commission (MHPC), historic and archaeological resources in comprehensive planning fall into three categories: Prehistoric Archaeological (Native American sites predating European arrival), Historic Archaeological (European American sites from the historic record), and Historic Buildings/Structures/Objects (above-ground structures and artifacts). Archaeological resources, found underground, include evidence of past human habitation such as artifacts, structures, and remains.

Prehistoric Archeological Sites:

Brighton Plantation has no known prehistoric sites.

Historic Archeological Sites:

Historic archeological sites statewide include English and French trading posts, forts, homesteads of the 1600 and 1700's, and 19th century logging camps. Since waterbodies have always provided transportation and power, these areas are usually the location for historic archeological sites.

In 2023, no historic archaeological sites have been documented for Brighton Plantation.

One small area of the southwest corner of the township received a professional archaeological survey for a utility corridor but nothing of note was discovered. No professional town-wide surveys of historic archaeological sites have been conducted to date in Brighton Plantation. Future archaeological surveys if ever conducted should focus on identification of potentially significant resources associated with the town's agricultural, residential, and industrial heritage, particularly those associated with the earliest Euro-American settlement of the town in the 18th and 19th centuries.

Brighton Plantation's Historic Buildings/Structures/Objects:

For Brighton Plantation, Maine, where only a few historic buildings may qualify for the National Register of Historic Places, listing can provide key benefits. Recognized structures may be eligible for a 20% investment tax credit, helping owners offset restoration costs if the building is income-producing and certified historic. Additionally, National Register status raises awareness of local history, encourages preservation efforts, and provides limited protection from federally funded alterations or demolition. This designation can be a valuable tool for maintaining Brighton Plantation's historical character and attracting potential funding or tourism interest.

The following seven (7) buildings have been determined eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. These properties generally represent when Brighton Plantation had a larger, agricultural focused community – mainly farms and their outbuildings. The properties are listed below:

Properties Eligible for the National Register			
Estimated Construction Date	Address	Architectural Style	Primary Use
1860	446 Brighton Road	Vernacular	Shed
1860	446 Brighton Road	Vernacular	Barn/Mixed Use
1890	Brighton Road / Rt 151	Vernacular/Greek Revival	Garage
1850	Brighton Road / Rt 151	Vernacular/Greek Revival	Single Family
1850	Brighton Road / Rt 151	Vernacular	Barn/Mixed Use
1880	Brighton Road / Rt 151	Vernacular	Other/Shed
1850-2011	Brighton Road / Rt 151	-	Residential

The Maine Historic Preservation Commission recommends a comprehensive survey of Brighton Plantation's above-ground historic resources to identify properties that may be eligible for nomination to the Register.

There are other non-eligible properties that are still of historical note, and these can be seen on the Historic and Archeological Resources Map, mostly in the town center.

These buildings are all in varying conditions. All are owned by private property owners. Time and lack of funds have taken a toll. Most are in need of some form of repairs and maintenance.

Local Historic Sites and Places:

Maine Historic Preservation Commission maintains a broad range of information relating to historic properties including historic buildings, structures, sites, districts, and objects. Additional research could reveal other locations and may show that some sites are eligible to be listed.

The village church, located at the intersection of Route 151 and Route 154, is an important local historic site. The steeple was lost after it was struck by lightning and caught fire. While the fire department saved the remainder of the building, the steeple was not salvageable. The plantation maintains funds in the annual budget, \$7,945 as of the 2023 Annual Report, for maintenance and care of the church.

The Kelly Mountain Fire Tower, built in 1925, is another significant historic landmark in Brighton Plantation, representing the region's early wildfire detection efforts. The tower features a metal frame, which, though showing signs of rust, remains structurally sturdy. Its wooden observation deck was replaced in recent years but still requires ongoing maintenance to ensure its preservation. For decades, the tower served as a vital lookout point, helping to protect the area's vast forests from devastating fires. As one of the few remaining structures of its kind, preserving the Kelly Mountain Fire Tower honors Brighton Plantation's heritage and provides a tangible link to its past.

Threats to Local Historic/Archeological/Cultural Resources:

Brighton Plantation does not have any designated historic districts that receive town protection to maintain architectural integrity or character. There are no formal historic preservation regulations or a historical society overseeing such efforts. The existing historic structures in the area are all privately owned, and without designated protections or preservation incentives, their upkeep relies solely on the individual homeowners. While historic sites have been identified, they are not currently threatened by development, as Brighton Plantation does not face significant development pressures. However, the primary concerns regarding these structures stem from time and a lack of funding. Many private homeowners do not qualify for historic preservation grants, making it difficult to secure the necessary resources for maintenance and restoration. As a result, neglect and gradual deterioration pose the most significant risks to the town's historic character.

Cemeteries:

Cemeteries are a critical link to our heritage. In Maine, municipalities are legally required to ensure the preservation and maintenance of ancient burying grounds and veterans' graves under state law (Title 13, §1101 and §1101-A). This includes protecting cemeteries from neglect, vandalism, and encroachment while ensuring that gravestones and markers, especially those of veterans, are properly maintained. Municipalities must also allow access for descendants and historians and, in some cases, provide funding for upkeep. These responsibilities help preserve the state's historical and cultural heritage while honoring those buried within these sacred spaces.

The following is a list of known cemeteries in Brighton Plantation, which can also be seen on the Historic Resources Map:

Brighton Plantation Cemeteries	
Name	Location
Brighton Village Cemetery	East side of Rt 151 and north side of Rt 154
Old Cemetery	North side of Back Rd
York Cemetery	North of Solon Rd

The plantation has appropriated \$11,000 for cemetery stone repair in the budget as of 2023.

Scenic Areas:

Although scenic areas might not be considered historic resources, they nevertheless can be highly valued by citizens as a part of the community heritage. Often, these scenic views are a cherished attribute that many people identify about their community. The following areas include those that can be seen from both public and private lands:

- Fire Tower, Kelly Mountain
- Smith Pond
- Wyman Pond

Protecting Significant Historic and Archeological Resources:

Brighton Plantation lacks a Historical Society, a traditional means of protective measures for buildings deemed historic. Due to the lack of traditional “Historic Districts” and the Plantation’s outdated land use ordinances, the existing regulatory protection for historic and archaeological resources is primarily provided through the state’s subdivision and shoreland zoning statutes. Maine’s subdivision statute and subdivision regulation require review of the impact on “historic sites”, which includes both National Register and eligible buildings and archaeological sites. The State’s Shoreland Zoning statute includes, as one of its purposes, “to protect archaeological and historic resources”. Therefore, the Plantation does not currently have any specific incentives or regulations for protecting historic areas and/or buildings, or potential historic or archeological resources.

Chapter 2: Brighton Plantation Community Profile

This report holds a statistical profile of Brighton Plantation and its people. Because of Brighton's population size, not as much data is available historically as larger communities. 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.

The population and demographic data presented in this chapter of the Brighton Plantation Comprehensive Plan is primarily based on the American Community Survey (ACS), a nationwide survey conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau to collect detailed demographic, social, economic, and housing data. The ACS provides estimates for a wide range of topics, relying on sample data rather than a complete count of the population.

Year	Population
1837	798
1840	803
1850	748
1860	733
1890	484
1900	368
1910	274
1970	58
1980	74
1990	94
2000	90
2010	38
2023	86

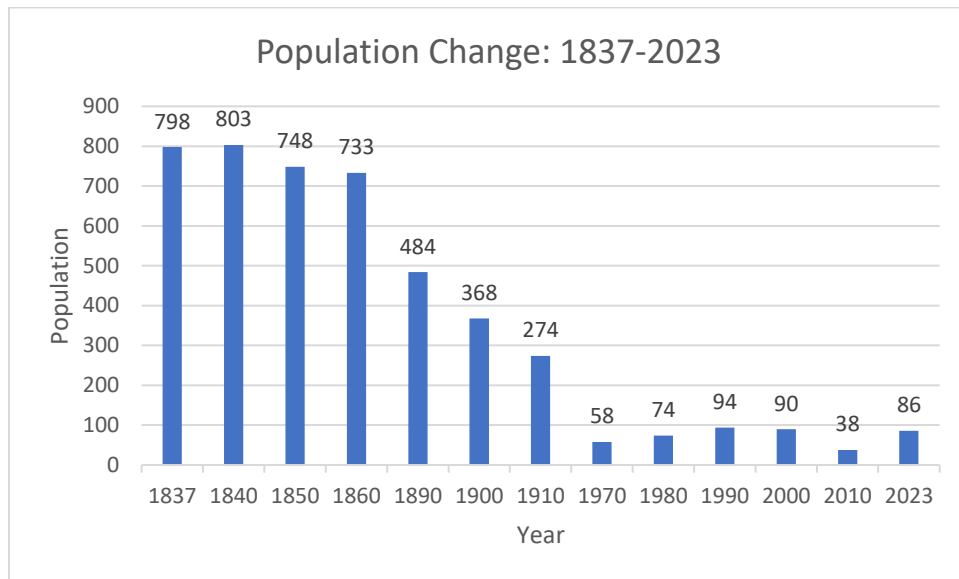
However, given the relatively small population of Brighton Plantation, which consisted of approximately 86 residents in 2023, it is important to note that the data may not fully reflect the precise characteristics of the community. The sample size used in the ACS for small populations such as ours can be limited, resulting in larger margins of error. This means that estimates for certain demographic categories may fluctuate more significantly than those derived from larger populations.

In small communities like Brighton Plantation, the number of individuals surveyed in each demographic category can be very small, which can cause more variation in the results. For example, a single person in a certain age group or income bracket can have a disproportionate effect on the estimate. As a result, while the data can provide a helpful snapshot of broad trends, it should be interpreted with caution. The data serves as a useful framework for understanding general demographic patterns but may not offer a fully accurate picture due to the potential variability inherent in small sample sizes.

Brighton Plantation is not a service center with many businesses that are in the town being small, home occupations, if any. There are no major employers and, as shown in the local economy chapter, more residents commute out of the town for work than commute into the area so there is no large daytime population to serve other than the small residential population.

As Brighton Plantation has always been a historically small and "tucked out of the way" municipality, data is not as reliable as data for larger towns. Earlier records are from published newspapers. There is a gap in data from 1910 to 1970. Brighton Plantation reached its peak population in 1840 at 803 residents and has been steadily declining ever since. Primarily an agricultural and forestry community, Brighton Plantation's population has often depended on income producing opportunities in the area based on natural resources. As those opportunities declined, so did the population. The information in this chapter 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 with planning for housing and public service demands that are expected in the next couple of decades. Similar information can be found in the Housing Chapter of this plan.



Over the course of its existence, Brighton Plantation has experienced a fall in population. The height of its population was in the 1800s near its incorporation as a town, but it has fallen steadily ever since. Economic and cultural factors have influenced population changes as displayed in the following table and graphed in the figure on the following page. There was a small rise in population during the 1980s-90s, followed by a decline in the 2010s, but the population has begun to rise again by the 2020s.

The median age of Brighton Plantation residents has decreased from 45.3 to 35.5 from 2010 to 2023, a decrease of 21.63%. According to the ACS, the number of residents over the age of 65 years old has risen 250% since 2010, from 8 to 28. Elderly households have unique needs, along with public service and planning requirements. Between 1990 and 2023, the town's population decreased by 8 persons.

TABLE 2: POPULATION AND HOUSEHOLD CHARACTERISTICS: 2010-2023

General Population Characteristics	2010	2017	2023
Total Population	38	57	86
Male Population	16	36	56
Female Population	22	21	30
Median Age	45.3	49.6	35.5
Total Households	15	26	28
Family Households	13	20	12
Married Couple Family Households	13	16	11
Nonfamily Households	2	6	16
Nonfamily Households Living Alone	13.3%	23.1%	10.7%
Households with children (under 18)	0%	0%	3.6%
Single-Person Household 65 years +	13.3%	7.7%	10.7%
Average Household Size	2.53	2.19	3.07

Source: 2010, 2017, and 2023 Census

Only one group saw a decline in the past thirteen years (the 25-44 years category went from 10 to 6 persons from 2010 to 2023). With the dramatic rise in the “young family” age group (20 to 24 year olds went from 0 to 28 from 2010 to 2023), that could lead to a rise in school age children in the coming years. The average household size in Brighton went from 2.53 to 2.19 from 2010 to 2017, but it went back up to 3.07 in 2023, which is higher than neighboring communities.

This data is imperative when considering the population and housing demands for the future. Considering the trends of increased median age, single-family households, and the increase in the age category of 18-24, the most likely demand will be for smaller houses and starter homes. Young adults and retirement age seniors are the groups that saw the largest increase in the last few decades (Table 3). The trends show that though

the school aged population fluctuates, it is not expected that the number of students will increase at any level.

Brighton Plantation does not have any dependence on seasonal visitors at this time. Previously, a local business called Poppa Joe's relied on 4-wheeler traffic and through traffic toward the Forks and Greenville, but that business has since closed. As of now, Brighton Plantation is not dependent on seasonal visitors economically, but there is opportunity for new businesses to take advantage of those traveling through the area or locals.

There are few good measures of seasonal population. To quantify the seasonal population, data from the 2022 Municipal Return Statistical Summary Report was used. Based on this report there are currently 34 homestead exemptions. From this information, of the 90 housing units reported in the 2022 ACS, it can be ascertained that the majority of housing units in Brighton are seasonal or aren't claimed as primary residences. It should be noted that using the Homestead Exemption claim for determining seasonal population is less than ideal because state law mandates that residents cannot file a Homestead Exemption unless they've lived at that residence for one year, and not everyone takes advantage of this tax incentive.

TABLE 3: AGE TRENDS 2000 TO 2020

	2010 % Of Total	2017 % Of Total	2023 % Of Total	13-Year Change
Population	38	57	86	48 (126.31%)
Median Age	45.3	49.6	35.5	-9.8 (-21.63%)
Under 5 years old	0	0	0	0 (0%)
5 - 19 years old	8 (21.1%)	3 (5.3%)	9 (10.5%)	1 (12.5%)
18 years and older	38 (100%)	57 (100%)	77 (89.5%)	39 (102.63%)
20 - 24 years old	0	0	28 (32.6%)	28 (2800%)
25 - 44 years old	10	23	6 (7%)	-4 (-40%)

45 - 54 years old	6 (15.8%)	4 (7%)	6 (7%)	0 (0%)
55 - 59 years old	3 (7.9%)	4 (7%)	3 (3.5%)	0 (0%)
60 - 64 years old	3 (7.9%)	8 (14%)	6 (7%)	3 (100%)
65 years and older	8 (21.1%)	15 (26.3%)	28 (32.6%)	20 (250%)

Source: 2010, 2017 & 2023 Census

TABLE 4: STUDENT ENROLLMENT TRENDS

Town	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Brighton Plt	9	8	9	11	14	12	9	10	7	6
Caratunk	2	2	2	4	4	5	8	5	3	3
Athens	168	170	151	152	155	166	153	139	140	145
Highland Plt	8	6	7	9	7	8	7	2	2	
Wellington	26	23	21	16	17	21	21	23	20	26

Source: Maine Department of Education, Student Enrollment Data

Brighton Plantation has a School Administrative Unit (SAU) so that students whose family reside in Brighton Plantation are tuitioned to other local school districts at a cost of \$13,300 per student. Brighton Plantation students have the option to attend Carrabec, Bingham, Madison, Skowhegan, or Maine Central Institute. Historically, the great majority of kids attend Athens Elementary School and Madison Area High School. Brighton Plantation contracts with the neighboring town of Athens to provide transportation to students at a cost of \$15,015 per year. With the rising rate of young family age adults, the potential of children below the age of 18 could also rise in the coming years which could increase, or at least keep steady, enrollment rates in school.

How much will Brighton Plantation change in the future? Population projections provide the short and easy answer. These are mathematical extrapolations of past population growth and factors such as age distribution and household size.

The Office of the State Economist publishes a projection to the year 2040 (they prepared it in 2021, based on Census data). They estimate Brighton Plantation's population will be 54, a loss of 32 people from the current population or -37.2% loss. This is based partially

on the advancing age of the residents and the overall observable trend, not necessarily a reflection of the popularity of Brighton Plantation as a place to live.

As the population of Brighton Plantation continues to decrease and age, the municipality is already beginning to have concerns about the ability to function as a municipality. With a small population, there are concerns not only about having enough voting population but also having enough qualified individuals to fill necessary positions such as the local planning board, assessors, etc. The role of code enforcement officer has been chronically vacant, which is a problem not just for Brighton Plantation, but many small municipalities across the region and throughout Maine.

Brighton Plantation remains a small, rural community with a distinctive character shaped by its natural landscape, self-reliant residents, and minimal municipal infrastructure. According to the 2025 community survey, 50% of respondents have lived in Brighton for over 25 years, and 37% have lived here between 10–24 years. This reflects a deeply rooted population with a long-standing connection to the land and a shared commitment to preserving the community's independence and rural way of life. While growth may be limited by geography and infrastructure, Brighton's enduring values—self-sufficiency, stewardship of natural resources, and a strong sense of place—continue to guide its future.

Chapter 3: Environmental Resources

Introduction

Brighton Plantation is fortunate to be surrounded by exceptional natural beauty and a high-quality environment. Brighton consists of 40 square miles (approximately 25,600 acres), of which 0.7 square miles (448 acres) or 1.75% is water.

The 39.3 square miles or approximately 25,152 acres of Brighton's land is largely forested. Brighton's natural resources are responsible for productive forest and farmland, clean water, and wildlife habitat. The most noticeable natural feature in Brighton Plantation is that vast expanses of forest cover throughout the 39.3 square miles of land, leaving no doubt that forestry is the largest industry in the town.

In the 2025 community survey, over 70% of respondents marked forests, wetlands, waterbodies, and scenic views as 'very important' to their quality of life. Specific areas mentioned for preservation included Smith Pond, Wyman Pond, Kelly Mountain, and surrounding trout brooks. This chapter identifies and documents Brighton's natural and water resources and identifies the physical limitations the natural environment imposes on the planning process for future development.

Natural Land Resources

Geology and Soils

Brighton's soils – and the rock that supports them – influence the topography and the type of vegetation, and constrain endeavors of development, farming, and forestry.

The State Plumbing code has a list of soils that are unsuitable for subsurface waste disposal. The plumbing code concentrates on 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

Brighton'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 reduced property values and recreational opportunities.

Article 4- Performance Standards Applicable to Land Use Districts in Brighton's Land Use Zoning Ordinance sets standards to protect against excessive erosion during and after construction, though these standards are outdated. Brighton is in the process of updating their Land Use Zoning Ordinance to more current standards.

Topography

Brighton's topography is depicted on the *Topographic Map* (Appendix). The ponds represent the low points of topography. Smith Pond, for example, is the low point between Foss Mountain at 458 meters elevation and Kelly Mountain at 487 meters elevation.

The state Plumbing Code limits the installation of septic systems to land with an original slope of 20 percent or less. Article 4- Performance Standards Applicable to Land Use Districts in Brighton's Land Use Zoning Ordinance sets standards for each district based on soil type and land use activity.

The topography of the land contributes to water bodies and their 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.

Scenic Resources

Topography and geography are the primary components of scenic vistas and resources. While it is said that 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. In Brighton, several vistas are notable:

- Kelly Mountain Fire Tower
- Smith Pond
- Wyman Pond

Water Resources

Floodplains

A floodplain is an area adjacent to a water body that is subject to periodic flooding. Brighton's 100-year floodplains are depicted on the Critical Natural Resources Map in the Appendix. A 100-year flood refers to a flood event that has a 1-percent chance of occurring in any given year. This designation is significant because federal law requires local regulation of 100-year floodplains. Brighton has an approved local Floodplain

Management Ordinance, which is enforced in accordance with state and federal standards and requires periodic review and updates.

Due to Brighton's naturally hilly topography, most floodplains are minimal and localized. The primary areas of concern are located near the Heart of Maine area, particularly along Route 154 where beaver activity from neighboring Wellington can cause damming and periodic roadway flooding. Another area of concern is near Corson Brook, where the topography and hydrology also contribute to occasional localized flooding. These specific areas merit continued monitoring and maintenance to ensure infrastructure resilience and public safety.

Groundwater

Enough groundwater exists in Brighton, as throughout much of Maine, to support residential uses. Larger supplies of groundwater are stored in underground aquifers located in sand and gravel deposits.

A "significant aquifer" provides a water supply in large enough volumes to support commercial use; however, all groundwater in Brighton—whether designated significant or not—should be protected from contamination. While aquifer-related soils often support effective septic systems, development over these areas increases the risk of groundwater pollution from a variety of sources.

There are three significant sand and gravel aquifers in Brighton, evaluated by the Maine Geological Survey as having moderate to good groundwater yield—generally greater than 10 gallons per minute. Two of these are located on the west shore of Smith Pond, and the third is near the west shore of Mayfield Pond (see Critical Natural Resources Map in the Appendix).

Local groundwater is the sole source of drinking water for all Brighton residents, as there is no public water system. Given this, any threats to groundwater are of serious concern.

Potential Groundwater Concerns in Brighton

While residential development densities remain low, there are several localized threats to groundwater quality that warrant attention:

- Farrin Brothers & Smith's operations may require remediation efforts. Though most mechanical work is now done inside the garage, in earlier decades, oil changes and equipment maintenance were often done outside, increasing the risk of petroleum contamination.
- The municipal salt shed was only recently covered. For many years, road salt was stored uncovered, raising the possibility of chloride infiltration into nearby groundwater or streams, especially during the spring thaw.

- There is local knowledge of timberland owners spreading paper mill sludge on clearcuts in past decades. This now-discouraged practice may have long-term impacts on soil and water quality depending on the composition of the sludge.
- Brighton's closed municipal dump was historically used for the disposal of household and possibly commercial waste. Reports of waste being thrown over the bank and occasional dump fires raise additional concerns about legacy contamination in soils and potential leaching into groundwater.

Although no specific violations have been documented for these practices, their cumulative impact over time may warrant further investigation and long-term water monitoring in certain areas.

In addition to manmade risks, naturally occurring elements can also impact well water quality in Brighton:

- Arsenic (As) and Radon (Rn) are both present in many parts of Maine and are known carcinogens. These contaminants originate from the local bedrock but can also be influenced by historical industrial or agricultural activity. Homeowners are encouraged to regularly test their well water and seek guidance from the town or Maine CDC on treatment options.
- Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS) are an emerging class of contaminants increasingly detected in drinking water across Maine. These "forever chemicals" have been found in association with agricultural sites, sludge spreading areas, landfills, and fire-fighting foam use. Brighton is not known to have documented PFAS contamination to date, but given past sludge spreading practices, the potential for localized contamination exists. As the science and regulations surrounding PFAS continue to evolve, guidance and testing support are becoming more available to Maine residents.

Surface Waters

The surface water resources in town are a critical factor in environmental quality. Not only do they provide an essential element in the natural beauty of Brighton, but they also contribute considerably to the health and welfare of the residents and wildlife.

Many land use practices can impact surface water quality. For example, improperly functioning or unsuitably located wastewater disposal systems may cause bacteria to contaminate surface waters. Poor agricultural practices can result in nutrient enrichment of waterbodies (e.g., phosphorus). Construction activities create 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.

All water bodies are required by state law to be locally protected through the Shoreland Zoning Ordinance. Brighton 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 Existing Land Use chapter of this plan details Brighton's Land Use Zoning Ordinance further.

In accordance with the present laws, Brighton must adopt standards to protect shorelines and other land resources, consistent with state requirements. As Brighton has assumed land use authority from the Land Use Planning Commission¹, the Plantation's land use regulations must not be "less protective of the existing natural, recreational, or historic resources than those adopted by the commission" (M.R.S. 12 § 685-A(4-A)).

Rivers and Streams

There are numerous perennial streams in Brighton, including the East Branch of the Wesserunsett Stream, Fall Brook, Meadow Brook, Higgins Stream, and Grant Brook, to name a few. The *Water Resources Map* in the Appendix details their locations in town.

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.

- **Classes AA** involve 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.
- **Classes 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. Classes 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

¹ All plantations were originally included under the Land Use Regulation Commission became Land Use Planning Commission in 2012.

Figure 1 below shows the water quality for the streams throughout Brighton. The streams in blue are Class A waterbodies and the streams in green are Class B waterbodies.

Figure 1: Stream Water Quality



Source: Maine Statutory Water Classification

Class A waterbodies are the second highest in water quality; therefore, they are at a lesser risk for degradation.

Class B 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 unimpaired habitat for fish and other aquatic life.

The *Water Resources Map* (Appendix) shows Brighton's streams, lakes, ponds, and wetlands. Wyman Pond, Smith Pond, Trout Pond, and Mayfield Pond are bounded by the Protection Subdistrict of Great Ponds; thus, they have a setback requirement of 250 feet from the normal high-water line.

All streams in Brighton are the Protection Subdistrict of Shoreland, broken down further as PSL 1 or PSL 2. Those given PSL 1 status have a setback of 250 feet from the normal high-water mark; whereas those given PSL 2 status have a setback of 75 feet from the normal high-water mark.

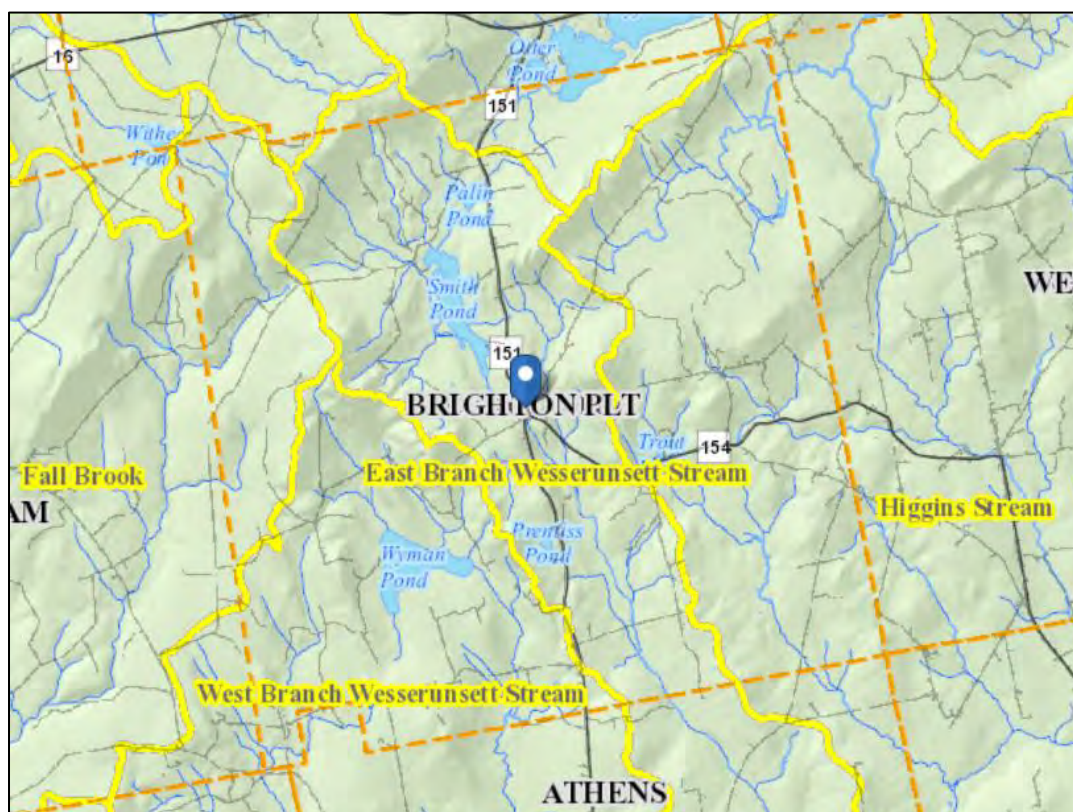
The Shoreland Development District and the Protection District require a setback of 100 feet from the normal high-water line.

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.

Brighton has all or part of six separate watersheds. See Figure 2 for details.

Figure 2: Watersheds in Brighton Plantation



Source: *Beginning with Habitat*

Figure 2 Highlights:

- The primary watersheds in Brighton are: West Branch Wesserunsett Stream, East Branch Wesserunsett Stream, Fall Brook, and Higgins Stream.

The Higgins Stream Watershed is part of the much larger Great Moose Lake Watershed, which encompasses 68,522.48 acres in Brighton, and several other towns across several counties. The DEP lists this large watershed as an “Impaired Lake Watershed”. A watershed is considered ‘impaired’ if one of its designated uses, such as human recreation or aquatic habitat, is being harmed by a pollutant. The ecological and economic values of Great Moose Lake Watershed contribute to its value. This area is home to at least three rare animals, as well as an uncommon floodplain forest community.

The concerns about the Great Moose Lake Watershed include degraded water quality due to septic systems and other contaminants, potential impacts of fish stocking, algal growth, pollutant runoff, and impaired wildlife habitat from development.

Wetlands

Wetlands are essential parts of a healthy environment. As natural low points, they absorb flood waters. As a lush and moist habitat, they are the best and sometimes only breeding areas for fish and wildlife, including most waterfowl. They have been proven to hold sediments and nutrients from waters before they reach streams, straining out pollution. Wetlands also serve as important travel corridors for many species of wildlife and provide open space for some forms of recreational enjoyment and/or aesthetic appreciation.

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).

There are more than 10 such wetlands in Brighton (*Water Resources Map, Critical Natural Features Map* in the Appendix), identified as National Wetland Inventory by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Several of these include Bryant Bog, Potter Bog, Decker Bog, Scribner Bog, the shorelines of Palin Pond, Smith Pond, and Wyman Pond. Nearly all lakes and ponds in Brighton have at least some wildlife wetlands connected to them.

There is a significant wetland area on Brighton's northwest border with Wellington. The wetland is part of Higgin Stream, and part of an unnamed tributary originating from an unnamed pond on the town's western border. Many of the larger wetland areas have been delineated as Inland Waterfowl/Wading Bird Habitat (IWWH) on the National Wetland Inventory by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

These areas are protected by Brighton's Land Use and Zoning Ordinance which designates these and other sensitive areas as Protection Districts and sets special requirements for any allowed land uses. Brighton's Land Use and Zoning Ordinance is detailed further in the Existing Land Use chapter.

Lakes and Ponds

Brighton's lakes and ponds are a defining feature of the town's rural, pristine landscape. Large, open bodies of water provide scenic views, a variety of recreational opportunities, important fish and wildlife habitats, and sources of drinking water.

Brighton's Land Use Zoning Ordinance's provides protective measures for water quality. All lakes and ponds within Brighton are in the Protection District (detailed fully in the Existing Land Use chapter). This District's purpose is to protect sensitive and significant

resources of all water bodies (including lakes and ponds), flowing streams, wetlands, floodplains and in shoreland areas along such water bodies, to maintain water quality; scenic and recreational values; protect plant, fish, and wildlife habitat; minimize flooding, and maintain ground water and ground water recharge areas.

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.

All water bodies in Brighton are listed on Maine DEP's Integrated Report as meeting Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) category #2- "Attaining some designated uses- Insufficient information for others". As with the water classification system for rivers, this classification should be viewed as hierarchy for risk, rather than for use or quality assessment, with the risk being the possibility of a breakdown of the ecosystem and loss of use due to either natural or human-caused events.

In addition, the Land Use Planning Commission has a comprehensive Lakes Management Program. The purpose of the program is to maintain a variety of lake experiences in the Commission's service area by preserving lakes with outstanding natural or other values, and by directing development to waterbodies that can support it. The program is based on a Wildlands Lakes Assessment, which rates each waterbody on categories that include scenic character, historic characteristics, water quality, its value as a fishery, and others. Depending on the relative natural and cultural values of the waterbody, the program assesses potential suitability for development.

Four lakes/ponds in Brighton Plantation (Mayfield, Palin, Smith/Weeks, Wyman) have data in the LUPC Lakes Assessment and are designated as LUPC Management Class 7 lakes. The Commission manages these lakes for multiple uses, including resource conservation, recreation, and timber production, and gives specific consideration to identified resource values when evaluating the merits of lake-related rezoning and permit applications.

The following section describes the natural features and characteristics of the 11 ponds and lakes in Brighton. Included in these descriptions are an assessment of water quality based on eight indicators when data is available. Those indicators are listed along with the State's averages below.

Water Quality Assessment and State Averages	
Transparency	<p>Transparency is set at a certain water depth. Factors that reduce water clarity are algal blooms, zooplankton, the color of the water, and silt, with algae being the most abundant. In Maine, average SDT readings relate to algal productivity using the following guidelines:</p> <p>Productive = 4 m (13 ft) or less; Moderately Productive = 4 - 8 m (13 - 26 ft); Unproductive = 8 m (26 ft) or greater.</p> <p>In Maine, the current overall average for transparency is 5.5 meters.</p>
Chlorophyll	<p>This test measures the green pigment found in plants, including microscopic algae. This measure is used to estimate algal biomass --the higher the chlorophyll content, the higher the quantity of algae in the lake. Epilimnetic Chlorophyll-a has varied from 0.3 ppb to 182 ppb in Maine lakes, with an average of 5.4 ppb.</p>
Phosphorous	<p>Phosphorus is a major plant nutrient needed for growth; however, high phosphorus levels are often a sign of pollutants entering the waterbody. As levels of phosphorus increase, the quantity of algae increases, resulting in reduced water quality. Maine lakes show variation in Epilimnetic TP from 1.0 ppb to over 426.0 ppb, with an overall average of 11.1 ppb.</p>
Color	<p>This measure refers to the amount of dissolved organic acids such as tannins and lignin, resulting in tea-colored water. The unit of measure for color is Standard Platinum Units or SPU. Color reduces the lake's transparency and increases phosphorus readings. True Color ranges from 0 to 197 SPU in Maine lakes, with an overall average of 20.7 SPU.</p>
Alkalinity	<p>This is the measure of the capacity of the water to neutralize acids (called buffering). A waterbody'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 milligrams per liter (mg/L). Epilimnetic alkalinity samples in Maine lakes have varied from -1.5 milligrams per liter (mg/L) to 190.0mg/L, with an overall average of 11.7 mg/L.</p>
pH	<p>Like 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 to 14, with 7 indicating neutral acidity, 1 being highly acidic, and 14 being highly basic. 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. Epilimnetic pH samples in Maine lakes can vary from 4.2 to 9.6 in Maine, with an overall average of 6.8.</p>
Conductivity	<p>Specific conductivity measures the ability of the water to carry an electrical current and is 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 water, usually in the form of runoff from urban or residential areas and roadways. The average conductivity for all Maine lakes is 53.0 μS.cm (micro-Siemens per centimeter).</p>
Dissolved Oxygen	<p>Adequate levels of dissolved oxygen (DO) in water bodies are essential to most life in the water. 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.</p>

Source: Lakes of Maine- 2025

Epilimnion: the warmer top layer of water in a stratified lake which rests on top of cooler bottom waters. The epilimnion is the section of the lake that usually receives the most light, wind activity, and mixing, and contains most of the biological organisms living in the lake. Many water samples are taken from the epilimnion because of its importance to the biota and productivity of the lake.

Bryant Bog

Area: 4 acres

Invasive species: unknown

No additional information was available for Bryant Bog.

Mayfield Pond

Area: 188 acres

Maximum Depth: 39 feet

Mean Depth: 14 feet

Invasive species: None known

Fisheries management: Cold and warm water

Fish species:	
American Eel (<i>Anguilla rostrata</i>)	Blacknose Dace (<i>Rhinichthys atratulus</i>)
Banded Killifish (<i>Fundulus diaphanous</i>)	Brown Bullhead (<i>Ameiurus nebulosus</i>)
Brook Trout (<i>Salvelinus fontinalis</i>)	Common Shiner (<i>Luxilus cornutus</i>)
Chain Pickerel (<i>Esox niger</i>)	Rainbow Smelt (<i>Osmerus mordax</i>)
Creek Chub (<i>Semotilus atromaculatus</i>)	Golden Shiner (<i>Notemigonus crysoleucas</i>)
Redbreasted Sunfish (<i>Lepomis auratus</i>)	Landlocked Salmon (<i>Salmo salar</i>)
Pumpkinseed (<i>Lepomis gibbosus</i>)	Rainbow Smelt (<i>Osmerus mordax</i>)
White Perch (<i>Morone americana</i>)	Splake (<i>Salvelinus hybrid</i>)
White sucker (<i>Catostomus commersoni</i>)	

Source: Lakes of Maine

There is no record on crayfish, mussels, plants, or Dissolved Oxygen for Mayfield Pond

Loon counts have taken place on Carlton Pond sporadically since 1983. The loon population has varied over the years.

Year	# Adults	# Chicks
2014	4	0
2019	2	0

Source: Lakes of Maine

All the above information indicates that Mayfield Pond has slightly above average water quality when compared to state averages, most likely due to the undeveloped nature of the watershed, including an undeveloped shoreline.

Water Quality Variable	State Average	Mayfield Pond
Transparency	5.5 M	4.8 M
Chlorophyll	5.4 ppb	5.2 ppb
Phosphorous	11.1 ppb	9 ppb
Color	20.7 SPU	16 SPU
Alkalinity	11.7 mg/L	12.7 mg/L
pH	6.8	No data
Conductivity	53.0 μ S/cm	32 μ S/cm
DO		

Palin Pond

Area: 9 acres

Invasive species: None known

No additional information was available for Palin Pond.

Potter Bog Pond

Area: 6 acres

Invasive species: None known

No additional information was available for Potter Bog Pond.

Prentiss Pond

Area: 8 acres

Invasive species: None known

No additional information was available for Prentiss Pond.

Smith (Weeks) Pond

Area: 166 acres

Maximum Depth: 32 feet

Mean Depth: 15 feet

Invasive species: None known

Fisheries management: Cold and warm water

Fish species:	
American Eel (<i>Anguilla rostrata</i>)	Blacknose Dace (<i>Rhinichthys atratulus</i>)
Banded Killifish (<i>Fundulus diaphanous</i>)	Brown Bullhead (<i>Ameiurus nebulosus</i>)
Brook Trout (<i>Salvelinus fontinalis</i>)	Rainbow Smelt (<i>Osmerus mordax</i>)
Chain Pickerel (<i>Esox niger</i>)	Brown trout (<i>Salmo trutta</i>)
Pumpkinseed (<i>Lepomis gibbosus</i>)	White sucker (<i>Catostomus commersoni</i>)
White Perch (<i>Morone americana</i>)	

Source: Lakes of Maine

There is no record on crayfish, mussels, plants, loons, or Dissolved Oxygen for Smith Pond.

Water Quality Assessment:

Variable	State Average	Mayfield Pond
Transparency	5.5 M	5.8 M
Chlorophyll	5.4 ppb	2.8 ppb
Phosphorous	11.1 ppb	8 ppb
Color	20.7 SPU	10 SPU
Alkalinity	11.7 mg/L	15.1 mg/L

pH	6.8	No data
Conductivity	53.0 µS/cm	35 µS/cm

Source: Lakes of Maine

All the above information indicates that Smith Pond has slightly above average water quality in most tested areas when compared to state averages. Smith Pond drains into the Wesserunsett Stream.

Trout Pond

Area: 11 acres

Invasive species: None known

Fisheries management: Warmwater

Fish species:	
Pumpkinseed (<i>Lepomis gibbosus</i>)	Bluegill (<i>Lepomis macrochires</i>)
Banded Killifish (<i>Fundulus diaphanous</i>)	Brown Bullhead (<i>Ameiurus nebulosus</i>)
Brook Trout (<i>Salvelinus fontinalis</i>)	Green sunfish (<i>Lepomis cyanellus</i>)
Chain Pickerel (<i>Esox niger</i>)	Largemouth bass (<i>Micropterus salmoides</i>)
Yellow Perch (<i>Perca flavescens</i>)	Golden Shiner (<i>Notemigonus crysoleucas</i>)
White sucker (<i>Catostomus commersoni</i>)	

Source: Lakes of Maine

There is no record on crayfish, mussels, loons, plants, or water quality data for Mayfield Pond

Wyman Pond

Area: 220 acres

Maximum Depth: 15 feet

Mean Depth: 8 feet

Invasive species: None know

Fisheries management: Warmwater

There is no water quality data for Wyman Pond, nor is there data on crayfish, mussels, loons, or plants. Wyman Pond drains into the Wesserunsett Stream.

Fish species:
Pumpkinseed (<i>Lepomis gibbosus</i>)
Chain Pickerel (<i>Esox niger</i>)
White sucker (<i>Catostomus commersoni</i>)
White Perch (<i>Morone americana</i>)

Source: Lakes of Maine

Threats to Brighton's Water and Natural Resources

The single greatest threat to water quality in Brighton is the introduction of phosphorus through runoff within the watershed. Phosphorus is a naturally occurring nutrient essential for plant growth; however, in excess, it leads to nuisance algal blooms, excessive aquatic plant growth, and reduced dissolved oxygen levels—conditions that can ultimately result in fish die-offs and long-term degradation of waterbodies.

The amount of phosphorus entering local ponds, streams, and lakes is directly linked to human activities that disrupt the watershed. In Brighton, the primary contributors to phosphorus loading include:

- Poorly maintained gravel camp roads and driveways, especially those near shoreline areas;
- Erosion due to lack of vegetative buffers;
- Runoff from impervious surfaces such as rooftops or driveways;
- Fertilizer use for agricultural or lawn care;
- Failing or outdated septic systems, particularly in seasonal homes converted to year-round residences.

Impervious surfaces, when not properly managed, channel stormwater runoff directly into nearby waterbodies. This runoff can pick up phosphorus, oil, sediment, and other pollutants along the way. In Brighton, gravel driveways and camp roads, especially in the Shoreland Zone, are common sources of sediment and phosphorus runoff.

Faulty or undersized septic systems also pose a notable threat—particularly those installed prior to modern standards. While the State of Maine requires a septic inspection for any transfer of property within the Shoreland Zone, this requirement is not triggered when properties are passed down informally through generations without a change in recorded ownership. Unlike some towns, Brighton does not currently require that septic inspection reports be filed with the town, which limits the ability to track system adequacy over time.

Agricultural runoff and fertilizer use near lakes and streams can also contribute to algal blooms. In areas where lawns extend to the water's edge without a natural buffer, stormwater flows unfiltered into the waterbody, carrying nutrients with it.

Brighton's Road Commissioner and Public Works operations follow Best Management Practices (BMPs), particularly when working on or near sensitive areas like streams, culverts, and ditches. Erosion and sedimentation are carefully managed during ditching, grading, and culvert replacement projects, especially given the plantation's network of rural gravel roads.

Salt and sand storage is a known issue. For many years, the town stored road salt uncovered, increasing the risk of chloride runoff, especially near Wesserunsett Stream

and other adjacent waterways. While a new structure has since been built, continued monitoring and future improvements could help minimize environmental impacts.

Although most equipment maintenance now occurs inside the town garage, there is a legacy of older practices, such as oil changes or equipment washing being done outside, which could have contributed to localized contamination.

The Public Works Department makes use of guidance from the Maine Department of Transportation and other state resources to incorporate BMPs into daily maintenance and roadwork routines, helping reduce the risk of runoff and erosion that could impact Brighton's surface waters.

Point and Nonpoint Source Pollution

Point Source Pollution can be linked back to one location, or point, such as a leaking oil tank. Point sources come from a direct source and are easily identified and managed.

Nonpoint Source Pollution cannot be traced to one sole source. One example is stormwater runoff. 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 sources of pollution in Brighton (potential and actual) include:

- The sand/salt storage area, although it is noted by the DEP that it is 600 feet away from the nearest drinking water well. It is, however, near Wesserunset Stream.
- Three ash utilization sites known as the Richmond Site Fields 1, 2, & 3. They are located on Rt 154. Gorbell Thermo Electron Power Co. received a Permit by Rule to land spread wood ash on eight fields totaling 67 acres. The crops grown on the fields are grass and legumes. The license was issued in October 1995.
- The Municipal Landfill, which is a remediation site. Brighton Plantation Municipal Landfill, a one-acre site, is on Route 145. As of 7/30/1996, it is listed by the DEP as "remedy in place- closed".

The state does not have any documentation on nonpoint sources of pollution in Brighton; although any impervious surface has potential for carrying pollutants to waterbodies.

Brighton's Land Use Zoning Ordinance includes language and performance standards specifically to protect natural resources. In fact, Brighton's Comprehensive Plan and Land Use Zoning Ordinance favors the preservation and protection of natural resources over development. The minimal amount of development in Brighton is indicative of the town's preference for preservation of the environment over development.

In the Land Use Zoning Ordinance, Article 4. Performance Standards, details requirements specific to each zoning district in Brighton. Since each district has different allowable land uses, this ensures standards are detailed thoroughly for each zoning district and different land uses.

Wildlife Habitat in Brighton

Waterbodies, watercourses, and wetlands are necessary habitats for the continued survival of many wildlife species. Unfragmented blocks of land are as essential to high-quality habitat as the many watercourses and wetlands found in Brighton because they provide sanctuary for woodland birds, and other wildlife species, including critical habitat for some rare or endangered species.

The extent and quality of wildlife habitat is an indicator of not just the richness and diversity of the flora and fauna in Brighton, 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 growing and 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 Brighton'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.

Due to Brighton's rural nature and vast expanses of privately owned working forest land, there have been minimal surveys done to document important information such as deer

wintering areas, rare or exemplary natural communities, or the presence of endangered species. This lack of information does not mean that these do not exist in Brighton; they are just currently undocumented. And, due to the expanses of unbroken habitat, the likelihood of their existence is significantly increased.

Brook Trout Habitat

Maine supports the most extensive distribution and abundance of wild brook trout (*Salvelinus fontinalis*) in their native range within the United States; more than 1,200 lakes and ponds are managed for brook trout, of which approximately 60 percent are sustained by natural reproduction. In addition, brook trout occur in an estimated 22,248 miles of stream habitat, the vast majority of which are wild.

Although brook trout populations are declining across their historic range within the United States (Maine to Georgia), a 2006 range-wide assessment by the Eastern Brook Trout Joint Venture found that Maine is the only state with extensive, intact populations of wild, self-reproducing brook trout in lakes and ponds, including some lakes over 5,000 acres in size. Lake populations of brook trout are intact in 185 subwatersheds (18 percent) of their historic range in Maine, and only six intact watersheds throughout the 16 other states. Maine is the last true stronghold for stream-dwelling populations of wild brook trout, supporting more than twice the number of intact subwatersheds as the other 16 states in the eastern range combined.

In Brighton, there are several streams documented by BwH that are wild brook trout habitat. They include the stream running out of Mayfield Pond (is there a name for this stream?) and Otter Pond, the area in and around Bryant Bog, and the East Branch of Wesserunsett Stream, as well as the associated tributaries to it.

Undeveloped Habitat Blocks, Connectors, and Conserved Land

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 habitats of these creatures, the large habitat blocks become fragmented, displacing the wildlife that relies on them.

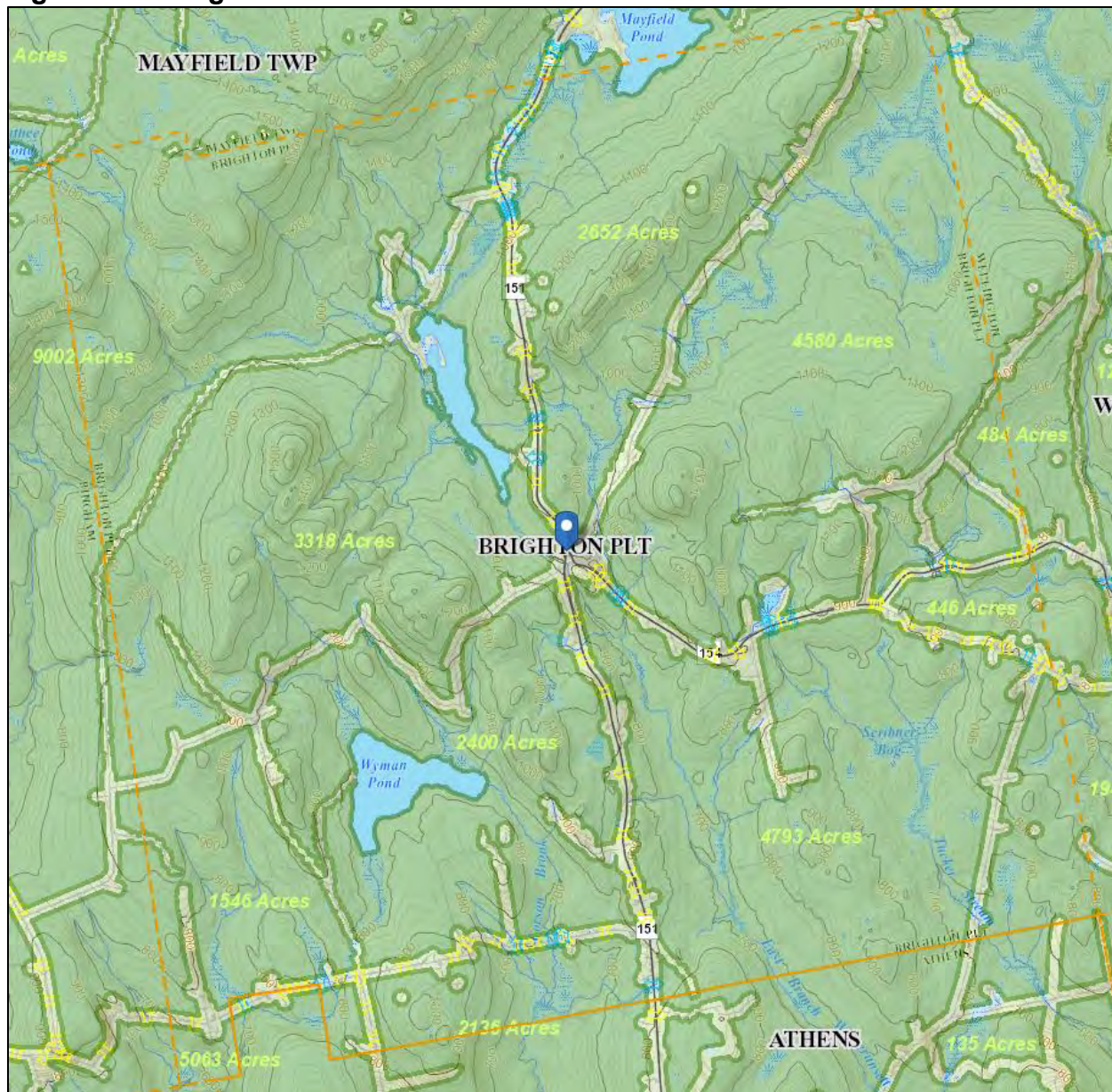
Development in rural areas often causes these fragmentations, reducing the land's value as wildlife habitat. Wildlife travel corridors linking individual habitat blocks together are critical to accommodate animal movement. Ensuring wildlife travel corridors helps preserve the region's biodiversity and 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.

The Beginning with Habitat program maps these unfragmented habitat blocks. The BwH maps include information such as who owns the habitat block and how it is conserved

(federally protected, state protected, municipally owned and protected, or through conservation easement). The *Critical Natural Resources Map* in the Appendix shows these unfragmented blocks, as well.

Of Brighton's approximately 25,152 acres of land area, roughly 80% is owned by Weyerhaeuser, the timber company. Essentially, what this means is that large swaths of working forest account for unfragmented blocks of land in Brighton without formal conservation or preservation status.

Figure 3: Unfragmented Habitat Blocks



Source: *Beginning with Habitat*

Figure 3 Highlights:

- The yellow connectors between the blocks mean there are less than 2,000 vehicle trips a day in that area.
- The blue connectors in riparian habitat also mean less than 2,000 vehicle trips a day.
- Most of Brighton is large, unfragmented habitat blocks.

Regulatory Protections

In addition to state and federal standards to protect water quality, Brighton's Land Use Zoning Ordinance, written in 1995, includes language to provide further protection of natural and water resources (see Existing Land Use chapter for more information). The Land Use Zoning Ordinance includes Shoreland Zoning requirements that are out of date and need updating to reflect the 2015 standards in the Chapter 1000 Guidelines. Brighton has contracted with KVCOG to perform the necessary update to the Land Use Zoning Ordinance after the completion of the Comprehensive Plan.

The Land Use Zoning Ordinance designates five zoning districts for the purpose of protecting water resources:

- General Development District
- Residential Development District
- Shoreland Development District
- General Management District
- Protection District

Of these districts, Shoreland Development, General Management, and Protection Districts are associated with natural resource protection. The purposes of each district are explained below.

The **General Development District** (D-GN on the Brighton Plantation Zoning Map) comprises the area where present and future residential, commercial, industrial and other significant development are considered to be the most desirable in terms of road access, economic viability, concentration of present development and retention of natural character in the remainder of the community.

The purpose of the **Residential Development District** (D-RS on the Brighton Plantation Zoning Map) is to set aside certain areas for single family residential uses so as to provide residential activities apart from areas of commercial and industrial development. The intention is to encourage the concentration of residential type development in areas which are appropriate for that use and prevent development in such areas which are incompatible with residential uses.

The purpose of the **Shoreland Development District** (D-SL on the Brighton Plantation Zoning Map) is to regulate residential and recreational development and other uses so that the development or use will not degrade the waters, recreational potential, fishery habitat, or scenic character in the shoreland areas suitable for development.

The D-SL district extends 250 feet from the normal highwater line of waterbodies. Permits for campsites and non-permanent docking or mooring facilities can be obtained from the Code Enforcement Officer; other allowed land uses require a Conditional Use Permit from the Planning Board. All Conditional Use Permits must conform to Article 4- Performance Standards.

Generally, the minimum lot size is one acre; however, the Land Use Zoning Ordinance reserves the right to require a larger lot size, depending on soil type and conditions. Structures are required to be set back 100 feet from the normal high water line and 25 feet from side and rear lot lines. Maximum allowable lot coverage is 20 percent.

The purpose of the **General Management District** (M-GN on the Brighton Plantation Zoning Map) is to permit forestry and agricultural management activities to occur with minimal interference from unrelated development. In addition, it provides protection of the food supply for wildlife that inhabit the forested areas of the plantation.

Included in the General Management District are areas which do not qualify for inclusion in any other district.

A permit from the Code Enforcement Officer is required for the erection of buildings used primarily for agricultural or forestry management purposes, or accessory structures and uses. All other allowed uses require a Conditional Use Permit from the Planning Board.

The purpose of the **Protection Districts** (denoted as P- on the Brighton Plantation Zoning Map- P-WL for example) are to regulate land uses, to protect the public health, safety and welfare, and to protect sensitive and significant resources such as water bodies, flowing streams, wetlands, floodplains and shoreland. This protection is intended to maintain water quality; and scenic and recreational values; to protect plants, fish, and wildlife habitats; to minimize the economic and human costs of floods; and to maintain the groundwater table and ground water recharge and discharge areas.

These following areas are included in the Protection District designation:

- All shoreland of major standing waters designated on the Brighton Plantation Zoning map as P-GP with a width of 250 feet from the normal high water mark.
- All shoreland of minor flowing water designated on the Brighton Plantation Zoning Map as P-SL2 with a width of 75 feet from the normal high water mark.
- Deer wintering areas designated on the Brighton Plantation Zoning Map as P-FW.
- Wetlands designated on the Zoning Map as P-WL, including beds or rivers, streams, and lakes.
- Floodplains designated on the Zoning Map as P-FP.

The only type of permit that can be issued from the Code Enforcement Officer is for a non-permanent dock or mooring facility. All other allowed land uses require a Conditional Use Permit issued after review by the Planning Board.

All structures permitted in the Protection District require a setback of at least 75 feet from the normal high water mark (not including structures that require direct access to the water for operational necessities). The Land Use Planning Commission requires varying setbacks depending on the resource, so this will need to be adjusted where applicable in the land use ordinance update.

All Conditional Use Permits must conform to Article 4- Performance Standards.

Brighton Plantation strives to adequately protect natural resources by providing appropriate locations throughout town intended for commercial, industrial, and residential, as well as providing appropriate districts for recreational endeavors. These district designations should serve to direct certain development to districts where it can be accommodated and away from sensitive areas or areas of critical natural resources.

Brighton's Land Use Zoning Ordinance is the first line of protection for watersheds, water bodies, sensitive natural areas, and water quality. As such, when the Ordinance is updated it should include standards, such as Best Management Practices (BMPs) for construction to reduce phosphorus run off, 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. In addition, standards must be comparable to current LUPC standards for requirements such as wildlife corridors in future subdivision developments.

To preserve and protect water quality, it is imperative that the Land Use Zoning Ordinance is reviewed and updated regularly. Regular updates will ensure the most current standards and practices are included, providing the utmost protection to Brighton's abundant natural resources.

Local and Regional Coordination

At present, Brighton Plantation has limited formal local or regional coordination efforts related to natural resource protection. Most of the land within the plantation is privately owned by large timber companies, and no land is currently under formal conservation easement or land trust protection. While the town does not have official partnerships with land trusts or watershed organizations, there is opportunity for future collaboration, particularly given Brighton's significant natural resources and proximity to shared watersheds.

Recreational and community coordination does exist in some forms. Brighton shares its solid waste disposal facility with the neighboring unorganized territory of Kingsbury, and participates in youth recreation programs (such as swimming and sports leagues) with Athens and other nearby towns where local children attend school. The town also works

informally with local snowmobile clubs to support access and trail maintenance across both public and private lands.

As the town continues to update its land use regulations and comprehensive plan, it may consider building new partnerships with regional conservation groups, watershed coalitions, or state resource agencies to support long-term protection of Brighton's forests, wetlands, and waterbodies.

Analysis

- Brighton Plantation consists of approximately 25,152 acres of land area and approximately 448 acres of water.
- Scenic areas are mostly situated near the plantation's great ponds and mountain tops i.e. Wyman Pond and Kelly Mountain
- There are three significant aquifers in Brighton.
- There are numerous rivers, streams, ponds, lakes, wetlands, and other waterbodies in Brighton.
- All rivers and streams in Brighton are classified as either Class A or Class B waterbodies.
- There are six watersheds in Brighton. The Higgins Stream watershed is part of the much larger Great Moose Lake Watershed which spans across several counties.
- There are an abundance of high quality wetlands throughout Brighton.
- Vernal pools have yet to be documented and mapped in Brighton.
- None of Brighton's Great Ponds meet the GPA waterbody classification.
- All lakes and ponds that had available water quality data were on slightly above state average.
- The biggest threats to Brighton's water quality are: phosphorus runoff from poorly maintained gravel roads and driveways, aging or failing septic systems near shoreland areas, historical industrial practices such as outdoor oil changes and unregulated waste disposal, legacy salt storage issues, and potential contamination from past sludge spreading on timberland.
- The municipal landfill is a known radiation site, though it has been closed since 1996.
- Minimal information on wildlife habitat in Brighton was available.
- Brighton consists of several large blocks of unfragmented habitat, as do the surrounding towns.
- The Land Use Zoning Ordinance divides the town into five land use districts; three of which are aimed at natural resource protection.
- The Land Use Zoning Ordinance will be updated upon the completion of the Comprehensive Plan update.
- Brighton Plantation has minimal regional coordination, limited primarily to shared services like solid waste disposal with Kingsbury and recreational programming with neighboring towns such as Athens.

Chapter 4: 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. This chapter reports on the economy from two perspectives: statistical information and local business issues.

Brighton's Median 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 entire town divided by its population, and median household income, which is the average income of the households within the town. For planning purposes, the median household income is more helpful than the per capita income.

Per capita income (PCI) data 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 town population number, 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.

Table 1: Brighton Plantation's Per Capita Vs. median Household Incomes

	Brighton
Per Capita Household Income	\$18,256
Median Household Income	\$50,750

Source: 2022 American Community Survey & Censusreporter.org

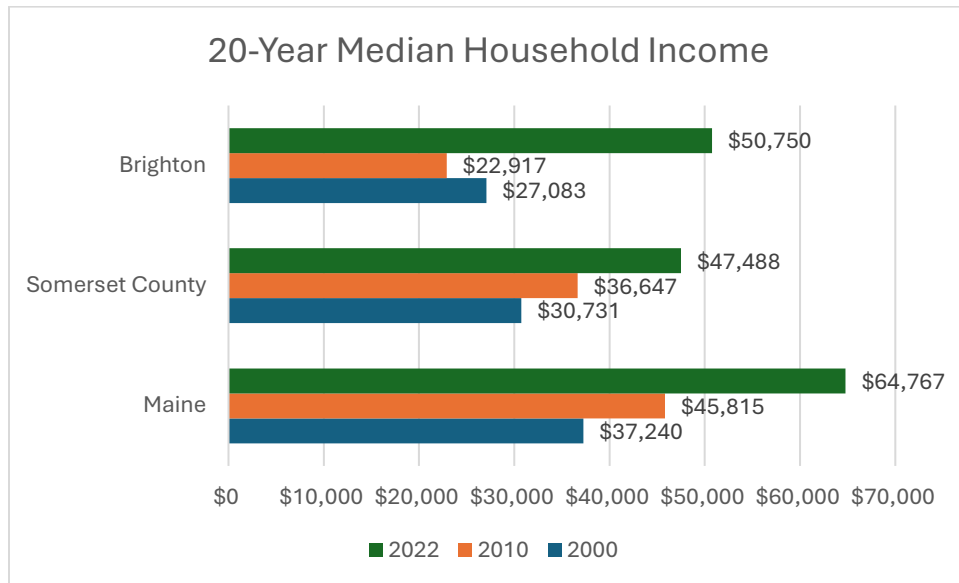
Median household income represents the total gross income received by all members of a household within a 12-month period. The median divides the income distribution into two equal parts: one half of the cases falling below the median income, and one half above the median income. Two factors distinguish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

- 1) decreasing household size over time,
- 2) changes in the number of members of the household with income.

Figure 1 shows changes to median household income over a 20-year period for Brighton, Somerset County and the State of Maine. In that 20-year period:

- Brighton's median household income increased by 87 percent.
- Somerset County's median household income increased by 55 percent.
- Maine's median household income increased by 74 percent.

Figure 1: Increase in Median Household Income*



Source: 2000 Census, 2010 and 2020 ACS

* Income has been adjusted for inflation

Brighton's median household income is higher than that of Somerset County, likely because there are so many fewer households in Brighton, resulting in a much smaller sample size of population. When looking at median income data for smaller populations, like that of Brighton Plantation, the numbers can sometimes be skewed or seem higher than they really are due to the small size of the community. In places with fewer people, a few individuals with significantly higher incomes can dramatically raise the median income. Since the median represents the middle point of a data set, even one or two high earners can make the median appear much higher than the income levels of most residents.

For example, if Brighton Plantation has only a handful of households and one or two of them have particularly high incomes, the median income will be pulled up by those few. This doesn't necessarily reflect the typical income for the majority of the population. Larger populations tend to have a wider range of incomes, so the median figure tends to be more representative of the general population. In a small community, however, the effect of a small number of high earners can create a misleading impression of the area's overall economic standing.

These income levels are also a way to assess housing affordability. 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.

For example, in Somerset County, 80 percent of the AMI by family size is as follows:

Family of 1: \$46,150

Family of 5: \$71,200

Family of 2: \$52,750
Family of 3: \$59,350
Family of 4: \$65,900

Family of 6: \$76,450
Family of 7: \$81,750
Family of 8: \$87,000

This data is from 2024 and can be found on the Maine Housing website (https://www.mainehousing.org/docs/default-source/homeimprovement/80-ami-income-limits.pdf?sfvrsn=6df08615_5). In Brighton, 80 percent of the median household income is \$40,600. Roughly 44 percent of Brighton's 26 households earn less than this income level.

The American Community Survey identified 16 households with social security income, about 62 percent of all households. It also identified 14 households with retirement income; however, there is probably a significant overlap between these categories. The 2022 ACS identified only 3 families with public assistance income.

Local Labor Force and Employment

Labor force is defined as the sum of employed and unemployed persons, thus being in the labor force is not the same as being employed.

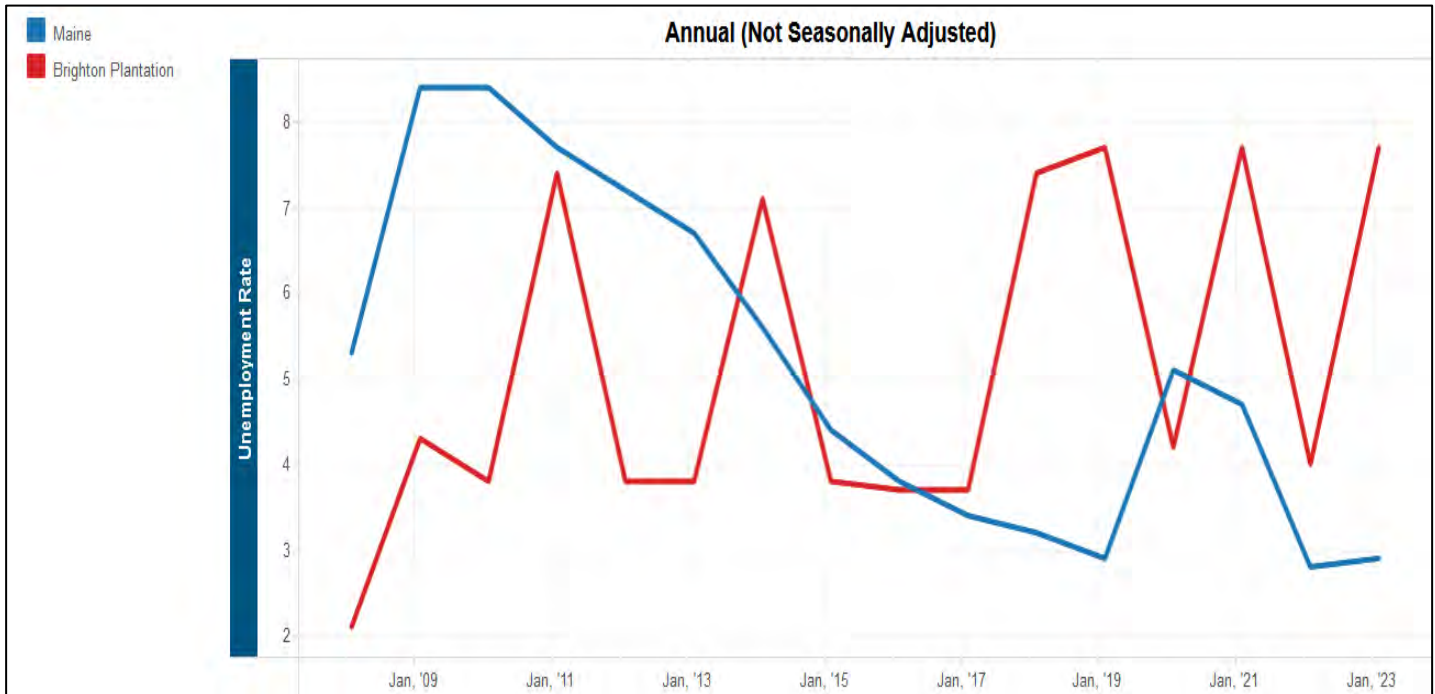
Unemployment rates are reported by the Maine Department of Labor (MDOL). The MDOL conducts surveys and is generally more accurate than the Census or ACS. Figure 2 is a graph of unemployment in the State of Maine and Brighton Plantation.

Figure 2- Unemployment Statistics in Maine and Brighton Plantation

Year	Month	Geography	Area Name	Civilian Labor Force	Employment	Unemployment	Unemployment Rate
2023	-	State	Maine	687,322	667,619	19,703	2.9%
		City/Town	Brighton Plantation	26	24	2	7.7%
2022	-	State	Maine	681,172	661,833	19,339	2.8%
		City/Town	Brighton Plantation	25	24	1	4.0%
2021	-	State	Maine	688,542	656,138	32,404	4.7%
		City/Town	Brighton Plantation	26	24	2	7.7%
2020	-	State	Maine	671,979	637,985	33,994	5.1%
		City/Town	Brighton Plantation	24	23	1	4.2%
2019	-	State	Maine	698,261	678,011	20,250	2.9%
		City/Town	Brighton Plantation	26	24	2	7.7%
2018	-	State	Maine	700,856	678,584	22,272	3.2%
		City/Town	Brighton Plantation	27	25	2	7.4%
2017	-	State	Maine	703,871	680,164	23,707	3.4%
		City/Town	Brighton Plantation	27	26	1	3.7%
2016	-	State	Maine	693,917	667,723	26,194	3.8%
		City/Town	Brighton Plantation	27	26	1	3.7%
2015	-	State	Maine	687,859	657,550	30,309	4.4%

Source: MDOL

Figure 3- Unemployment Graph for Maine and Brighton Plantation



Source: MDOL

Figures 2 and 3 show Brighton’s civilian labor force, as well as employment and unemployment rate compared with the state. Brighton has cyclical trends of highs and lows, which happen more frequently than the highs and lows seen at the state level, likely because the state is on a much larger scale. The trend caused by the pandemic is easily visible on the state level, but not evident for Brighton Plantation in and around 2020. This cyclical nature is also influenced by the seasonal work that many residents participate in, particularly in trades and forestry. These industries often experience fluctuations based on the time of year, contributing to the more frequent changes in employment and unemployment rates seen in Brighton compared to the state as a whole.

Labor Market Area

Brighton Plantation is a contributor to the Skowhegan Labor Market Area (LMA), detailed in Table 2 below.

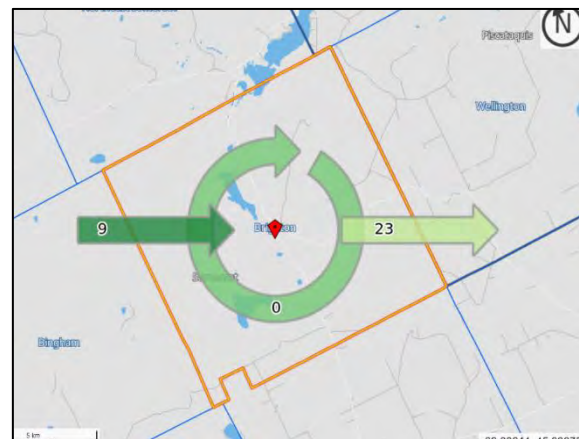
Table 3: Labor Force and Employment in the Skowhegan LMA & Brighton

Year	Geography	Civilian Labor Force	Employment	Unemployment	Unemployment Rate
2023	Skowhegan LMA	13,524	12,977	547	4.0%
	Brighton	26	24	2	7.7%
2020	Skowhegan LMA	13,359	12,531	828	6.2%
	Brighton	24	23	1	4.2%
2015	Skowhegan LMA	14,478	13,550	928	6.4%
	Brighton	26	25	1	3.8%
2010	Skowhegan LMA	14,960	13,256	1,704	11.4%
	Brighton	26	25	1	3.8%

Source: Maine Department of Labor

Commuting to Work

Brighton has no residents who are employed in town. There are, however, nine people who live outside of town and commute to Brighton Plantation for work.² 23 Brighton residents commute elsewhere for work (Figures 5 and 6).











Source: 2021 ACS

Figure 4- Inflow/Outflow of Commuters

² The Comprehensive Plan Committee felt this number could be misrepresented as there is not much industry in Brighton Plantation. Instead, this could account for those who work at a business located in Brighton but conducts work in other towns across the state.











Figure 5- Where Workers Live Who are Employed in Brighton

<u>All County Subdivisions</u>	9	100.0%
 <u>Harmony town (Somerset, ME)</u>	2	22.2%
 <u>Bingham town (Somerset, ME)</u>	1	11.1%
 <u>Franklin town (Hancock, ME)</u>	1	11.1%
 <u>Harpswell town (Cumberland, ME)</u>	1	11.1%
 <u>Penobscot Indian Island Reservation (Penobscot, ME)</u>	1	11.1%
 <u>Skowhegan town (Somerset, ME)</u>	1	11.1%
 <u>Solon town (Somerset, ME)</u>	1	11.1%
 <u>Sullivan town (Hancock, ME)</u>	1	11.1%
All Other Locations	0	0.0%

Source: 2021 ACS

Figure 5 shows where people live who commute to Brighton and Figure 6 shows where Brighton residents travel for employment. All data is for year-round workers; no information on seasonal workers was available.

Figure 6- Work Destination for Brighton Residents

	Count	Share
<u>All County Subdivisions</u>	23	100.0%
 <u>Athens town (Somerset, ME)</u>	3	13.0%
 <u>Harmony town (Somerset, ME)</u>	3	13.0%
 <u>Skowhegan town (Somerset, ME)</u>	3	13.0%
 <u>Bangor city (Penobscot, ME)</u>	2	8.7%
 <u>Augusta city (Kennebec, ME)</u>	1	4.3%
 <u>Brewer city (Penobscot, ME)</u>	1	4.3%
 <u>Brunswick town (Cumberland, ME)</u>	1	4.3%
 <u>Clinton town (Kennebec, ME)</u>	1	4.3%
 <u>Dover-Foxcroft town (Piscataquis, ME)</u>	1	4.3%
 <u>Greenville town (Piscataquis, ME)</u>	1	4.3%
All Other Locations	6	26.1%

Source: 2021 ACS

Job Types

Table 4 broadly lists the occupational categories of Brighton’s workers for 2015 and 2022.

Table 4: Occupational Profile for Brighton

Occupation	2015	2022
Total Employed	26	20
Management, business, science, and art	3	5
Service	8	4
Sales and Office	5	2
Natural resource, construction, and maintenance	4	9
Production, transportation, and material moving	6	0

Source: 2015 & 2022 ACS

In 2015 nearly 23 percent of the labor force was employed in the category ‘production, transportation, and material moving’. In 2022, no Brighton residents were employed in this occupational category. The ‘service’ category also decreased between 2015 to 2022, while the ‘natural resources, construction, and maintenance’ category more than doubled in this time.

Brighton’s workforce can also be broken down by industry of employment, as in Table 5. This is not as specific as describing a person’s actual job because, for example, manufacturing may include secretaries, managers, sales staff and skilled workers all together. However, breaking industries down in this way provides information to gauge which sectors of the economy are doing well. An additional advantage is that this is the classification that the Maine DOL uses for its annual updates.

Table 5: Industrial Classification for Brighton

Industry	2015	2022
Total Employed	26	20
Agriculture, forestry, fishing, hunting, and mining	5	5
Construction	0	9
Manufacturing	0	0
Wholesale trade	0	0
Retail trade	5	0
Transportation and warehousing, and utilities	4	0
Information	0	0
Finance and insurance, and real estate and rental and leasing	0	0
Professional, scientific, and management, and administrative and waste management services	2	0
Educational services, health care and social assistance	10	6
Arts, entertainment, and recreation, and accommodation and food services	0	0
Other services, except public administration	0	0
Public administration	0	0

Source: 2015 & 2022 ACS

In Table 5, the 'agriculture, forestry, fishing, hunting, and mining category retained the same amount of Brighton workers, while all other categories, besides construction, decreased. From Table 5, it appears that the categories 'agriculture, forestry, fishing, hunting, and mining' and 'educational services, health care and social assistance' are the strongholds of the local economy.

Brighton's Local Business Climate

Brighton has a small local economy, with most businesses being inconspicuous home occupations or small enterprises. The town encourages home-based businesses, such as farm stands, as they align with the rural character and have minimal impact on traffic or natural resources. While there is no opposition to larger commercial or industrial development, such projects would need to be in keeping with the town's rural atmosphere and ensure there are no adverse effects on traffic or the environment.

Currently, Brighton has no defined priorities for economic development besides that it must be in a location that can support that type of development without causing adverse effects to natural resources. Considerations include appropriate soil, topography, road access, proximity to wetlands, and existing land use patterns.

Brighton does not have public utilities such as municipal water, sewer, three-phase power, or broadband, and there are no plans to introduce these services in the future. Any

proposed development in the Plantation is expected to operate within the existing constraints, without the support of these amenities. The type of economic development that would require such utilities is neither anticipated nor welcomed in Brighton.

Brighton does not have any economic development incentives such as Tax Increment Financing District, as the town does not wish to encourage an excessive amount of development or large scale development. For appropriate economic development, the Land Use Zoning Ordinance details specific districts and requirements for approval, including performance standards to allow the town's Planning Board oversight.

Forestry and Agriculture

Brighton's primary economic driver is the vast expanse of working forest in and around the town. Timber company giant, Weyerhaeuser owns approximately 25,152 acres of commercial forest in Brighton, which is about 80% percent of the town's land area. The remaining land not owned by Weyerhaeuser is largely forested, as well.

Brighton has small-scale agriculture, primarily consisting of personal hobby farms and farm stands. The plantation's hilly terrain and short growing season limit large-scale farming. Forestry, while a significant part of the local economy, operates outside of the town, with large commercial foresters transporting products through town to large mills, such as SAPPI in Skowhegan. These forestry operations do not typically employ local residents, as the work is carried out by external crews

The Agriculture and Forestry chapter of this plan details the parcels enrolled in the Tree Growth Tax Law Program and harvest production information. The logging industry and forestry management operations are likely the reason the occupational category of natural resource, construction, and maintenance increased, and the job category of agriculture, forestry, fishing, hunting, and mining stayed the same between 2015 and 2022.

Unique Assets

Brighton Plantation boasts several unique assets, including a wealth of recreational opportunities that attract outdoor enthusiasts year-round. The town is home to well-maintained ATV trails and snowmobile routes, offering exciting terrain for those who enjoy winter pursuits. In addition, Brighton's proximity to nearby ski areas allows for easy access to skiing and snowboarding, making it an appealing destination for winter sports enthusiasts. The area is also rich in historic resources, with sites that reflect the town's past and its rural heritage. While there is a clear opportunity to expand tourism, such as developing more outdoor recreation, promoting its historic sites, or creating additional lodging options, these opportunities have yet to be fully realized, leaving room for future growth in tourism.

Regulation of Economic Development

Brighton's Land Use Zoning Ordinance includes the following five land use districts:

1. General Development District
2. Residential Development District
3. Shoreland Development District
4. General Management District
5. Protection Districts

Permit requirements are dependent upon the land use activity and the district. Different permit types include:

No permit required

Permit issued by the Code Enforcement Officer

Conditional Use Permit granted after review and approval by the Planning Board

General Development District: This district comprises the area where present and future residential, commercial, industrial and other significant development are considered to be the most desirable in terms of road access, economic viability, concentration of present development, and retention of natural character in the remainder of the community.

Residential Development District: The purpose of this District is to set aside certain areas for single family residential uses to provide for residential activities apart from areas of commercial and industrial development. The intention is to encourage the concentration of residential type development in areas which are appropriate for the use and to prevent development in such areas which is incompatible with residential uses.

Shoreland Development District: The purpose of this district is to regulate residential and recreational development and other uses so that the development or use will not degrade the waters, recreational potential, fishery habitat, or scenic character in shoreland areas suitable for development.

Protection Districts: The purposes of these districts are to regulate land uses to protect the public health, safety and welfare and to protect sensitive and significant resources in the beds and waters of all water bodies (including lakes and ponds), flowing streams, wetlands, floodplains and in shoreland areas along such water bodies in order to maintain water quality and scenic and recreational values; to protect plant, fish, and wildlife habitat; to minimize the economic and human costs of floods; and to maintain the groundwater table and groundwater recharge and discharge areas.

General Management District: The purpose of this district is to permit forestry and agricultural management activities to occur with minimal interference from unrelated development. In addition, it provides protection of the food supply for wildlife that inhabit the forested areas of the plantation.

Under Brighton's existing Land Use Zoning Ordinance, commercial and industrial development are generally permitted in two districts: the General Development District

and the Shoreland Development District. For the Shoreland Development District, the only commercial and industrial uses that are permitted are those which require a shoreland location to function.

In both districts, any commercial and industrial uses must comply with the performance standards outlined in Article 4 and require a Conditional Use Permit, granted after the Planning Board reviews and approves the application.

Brighton's Land Use Zoning Ordinance was adopted by the town in 1995 and needs an update, which is scheduled to happen concurrently with the update of this Comprehensive Plan. Updating the Ordinance would provide more up-to-date standards and requirements to further protect the town's natural resources, direct growth, and preserve rural areas.

Summary of Analysis

Historically, Brighton's economic growth has happened in incremental changes.

Brighton's abundant outdoor activities and recreational opportunities draw many visitors every year and every season, a virtue the town would like to continue to promote.

Brighton's labor force has changed little over the past decade. The unemployment rate is low, but that's related to the low population numbers. Brighton is within commuting distance of the Skowhegan Labor Market Area, which is where most of the town's working population commutes.

Minimal economic development has taken place in Brighton in the past decade and that trend is anticipated to continue in the coming decade. The town's Land Use Zoning Ordinance delineates a district in which appropriate economic growth will be directed. The Land Use Zoning Ordinance will be updated to include new standards to protect natural resources and to make the document more user-friendly.

Chapter 5: Brighton's Housing Profile

Note: The population figures in this plan range from 62 to 86. The higher estimate of 86 comes from the American Community Survey (ACS), while the lower figure of 62 is based on the U.S. Census, which is more accurate but outdated. Some tables use the ACS estimate because related data was calculated using that number. Replacing it with the Census figure would result in inconsistencies. It's important to note this difference to avoid confusion, as it may appear to be an error when it is not. These discrepancies are noted throughout the document where relevant.

The Housing Stock

Brighton's housing supply and prices determine the potential for future growth in the town, as well as the diversity of opportunities. A mixture of housing types encourages a mixture of residents – young and old, singles and large families, as well as different economic classes.

The 2020 Census shows Brighton has 80 total housing units, 30 occupied units, and 50 vacant (seasonal) units. In contrast, the 2023 ACS data show Brighton as having 87 total housing units, 28 occupied units, and 59 vacant (seasonal) units. Table 1 below highlights the disparities between the 2020 Census data and the 2023 ACS data.

Table 1: Differences in 2020 Census vs. 2020 ACS Data Compared to 2010 Census Data

	2020 Census Data	2023 ACS Data	2010 Census/ACS Data
Population	62	86	38
Total Housing Units	80	87	56
Occupied Housing Units	30	28	15
Vacant Housing Units	50	59	41
Seasonal Use Only	45	59	32
Households	30	28	15

Source: 2010 ACS & Census, 2020 Census, 2023 ACS

The variations between the 2020 Census data and the 2023 ACS data may be a result of the three-year difference in data collection and because the ACS is more estimate-based from a smaller sample size than the Census. Regardless, the numbers are similar enough that the 2023 ACS will be used throughout this chapter.

Based on projections by the Office of the State Economist, by the year 2040 Brighton's full-time population is estimated to be 54, a decrease of 8 residents. With the current average household size (3.07), a population of 54 would need approximately 18 houses for this population size. Brighton's current occupied housing stock is 28 houses. This projected population decrease would mean that 10 houses in Brighton would no longer be needed in the next 15 years.

It is important to remember that there are many outside factors that influence population changes and that projects may not be accurate; they are based solely on past trends. With the changes brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic, it is not possible to predict the future based on past trends.

One important variable that could significantly impact Brighton's future housing landscape is the potential sale of large land holdings by timber companies. Approximately 80% of the land in Brighton is owned by timber companies, with Weyerhaeuser being the dominant landholder. While current development has remained low-density and seasonal, this could shift if substantial tracts are sold for residential or recreational development. Weyerhaeuser has already sold parcels in neighboring communities, contributing to a rise in seasonal camps and private lots. If similar sales occur in Brighton, it could lead to increased development pressure and changes in housing demand. However, Brighton currently lacks the infrastructure necessary to support large-scale or year-round residential development — including no public sewer, water, or three-phase electrical service. This presents significant limitations for any future growth and underscores the need to consider long-term infrastructure capacity, road access, and emergency services. Additionally, any increase in residential activity could have implications for environmental conservation and natural resource protection, especially if development occurs near sensitive areas such as wetlands, forest habitat, or key watersheds. As such, monitoring land sales and proactively considering zoning and land use policies will be essential to ensure that any future development aligns with the community's vision and capacity.

In Table 2, 2023 ACS data was used for comparison, because not all the 2020 Census data was available, and calculations were made (by the Census Bureau) using the ACS data. Table 3 shows the development of housing by type since 2000.

Table 2: Housing: Type and Occupancy from 2000 to 2023

	2000	2010	2023
Total Housing Units	73	56	87
Occupied Housing Units	37	15	28
Vacant Housing Units	36	41	59
Seasonal Housing Units	31	32	59
Mobile Homes	10	3	0
Owner Occupied Housing	30	12	14
Renter Occupied Housing	57	3	14
Single Family Housing Unit (attached and detached) Including Mobile Homes (out of total housing stock)	62	53	87
Two or More Unit Housing	0	0	0

Source: 2000, 2010, & 2023 ACS

Table 2 Highlights:

- The data for 2010 appears to be skewed.
- Total housing units increased by 19 percent between 2000 and 2023.
- The number of seasonal housing units stay about the same from 2000 to 2010, then increased 84 percent.
- In 2023, all the vacant units were also seasonal. There were no year-round houses that were vacant.
- The number of people renting in Brighton increased significantly between 2000 and 2023.
- There is no record of any duplexes or multifamily housing in Brighton.

Brighton's average household size has fluctuated over the last several decades. Smaller household sizes are an important factor to consider with housing because they affect the amount, size, and type of housing that will be needed in the future. For example, an increase in people living alone equates to the need for more housing to accommodate the same number of people.

Average household size is defined by the American Community Survey as those living together, related or not. This is opposed to average family size, which strictly refers to those living together and are related.

Table 3: Average Household Size Fluctuations

Year	2000	2010	2015	2020	2023
Average Household Size	2.61	2.53	2.17	3.33	3.07

Source: 2000, 2010, 2015, 2020, 2023 Census/ACS

Table 3 Highlights:

- The average household size in Brighton decreased from 2000 to 2015.
- After 2015, the average household size in Brighton appeared to jump by 53 percent — a sharp increase that reflects the quirks of working with very small population numbers rather than a dramatic demographic shift. In a community as small as Brighton, even the addition or subtraction of just a few households can significantly skew averages and percentages. This statistic should be interpreted with caution, as it likely reflects normal fluctuations rather than a meaningful long-term trend.
- The average household size decreased by about 8 percent between 2020 and 2023.

Table 3 shows the average household size for all households in Brighton. Shrinking household size is a national trend. Almost all social and economic factors favor smaller households – more independent living among youth and elderly, smaller families, and more single-parent families.

The average household size, according to the 2023 ACS, was 3.07 people per household. Comparatively, the average household size for those who rent was 1.71 people per household, whereas the average household size for owner-occupied housing was 4.43 people per household.

Smaller households tend to be in flux more than larger households and they tend to be renters. Based on the 2023 ACS, Brighton has 14 renter-occupied units (75 percent decrease since 2000) and 14 owner-occupied units (53 percent increase since 2000). As of 2023, 50 percent of people living in Brighton were renters.

To some extent, the household size statistics relate to the type of housing that will be in demand, as well as the quantity of houses needed. Young and old households (seniors and singles) tend to prefer smaller houses than average. A specific type of housing suits them, such as apartments, retirement communities, or just smaller houses. Large lot subdivisions typically attract families with children. As the baby boomer generation reaches retirement age, there is an increased likelihood that the market for large family housing will be greatly reduced in favor of smaller, more efficient housing.

Seasonal Housing

The number of seasonal housing units in Brighton increased only slightly between 2000 and 2010; however, a more noticeable rise occurred between 2010 and 2023. This uptick may be attributed in part to the COVID-19 pandemic, when many people sought out rural areas as a refuge from more densely populated regions. According to the 2025

community survey, 36.36% of respondents identified as year-round residents, while 27.27% were non-resident property owners and another 27.27% reported occasional use—illustrating the seasonal nature of land use in Brighton. Despite the overall increase in seasonal units, there is no clear trend of camps being converted into year-round residences or vice versa. Seasonal and year-round housing continue to exist as distinct categories within the community, reflecting longstanding patterns of use rather than a shift in occupancy type.

Housing Conditions

Very little statistical data exists on the age and condition of the town's housing stock. The Census does ask questions such as how old a house is and whether it has modern plumbing and heating systems, but this is based on a statistical sample. Frequently, these samples are so small in a plantation the size of Brighton that they are little more than a guess.

The 2023 ACS indicates that 27 of the 28 occupied houses in Brighton have complete plumbing facilities and all occupied houses have complete kitchen facilities and telephone service. No occupied houses were reported as having more than one person per room, an indication of overcrowding.

Very little statistical data exists on the age and condition of Brighton's housing stock. While the U.S. Census and American Community Survey (ACS) collect information such as the age of structures and whether homes have modern plumbing or heating systems, these results are drawn from statistical samples. In a plantation as small as Brighton, the sample size is often too small to draw meaningful conclusions, making the data more of a rough estimate than an accurate reflection.

The 2023 ACS, for example, reports that 27 of the 28 occupied housing units in Brighton have complete plumbing facilities, and that all have complete kitchen facilities and telephone service. It also notes that none of the occupied homes experience overcrowding, with no units reporting more than one person per room. However, this data likely misses important nuances of rural living in Brighton. Many residents are drawn to the area specifically because of its remoteness and lack of municipal infrastructure, embracing an off-grid lifestyle that may include solar power, composting toilets, wood heat, and satellite phone or internet service. These choices allow residents to live independently of traditional utility systems — a lifestyle not always accurately captured in federal surveys. As such, while official data may suggest conventional standards of housing service, the lived reality in Brighton often reflects a deliberate preference for self-sufficiency and low-impact living.

The age of housing structures can often be used as an indicator of housing conditions with varying degrees of accuracy. While some older homes are structurally very sound, they may have inadequate wiring, inefficient insulation, or contain hazardous materials like lead paint or asbestos. It should be noted that this age estimate is provided by Census responders.

Table 4: Age of Housing Stock in Brighton, Maine

Year Structure was Built	# of Homes	Percent of Total
1939 or earlier	28	32%
1940-1949	0	0
1950-1959	0	0
1960-1969	0	0
1970-1979	13	14.9%
1980-1989	0	0
1990-1999	18	20.7%
2000-2009	14	16.1%
2010-2019	14	16.1%
2020 or later	0	0

Source: 2023 ACS

Table 4 Highlights:

- A considerable portion of the homes in Brighton were built prior to 1939.
- There was another building spurt around 1970-1979.
- 46 (around 53%) of Brighton's housing stock was built between 1990 and 2019.

Price and Affordability

The price and affordability of housing is often a significant factor in the economic life of a town or plantation. Housing prices are generally set by the open market, but if supply and demand get out of balance it can result in insufficient housing availability, unaffordability for prospective workers, and it could result in residents relocating to another area because they cannot afford local housing.

The growth management goal for affordable housing states that 10 percent of new housing should be affordable to households making less than 80 percent of the median household income. How this goal is attained is left up to the town to determine, such as if that ten percent should be as stick-built homes, mobile homes, rental properties, or elderly apartments.

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.

In Somerset County, 80 percent of the AMI by household size is as follows:

Table 5: 80% Area Median Income Limits by Family Size

Family Size	Income Limit for Family Size
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Family of 1	\$47,600
Family of 2	\$54,400
Family of 3	\$61,200
Family of 4	\$68,000
Family of 5	\$73,450
Family of 6	\$78,900
Family of 7	\$84,350
Family of 8	\$89,800

Source: https://www.mainehousing.org/docs/default-source/homeimprovement/80-ami-income-limits.pdf?sfvrsn=6df08615_5

The determination of whether housing is affordable begins with the consideration of cost. The Census usually provides adequate, though sample-sized, data regarding the price of housing. It is imperative to bear in mind that these prices are derived through owners' estimation of their home's value, meaning they do not necessarily match up with actual recorded sales prices, assessor evaluation, or real estate appraisals.

Due to the origins of this data and the sample size from Brighton, this data is likely highly inaccurate. Unfortunately, there are few other data sources from which to obtain more accurate data. For this reason, the margin of error is significant and should be considered when reviewing the information throughout this chapter and Plan.

In the following tables, the values used are that of 'specified housing' which means they are owner-occupied, one-housing unit structures, on less than 10 acres without a commercial establishment or medical office on the property.

Table 6: Value of Owner-Occupied Housing Units From 2000 to 2010

	2000	2010	Change
Median Value of Specified Housing Units	\$26,300	\$77,500	\$51,200 (195%)
Number of Units Valued at:			
Less Than \$50,000	13	0	-13 (-100%)
\$50,000 - \$99,999	2	7	5 (250%)
\$100,000 - \$149,999	0	2	2 (100%)
\$150,000 - \$199,999	0	3	3 (100%)
\$200,000 - \$299,999	0	0	0
\$300,000 - \$499,999	0	0	0
\$500,000 - \$999,999	0	0	0
\$1,000,000 or more	0	0	0

Source: 2000 & 2010 ACS

Table 6 Highlights:

- The median housing price increased between 2000 to 2010 by 195 percent, or \$51,200.
- In 2000, there were 13 homes valued at less than \$50,000.
- In 2010, no homes were valued at less than \$50,000.
- In 2010, there were an increase in homes valued between \$50,000 to \$99,999 and homes valued between \$ 100,000 to \$149,000.

Table 7: Value of Owner-Occupied Housing Units From 2010 to 2023

	2010		Change
Median Value of Specified Housing Units	\$74,500	N/A	N/A
Number of Units Valued at:			
Less Than \$50,000	0	2	2 (100%)
\$50,000 - \$99,999	7	3	-4 (-57%)
\$100,000- \$149,999	2	0	-2 (-100%)
\$150,000 - \$199,999	3	1	-2 (-67%)
\$200,000 - \$299,999	0	3	3 (100%)
\$300,000 - \$499,999	0	0	0
\$500,000 - \$999,999	0	0	0
\$1,000,000 or more	0	5	5 (100%)

Source: 2010 & 2023 ACS

Table 7 Highlights:

- The median home price for homes in Brighton was not available after 2017. In 2017, the median home value was \$67,500, which seems inaccurate.
- In 2023, there were 2 homes valued at less than \$50,000, an increase from 0 in 2010.
- In 2023, there were fewer homes at lower values, such as the \$50,000 to \$99,999 and \$ 100,000 to \$149,000 than in 2010.
- There was an increase in homes in the \$200,000 to \$299,999 range and the \$1,000,000 or more range.

The Maine State Housing Authority (MSHA) tracks actual sales data and other affordability data, though it is sometimes out of date by the time it is published. While the MSHA did not have data on the median home price in Brighton, data from this source will be used in other comparisons throughout this chapter and will differ from the estimate from the ACS.

While the exact median home price for Brighton Plantation is not available through state or federal sources due to the community's small size, a general estimate can be made based on recent home sales and current listings. According to Realtor.com, homes for sale in Brighton have had a median listing price of \$249,000 in recent years. However, this figure is likely skewed by a small number of higher-end properties and may not reflect typical sale prices in the area. Listing prices also differ from actual sale prices, which are often lower. For broader context, the median home sale price in Somerset County was \$211,000 in 2023, and the Skowhegan Labor Market Area — which includes Brighton — reported a similar 2023 median of \$210,000. Given Brighton's limited housing stock and rural character, home values can vary widely depending on factors such as land size, condition, and the presence of off-grid infrastructure.

Neighboring communities have the following median home prices (Maine State Housing Authority data):

- Bingham (2023) \$146,000
- Athens (2023) \$182,450
- Moscow (2020) \$82,500
- Solon (2022) \$187,000

The only data available for Moscow was from 2020, which makes it too outdated for this comparison and to use to obtain an estimate for Brighton. Solon and Athens had similar median home prices, while Bingham's were slightly lower.

From the median home prices for surrounding towns, the Skowhegan Labor Market Area, and Somerset County, and considering Brighton's rural location, it can be estimated that the median home price for Brighton is roughly between \$130,000 to \$175,000. If this range is averaged, an estimated median home price is around \$152,500.

Household Income

As with the data used throughout this Plan, the viability of the household income data provided by the Census Bureau is uncertain; however, it is included and analyzed because there are no other viable data sources available. Table 8 below details the household income in Brighton, as well as the median household income.

Table 8: Brighton's Estimated Household Incomes

Total Households: 28	Approximate Households	Number of
Less than \$10,000	7.1%	
\$10,000 - \$14,999	0%	
\$15,000 - \$24,999	3.6%	
\$25,000 - \$34,999	0%	
\$35,000 - \$49,999	17.9%	
\$50,000 - \$74,999	39.3%	
\$75,000 - \$99,999	28.6%	
\$100,000 - \$149,999	0%	
\$150,000 - \$199,999	3.6%	
\$200,000 or more	0%	
Median Income	\$52,500	

Source: 2020 ACS

Based on the median home price estimate of \$152,500 and the median household income of \$52,500, the median home price would be considered affordable for families of one or two people on this income, when compared to the 80 percent rule for AMI in Table 5. A median priced home would be unaffordable to families larger than two people on the median household income.

Additionally, a median priced home would be unaffordable to households earning less than the median household income. According to the 2023 ACS, there are two households paying 35 % or more for housing costs, which is also considered unaffordable.

Provision of affordable housing options is 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 provisions to attempt to remediate the affordable housing problem state-wide.

Rental Housing

Table 9 below shows changes in rental costs between 2010 and 2023 based on ACS data.

Table 9: Cost of Renting in Brighton

	2010	2020	% Change
Median Monthly Rent Specified Renter-Occupied Units	N/A	N/A	-
Less than \$500	0	0	-
\$500 - \$999	0	0	-
\$1,000 - \$1,499	0	0	-
\$1,500 - \$1,999	0	0	-
\$2,000 - \$2,499	0	0	-
\$2,500 - \$2,999	0	0	-
\$3,000 or more	0	8	100 %
No Rent Paid	3	6	100 %
Rent as a Percent of Household Income			
Less than 20 %	0	0	
20 – 30 %	0	0	
35% or more	0	8	100 %
Not Computed	3	6	100 %

Sources: US Census 2010, American Community Survey (2023)

Table 9 Highlights:

- In 2000 there were no renters paying \$3,000 or more for a month's rent. In 2023, there were 8 households paying \$3,000 or more for a month's rent.
- In 2000 there were no renters paying 35 percent of their household income or more for a month's rent. In 2023, there were 8 households paying 35 percent of their household income or more for a month's rent.

The planning committee is not aware of any formal rental units in Brighton Plantation, and available data on rental housing is likely skewed due to the small population and possible misreporting of seasonal or informal arrangements. As a result, projections related to rental demand or affordability are not considered reliable. There is no demonstrated need

for affordable, senior, or assisted living housing, and no current or planned municipal or regional efforts to promote such development. Seasonal homes are not being regularly converted to year-round use, and local regulations neither encourage nor discourage affordable housing—but there are no plans to revise them, as housing demand remains low and infrastructure is limited.

Housing Location Trends

Town records show that 28 permits were issued in Brighton Plantation between 2013 and 2024. After a predictable slowdown following the 2009 recession, homebuilding began to increase slightly around 2018. The plantation would benefit from employing a full-time Code Enforcement Officer (CEO) and Local Plumbing Inspector (LPI), but due to its small size and remote location, it has not been feasible to do so. As a result, permit tracking is managed by the Planning Board and plantation administration, traditionally through paper files. The town has recently begun transitioning to an Excel-based system to improve recordkeeping, though the number of permits issued annually remains very low.

Projections

Population and Housing Projections

Referring to the population projections in the Community Profile and Existing Land Use chapter, it is difficult to anticipate significant future demand for housing.

The **State Economist's Office** predicts a population of 54 people by 2040- a decrease of 8 people since 2020 (13 percent decrease).

Brighton's average household size has been fluctuating and increasing since 2000. In fact, Brighton's average household size increased nearly 18 percent between 2000 and 2023, reaching a peak of 3.33 in 2020 then falling to 3.07 in 2023.

Table 11: Population Projections and Housing Needs, Based on Household Size

	Population Projection	Total Current Housing Units (minus seasonal)	Average Household Size	Amount of Housing Needed	Deficit?
Current	86	28	3.07	28	N/A
State Economist's Population Projection (at current average household size)	54	28	3.07	18	No

State Economist's Population Projection (at a 5% decrease in average household size)	54	28	2.92	18.5	No
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Table 11 Highlights:

- **Highlighted in Green:** With Brighton's current population of 86 people and the current average household size of 3.07, the existing, year-round housing stock of 28 housing units is adequate for accommodating this population.
- **Highlighted in Gold:** Based on the State Economist's population project of a decreased population to 54 people, combined with the current average household size of 3.07, Brighton's current housing stock would be at a surplus. This population decrease would require approximately 18 housing units and Brighton's existing housing stock is 28 housing units, leaving 10 housing units unoccupied.
- **Highlighted in Orange:** Based on the State Economist's population project of a decreased population to 54 people, combined with a (hypothetical) decreased average household size of 2.92 people per household, Brighton's current housing stock would still have a surplus of 10 housing units.
- Based on Table 11 and the State Economist's population projection, there is no immediate need for additional housing in Brighton, even if the average household declines by five percent. In fact, if the State Economist's population projections hold true, there will be a surplus of housing.

Population projections are based on past trends, not current conditions. While Brighton's population has been steadily increasing, even limited growth will bring demographic shifts that affect housing needs.

An aging population and smaller household sizes will drive demand for different housing types. Smaller households require more units, while seniors will need accessible, one-story homes or retirement living options. Though not always considered "affordable housing," these options will be in high demand within the next 15 years.

Rising numbers of both younger and older individuals living alone will also increase demand for smaller, more affordable homes. Even without major growth, demographic changes alone will require more—and different—housing options.

The greatest need will likely be for "right-sized housing": smaller, single-level homes on compact lots suitable for downsizing seniors and younger single residents alike.

Regardless of projections or current housing stock, new homes will continue to be built in Brighton Plantation. This growth will increase land use, with minimum lot sizes and zoning

standards determining how much land is needed. See the Existing Land Use chapter for details.

Finally, an expected housing surplus may make it difficult to reach the goal of 10% of new homes being classified as affordable.

Current Housing Regulations

Brighton's Land Use Zoning Ordinance was written and adopted in 1995. It has not been updated since that time. This Ordinance divides the plantation into five separate zoning districts which fall under the umbrella of the subdistricts detailed more thoroughly in the Existing Land Use chapter, each with its own intended purpose.

Although it needs to be updated to reflect the most recent versions, the Land Use Zoning Ordinance includes the state-required Shoreland Zoning language, as well as the requirements of the State's Subdivision statute (see below).

Under Article 4- Performance Standards Applicable to Land Use Districts, Section 4.7, Subdivisions- Subdivisions are only permitted in the General Development District, Shoreland Development District, or Residential Development District. The subdivision of land is only permitted in these three districts in Brighton. The Planning Board is the reviewing authority for all proposed subdivisions.

Also, under Article 4- Performance Standards Applicable to Land Use Districts, Section 4.7, Subdivisions- the Planning Board shall follow the procedures of 30-A.M.R.S.A Section 4551 when acting on subdivision proposals.

One of the objectives in the 1995 Comprehensive Plan was to make Brighton a community of single-family homes with suitable recreational development. The Plan detailed three locations intended for development: one at the village center (intersection of Rts 151 and 154); a second along Rt 154 near Trout Pond; and a third in the vicinity of the intersection of Bunker Hill Road, the Brighton Road, and Rt 151.

The Ordinance specifies the designated growth areas as the General Development District, the Residential Development District, and the Shoreland Development District by making them the most permissive for development and other land uses.

Overall, Brighton's Land Use Zoning Ordinance was well written for its time, it needs to be updated to reflect current practices and standards. It does not promote the development of affordable or workforce housing, but those types of housing were not considered at the time this Ordinance was written.

Brighton has adequate growth areas within its existing built-up areas; however, the lack of public sewer and water provides little incentive to concentrate development there. One of the primary challenges to developing affordable or workforce housing in the plantation is that, without public utilities, each property must be able to support both a well and a

septic system. As part of the building permit process, applicants are required to have at least a septic design in place. This need for on-site infrastructure often necessitates larger lot sizes, which can drive up property costs and make smaller or more affordable housing less feasible. While the plantation could consider increasing its minimum lot size to better regulate development and protect groundwater resources, such a change would need to balance environmental concerns with the potential for limiting housing availability.

However, even in the growth area, the minimum lot size is 'no less than 1 acre', which increases building costs. One potential way to encourage affordable/workforce housing development would be reduce lot sizes in a certain area to the state's minimum, depending on the viability of the soil for supporting a well and septic.

Due to Brighton's location in central northern Somerset County, there are no workforce housing coalitions locally or regionally. The plantation staff does not have the capacity to participate in these efforts, nor does there appear to be interest amongst residents.

Analysis and Key Issues

- Brighton's housing stock consists of 87 total housing units with 28 occupied by year-round residents and 59 seasonal housing units.
- There are no year-round homes that are vacant.
- The State Economist predicts Brighton's population will be 54 by 2040- a reduction of 8 residents.
- Currently, all homes in Brighton are single-family homes.
- Brighton's 2023 average household size is 3.07 people per household.
- Brighton's median house price is estimated at 152,500 and the median household income is \$52,500.
- There were 8 households paying 35 percent or more of their household income in rent, which is considered unaffordable.
- Based on the population projection by the State Economist, Brighton's housing stock, and average household size, there will not be a need for more housing to accommodate the population.
- There will likely be a need for 'right-sized housing' for more people living alone, and elderly housing, though.
- Brighton's Land Use Zoning Ordinance does not promote the development of workforce/affordable housing, as it is currently written.

Chapter 6: Public Facilities and Services

Municipal Services

Brighton Plantation, by itself or in collaboration with neighboring towns and other partners, offers minimal public facilities and services to residents. This chapter details Brighton Plantation's government and how it provides services.

Brighton Plantation's Municipal Government

Brighton Plantation runs on Maine's simplest form of local government: the Plantation system. Brighton holds an annual town meeting (the last Saturday of July at 10:00 AM). At this meeting, the residents choose a clerk, three assessors, treasurer, collector of taxes and a school committee. The three assessors are considered the members of the select board of the plantation. The board of assessors meets twice a month, on the second and fourth Monday at 6PM at the municipal office.

Treasurers, collectors and constables of plantations must give the same bond as similar officials of towns are required to give and to be approved in the same manner. The valuation of property for the assessment of taxes in plantations, as well as the assessment, collection and disposal of taxes, must be the same as in towns. Assignment to other committees (Planning Board, Board of Appeals, Smith Pond Committee, Comprehensive Plan Committee, and Village Church Committee) are appointed by the Board of Assessors.

The Municipal Office

The Brighton Plantation Municipal Office is located at 1 Stagecoach Road in Brighton Plantation near the historic and current center of the plantation. The Plantation office is opened for limited hours four days a month. The office was once one of several one-room schoolhouses located in the plantation. It now serves as the base of operations for the plantation's general government services. It includes offices for the Town Clerk and Tax Collector as well as meeting space for the Board of Assessors and other municipal boards and committees. There would also be an office for a Code Enforcement Officer (CEO), however, Brighton Plantation has had difficulty hiring and retaining this position.

The municipal office building has received several technology upgrades in recent years to support teleconferencing and meet modern internet needs. However, the building continues to experience chronic issues with freezing during the winter. This is largely due to the heating pipe not being buried deep enough underground and lacking proper insulation. Limited water flow during periods of low use, combined with regular plowing directly over the pipe, contributes to frequent freezing. Inside, a hole in the office floor presents a risk management concern that should be addressed. Additional improvements

needed include upgrading the lighting to energy-efficient LEDs for cost savings and better visibility, assessing and potentially updating the building's overall electrical system, repairing or replacing the exterior accessibility ramp, and acquiring a new fireproof safe to properly secure important municipal records. To the east of the office, there is a small "fire shed" between the building and Route 151 that is no longer in active use, as Brighton now contracts with the Town of Athens for fire protection services.

Public Safety

Police Protection

Police protection in Brighton Plantation is provided by the Somerset County Sheriff's Department, which serves the entire county with a Patrol Division made up of 15 Deputies and three (3) Sergeants. Deputies respond to a wide variety of calls, including drug-related incidents, theft, assault, scams, and welfare checks. In 2023-2024, Brighton-specific calls for service totaled 31 in 2023 and 32 in 2024, excluding special investigation. The most frequent calls were medical emergencies (7 in 2023, 15 in 2024), motor vehicle accidents (6 in 2023, 1 in 2024), and 911 hangups/misdials (6 in 2023, 11 in 2024). Other incidents included animal complaints, harassment, flooding of roadways, burglar alarms, and threatening complaints.

Fire Protection

Brighton Plantation has a partnership with the neighboring community of Athens to provide fire protection to its residents. In 2023, Brighton Plantation appropriated \$5,000 to pay Athens for fire protection. The Athens Fire Department is a volunteer force with their headquarters at 24 Brighton Road in Athens. One fire-related call from Brighton was recorded in 2023 and none in 2024.

Ambulance Service

Ambulance services in Brighton Plantation are provided by neighboring towns, including Skowhegan and Harmony. Medical emergencies are one of the leading categories of emergency calls in Brighton, highlighting the importance of reliable EMS coverage for the community's aging population (the majority of survey respondents were age 60 and above). The community survey did not indicate significant dissatisfaction with emergency response.

Given Brighton's small population and remote location, most residents accept that police, fire, and EMS coverage is provided from outside the Plantation. The survey showed no major demand for expanded public safety facilities, but the older age profile of residents suggests that medical and welfare checks may continue to be a significant portion of calls.

Health Care Facilities

Residents of Brighton Plantation travel for health care as they do for most services. The closest health services to Brighton Plantation include:

Name of Facility	Distance to Brighton Plantation	Open
Bingham Area Health Center	15 miles	M-F 7AM-4:30PM
Redington-Fairview General Hospital (Skowhegan)	22 miles	24 Hours
Madison Area Health Center	24 miles	M-F 7:30AM-5PM
Northern Light Mayo Hospital (Dover-Foxcroft)	30 miles	24 Hours
Maine General Health (Waterville)	36 miles	24 Hours
Maine General Medical Center (Augusta)	53 miles	24 Hours
Northern Light Eastern Maine Medical Center (Bangor)	63 miles	24 Hours

The closest facility to Brighton Plantation is the Bingham Area Health & Dental center which offers medical, behavioral, and dental health services. The closest 24 hour hospital is located in Skowhegan at Redington-Fairview General Hospital 22 miles away followed by Northern Light Mayo Hospital in Dover-Foxcroft at 30 miles away.

Brighton Plantation does not have a Local Health Officer (LHO). As with many local municipal official positions, this position is hard to fill and retain within the community due to the size of the population, remoteness, and pay.

The Plantation provides General Assistance (GA) to eligible residents. Applicants can apply in person at the local municipal office, instructions are on the website, or if they are in need of emergency assistance, they can contact Somerset Communications to ready the GA Administrator during regular business hours. Assistance is provided in the form of a voucher payment to the vendor.

Utilities

Brighton Plantation does not have any available utilities and there are no plans to provide them in the foreseeable future. Most residents have water supplied through private wells. There is no public sewer. Most residents use septic. There is some concern, especially with the lack of a CEO and LHO, about whether or not residents are following proper regulations around wastewater disposal. There is no available 3-phase power or cable and there does not seem to be a desire for it. There is internet in portions of the Plantation but no broadband and like with most other utilities, no call for it.

Brighton Plantation's Public Utilities Analysis

Solid Waste Disposal

Brighton Plantation operates a municipal transfer station located off Wellington Road (Route 154), which is also used by Kingsbury Plantation under a paid agreement. In 2023, Brighton appropriated \$24,000 for the operation of the transfer station and received \$21,000 in revenue from Kingsbury's usage contract. Having a centrally located transfer station is a benefit to Brighton residents; however, summer months can be challenging due to increased usage by Kingsbury residents. The facility currently does not offer recycling services and lacks a permanent building—an earlier attempt using a trailer was unsuccessful. In the future, the Plantation may benefit from constructing a more permanent structure to improve operations.

Septic Waste Disposal

Brighton Plantation has no public sewer system and is served entirely by private septic systems. When pumping is needed, property owners must hire a third-party licensed contractor, and the town is not involved in the disposal process. However, concerns have been raised about improper or illegal disposal of septic waste by some residents. Enforcement of disposal regulations is difficult due to the Plantation's lack of a full-time Code Enforcement Officer (CEO) and Local Plumbing Inspector (LPI), which limits the town's ability to monitor compliance and respond to potential violations effectively.

Public Works

The plantation appoints a Road Commissioner. The Road Commissioner's responsibilities include overseeing the maintenance of all town roads not maintained by the state, coordinating snow removal and grading, replacing and repairing culverts, managing roadside mowing and ditching, and responding to storm damage or other road-related issues. The Road Commissioner also works with contractors as needed to ensure the safe and passable condition of the plantation's road infrastructure throughout the year.

Stormwater Management

Existing stormwater management facilities are adequately maintained, though improvements could be made in the frequency with which stormwater catch basins are cleaned. The town's existing stormwater management system can sufficiently handle the expected future development in this planning period.

Cemeteries

Brighton Plantation is responsible for the care of 3 cemeteries:

Brighton Plantation Cemeteries	
Name	Location
Brighton Village Cemetery	East side of Rt 151 and north side of Rt 154
Old Cemetery	North side of Back Rd
York Cemetery	North of Solon Rd

The town's current cemeteries are expected to adequately handle the projected growth, as the rate of growth is not expected to be rapid or significant. The plantation budgeted \$4,500 in 2023 for sexton services and has an account for \$11,000 for stone repair.

Town-Owned Lands

Within the Plantation's Annual Report, there is an account dedicated to the Village Church, a local historic landmark located at the intersection of Routes 151 and 151. It is part of what once was the historic village center of Brighton Plantation. The account as of 2023 had \$7,945.72 for the maintenance of the building.

The town also maintains an account for the maintenance and upkeep of the Smith Pond Picnic Area, which is leased by the town for \$159.22 per year. This account is supported entirely through donations. In addition to the picnic area, the town is responsible for maintaining other municipal properties, including the town dump (transfer station), the municipal office, and the salt and sand shed. These facilities are essential to the operation of the Plantation and require ongoing upkeep and funding for repairs and improvements.

Education

Brighton Plantation has its own school department. It was once part of RSU 59/MSAD 59 but left that district in 2013 to form its own. Brighton Plantation runs as a School Administrative Unit (SAU) with a Board of Directors that meets on the first Saturday of each month. The Plantation also has a Superintendent to oversee administration. The Plantation partners with Athens to provide transportation to students at a cost of \$14,602.50 in 2023.

Chapter 7: Fiscal Capacity

Fiscal Management

Comprehensive plans are not meant to dictate the town's day-to-day financial decisions but rather to highlight long-term trends and needs that may arise from growth and development. While larger municipalities may respond to these needs with expanded facilities and services, Brighton Plantation operates with a limited scope of public services, primarily road maintenance and a transfer station.

The town's ability to sustain these essential services depends on careful fiscal management, especially given its small tax base and reliance on property taxes. Challenges such as gradual population changes, evolving state and federal mandates, and the need to maintain infrastructure must be balanced within the town's limited financial capacity. Strategic planning ensures that Brighton Plantation remains fiscally responsible while continuing to meet its residents' basic needs.

Local property values were last assessed in 2024.

Brighton Plantation, as a very small and rural municipality, provides only a limited number of public services and therefore has a minimal need for annual capital improvements. Because of this, and due to its clear and responsible accounting and budgeting practices, the Plantation has been able to operate without incurring any debt. Brighton remains in full compliance with 30 MRSA, Section 5061, as amended, which limits municipal debt to no more than 15 percent of the state valuation. From 2019 through 2023, the Plantation maintained a debt-free status, with no outstanding financial obligations during that time

TABLE 2: LIST OF TAX-EXEMPT PROPERTIES AND EXEMPTION AMOUNTS

Tax Exempt Properties	2024
Total Value Government and Municipal	\$119,110
Literary and Scientific	\$0
Total exempt churches and parsonages	\$25,670
Fraternal Organizations	\$0
Property leased by hospitals	\$0
Pollution control facilities	\$0
Quasi-governmental organizations	\$0
Total Value Veteran exemptions	\$45,360
TOTAL	\$190,140
STATE VALUATION	\$14,850,000
Percent Exempt	1.2%

Source: 2023 Municipal Valuation Return Statistical Summary

With only 1.2% of Brighton Plantation's properties classified as tax-exempt, nearly all landowners contribute to the town's property tax revenue. This indicates a strong and stable tax base, as the town is not significantly impacted by non-taxable entities such as government buildings, churches, or nonprofit organizations. Unlike larger municipalities that may struggle with a growing number of tax-exempt properties, Brighton Plantation's financial burden is shared almost entirely by its residents and landowners. Given the town's small size and minimal public services this stable tax base is crucial for maintaining essential functions.

TABLE 3: SIX YEARS OF STATE VALUATIONS FOR BRIGHTON PLANTATION

Year	State Valuation
2019	\$13,450,000
2020	\$13,400,000
2021	\$13,550,000
2022	\$13,900,000
2023	\$13,600,000
2024	\$14,850,000

Source: Municipal Valuation Statistical Summary

TABLE 4: FIVE YEARS OF BRIGHTON'S BUDGET INFORMATION

YEAR	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023*
STATE VALUATION	\$13,450,000	\$13,400,000	\$13,550,000	\$13,900,000	\$13,600,00
COUNTY TAX	\$32,250.78	\$31,607.00	\$30,204.04	\$31,193.05	\$30,330.83
EDUCATION APPROPRIATION (Special Assessment)	\$120,768.00	\$133,566.00	\$105,465.00	\$134,250.00	\$51,937.66
MILL RATE	0.01850	0.02000	0.01750	0.01750	0.01550
REVENUES					
General Fund (taxes, fees, etc.)	\$266,345.86	\$276,708.38	\$246,102.95	\$239,396.25	\$229,549.47
Intergovernmental	\$133,170.42	\$92,280.10	\$126,276.74	\$182,999.41	\$121,428.14
Charges for Services	\$999.72	\$1,176.88	\$1,264.72	\$644.72	\$156.48
Interest	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$336.33
Miscellaneous	\$1,718.89	\$4,389.45	\$2,023.34	\$394.13	\$5,264.90
TOTAL REVENUES	\$402,234.89	\$374,554.81	\$375,667.75	\$423,434.51	\$356,735.32
EXPENDITURES					
General Government	\$46,900.00	\$41,500.00	\$32,600.00	\$37,200.00	\$53,500.00
Public Safety	\$3,850.00	\$5,000.00	\$5,000.00	\$5,000.00	\$5,125.00
Public Works	\$84,500.00	\$84,500.00	\$82,000.00	\$87,500.00	\$107,500.00
Health and Sanitation	\$10,500.00	\$20,000.00	\$13,500.00	\$16,500.00	\$28,500.00
Leisure Services	\$1,200.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Social Services	\$1,200.00	\$1,200.00	\$1,700.00	\$1,700.00	\$1,700.00
Special Assessments (Education)	\$110,070.53	\$113,654.10	\$94,385.04	\$81,522.66	\$85,107.49
Unclassified	\$4,900.00	\$6,100.00	\$1,200.00	\$2,200.00	\$200.00
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$263,120.53	\$271,954.10	\$230,385.04	\$231,622.66	\$281,632.49
TOTAL DIFFERENCE	\$139,114.36	\$102,600.71	\$145,282.71	\$191,811.85	\$75,102.83

Source: Brighton Plantation Annual Reports

The town's mil rate is a calculated value which means taxpayers pay the mill rate for each thousand dollars of their property's assessed value. For example, for the 2022 tax year, property assessed for \$150,000.00, the assessed taxes were calculated by multiplying \$150,000.00 by the mil rate: $150,000.00 \times 0.01750 = \$2,625$.

Education appropriation is Brighton Plantation's biggest expense, accounting for between 30 - 41 percent of the budget between 2019 and 2023. The education appropriation is beginning to become exceeded by the public works budget, mostly taken up by road maintenance. The public works budget accounted for 32 percent of the budget in 2019, but in 2023 that jumped to 38 percent.

Property taxes are the largest contributor to the town's budget. Those are broken down by category in Table 5.

TABLE T5: REAL AND PERSONAL PROPERTY BY TYPE

Year	Land	Buildings	Total Land and Buildings	Mil Rate	State Valuation	Total Taxable Personal Property	Motor Vehicle Excise Tax	Distribution and Transmission
2019	\$8,544,250	\$3,721,260	\$12,265,510	0.01850	\$13,450,000	\$33,460	\$0	\$548,100
2020	\$8,525,120	\$3,590,660	\$12,115,780	0.02000	\$13,400,000	\$26,180	\$0	\$568,180
2021	\$8,157,650	\$3,518,300	\$11,675,950	0.01750	\$13,550,000	\$20,470	\$0	\$601,510
2022	\$8,724,940	3,608,100	\$11,883,040	0.01750	\$13,900,000	\$20,470	\$10,000	\$601,510
2023	\$8,723,150	\$3,757,940	\$12,481,090	0.01550	\$13,600,000	\$340	\$13,000	\$674,330

Source: Municipal Valuation Statistical Summary (2018-2022)

**Most recent data available*

Over the past five years, Brighton Plantation's fiscal capacity has demonstrated a pattern of stability with modest fluctuations in valuation and tax rates. From 2019 to 2023, the total assessed value of land and buildings has remained relatively consistent, ranging from approximately \$11.6 million to \$12.5 million. Notably, the mil rate has decreased from a high of 0.02000 in 2020 to 0.01550 in 2023, signaling a reduction in the property tax burden on residents. This trend coincides with a steady increase in the State Valuation, which rose from \$13.45 million in 2019 to \$13.6 million in 2023, suggesting a gradual growth in the municipality's overall taxable value. The assessed value of taxable personal property has declined significantly, dropping from \$33,460 in 2019 to just \$340 in 2023, while the motor vehicle excise tax has increased slightly from \$0 in earlier years to \$13,000 in 2023, likely reflecting changes in vehicle ownership or registration activity. Revenue from distribution and transmission lines also increased from \$548,100 in 2019 to \$674,330 in 2023, providing an important and growing source of municipal income.

Accounting Practices

Brighton Plantation's financial records are audited annually, with audits from 2019 to 2022 conducted by Hamlin Associates, Inc. Each audit has been favorable, noting the town's sound financial management and transparent accounting practices, as detailed in the annual reports. The town has never needed to borrow money and has no foreseeable capital projects that would require debt. In recent years, with the support of a new combined town clerk/treasurer, Brighton has begun strategically investing its funds and generating additional revenue through interest earnings, further strengthening its financial position.

Tax Collection Rate

Brighton Plantation strives to manage town finances as prudently as possible, keeping property taxes reasonable and broadly affordable. The current-year tax collection rate has remained stable. Despite relying on tree-growth classification, the town allocates a portion of its annual tree-growth reimbursement to help offset residents' property tax bills (though the precise dollar figure wasn't publicly specified in available annual reports).

Residents increasingly notice the imbalance between what corporate timber companies pay per acre under tree-growth valuations and what private residents contribute, an inequity felt more keenly as economic and demographic shifts unfold. Town officials, both elected and appointed, remain vigilant in efforts to minimize tax burdens, aiming to reinforce fairness while preserving fiscal stability.

Summary and Findings

Brighton Plantation has demonstrated strong fiscal responsibility through careful budgeting and financial management. This is evident in the Plantation's consistent debt-free status and its adherence to both the Maine Bond Bank's recommended limits and state statute over the past five years. With limited public services and modest financial needs, Brighton has effectively maintained stable municipal finances. Notably, the mil rate has remained relatively steady between 2019 and 2023, reflecting the Plantation's prudent approach to taxation and spending.

Chapter 8: Transportation

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

There is no major traffic generators located in Brighton Plantation (i.e. schools, major retailers, event venues, etc.) and there is no plan for any in the foreseeable future. Brighton Plantation has no planned or recently built subdivisions. There are no large impending residential developments that would disrupt traffic flow. Brighton Plantation has no sidewalks. The Plantation has one small village center, but otherwise there is little in Brighton Plantation to connect with sidewalks.

With such a low population and so few businesses, the town does not have high demand for public parking. The few public parking areas are concentrated around public recreation areas such as water access sites but are not being used over capacity. As such, Brighton Plantation does not place any sort of regulations on public parking.

Brighton Plantation residents have no access to public transportation such as buses, vans, or trains. With the overall trend in Brighton, Somerset County, and Maine being towards an aging population, the need for van services or ride shares for senior citizens to access necessary services may become necessary. The closest interstate bus service is in Waterville and the closest interstate train service is in Brunswick. The closest private airport is in Bingham and the closest public airport is located in Augusta. Citizens rely heavily on automotive vehicles for transportation.

Bicycling is not very popular in Brighton. There are no facilities dedicated to biking and there is not an urgent need for bike infrastructure. Snowmobiles are a common alternative form of transportation for residents in the winter and as a recreational activity as is ATVing. Snowmobile and ATV trails also bring visitors to Brighton Plantation from elsewhere. Use of public and private motor vehicle roadways by ATVs has become a problem not just in Brighton Plantation, but throughout the region, as ATV trails become more connected across the state.

Maine DOT Road Classification

Roads in Maine are classified in two ways: Highway Functional Classification and State Highway System. The Highway Functional Classification is a federal classification that describes the functionality and geographical characteristics of the road based on federal guidelines, while the State Highway System identifies which entity (State or local) is responsible for maintenance and capital expenditure of that road.

Functional classification classifies roads by the role they serve in the overall transportation network. The principal classifications are:

Arterials: These are the most important travel routes in the state. Arterial roads are designated for their capacity to carry large volumes of traffic efficiently between commercial or service centers. The DOT has restrictive access standards on arterial roads to preserve this mobility function. These highways generally carry a federal route number designation, such as U.S. 201 which is a Principal Arterial. Route 201A and Route 8 are Minor Arterials as they come out of Norridgewock.

Collectors: These are the roads that collect and distribute traffic from areas of lower population density onto arterials and service centers. Collectors are further divided into “major” and “minor,” depending on the proportions of federal, state, and local money available for maintenance and improvements. In Brighton Plantation, Route 151 south of the village center is classified as a major collector, but Route 151 north of the village is a minor collector as is Route 154.

Local Roads: These roads provide direct access to residential neighborhoods, local businesses, agricultural properties and timberland. Traffic volumes typically range from less than 100 to possibly 1,000 vehicles trips per day. Solon Road is a local road and Brighton Plantation’s busiest road as of the latest traffic counts from Maine DOT in 2021 when it saw an annual average daily traffic volume of 507. Roads not classified as arterials or collectors are considered local roads.

The State Highway System determines maintenance responsibility. The State Highway System is grouped into three categories:

State Highways: These roads form a system of connected routes throughout the state that primarily serve intra- and interstate traffic. The State Highway category generally corresponds with the federal ‘arterial’ classification. The a few exceptions, Maine DOT is responsible for year-round maintenance of state highways. In Brighton Plantation, Route 151 falls under the State Highway classification.

State Aid Highways: These roads connect local roads to the State Highway System and generally serve intra-county rather than intrastate traffic movement. The State Aid Highway category generally corresponds with the federal ‘collector’ classification. Except for compact areas, state aid roads are usually maintained by MDOT in the summer and by municipalities in the winter. Route 151 is classified as a State Aid Highway.

Town Ways: These roads are all other roads not included in the State Highway or State Aid Highway classifications that are maintained by municipalities or counties. These roads are classified as federal ‘local’ roads. Solon Road is a town way.

Maintenance and improvement projects done by MDOT are programmed into the state budget through a Biennial Transportation Improvement Program (BTIP). This program

outlines transportation projects (including non-road projects) that have been funded with a combination of federal and state funds.

Brighton Plantation's Highway System

Maine State Route 151: The principal highway through Brighton Plantation, Route 151 is a state highway that travels from U.S. Route 2 in Palmyra. It intersects State Route 154 in Brighton Plantation center and continues north before ending at an intersection with State Route 16 in Mayfield Corner. It is classified as a “major collector.” Light capitol paving was completed on 151 through Brighton Plantation in September 2024 and the road is in good condition.

Maine State 154: Another principal route through the Plantation, Route 154 begins at Brighton Plantation center at the junction with Route 151 and ends in Ripley. It is classified as a “minor collector.” Light capitol paving was completed on 154 through Brighton Plantation in September 2024 and the road is in good condition.

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 (AADT), equivalent to vehicles per day, is compiled by MDOT for state roads in several locations throughout Brighton Plantation.

Table 1: Average Annual Daily Traffic Count

Location	2018	2021
IR 334 (SOLON RD) W/O SR 151 @ BR# 5194	-	60
SR 151 (MAYFIELD RD) N/O SR 154 (MAIN)	250	370
SR 151 (MAYFIELD) S/O SR 154 @ BR# 5826	320	510
SR 151 @ MAYFIELD TWP TL	-	330
SR 151 S/O IR 334 (SOLON RD)	-	570
SR 154 (MAIN ST) @ WELLINGTON TL	-	80
SR 154 (MAIN) SE/O IR 1055 (MCCROSS LN)	90	150

Source: Maine DOT Traffic Volume annual report, 2023

Key for Table 1:

SW/O= southwest on
SE/O= southeast on
S/O= south on

NE/O= northeast on
N/O= north on
W/O= west on

SR= state route
IR= inventory road
EB= eastbound

NW/O= northwest on

E/O= east on

WB= westbound

The data provided in the DOT's 2023 report only included data for Brighton Plantation from 2021 and some data for certain locations from 2018. While the daily traffic volume is increasing, none of these roads are in danger of exceeding their capacity. But more traffic means more wear and tear and conflicts for road users.

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 which are marked as High Crash Locations (HCL). MDOT defines an HCL as a roadway intersection or segment which experiences eight or more accidents in a 3-year period and has a Critical Rate Factor (CRF) 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.

Brighton Plantation has no HCLs. Between the years of 2020 and 2023, Brighton Plantation has had nine motor vehicle accidents in total. The two most common causes of accidents were "went off road" (five crashes caused by this) and "deer" (caused three). Time of day, weather, and time of year did not seem to play a factor. All of Brighton Plantation's roadways are rural with little to no street lighting, surrounded by forest making wildlife a dangerous challenge for motorists who are either distracted or impaired.

Support Infrastructure for the Road System

To function efficiently, the highway system needs certain additional elements of infrastructure. These include bridges, traffic controls (signals, directional controls), and parking.

Bridges: Brighton Plantation's road system out of necessity includes a large number of stream crossings. Many of these are small culverts, which are the responsibility of the town to maintain. Culverts are cleaned and inspected regularly and replaced as necessary. There are also a number of bridges. Bridges are usually the responsibility of the state, although when they are replaced on local roads, a portion of the costs must be contributed by the town. A summary of the DOT bridge inventory follows:

Local Name	Bridge ID #	Location	Year Built	Length (ft)	Major Deficiencies	Federal Sufficiency Rating
Clough	5124	Main St	1929	10'	Yes	60.8
Corson	5194	Solon Rd	1948	10'	No	77.4
Brighton	5826	Brighton Rd	1975	16.3'	No	86.3

Source: MDOT

The Federal Sufficiency Rating is required by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and is determined through a formula involving load rating in conjunction with other bridge inventory and inspection information. Each span receives a Federal Sufficiency Rating – based out of 100 points this numerical score that indicates the health based off four categories:

1. Structural Adequacy and safety
2. Serviceability and Functional Obsolescence
3. Essentiality for Public Use
4. Special Reductions.

Regulation for Development and Traffic Growth

The Maine DOT has established a set of regulations for new development impacting state highways. Traffic Movement Permits are required for major developments, such as shopping centers or large subdivisions (though this is unlikely to happen in Brighton Plantation in the foreseeable future). For all other developments on state highways, driveway access permits are required. Permitting rules contain different standards based on road classification. Route 151 has the tightest access rules; the remaining roads have relatively moderate rules. All the rules have some standards for sight distance, driveway width, spacing, safety, and drainage.

Development also increases the number of driveways and intersections, contributing to traffic conflicts and safety concerns. Brighton Plantation has standards for the location of the construction and maintenance of new roads, culverts and bridges, and minimal parking review. Brighton Plantation is also planning on revising and updating their land use ordinance in 2025.

There are several other ways in which the town can further soften the impact of development on transportation. They include:

- i. Updating local road design and construction standards to reflect current best practices.
- ii. Offering different road design options based upon anticipated use and traffic volume.
- iii. Rear lot access options to reduce road frontage development.
- iv. Proper design and location of major land use activities.
- v. Implementation of the ongoing road maintenance plan.

Financial Stability

The majority of money Brighton Plantation budgets for road maintenance is spent on plowing. Brighton Plantation budgeted \$91,000 in 2023 for winter road maintenance and maintained a separate line item for plowing Kingsbury Road for \$1,500. In 2023, Brighton Plantation budgeted \$15,000 for summer road maintenance. Brighton Plantation also maintains an account of approximately \$80,000 for general road maintenance. In 2023, \$12,000 was expended from this account.

Checklist question: What is the community's current and approximate future budget for road maintenance and improvement?

Regional and Statewide Trends

State and regional transportation plans have limited direct impact on Brighton Plantation due to its small population, rural character, and limited road network. However, Brighton is indirectly affected by regional trends, such as increased residential development in neighboring towns like Athens and Harmony, and broader infrastructure priorities set by Somerset County and the Maine Department of Transportation (MaineDOT). Brighton's proximity to Route 154 and other collector roads means any future upgrades or changes in regional traffic flow could influence maintenance needs and safety concerns locally. While no major state-led transportation projects are currently planned within the plantation, continued awareness of regional transportation initiatives is important to ensure Brighton remains prepared for future development pressures or shifts in traffic patterns.

Scenic and Environmental Impacts

The varying effects of roads and transportation infrastructure on the natural environment are an important consideration for Brighton Plantation. While the existing road system has not caused significant negative impacts to wildlife or water quality, the Plantation remains attentive to potential erosion and runoff concerns. One area of note is near the Heart of Maine property, which experiences occasional flooding due to poor drainage. Although there are no known major drainage systems causing ongoing erosion, the Plantation follows Maine Department of Transportation (MDOT) Best Management Practices for all ditching, culvert work, and earth-moving activities to minimize environmental harm. Road design, construction, and maintenance are overseen by the appointed Road Commissioner, who ensures that both public and private roads meet basic standards for safe travel, proper drainage, and minimal environmental disruption. The Plantation does not have formal written road policies but relies on field knowledge, MDOT guidance, and site-specific decision-making for road-related projects.

Trails

Brighton Plantation is home to a robust network of recreational trails, primarily catering to snowmobiles and ATVs, which are a vital aspect of the local transportation and tourism infrastructure. The plantation is situated in an area renowned for its outdoor recreational activities, and the trails serve as essential routes for both residents and visitors seeking access to the surrounding natural landscapes. Unlike many urban areas that prioritize connections to activity centers such as parks or commercial hubs, the trail network in Brighton Plantation is primarily focused on linking various public and private roads, allowing seamless travel between neighboring municipalities and access to rural properties.

The extensive snowmobile and ATV trail system forms an integral part of the local transportation infrastructure, providing routes that enhance mobility and promote economic activity, especially in the winter months. These trails connect to key public roads and provide access to neighboring communities, facilitating cross-municipal travel. The design of the trail network takes into account the unique geography of the region, with trails winding through forests, across fields, along existing roadways, and through power line corridors. These trails are carefully maintained to ensure safety and usability throughout the year, especially during peak snowmobile and ATV seasons.

While Brighton Plantation lacks a centralized activity center or urban commercial nodes, the trail system remains an important means of linking users to essential services, recreational areas, and other municipalities. It is an attractive feature for tourists seeking outdoor experiences and for locals who use the trails for commuting or recreation. There is a focus on ensuring that these trails connect with larger regional networks, allowing for extended routes that span beyond the plantation's borders. In future planning, efforts may be made to further integrate these trails with surrounding areas, improving access to broader recreational opportunities, enhancing public safety, and supporting sustainable tourism.

The current and future development of trails will continue to be driven by community needs and opportunities for collaboration with adjacent municipalities, ensuring the continued integration of Brighton Plantation into the broader regional trail network. By maintaining and expanding these routes, the area can increase its appeal as a destination for outdoor recreation while maintaining its character as a rural and connected community.

Summary of Analysis

The transportation system in Brighton Plantation is characterized by minimal infrastructure and low traffic demand, reflecting the plantation's small population and lack of major commercial or residential developments. The plantation does not have sidewalks, public transportation, or major traffic generators, with most residents relying

on personal vehicles. Snowmobiles and ATVs are important alternative modes of transportation and play a key role in the local economy and recreational tourism.

The road network, which includes state highways and local roads, is generally in good condition, thanks to recent paving of key routes like Route 151. Traffic volumes are low, with no immediate congestion concerns; however, increased traffic may lead to road wear and safety issues, especially related to wildlife. There is minimal public parking demand, concentrated around recreation areas, and no significant conflicts between road uses at present.

The extensive network of snowmobile and ATV trails is a critical element of the transportation system, connecting residents and visitors to neighboring municipalities and natural areas. These trails support both mobility and tourism, enhancing regional connectivity. Future planning should focus on maintaining and expanding these trails, improving road design standards, and integrating the town more fully into the regional transportation network. Additionally, addressing long-term maintenance funding will be essential to sustaining the transportation system as the community continues to evolve.

Chapter 9: Agriculture and Forestry

Introduction

Brighton Plantation's landscape and identity have been shaped for over a century by the decisions of timber companies, most of them headquartered far from the community itself. Since the late 1800s, large-scale land acquisition by logging interests has defined land ownership patterns, limited local control, and redirected economic benefits out of the community. While forestry once provided seasonal employment in cutting, trucking, and milling, today's operations are highly mechanized and regulated from out-of-state boardrooms. Residents have raised concerns about soil degradation, damage in shoreland zones, and the long-term impacts of past practices, such as spreading paper mill sludge across clearcuts. With the growing recognition of PFAS contamination across Maine, these legacies carry renewed urgency.

Agriculture, though once practiced out of necessity by early homesteaders, has always been challenged by Brighton's poor soils and harsh climate. As farming declined through the 20th century, it gave way to industrial timber harvesting. What remains today are small, individual efforts, driven more by a desire for self-reliance than profit. While not a commercial industry, these practices remain central to how many residents choose to live.

Brighton's identity has not shifted recently. It has been under pressure to change for generations. The loss of control over land use, the consolidation of forest profits, and the decline of seasonal rural employment has all shaped a quiet but enduring resilience among residents. Agriculture and forestry today are less about industry and more about values: independence, conservation, and a refusal to contribute further to the damage already done. Even as the economy transforms, Brighton remains rooted in the land—by choice, not by corporate mandate.

Agriculture in Brighton Plantation

Brighton Plantation's rocky terrain, steep elevation, and poor-quality soils have historically made large-scale farming difficult. Early settlers struggled with erosion-prone land and limited access to markets. As westward expansion opened new opportunities in the 1800s, many abandoned their farms in search of more fertile ground. Those who stayed often shifted to timber-related work, especially as the industrial era brought jobs in nearby mills and factories.

Farming was never a dominant industry in Brighton, but it has remained part of the community's fabric. Today, agriculture exists on a much smaller scale, primarily as homesteading or hobby farming. Residents grow food not for profit, but for self-reliance, food security, and personal values. These small-scale operations include gardens,

poultry, goats, and seasonal farmstands, where locals sell fresh produce, eggs, and cottage goods such as jams or baked items.

While there is strong local interest in supporting agriculture, Brighton lacks formal infrastructure such as a farmers' market. The closest established market is located in Skowhegan. As a result, most agricultural sales occur informally, at the roadside or through word of mouth. In the 2025 community survey, nearly 97% of residents said protecting farmland was 'important' or 'extremely important,' and many expressed support for encouraging more local food opportunities, such as farmstands and community-supported agriculture.

Land Use Policies

Brighton Plantation exercises local land use control under its Land Use Zoning Ordinance and Comprehensive Plan originally approved in 1995, transferring jurisdiction from the Maine Land Use Regulation Commission (LURC which became the LUPC in 2012). This Land Use Ordinance is in the process of being updated. While this provides a foundational framework for land management, Brighton's approach to protecting farming and forestry lands is limited in scope and largely reliant on voluntary participation.

The most notable regulatory action taken by the community was the 1996 ban on the use of herbicides on forestland, an early and strong expression of concern over industrial forestry practices. This local ordinance remains in effect and reflects long-standing environmental values among residents, particularly regarding water quality, soil health, and wildlife habitat.

The current land use ordinance includes zoning districts and performance standards that regulate timber harvesting, agricultural clearing near water bodies, and road construction, particularly in protection districts (such as around ponds, wetlands, and deer wintering areas). These provisions aim to reduce erosion, sedimentation, and ecological disruption. However, enforcement capacity is limited, and many conservation outcomes depend on the cooperation of individual landowners.

Brighton does not work with any regional or statewide land trusts, and no agricultural or forest parcels are protected by conservation easements. While current-use tax programs like Tree Growth and Farmland classification are used locally, they are state-administered and often criticized by residents for favoring corporate landowners over residents.

There is no farmland preservation program, no formal conservation commission, and no active partnerships with entities such as Maine Farmland Trust or Land for Maine's Future. The planning board is authorized to review subdivisions and conditional uses but does not have the regulatory authority or capacity to direct private land management beyond ordinance compliance.

In summary, Brighton Plantation's conservation efforts are rooted in community-driven values and historic action, such as the herbicide ban, but remain informal, under-

resourced, and unconnected to broader land trust networks. Most preservation happens at the individual level. While the plantation has laid a regulatory foundation, broader protection of productive lands will require expanded local engagement or new partnerships.

Challenges and Threats to Farmland and Farms

There are no commercial farms in Brighton Plantation today. Agriculture exists primarily through small homesteads, gardens, and pasture used for personal food production. These efforts reflect residents' desire for self-sufficiency, not profit—a value strongly supported in the 2025 community survey.

The most significant threat to remaining farmland is conversion—either to residential lots or, more recently, to large-scale solar developments. While development can support tax revenue, it often comes at the cost of open land and the rural lifestyle residents seek to protect.

Another growing concern is the potential contamination of soil and water due to past industrial forestry practices. In previous decades, paper mill sludge was spread on clear-cut land throughout rural Maine, including in parts of Brighton. This sludge may contain PFAS—persistent, harmful chemicals now known to affect food safety and health. Additionally, Brighton permitted tire burning in the 1990s, raising further concerns about long-term impacts on soil quality. While no local testing has been conducted, these past practices could limit the safety or viability of future agricultural development.

Brighton has no local ordinance to regulate farmland conversion, and there are no formal partnerships with land trusts or conservation groups. Agricultural preservation is left to individual landowners. One important protection in place is Maine's Right to Farm Law, which shields farmers from nuisance complaints related to standard agricultural practices. While informal, the community's support for local agriculture remains strong—and preserving farmland will depend on continued individual commitment, soil health awareness, and thoughtful planning.

Farmland and Open Space Tax Law Programs

The state offers multiple tax programs aimed at improving and protecting agriculture and forestry operations. There are three current-use tax programs that relate to forestry or agriculture in Brighton Plantation: 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 these lands from competition from 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 valuation results in lower property tax bills for the owner. Lower taxes are intended to incentivize the preservation of 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 3: PARCELS OF LAND IN BRIGHTON PLANTATION ENROLLED IN THE FARMLAND TAX LAW

	2013	2023	Percent Change
Number of Parcels	1	2	↑50%
Acres First Classified	182	0	↓182%
Farmland Acres	29	119	↑76%
Farmland Valuation	\$10,900	\$45,400	↑76%
Woodland Acres	153	2,444	↑94%
Woodland Valuation	\$18,670	\$332,660	↑94%

Source: Municipal Valuation Return Statistical Summary

TABLE 4: PARCELS OF LAND IN BRIGHTON PLANTATION ENROLLED IN THE OPEN SPACE TAX LAW

	2013	2023
Number of Parcels	0	0
Acres First Classified	0	0
Total Acres	0	0
Total Valuation	\$0	\$0

Source: Municipal Valuation Return Statistical Summary

The data presented in Table 3 reflects significant growth and changes in the enrollment of parcels of land under the Farmland Tax Law in Brighton Plantation from 2013 to 2023. Over this period, the number of parcels classified under this program increased from 1 to 2, marking a 50 percent increase. Notably, while the acreage first classified in 2013 was 182 acres, this figure has dropped to 0 in 2023, indicating a potential reclassification or a shift in how farmland is being utilized or reported.

In contrast, the farmland acres designated for use saw a substantial increase from 29 acres to 119 acres, representing a 76 percent rise. This increase suggests a positive trend in the preservation and use of active farmland in the region. Correspondingly, the valuation of farmland has also risen significantly from \$10,900 to \$45,400, which aligns with the growing number of acres classified under current agricultural use. The increase in woodland acres classified under the same program is particularly noteworthy, jumping from 153 acres to an impressive 2,444 acres, which reflects a 94 percent increase. The valuation of woodland also soared from \$18,670 to \$332,660, indicating a substantial recognition of the economic value of these wooded areas alongside farmland.

In stark contrast, Table 4 highlights that there have been no parcels classified under the Open Space Tax Law in Brighton Plantation as of 2023. This absence suggests that there are currently no designated open space lands in the municipality, which could represent an opportunity for future conservation efforts. Implementing this classification could provide additional benefits to landowners through tax reductions while also serving public interests such as enhancing recreational spaces and preserving wildlife habitats.

Overall, the data indicates a growing commitment to preserving farmland and woodland in Brighton Plantation through the Farmland Tax Law, enhancing the area's agricultural viability and environmental resources. In contrast, the lack of participation in the Open Space Tax Law presents an area for potential development that could complement existing efforts to protect and utilize the land in ways that benefit both landowners and the broader community.

Forestry in Brighton Plantation

Forestry has been central to Brighton Plantation's identity, economy, and land use since its earliest days. From the 1800s onward, Brighton developed almost entirely around timber extraction. It began with William Bingham's land lottery, which handed over millions of acres, including Brighton, to absentee investors. Settlers followed, carving out homesteads and sawmill operations in the dense forest. By 1840, the population surged to over 800 residents, supported by sawmills, small farms, and forest-based trades.

However, as woodlots close to the center of the plantation were cleared and the soils proved too poor for farming, the community struggled with persistent poverty. The large landholding of the Bingham estate meant much of Brighton's land was controlled by outside investors through the 1800s, even as local lumbermen worked the forests. This early pattern, vast tracts owned by absentee landowners with locals dependent on timber jobs, set the stage for Brighton's later development and challenges.

In Brighton, the large tracts of land stayed consolidated. Governor Abner Coburn, one of Maine's most influential land speculators from Skowhegan, was among the first to consolidate land holdings in the region. His lands in Brighton would later pass to industrial forestry companies. In 1949 after a devastating birch borer infestation, Brighton surrendered its municipal status. The population had dwindled to 108 and emergency

clear-cutting left most local woods workers unemployed. In 1950, the plantation formally joined the Maine Forestry District to ensure fire watch coverage on its now largely unpopulated woodlands, leading to the construction of Kelly Fire Tower.

Through the mid to late 20th century, major timber corporations consolidated ownership of Brighton's land. By the 1990s, Scott Paper Company was the principal land owner, holding roughly 16,900 acres of Brighton's forest (the majority of the plantation's ~40 square miles) for timber production. This meant that a single corporate owner controlled most of the plantation's land and resources. When Scott Paper's Maine assets were later sold, Brighton's ownership passed to other timber investors: First S.D. Warren/SAPPI and then by the late 1990s and 2000s, to Plum Creek Timber Company. Plum Creek, a large out-of-state REIT, acquired extensive Maine holdings (including Brighton's forests) in that era. In 2016, Plum Creek merged with Weyerhaeuser, one of the nation's largest timber companies, making Weyerhaeuser the current predominant landowner.

Between 1990 and 2020, Brighton Plantation experienced over 24,000 acres of commercial timber harvesting, as reported in confidential landowner filings with the Maine Forest Service. The data reveal a heavy emphasis on shelterwood harvesting, with 13,607 acres cut using this method, followed by 8,891 acres under selection harvesting. While clearcutting declined sharply after the 1990s—from 963 acres in the early 1990s to just 345 acres between 2015–2020—it still accounted for 1,777 acres total over three decades. The peak decade for harvesting activity was 2005–2009, with more than 6,300 acres harvested. The average harvest per five-year period was just over 4,000 acres, representing a substantial and consistent level of forest extraction for a municipality with approximately 25,000 acres of forested land. The number of harvest reports filed (182 over 30 years) suggests continuous, industrial-scale forestry by large landowners, aligned with the corporate consolidation of Brighton's forests during this same period.

Forestry has shaped every era of Brighton Plantation's history, from early settlement, to economic collapse, to deorganization and modern land use patterns. The activity remains physically present and economically important in terms of acreage harvested and property value, but it is neither locally controlled nor broadly beneficial to the community. As harvest data show, timber extraction in Brighton has been steady and large in scale, but ownership and profits reside with distant corporate entities. Despite tens of thousands of acres harvested since 1990, the plantation's population has not rebounded, and municipal revenues have not kept pace. Forestry is therefore best described as active but extractive, stable in scale, but declining in value to the community. Without structural changes in tax policy, land ownership, and environmental accountability, Brighton Plantation will continue to host a significant forestry industry without reaping meaningful, long-term benefits.

TABLE 5: FORESTRY HARVEST INFORMATION

Year	Selection harvest, acres	Shelterwood harvest, acres	Change of land use, acres	Clearcut harvest, acres	Total Harvest, acres	# of Reports
1990 – 1994	1,127	139	1	963	2,230	21
1995 – 1999	1,793	985	2	324	3,104	31
2000 – 2004	2,814	3,012	3	36	5,865	26
2005 – 2009	1,545	4,772	-	20	6,337	42
2010 – 2014	784	2,272	18	89	3,163	36
2015 – 2020	828	2,427	10	345	3,610	26
Total	8,891	13,607	34	1,777	24,309	182
Average	1,482	2,268	6	296	4,051	30

Source: Data compiled from Confidential Year End Landowner Reports to Maine Forest Service.

Tree Growth Tax Law Program

Table 6 summarizes changes in parcels enrolled in the Tree Growth Tax Law Program in Brighton Plantation from 2013 to 2023. Over this ten-year period, the number of enrolled parcels declined slightly from 57 to 54 (a 6% decrease), likely reflecting continued consolidation of landownership or changes in how larger forest parcels are managed. Despite this modest reduction, the majority of land in Brighton remains enrolled in the Tree Growth program, underscoring the continued dominance of commercial forestry in the community's landscape.

Total acreage enrolled in Tree Growth fell by 10%, from 20,957 acres in 2013 to 19,020 acres in 2023. During the same period, shifts in forest composition were observed:

- Softwood acreage declined by 30% (from 3,242 to 2,501 acres),
- Mixed wood acreage declined by 33% (from 11,235 to 8,418 acres),
- Hardwood acreage increased by 20% (from 6,481 to 8,101 acres).

These shifts may reflect a combination of harvesting activity, forest succession, and market preferences for hardwood products. Despite the decrease in total acres, the assessed value of Tree Growth parcels rose by 22% during the same period, from

\$2,585,911 to \$3,143,998, suggesting that forestland remains a valuable investment and taxable resource.

While the State of Maine reimburses municipalities for a portion of lost revenue from Tree Growth parcels, this reimbursement does not fully offset the difference between market-rate taxation and the reduced valuation provided under the program. In Brighton Plantation, this has created a measurable gap in per-acre tax contributions between large landowners enrolled in Tree Growth and residential property owners.

For example, in 2024:

- Weyerhaeuser NR Company, the largest landowner in Brighton, paid \$5,456.39 in property taxes on 1,024.6 acres enrolled in the Tree Growth program, averaging \$5.33 per acre.
- The average residential parcel in Brighton is approximately 1.9 acres in size and paid a total property tax bill of \$470.21 in 2024. Of this, roughly \$167.41 was attributable to the land itself—amounting to a land-only tax rate of \$88.11 per acre.

This means that, even when excluding the value of buildings and improvements, residential landowners pay over 16 times more per acre in property tax on land than large Tree Growth parcels. This disparity illustrates how the Tree Growth program, while promoting working forest retention, also results in a significant redistribution of the local tax burden.

Weyerhaeuser was invited to participate in the Brighton Plantation comprehensive planning process but did not respond. While corporate forest ownership provides continuity in land use and helps prevent fragmentation, the lack of engagement from such major stakeholders, combined with low per-acre tax contributions, raises concerns about long-term equity and municipal sustainability.

The Comprehensive Plan Committee recognizes the original intent of the Tree Growth program and the importance of maintaining forestland in active use. However, the Plantation's fiscal reality suggests a need for ongoing review of the program's local impacts, particularly in small, low-growth communities like Brighton where a few large landowners dominate the tax map.

TABLE 6: BRIGHTON PLANTATION PARCELS ENROLLED IN THE TREE GROWTH TAX LAW PROGRAM

	2013	2023	% Change
# Of Parcels	57	54	↓6 %
Softwood Acres	3,242	2,501	↓30 %
Mixed Wood Acres	11,235	8,418	↓33%
Hardwood Acres	6,481	8,101	↑20 %
Total Acres	20,957	19,020	↓10 %
Total Value	\$2,585,911	\$3,143,998	↑22 %

Source: 2013 & 2023 Municipal Valuation Return Statistical Summary

Potential for Land Sale and Land Use Conflicts

Although no recent large-scale sales have occurred, the possibility of major forestland divestment is a significant concern. Across Maine, several corporate timberland owners have sold holdings in recent years, leading in some cases to fragmented residential development, recreational access restrictions, or absentee ownership. Brighton is especially vulnerable to this trend. With limited local planning infrastructure, no staff planner or code enforcement officer on-site full time, any large land transaction could result in rapid land use changes that the Plantation is not equipped to manage.

If such parcels were to be sold or subdivided for residential or speculative development, impacts could include:

- Fragmented or low-density development that strains local infrastructure
- Loss of public access to recreational land
- Disruption of hunting areas and traditional land uses
- Increased fire and erosion risk from unmanaged cutover land
- A rapid shift in municipal service needs with little time to plan
- Abrupt shifts in tax base composition, requiring the Plantation to re-evaluate its limited service provisions

Weyerhaeuser was invited to participate in the comprehensive planning process but did not respond. This absence underscore a broader challenge. While large landowners control the majority of land in Brighton, they are not currently engaged in shaping its future alongside residents. Without local engagement or regulatory mechanisms, any future sale of corporate timberlands would leave the community with limited tools to respond or guide growth in a way that aligns with local goals.

At present, there is no indication that existing homes are interfering with active forestry operations, and land use conflicts have been minimal. Most residential parcels are longstanding, and harvest activities have continued uninterrupted. However, if residential development were to increase, conflicts with trucking, harvesting, or noise could emerge.

In short, while current land use is stable, Brighton Plantation faces a real and growing risk from the potential sale or withdrawal of large-scale Tree Growth parcels. Without planning tools in place, the Plantation may struggle to maintain its character, manage land use transitions, or protect residents from the impacts of incompatible development.

Analysis

- Brighton's landscape and economy have been shaped and constrained by external ownership for over 150 years. From the land lotteries of the 1800s through today's industrial timber operations, decisions about land use and resource management have historically been made by absentee landowners, not residents.
- Agriculture has always been limited by geography. Poor soils, rocky terrain, and short growing seasons made large-scale farming difficult. Today, only small, garden-scale farm operations remain, driven by self-reliance, not profit, and are supported by strong local values and informal exchange.
- Forestry is not locally controlled or a broadly beneficial industry. While over 24,000 acres were harvested between 1990 and 2020, Brighton received minimal economic benefit. Profits and decisions rest with corporate landowners, not the local community.
- Land consolidation remains extreme. As of 2023, over 19,000 acres (87% of Brighton) were enrolled in the Tree Growth Tax program, with much of that land owned by a single entity: Weyerhaeuser. This limits land availability, local governance, and long-term planning capacity.
- Tax equity is a significant issue. The average Brighton resident pays 46 times more per acre in property taxes than corporate timber companies enrolled in Tree Growth. This disparity limits municipal revenue and places a disproportionate burden on residents.
- Environmental legacy issues are unresolved. Past practices, including tire burning and the spreading of paper mill sludge, may have long-term consequences. These raise concerns about PFAS contamination, water safety, and soil quality, possibly limiting future agricultural use.
- The community has taken steps to regain local control. Brighton adopted a Land Use Ordinance in 1995 and passed a herbicide ban in 1996. These actions demonstrate a history of proactive local governance despite limited resources.
- No conservation easements or land trust partnerships exist. All current preservation is voluntary and handled privately. No agricultural or forest parcels are formally protected beyond state tax programs.

- The risk of corporate land divestment are rising. If large landowners sell or subdivide their holdings, Brighton lacks the regulatory or staffing infrastructure to manage growth or prevent land use conflicts.
- Residents support agriculture and working land, but want balance. Survey responses show strong interest in farmstands, local food access and conservation, but not in continuing to subsidize corporate forestry without accountability.

Chapter 10: Recreation

Recreation is a valued part of community life in Brighton Plantation though the Plantation does not operate a municipal recreation department or developed facilities. Instead, residents and visitors rely on the community's extensive natural resources, informal public access, and partnerships with regional schools and neighboring towns for both unorganized (passive) and organized (active) recreation opportunities.

Existing Recreation Resources

Passive (Unorganized) Recreation

Brighton Plantation offers abundant passive outdoor recreation through its forests, ponds, and trail networks. Popular activities include:

- Fishing, boating, and wildlife observation at Smith Pond
- Hunting and hiking on privately owned and timber company lands
- Snowmobiling and ATV riding on trails maintained by local clubs

Public access is primarily informal, with trailheads and parking areas minimally developed with little to no signage. Continued public access depends on landowner goodwill and informal agreements.

Active (Organized) Recreation

Brighton Plantation does not offer organized recreation programs or facilities within its boundaries. Instead, residents access organized youth and adult recreation through:

- Regional School Units: RSU 74 (Carrabec Schools), Upper Kennebec Valley Schools (Bingham), MSAD 59 (Madison), and Maine Central Institute (Pittsfield, private high school). These offer sports like soccer, basketball, baseball, track and field, and other activities to school aged children.
- Partnership with Athens' Recreation Department for swimming programs and youth league sports.
- Adult and Community Education: Available through MSAD 59 (Madison) and Skowhegan, providing fitness classes, enrichment, and recreation for adults and seniors.

Table 1: Publicly Used Open Spaces and Facilities in Brighton Plantation

Public Facility	Type of Recreation	Facilities Available
Smith Pond	Boating, Fishing, Swimming	Informal parking area; no formal toilet facilities; owned by Weyerhaeuser, maintained by the Plantation
Snowmobile and ATV Trails	Trail riding	Trailheads with informal parking; no facilities
Kelly Mountain Fire Tower	Hiking; trail riding	Informal parking at municipal building; no facilities

Source: Brighton Plantation

Note: There are no permanent toilet facilities, formal boat launches, or paved parking lots associated with these recreation areas.

Trails System

Local snowmobile and ATV trails are maintained by volunteer clubs such as the Kennebec Valley Snowmobile Club and Eastern Maine ATV Club, with routes crossing both public and private lands. Trail upkeep relies on volunteer efforts and seasonal maintenance. Use conflicts are minimal but can arise on mixed-use paths shared by snowmobiles, hikers, or skiers.

Public Access to Water Bodies

Smith Pond provides dedicated public access. There are no formal boat launches or restrooms at the site. Residents have not indicated any kind of desire for improvement or need for amenities at the site.

Hunting

Hunting is a popular outdoor activity in Brighton Plantation, supported by the town's large tracts of undeveloped, privately owned forestland and nearby state-managed lands. Access typically depends on the goodwill of private landowners and informal agreements with timber companies. Maintaining these relationships and exploring formal conservation partnerships will help ensure that hunting remains available for residents and visitors in the future.

Regional Recreational Resources

Regional resources significantly expand options for Brighton residents, including:

- Moosehead Lake and nearby state forests for boating, fishing, hiking, and camping
- The Appalachian Trail and regional trail networks for hiking, snowmobiling, and ATVing
- Lakes and community facilities in Athens, Madison, and Skowhegan
- Adult and community education and fitness centers in nearby towns

Conserved Lands & Open Space

Brighton Plantation does not have formally conserved lands, conservation easements, or an open space fund. Most open spaces commonly used for recreation are privately owned, particularly by timber companies. Continued access depends on maintaining relationships with landowners. There is no conservation commission or formal partnership with a land trust at this time. In total, 66% of respondents to the 2025 community survey supported either grant funding or a combination of grants and local taxes to preserve open space, even with concerns about rising taxes. This suggests strong public support for conservation if pursued with external funding sources.

Public Use of Private Land

A significant portion of the land used for recreation in Brighton Plantation is privately owned, including large tracts held by timber companies, including Weyerhaeuser. These lands have traditionally been open to the public for activities like hunting, snowmobiling, ATVing, and hiking through informal agreements and landowner goodwill.

However, there is no guarantee that this access will continue. If timber companies sell large parcels or post them against public use, it could restrict many of the recreation opportunities that residents and visitors rely on. To protect long-term access, the community should prioritize maintaining positive relationships with landowners and explore conservation easements or other formal measures to secure important recreational lands for future generations.

Needs & Opportunities

Given Brighton Plantation's rural character and small population, large-scale recreation facilities are not warranted, nor desired by the residents. However, the community could:

- Improve signage and parking at popular access points
- Provide simple amenities like picnic areas or outhouses where feasible and desired

- Support continued access through outreach and educational materials for landowners
- Explore partnerships with conservation organizations for permanent open space protection

Analysis and Key Issues

- Existing recreation facilities are adequate for the Plantation's population and likely future growth.
- There is limited capacity to upgrade or expand municipal recreation; focus should be on maintaining and protecting informal access.
- Public water access is adequate but could benefit from minor improvements.
- Trails are generally well maintained by volunteer clubs; ongoing landowner agreements are essential.
- Traditional access to private land should be preserved through relationship-building and education.

Chapter 11: Existing Land Use

Our vision for Brighton Plantation is to protect and preserve the natural beauty and ecological integrity of our forests, waterways, and landscapes, while respecting the property rights of all landowners. We are committed to maintaining the unique rural character of our community by ensuring that development remains in harmony with the environment. Through careful stewardship, sustainable land practices, and a focus on organic growth, we strive to foster a resilient community that can provide basic municipal services to its citizens without compromising the area's natural resources. We believe in promoting thoughtful, gradual development that aligns with the values of the Plantation, its residents, and environmental character of the area. At the same time, we are dedicated to ensuring that Brighton Plantation remains a self-sustaining, independent community, preserving its status and autonomy. Ultimately, Brighton Plantation strives to create a future where the landscape is preserved, property rights are respected, municipal services are provided, and development is carefully managed to maintain the rural character for generations to come.

Introduction

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

A vision is only as good as a community's commitment to work toward it. This work is 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, there must be a plan for priorities and implementation to support a successful vision.

The Existing Land Use Chapter serves to review the land use patterns and development in Brighton. Like many municipalities in central Maine, Brighton Plantation can be characterized as a rural, residential community, where residents must commute to larger areas, such as Skowhegan, for work.

Brighton remains committed to protecting the community's abundant natural resources, natural beauty and ecological integrity; while maintaining the plantation's unique rural character with basic municipal services to preserve its independence.

Characteristics of Brighton's Land & Settlement Patterns

Brighton Plantation comprises about 25,600 acres, of which approximately 448 acres is water. Most of the land in Brighton is owned by private timber companies and is heavily forested. Brighton Plantation has an abundance of natural resources of both land and

water, outlined further in the Natural Resources chapter. When considering land use planning, it is imperative to plan with consideration of these fragile, natural resources, as they contribute to the inherent beauty of Brighton and are so valued by residents.

Brighton Plantation's settlement patterns, both current and historic, have been heavily influenced by the logging industry, as logging has been the primary industry in the plantation for over a century.

The village area at the intersection of Routes 151 and 154 was built around the logging industry and wood mills. Historic settlement patterns in this area are still evident today, as the village area remains the most built-up part of town.

Residential Land Uses

Brighton Plantation is primarily a residential community with minimal commercial or industrial land uses. Most of the residential land uses are scattered throughout the plantation, with a clustering near the village area and along Routes 151 and 154.

As there are no public utilities in Brighton, such as public water or sewer, there is minimal development density. Although Brighton does have a Land Use Zoning Ordinance complete with designated growth areas, it was developed necessarily to remain under their own land use authority instead of returning to the Land Use Planning Commission; not in response to an abundance of development.

The village area is predominantly zoned as General Development District (D-GN). This district designation allows for most land uses, including residential, commercial, and industrial, either under a permit from the Code Enforcement Officer (CEO) or a Conditional Use Permit from the Planning Board.

The General Development District in the village area is not at capacity and can accommodate additional development. Since this area is part of the designated growth area in both this plan and in the previous Comprehensive Plan, additional development in this area would align with the community's vision. Directing growth to an area that is already built up would reduce the expense of providing municipal services to rural parts of town and would also serve to protect natural resources.

Subdivision Developments

Subdivisions are regulated in Brighton by state statute, as referenced in the Land Use Zoning Ordinance, written and adopted in 1995. The Land Use Zoning Ordinance will be updated to reflect current standards after the completion of this Comprehensive Plan update.

Brighton's Land Use Zoning Ordinance allows for the subdivision of land as a Conditional Use Permit, approved by the Planning Board in the General Development District, Residential Development District, and the Shoreland Development District.

The analysis and statistics on the number of subdivisions in Brighton is based on the state definition of "subdivision." 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:

- Gifts to [of land] relatives,
- Transfer to governmental entity,
- Transfer to conservation organizations,
- Transfer of lots for forest management, agricultural management, or conservation of natural resources,
- 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 have been no subdivisions created in Brighton in the past forty years. There are many plausible reasons why subdivisions have not been created in Brighton in recent years:

- Most of the land in Brighton is owned by timber companies, thus unavailable for subdivision creation.
- There is little demand for this type of development.
- Most of the people who choose to live in Brighton are not the type that would seek to live in a subdivision.
- The cost of subdividing property, then constructing houses on it is too high.
- Brighton's population is declining

Because there are no subdivisions in Brighton that are developed, most of the residential development has been occurring lot by lot. This aligns with Brighton's community vision since the plantation prioritizes preservation and protection of natural resources rather than encouraging large amounts of development. Lot by lot development is more in line with preserving the town's rural character through thoughtful, gradual development.

Industrial and Commercial Development

There has been no new industrial or commercial development in Brighton Plantation since the establishment of Farrin Brothers, and no significant commercial or industrial growth in recent memory. Existing economic activity is limited to small-scale home and cottage industries, reflecting the rural character of the community and the absence of supporting infrastructure such as public water, sewer, or three-phase electricity.

Historically, any commercial development in Brighton occurred along either the Route 151 corridor or the Route 154 corridor. Most of the businesses were related to logging, construction, or agriculture.

The Land Use Zoning Ordinance designates the General Development District (D-GN), situated in and around the village area, for commercial and industrial development. This district is not at capacity, since there are no commercial or industrial endeavors in Brighton. The lack of commercial and industrial land uses is not because there is no appropriately designated location for them; it is likely due to Brighton's rural nature.

As stated in the community vision, preservation of natural resources is paramount to the community, as is maintaining the rural character. Encouraging appropriate commercial or industrial development is not a priority of the municipality; although, neither is it discouraged.

As stated in the community vision, preservation of natural resources and the maintenance of rural character are paramount to Brighton Plantation. Encouraging commercial or industrial development is not a primary goal of the municipality; however, such development is not actively discouraged if it aligns with community values. The local economy is primarily tied to the wood products industry, with a significant portion of land owned by timber companies. Additionally, the Heart of Maine camp property, though currently unused, represents a potential opportunity for future economic or recreational development, should it be pursued in a way that complements the community's vision and scale.

Land Use Trends

Brighton Plantation remains a predominantly rural community, with development in recent years being limited and primarily residential in nature. Most of the newer development has occurred on a lot-by-lot basis, dispersed throughout the area. While growth in Brighton Plantation may fluctuate over time, as it has in the past, the community remains committed to preserving its rural character. The Brighton Future Land Use Plan will help guide future development, ensuring that growth is directed to appropriate locations while discouraging large-scale commercial or industrial development that could compromise the area's rural nature.

New residential development is more challenging to direct into growth areas than commercial development because there are fewer regulatory and nonregulatory incentives. For example, most new commercial development would opt for a location with easy access to a main road; however, this is rarely a consideration for residential development. Additionally, most people moving to Brighton appreciate the plantation's rural atmosphere, resulting in housing construction in rural areas.

Brighton's current land use trends and patterns align with the community's vision in that the minimal amount of growth certainly protects natural resources; however, if development was proposed, the plantation's Land Use Ordinance restricts where development can occur and the Land Use Ordinance will be updated with up-to-date language and standards after the Comprehensive Plan is complete, which would provide further protection.

Permitting in Brighton Plantation is overseen by the Planning Board and tracked manually, with applications and approvals filed by year in a physical filing cabinet. Due to the community's small size and the very limited number of permits issued each year, the Plantation does not currently employ a Code Enforcement Officer (CEO) or Local Plumbing Inspector (LPI). However, the town recognizes the value of having these positions and would prefer to have them if it were financially and logistically feasible. In the meantime, the assessors and plantation administrator are actively working to update and better organize the permitting system. The long-term goal is to scan existing records and transition to a digital system for improved access and long-term preservation.

Land Use Regulation

Brighton Plantation has a position for a fully certified Code Enforcement Officer (CEO) to assist and advise the Planning Board, and this role is intended to serve as the Chair of the Planning Board. However, due to the town's rural nature and declining population, maintaining a full-time CEO has been a challenge. In addition, staffing other essential municipal positions, such as the Local Health Officer (LHO), assessors, and Planning Board members, has become increasingly difficult. The Planning Board consists of three members appointed by the assessors and holds at least one regular meeting per quarter, requiring a quorum of two members to conduct business. Despite these challenges, the plantation remains committed to ensuring proper code enforcement and planning oversight.

Plantations were originally included in the Land Use Regulation Commission (LURC) jurisdiction which became the Land Use Planning Commission (LUPC) in 2012. If a plantation has assumed local land use authority, special provisions of statute apply that require that their land use plans and regulations be "not less protective of the existing natural, recreational, or historical resources than those adopted by the commission." (M.R.S. 12 § 685-A(4-A)) In 1995, this was translated in a similar zoning structure. Both Brighton Plantation and the LUPC zoning structures have three types of zoning districts: development, management, and protective. These are further divided into subdistricts. In addition, there are land use standards for development and land use activities.

The subdistricts are as follows:

- **Development districts:** Areas discernible as having patterns of intensive residential, recreational, commercial or industrial use or commercial removal of metallic minerals, and areas appropriate for designation as development districts when measured against the purpose, intent and provisions of this chapter.” 12 M.R.S. § 685-A(1); and,
- **Management districts:** Areas that are appropriate for commercial forest products or agricultural uses or for the extraction of nonmetallic minerals and for which plans for additional development are not presently formulated nor development anticipated; and,
- **Protection districts:** Areas where development would jeopardize significant natural, recreational and historic resources, including, but not limited to, flood plains, precipitous slopes, wildlife habitat and other areas critical to the ecology of the region or State.

Brighton’s Land Use Zoning Ordinance was written and adopted in 1995. It has not been updated since that time. This Ordinance divides the plantation into five separate zoning districts which fall under the umbrella of the subdistricts detailed above, each with its own intended purpose. Because the Ordinance has not been updated recently, not all districts are still acknowledged by the most recent version of the statutes and rules that govern land use for the Land Use Planning Commission.

While the Ordinance needs updating to reflect the most up to date standards and districts, it was written in a way that provided thorough protection of the community’s natural resources for its time. Three of the five districts have limitations due to these protective measures. The Land Use Zoning Ordinance includes the state-required Shoreland Zoning language, as well.

Brighton’s Zoning Ordinance includes:

- Article 1- General Provisions
- Article 2- Establishment of Land Use Districts
- Article 3- Land Use Districts and Applicable Standards
- Article 4- Performance Standards
- Article 5- Definitions
- Article 6- Administration and Enforcement

These umbrella districts (Development, Management, Protection) are broken down further into five subdistricts (see *Existing Zoning Map* in Appendix):

1. General Development District (under Development)
2. Residential Development District (under Development)
3. Shoreland Development District (under Development)
4. General Management District (under Management)
5. Protection Districts (under Protection)

The Ordinance specifies the designated growth areas as the General Development District, the Residential Development District, and the Shoreland Development District by making them the most permissive for land uses. The other two districts detailed in the Land Use Zoning Ordinance, the General Management District and the Protection Districts include several subdistricts and are intended to protect natural resources. Growth is directed away from these areas and into locations that can accommodate further development. The town will update the Land Use Zoning Ordinance upon the completion of the Comprehensive Plan.

Each district and related subdistricts are detailed below.

Districts intended to accommodate growth:

The Development subdistricts include:

Commercial Industrial District (D-CI)

General Development District (D-GN)- detailed below

Residential Development District (D-RS)- detailed below

The primary zoning districts in Brighton are detailed more thoroughly in Table 1, below, but their purpose is described here.

The **General Development District** (D-GN on the Brighton Plantation Zoning Map) comprises the area where present and future residential, commercial, industrial and other significant development are the most desirable in terms of road access, economic viability, concentration of present development and retention of natural character in the remainder of the community.

In the General Development District, certain common land uses only require a permit issued by the Code Enforcement Officer, such as one- and two-family dwellings; however, for more potentially impactful land use activities, such as multi-family dwelling units, a Conditional Use permit is required through the Planning Board.

The purpose of the **Residential Development District** (D-RS on the Brighton Plantation Zoning Map) is to set aside certain areas for single family residential uses so as to provide residential activities apart from areas of commercial and industrial development. The intention is to encourage the concentration of residential type development in areas which are appropriate for that use and prevent development in such areas which are incompatible with residential uses.

The permitting process and requirements in the Residential Development District are the same as those detailed above in the General Development District.

The purpose of the **Shoreland Development District** (D-SL on the Brighton Plantation Zoning Map) is to regulate residential and recreational development and other uses so that the development or use will not degrade the waters, recreational potential, fishery habitat, or scenic character in the shoreland areas suitable for development.

The D-SL district extends 250 feet from the normal highwater line of waterbodies. Permits for campsites and non-permanent docking or mooring facilities can be obtained from the Code Enforcement Officer; other allowed land uses require a Conditional Use Permit from the Planning Board. All Conditional Use Permits must conform to Article 4- Performance Standards.

The Shoreland Development District is a land use designation that is defunct in terms of the Land Use Planning Commission. The Future Land Use Plan will propose a new district designation for what this district previously encompassed.

Districts Intended to Remain Rural:

The rural areas include the umbrella districts of the Management Districts and the Protection Districts.

The Management subdistricts include:

General (M-GN)

Highly Productive (M-HP)

Natural Character (M-NC)

All land use zoning districts in Brighton are detailed more thoroughly in Table 1, below, but their purpose is described here.

The purpose of the **General Management District** (M-GN on the Brighton Plantation Zoning Map) is to permit forestry and agricultural management activities to occur with minimal interference from unrelated development. In addition, it provides protection of the food supply for wildlife that inhabit the forested areas of the plantation.

Included in the **General Management District** are areas which do not qualify for inclusion in any other district.

A permit from the Code Enforcement Officer is required for the erection of buildings used primarily for agricultural or forestry management purposes, or accessory structures and uses. All other allowed uses require a Conditional Use Permit from the Planning Board.

Protection districts include the following:

Aquifer Recharge (P-AR)

Fish & Wildlife (P-FW)

Mountain Area (P-MA)

Resource Plan (P-RP)

Unusual Area (P-UA)

Accessible Lake (P-AL)

Shorelands (P-SL1 with a 250' buffer & P-SL2 with a 75' buffer)

Flood Prone (P-FP)

Great Pond (P-GP)

Recreation (P-RR)

Soils & Geology (P-SG)

Wetlands (P-WL)

River Transition (P-RT)

The purpose of the **Protection Districts** (denoted as P- on the Brighton Plantation Zoning Map- P-WL for example) are to regulate land uses, to protect the public health, safety and welfare, and to protect sensitive and significant resources such as water bodies, flowing streams, wetlands, floodplains and shoreland. This protection is intended to maintain water quality; and scenic and recreational values; to protect plants, fish, and wildlife habitats; to minimize the economic and human costs of floods; and to maintain the groundwater table and ground water recharge and discharge areas.

These following areas are included in the Protection District designation:

- All shoreland of major standing waters designated on the Brighton Plantation Zoning map as P-GP with a width of 250 feet from the normal high-water mark.
- All shoreland of minor flowing water designated on the Brighton Plantation Zoning Map as P-SL2 with a width of 75 feet from the normal high-water mark.
- Deer wintering areas designated on the Brighton Plantation Zoning Map as P-FW.
- Wetlands designated on the Zoning Map as P-WL, including beds or rivers, streams, and lakes.
- Floodplains designated on the Zoning Map as P-FP.

The only type of permit that can be issued from the Code Enforcement Officer is for a non-permanent dock or mooring facility. All other allowed land uses require a Conditional Use Permit issued after review by the Planning Board.

All structures permitted in the Protection District require a setback of at least 75 feet from the normal high-water mark (not including structures that require direct access to the water for operational necessities).

All Conditional Use Permits must conform to Article 4- Performance Standards.

Table 1: Current Zoning Districts

Growth Areas	General Development District	This area is the most desirable location for all future and present residential, commercial, industrial, and other types of development. This district is ideal due to road access, economic viability, current development trends, and density. Directing current and future growth into this district will protect more environmentally sensitive areas and the character of the community.	Minimum Lot Size: No less than 1 acre—larger minimum lot size may be required depending on soil type. Road Frontage: at least 200 feet
	Residential Development District	Supports higher density residential uses while restricting commercial and industrial development.	Minimum Lot Size: No less than 1 acre—larger minimum lot size may be required depending on soil type. Road Frontage: At least 100 feet Setback Requirements: Minimum of 50 feet from front lot line, and 25 feet from side and rear lot lines.
	Shoreland Development District	Designated for high-impact commercial uses not compatible with residential or recreational land uses.	Minimum Lot Size: No less than 1 acre—larger minimum lot size may be required depending on soil type. Road Frontage: At least 100 feet. Commercial lots require 200 feet. Setback Requirements: 100 feet from high water mark and 25 feet from side and rear lot lines.
Rural Areas	General Management District	Allows low-intensity residential and recreational development within Shoreland Zone.	Minimum Lot Size: No less than 1 acre—larger minimum lot size may be required depending on soil type. Road Frontage: At least 100 feet. Setback Requirements: 75 feet from the front lot line, 25 feet from side and rear lot lines.
	Protection Districts	Surrounds ponds, lakes, streams, wetlands, floodplains, shoreland areas, sensitive areas, and significant resources.	All structures permitted in a protection district must be setback 75 feet from the normal high-water mark (except for water dependent structures).

Source: Brighton's Land Use Zoning Ordinance, 1995

Growth Areas Explained: The Maine Growth Management Act requires municipalities 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 municipalities 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.

Brighton Plantation's designation of growth areas serves as a tool to protect natural resources and uphold the community's vision of preserving its rural character. By encouraging development in already developed or designated areas, the town helps safeguard more sensitive lands, including forests, wildlife habitat, and recreational areas. While the Plantation currently has basic zoning in place, there is interest in updating and expanding local land use regulations—for example, by limiting the number of building permits issued annually or refining standards to guide appropriate development. The community supports slow, thoughtful growth and encourages small-scale, locally rooted businesses such as farmstands, Airbnb rentals, or event spaces for small destination weddings. Brighton is increasingly recognized as a low-impact recreation destination, with trails and woodlands that attract hunters, hikers, and nature enthusiasts. Any future development should reflect and support this identity, ensuring that growth remains compatible with both the landscape and the values of residents.

Non-Regulatory Measures

In addition to the Land Use Zoning Ordinance with a full suite of regulatory measures aimed at encouraging and promoting development in designated growth areas, Brighton could introduce non-regulatory means to encourage development in growth areas, as well. Public sewer and water, the most influential non-regulatory measure for directing growth, is not viable in Brighton, so the plantation must consider more non-traditional options.

Perhaps the biggest non-regulatory measure in directing growth to certain areas is that most of the rural land outside the village area is working forest and privately owned. This is an unintentional non-regulatory measure that will prevent sprawl and development in the rural areas unless Weyerhaeuser sells portions of its holdings. Essentially, the historical development pattern of Brighton acts to direct growth to the already developed areas within town.

These non-regulatory measures, intentional or unintentional, work to direct future growth and development into the designated growth areas, while protecting the town's rural areas, preserving natural resources, reducing the impact of sprawl, and reducing the cost of supplying municipal services to areas outside of the town's center. Directing growth into areas that are already developed and preserving the rural character of the town are in keeping with the community's vision statement.

Forestry, Agriculture and Open Space

As forestry, and to a lesser extent, farming were the historical economic cornerstones of the community, these resource-based practices should be supported and afforded

protection. Particularly because Brighton still relies heavily on the forest industry even today.

Enrollment in the Open Space, Farmland, and Tree Growth Tax Law are encouraged for property owners to reduce property tax valuations. The amount of acreage in Brighton enrolled in the Tree Growth Tax Law alone adds up to ##### acres (## percent) out of the 25,152 acres which make up the land area of the town.

To underscore the importance of forestry in Brighton, the timber company giant Weyerhaeuser, currently holds approximately ##### acres of working forest land in Bingham. They are the largest landowners in town. For further information on agriculture and forestry in Brighton, see the Agriculture and Forestry Chapter of this Plan.

Floodplain Management Ordinance

The plantation 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.

Projections

Population and Housing Projections

Referring to the population projections in the Community Profile and Housing chapter, it is difficult to anticipate significant future demand for housing.

- The **State Economist's Office** predicts a population of 54 people by 2040- a decrease of 8 people since 2020 (13 percent decrease).

It is important to note that this population projection is just that: a prediction based on past trends. As such, it cannot possibly factor in outside conditions that could increase the inflow or outflow of people into Brighton.

It is also important to note that this projection does not consider changes to household size: declining household size requires additional housing to accommodate individuals living alone, whereas increasing household size means less houses are required to accommodate a larger population of individuals sharing living quarters.

Brighton's average household size has been fluctuating and increasing since 2000. In fact, Brighton's average household size increased nearly 18 percent between 2000 and 2023. But it has also declined since 2020. With such a small population and small sample size, the statistical data for Brighton Plantation is less reliable than it is for larger communities. When considering data such as average household size, this must be taken into account.

Table 2: Average Household Size Fluctuations

Year		2000	2010	2015	2020	2023
Average Household Size		2.61	2.53	2.17	3.33	3.07

Source: 2000, 2010, 2015, 2020, & 2023 Census and ACS

Regardless of the validity of the data, this is the data available with which to make estimation about the minimum land needed to accommodate the projected needs.

Highlighted in Green: With Brighton's current population of 86 people and the current average household size of 3.07, the existing, year-round housing stock of 28 housing units is adequate for accommodating this population.

Highlighted in Gold: Based on the State Economist's population project of a decreased population to 54 people, combined with the current average household size of 3.07, Brighton's current housing stock would be at a surplus. This population decrease would require approximately 18 housing units and Brighton's existing housing stock is 28 housing units, leaving 10 housing units unoccupied.

Highlighted in Orange: Based on the State Economist's population project of a decreased population to 54 people, combined with a (hypothetical) decreased average household size of 2.92 people per household, Brighton's current housing stock would still have a surplus of 10 housing units.

Table 3: Population Projections and Housing Needs, Based on Household Size

	Population Projection	Total Current Housing Units (minus seasonal)	Average Household Size	Amount of Housing Needed	Deficit?
Current	86	28	3.07	28	N/A
State Economist's Population Projection (at current average household size)	54	28	3.07	18	No
State Economist's Population Projection (at a 5% decrease in average household size)	54	28	2.92	18.5	No

Based on Table 3 and the State Economist's population projection, there is no immediate need for additional housing in Brighton, even if the average household declines by five percent.

It is essential to bear in mind that these population projections are based on past trends, not current circumstances. Brighton's recent population trends are a steadily increasing population; an influx of new residents moving to Brighton from elsewhere.

It is also essential to understand that even with slow population growth, the components of the population will most assuredly change. The aging population and the trend of fluctuating average household size will undoubtedly impacts the need for certain housing types.

The aging population is a necessary 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, appropriately sized homes, and elderly housing facilities. Additionally, with the increase in residents, both younger and seniors living alone, the demand for smaller homes will increase. In short, the population may not be growing drastically or at all, but the changes in the demographics of the population will result in the need for more homes or different types of homes.

Regardless of population projections, population fluctuation, and existing housing stock, it is unreasonable to assume no new houses will be built in Brighton Plantation. The construction of new houses will consume more land for development. Brighton's minimum lot sizes and lot standard requirements will affect how much land is required for any new housing construction.

Hypothetically, if five new houses were constructed in the next planning period, the minimum amount of land required would be at the very least five acres. All zoning districts in Brighton require a minimum lot size of at least an acre; however, that is dependent on soil characteristics. If the soil is evaluated and determined to be lacking, the minimum lot size requirement could be increased. And this hypothetical scenario does not include other necessities such as driveways, roads, or utilities which would take up more land.

Currently, under the State Economist's population projection and even with a hypothetical decreased household size to 2.92 people per household, there is no need for additional housing to accommodate this population.

Ideally, any new homes would be built within Brighton's designated growth area, which is consistent with the town's vision, as well as with comprehensive planning guidelines.

Institutional, Industrial, and Commercial Projections

New commercial and industrial development in the last 10 years has been minimal in Brighton. That is not to say there has not been new businesses coming to Brighton; there are likely small, home-based businesses that have not been documented. But there has not been any large- or even medium-scale new businesses in Brighton in several years.

If any new businesses came to Brighton, they would most likely be in the General Development District, which has a 1-acre minimum lot size, depending on soil. If the soil

is found inadequate, the Land Use Zoning Ordinance reserves the right to require additional lot area.

Hypothetically, if two new businesses came to Brighton in the next ten years and required the construction of new buildings, they would require, at the very minimum, two acres. This is not taking into account land needed for driveways utilities or any other necessities; those would increase the amount of land needed.

Due to Brighton's rural nature, location, low population density, and lack of infrastructure, it is unlikely that there will be any new, major development of any kind in the next ten years period.

While new businesses in town would mean job opportunities and increased population, Brighton residents prefer a more organic approach to growth rather than forced. The community has no desire to expand; rather, residents prefer to maintain a status quo of their current conditions. This aligns with their high priority of protecting natural resources and maintaining the rural character of the town.

Analysis

- Brighton's Land Use Zoning Ordinance, although outdated, serves the community well and provides the necessary protection of natural resources and rural community character.
- Brighton's historic settlement patterns, heavily influenced by logging, are still evident today. The village area, at the crossroads of Route 151 and 154, was once one of the Plantation's hubs and remains the most densely settled area.
- Brighton is primarily a residential community with no commercial or industrial land uses.
- There has been no subdivisions in the last five to ten years and minimal residential, commercial, industrial, or retail development in the past ten years.
- The Land Use Zoning Ordinance delineates five primary districts in town; three of which are intended for growth.
- There are minimal non-regulatory measures for directing growth in Brighton, aside from the fact that most of the land is privately owned by timber companies.
- The State Economist projects a population decline down to 54 residents by 2040.
- This population decline and increasing average household size negate the need for any new housing development.
- No institutional, industrial, or commercial development is anticipated in the planning period.

Recommendations, 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 short term, mid-term, long term, and ongoing:

- “Short 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.
- “Ongoing” is used to identify strategies which are currently in place and should continue.

Policies:	Strategies:	Implementing Party/Timeframe:
HISTORIC RESOURCES: Brighton Plantation does not have an active Historic Society. The town's historic sites are in varying states of repair, with some in need of restoration. A comprehensive survey of these sites could help assess their condition and guide preservation efforts. Additionally, there are no requirements beyond the state's standard site assessment for historic sites. 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.	Planning Board / Ongoing.
	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.	Planning Board / Long Term.
	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.	Planning Board / Long Term.
2. Continue efforts to preserve Brighton's history.	2.1: Require new developments in sensitive areas to perform an analysis of possible archeological impacts prior to construction.	Planning Board / Ongoing.

Policies:	Strategies:	Implementing Party/Timeframe:
	2.2: Seek funding sources, such as grants aimed at historical preservation.	Board of Assessors / Long Term.
	2.3: Conduct a comprehensive inventory of historical buildings in Brighton for potential identification and inclusion on state or federal historic listings.	Board of Assessors / Long Term.
4. Consider adopting a historic preservation ordinance or land use standards to protect historically significant properties and archaeological areas, ensuring that such regulations are not less protective than standards established by the Land Use Planning Commission (LUPC).	4.1: Investigate the possibility of adding a provision to an existing ordinance or creating a stand-alone ordinance that would enhance protection of potential historic and archeological resources.	Planning Board / Long Term.

Policies:	Strategies:	Implementing Party/Timeframe:
NATURAL AND WATER RESOURCES: Brighton Plantation'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 as well as sustaining life. Protection of these assets from over-development is an important function of this Plan. <i>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.</i> <i>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.</i>		
Policies:	Strategies:	Implementing Party/Timeframe:

Policies:	Strategies:	Implementing Party/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.	Planning Board / Long Term.
	1.2: Designate critical natural resources as Critical Resource Areas in the Future Land Use Plan.	Comprehensive Plan Committee / Ongoing.
	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.	Planning Board / Ongoing.
	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 BwH maps and information regarding critical natural resources.	Planning Board / Ongoing.
	1.5: Educate the public about the plantation's natural resources to raise awareness and improve protection efforts.	Board of Assessors, Planning Board / Ongoing.
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.	Board of Assessors / Ongoing.
	2.2: Pursue public/private partnerships to protect critical and important natural resources such as through purchase of land or easements from willing sellers.	Board of Assessors / Ongoing.

Policies:	Strategies:	Implementing Party/Timeframe:
3. To protect water resources in growth areas while promoting more intensive development in those areas.	3.1: Maintain, enact or amend public wellhead and aquifer recharge area protection mechanisms, as necessary.	Board of Assessors / Long Term.
	3.2: Encourage landowners to protect water quality. Provide local contact information at the municipal office for water quality best management practices 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.	Board of Assessors / Long Term.
	3.3: Maintain standards for earth-moving and land-clearing activities in lake watersheds.	Board of Assessors / Ongoing.
	3.4: Utilize the Department of Environmental Protection's handbook, <i>Phosphorus Control in Lake Watersheds</i> , to aid in establishing density, design, and development standards to maintain water quality.	Board of Assessors / Ongoing.
	3.5 Adopt applicable Maine Model Shoreland Zoning ordinance provisions	Board of Assessors / Ongoing.
4. To minimize pollution discharges through the upgrade of existing public sewer systems and wastewater treatment facilities.	4.1: 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.	Board of Assessors / Mid-term.
	4.2: Seek grant funds to assist homeowners in voluntary upgrading of inadequate septic systems.	Board of Assessors / Mid-term.

Policies:	Strategies:	Implementing Party/Timeframe:
5. To cooperate with neighboring communities and regional/local advocacy groups to protect water resources.	5.1: Participate in local and regional efforts to monitor, protect and, where warranted, improve water quality. 5.2: Provide educational materials at appropriate locations regarding aquatic invasive species.	Board of Assessors / Long term. Board of Assessors / Mid-term.

Policies:	Strategies:	Implementing Party/Timeframe:
LOCAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT: <p>Brighton Plantation's local economy is an important contributor to the health and vitality of the Plantation and is linked to many other areas of Plantation policy. Like many other communities, Brighton Plantation is facing trends that are unfavorable, such as rural location and lack of investment capital. But Brighton Plantation 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.</p> <p><i>State Goal: To promote an economic climate which increases job opportunities and overall economic well-being.</i></p>		
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). 1.2: Explore ways to help existing businesses stay in Brighton Plantation.	Board of Assessors / Ongoing. Board of Assessors / Ongoing.

Policies:	Strategies:	Implementing Party/Timeframe:
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.
	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.)	Board of Assessors / Ongoing.
	2.3: Explore grant opportunities for appropriate economic development.	Board of Assessors / Ongoing.
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.	Board of Assessors / Ongoing.
	3.2: Explore options to coordinate with the regional school system for training opportunities for young workers.	Board of Assessors / Ongoing.

Policies:	Strategies:	Implementing Party/Timeframe:
HOUSING: <p>Brighton Plantation has seen a gradual increase in its housing stock, primarily consisting of rural, low-density development. While some areas near the historic village center and along existing road networks have been informally identified as suitable for growth, the town does not have formal zoning districts or a zoning ordinance to direct development patterns. As the town's demographic structure shifts, there may be future demand for more rental housing and age-appropriate housing for seniors, especially as existing options are limited. Affordability is a growing concern for both owner-occupied and rental housing, driven in part by the limited housing inventory and rising market pressures in rural parts of the region.</p> <p>Unlike larger towns, which have comprehensive zoning ordinances to guide growth and separate land uses, Brighton Plantation relies on state subdivision law and basic land use review processes. This creates both flexibility and challenges: while landowners enjoy fewer regulatory constraints, the town has limited ability to guide development, preserve open</p>		

Policies:	Strategies:	Implementing Party/Timeframe:
<p>space, or ensure compatibility between land uses. As housing needs evolve, the town may wish to explore voluntary growth management strategies, cooperative affordable housing partnerships, or basic site plan standards to help maintain rural character while accommodating future needs.</p> <p><i>State Goal: To encourage and promote affordable, decent housing opportunities for all Maine citizens.</i></p>		
Policies:	Strategies:	Implementing Party/Timeframe:
<p>1. Encourage and promote adequate affordable and workforce housing to support the community's and region's economic development.</p>	<p>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.</p>	<p>Planning Board / Long term.</p>
	<p>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.</p>	<p>Planning Board / Ongoing.</p>
	<p>1.3: Create or continue to support a community affordable/workforce housing committee and/or regional affordable housing coalition.</p>	<p>Board of Assessors / Ongoing.</p>
	<p>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).</p>	<p>Planning Board / Ongoing.</p>
<p>2. To ensure that land use controls encourage the development of quality affordable housing, including rental housing.</p>	<p>2.1: Support the efforts of local and regional housing coalitions in addressing affordable and workforce housing needs.</p>	<p>Board of Assessors / Ongoing.</p>
	<p>2.2: Provide training for the Code Enforcement Officer, Planning Board and Zoning Board of Appeals, aimed at providing town staff and volunteers with</p>	<p>Board of Assessors / Ongoing.</p>

Policies:	Strategies:	Implementing Party/Timeframe:
	<p>relevant knowledge in their subject areas to ensure they are equipped to make decisions and implement policy.</p> <p>2.3: Actively pursue the recruitment and retention of a Code Enforcement Officer (CEO), Licensed Plumbing Inspector (LPI), and Licensed Health Inspector (LHI) to support consistent permit review, enforcement, and guidance related to affordable and appropriate residential development. This will help ensure that land use regulations are applied fairly and effectively, especially given Brighton's reliance on private septic systems and off-grid housing solutions.</p>	<p>Board of Assessors / Ongoing.</p>
<p>3. To encourage and support the efforts of the regional housing coalitions in addressing affordable and workforce housing needs.</p>	<p>3.1: Seek to achieve a level of at least 10% of new residential development built or placed during the next decade be affordable.</p> <p>3.2: Provide residents and landowners with accessible information on tax relief programs, such as the Homestead Exemption, Tree Growth, and Open Space programs, by including brief informational inserts with annual tax bills and making printed materials available at the municipal office. Increasing awareness of these programs may help reduce cost burden of housing and land ownership for qualifying residents.</p>	<p>Board of Assessors / Ongoing.</p> <p>Board of Assessors / Ongoing.</p>

Policies:	Strategies:	Implementing Party/Timeframe:
PUBLIC FACILITIES AND SERVICES: Brighton Plantation provides limited public services to its residents. The Plantation maintains limited municipal office hours, road maintenance, a transfer station, and partners with the county and the neighboring community of Athens for public safety services. The Plantation maintains its own SAU with a SAU Board of Directors. The minimal services provided are enough to meet the needs of the current and future population. <i>State Goal: To plan for, finance and develop an efficient system of public facilities and services to accommodate anticipated growth and economic development.</i>		
Policies:	Strategies:	Implementing Party/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.	Board of Assessors / Ongoing.
	1.2: Locate new public facilities comprising at least 75% of new municipal growth-related capital investments in designated growth areas.	Board of Assessors / Ongoing.
2. To provide public facilities and services in a manner that promotes and supports growth and development in identified growth areas.	2.1: Explore options for regional delivery of local services.	Board of Assessors / Ongoing.
3. Encourage citizen participation in community affairs by keeping residents informed of town activities and opportunities.	3.1: Explore ways to encourage residents to volunteer for local boards, committees, and activities.	Board of Assessors / Ongoing.
	3.2: Annually recognize individual volunteers who have made significant contributions of their time.	Board of Assessors / Ongoing.

Policies:	Strategies:	Implementing Party/Timeframe:
FISCAL CAPACITY Brighton Plantation is in strong financial condition, with no outstanding debt and a long-standing commitment to conservative financial management. Revenues have remained relatively stable over the past decade, reflecting the town's modest size and limited municipal services. The Assessors and Town Clerk/Treasurer work collaboratively to maintain a balanced budget, seeking practical and sustainable solutions that meet the needs of the community while minimizing unnecessary expenditures. 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 Party/Timeframe:
1. To finance existing and future facilities and services in a cost effective manner.	1.1: Formalize, review, and update the Town's Capital Improvement Plan on an annual basis, incorporate improvements into the annual budget, and expand its scope to 10 years into the future. 1.2: Support legislative initiatives to increase state financial support to towns and schools. 1.3: Explore grant opportunities available to assist in the funding of capital investments within the community.	
2. To explore grants available to assist in the funding of capital investments within the community.	2.1: Maintain a working knowledge and listing of grants and deadlines for financing special projects.	
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.	

Policies:	Strategies:	Implementation:
<p>AGRICULTURE AND FOREST RESOURCES</p> <p>Forestry remains Brighton Plantation’s primary industry and land use. While farming has declined, small-scale agricultural operations focused on specialty products still exist and reflect broader statewide trends.</p> <p>Brighton residents value working land but are cautious about overdevelopment and extractive practices. Even when facing outside pressures—like market-driven timber harvesting—they are reluctant to become part of the problem. They support responsible forest management and sustainable use that preserves the character of the community for future generations.</p> <p>State Goal: To safeguard the State's agricultural and forest resources from development which threatens those resources.</p>		
Policies:	Strategies:	Implementation:
<p>1. To safeguard lands identified as prime farmland or capable of supporting commercial forestry.</p>	<p>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.</p> <p>1.2: Consult with Soil and Water Conservation District staff when developing any land use regulations pertaining to agricultural management practices.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p>	<p>Planning Board, Board of Assessors / Ongoing.</p> <p>Planning Board, Board of Assessors / Ongoing.</p> <p>Planning Board, Board of Assessors / Ongoing.</p> <p>Planning Board / Ongoing.</p>

Policies:	Strategies:	Implementation:
2. To support farming and forestry and encourage their economic viability.	<p>2.1: Encourage owners of productive farm and forest land to enroll in the current use taxation programs.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>2.3: Include agriculture, forestry operations, and land conservation that supports them in local or regional economic development plans.</p>	<p>Town Clerk, Board of Assessors / Ongoing.</p> <p>Planning Board, Board of Assessors / Ongoing.</p> <p>Board of Assessors / Ongoing.</p>

Policies:	Strategies:	Implementing Party/Timeframe:
<p>RECREATION:</p> <p>Brighton Plantation offers a variety of opportunities for passive and active outdoor recreation, primarily through self-directed pursuits such as hunting, fishing, hiking, and snowmobiling. While the town does not offer organized recreational programs, residents benefit from access to large tracts of undeveloped land, including timber company holdings and state-managed areas, with trail systems maintained informally by local snowmobile and ATV clubs. Brighton has no permanently conserved land and no partnerships with land trusts or conservation organizations. Public access is largely based on longstanding landowner goodwill, which could be vulnerable to change over time. While current recreational access meets the needs of the small population, improvements could include enhancing public access to water bodies, formalizing trailheads, increasing ADA accessibility where possible, and exploring low-impact conservation partnerships to ensure long-term recreational use.</p> <p><i>State Goal: To promote and protect the availability of outdoor recreation opportunities for all Maine citizens, including access to surface waters.</i></p>		
Policies:	Strategies:	Implementing Party/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	Board of Assessors / Ongoing.

Policies:	Strategies:	Implementing Party/Timeframe:
	<p>the policies and strategies outlined in the plan.</p> <p>1.2: Consider allowing small-scale recreation facilities in suitable locations in most subdistricts.</p>	<p>Planning Board / Ongoing.</p>
2. To preserve open space for recreational use as appropriate.	<p>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.</p> <p>2.2: Work with an existing local land trust or other conservation organizations to pursue opportunities to protect important open space or recreational land.</p>	<p>Board of Assessors / Ongoing.</p> <p>Board of Assessors / Long Term.</p>
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.	Board of Assessors / Ongoing.

Future Land Use Plan

Brighton Plantation's Comprehensive Plan Vision

Our vision for Brighton Plantation is to protect and preserve the natural beauty and ecological integrity of our forests, waterways, and landscapes, while respecting the property rights of all landowners. We are committed to maintaining the unique rural character of our community by ensuring that development remains in harmony with the environment. Through careful stewardship, sustainable land practices, and a focus on organic growth, we strive to foster a resilient community that can provide basic municipal services to its citizens without compromising the area's natural resources. We believe in promoting thoughtful, gradual development that aligns with the values of the Plantation, its residents, and environmental character of the area. At the same time, we are dedicated to ensuring that Brighton Plantation remains a self-sustaining, independent community, preserving its status and autonomy. Ultimately, Brighton Plantation strives to create a future where the landscape is preserved, property rights are respected, municipal services are provided, and development is carefully managed to maintain the rural character for generations to come.

Future Land Use Plan

Future Land Use Plan aligns with Brighton Plantation's vision by reinforcing residents' desire for local control, rural character, and protection of natural resources. It reflects concerns raised through public participation, survey results, and committee input—particularly regarding absentee land ownership, environmental degradation, and the desire to prevent unchecked development.

The purpose of this Plan is to guide future land use decisions in a way that reflects Brighton's character and limited infrastructure. While it does not enact regulation directly, it provides a foundation for future updates to the Land Use Zoning Ordinance and supports informed decision-making by the Planning Board, Board of Assessors, and residents.

Brighton's 1995 Land Use Zoning Ordinance currently governs land use through zoning districts, minimum lot sizes, and performance standards for sensitive areas. In 2025, the Plantation plans to update this ordinance to reflect the policies and strategies outlined in this Comprehensive Plan.

As part of that update, Brighton Plantation intends to seek an exemption from the state's requirement to designate formal growth areas, under the provisions allowed by state law for low-growth, rural municipalities. The Plantation's small year-round population, lack of municipal water or sewer, and minimal development pressure support this exemption. Rather than identifying growth areas, Brighton will continue to guide future development based on:

- Access to existing roads and infrastructure
- Avoidance of sensitive environmental areas (wetlands, watersheds, shorelands)
- Proximity to existing developed areas to limit sprawl

This approach aligns with Brighton’s vision of compact, appropriate growth that protects working lands, open space, and natural resources—without mandating growth where it may not be wanted or supported.

Delineating Growth Areas

Brighton Plantation intends to maintain the same designated growth areas identified in its 1995 Land Use Zoning Ordinance, consistent with the requirements of Title 30-A §4326(3-A). The Plantation does not propose any expansion or reduction of these areas.

This approach is supported by the following conditions:

- Minimal growth pressure: Brighton’s population is small and aging, with no recent commercial development and only minor residential growth. The 2025 Comprehensive Plan projects no significant change in development patterns over the next 10 years.
- No public utilities: Brighton has no public sewer, water, or other infrastructure typically associated with compact development. These limitations naturally restrict density and make high-intensity growth infeasible.
- Land ownership and use constraints: Roughly 80% of Brighton’s land is owned by industrial timber companies, primarily Weyerhaeuser. These lands are not available for residential or commercial development and are managed for long-term timber extraction.
- Existing development is dispersed: Residential uses are scattered along Route 151, Route 154, and near the village area, with no established commercial center. Most commercial activity occurs through home-based businesses or resource-based enterprises like logging and guiding.
- Designated growth areas are underutilized: The 1995 Land Use Zoning Ordinance already designates the village center as a General Development District (D-GN), allowing residential, commercial, and light industrial uses. However, the area is not near capacity and no new commercial enterprises have located there in over five years.
- Natural constraints: Brighton’s rugged terrain, poor soils, wetlands, shoreland zones, and lack of infrastructure limit development opportunities and reinforce a low-density, rural pattern.
- Community vision: Residents have clearly expressed their desire to maintain the Plantation’s rural character, conserve natural resources, and avoid sprawl. The Comprehensive Plan reflects this by supporting compact, appropriate development where infrastructure exists, not by expanding growth areas unnecessarily.

Given these factors, Brighton’s existing zoning and land use policies already guide limited development to the most suitable areas. Maintaining the current growth area designations allows the Plantation to remain in compliance with state planning requirements while preserving rural character, conserving natural resources, and supporting the community’s long-term vision.

The location of current development is already shaped by logical factors: proximity to travel corridors (Routes 151 and 154), historical settlement patterns, and avoidance of environmentally sensitive areas. No additional growth areas are needed or warranted.

Current Land Use Patterns

Brighton Plantation’s Future Land Use Plan reflects and reinforces recent development trends, which have remained minimal and largely residential in nature. Over the past decade, development has occurred at a low rate, with most new structures being year-round homes or seasonal camps. No new commercial or industrial development has occurred during this time.

The 1995 Land Use Zoning Ordinance divides the Plantation into five primary zoning subdistricts, grouped under three umbrella categories:

- Development Districts
 - General Development District (D-GN)
 - Residential Development District (D-RS)
 - Shoreland Development District (D-SL)
- Management District
 - General Management District (M-GN)
- Protection Districts
 - Wetlands, Floodplains, and other resource-specific zones

These zoning districts have helped guide new residential development toward appropriate areas—particularly along existing travel corridors (Routes 151 and 154) and near the village center—while discouraging growth in environmentally sensitive zones.

The designated growth areas, especially the General Development District near the village center, are not at capacity and remain the most logical locations for any future growth. Maintaining these existing areas supports the community’s goals by:

- Directing new development to areas with existing road access and settlement patterns
- Avoiding sprawl into remote, forested, or conservation-priority areas
- Preserving open space, natural resources, and rural character
- Aligning with the community’s expressed vision for modest, well-sited growth

The Future Land Use Plan does not propose expanding these growth areas, as the current zoning framework continues to accommodate the limited growth that is expected.

This approach is consistent with recent trends and supports Brighton's request for an exemption from the state's growth area designation requirements.

Constraints and Natural Opportunities for Development

Brighton Plantation's designated growth areas have been shaped by a combination of natural constraints, infrastructure limitations, and long-standing development patterns. The configuration of these areas reflects where development is most feasible—physically, environmentally, and economically—while avoiding areas where it would place undue burden on municipal services or threaten natural resources.

Environmental constraints are a key consideration in land use planning and are discussed in more detail in the Natural Resources chapter of this Plan. These include wetlands, steep slopes, shallow or poor soils, floodplains, and areas important to groundwater protection. Such features reduce the suitability of land for development due to erosion risks, septic system limitations, or habitat concerns. The town's existing zoning ordinance reflects these constraints by designating sensitive areas as either Management or Protection Districts, where development is limited or prohibited. These measures help preserve the integrity of Brighton's water resources, soil health, and scenic landscape.

In addition to environmental limitations, public service constraints also shape where growth can occur. Brighton does not have public water, sewer, or transit services. Road maintenance is minimal, especially on private or seasonal roads. Fire protection is provided by a volunteer department with limited equipment, and electricity access can be inconsistent in remote areas. Extending services to new or scattered development would place unsustainable financial pressure on the community and its residents.

Despite these limitations, the Plantation's designated growth areas present several natural advantages. These locations are characterized by:

- Proximity to existing public roads, including Routes 151 and 154
- Clusters of existing development, particularly near the village center
- Fewer environmental constraints
- Access to civic buildings and other public facilities

These areas represent the most suitable locations for future growth, and the current zoning already supports a mix of residential, commercial, and municipal uses. While most recent development has occurred outside the designated growth areas—often along rural corridors or lakeshores—the Future Land Use Plan seeks to gently redirect future development into areas already equipped to handle it. This approach protects Brighton's rural character, avoids costly infrastructure expansion, and aligns with the community's stated vision.

In summary, the location and size of Brighton's designated growth areas are both a response to and a reflection of the town's physical geography, limited public services, and

evolving land use needs. These areas remain the most logical and cost-effective places to accommodate any future residential or small-scale commercial growth.

Land Use Districts and Their Relationship to Growth and Conservation

Brighton Plantation's Land Use Zoning Ordinance divides the community into districts that reflect development suitability, environmental sensitivity, and long-term land use goals. These are grouped into Development, Management, and Protection districts.

Development Districts—including the General Development (D-GN), Residential Development (D-RS), and Shoreland Development (D-SL) districts—make up the Plantation's designated growth area. These are centered near the village and along primary travel routes (Routes 151 and 154), where development has historically occurred. These districts allow for a mix of residential, home-based commercial, and municipal uses, with the General Development District offering the greatest flexibility. The Shoreland Development District is being phased out and replaced by updated shoreline protection standards.

Outside these areas, the Management Districts and Protection Districts cover the remainder of the Plantation and are intended to conserve rural character and natural resources.

- Management Districts include:
 - *General (M-GN)*: low-density residential and resource-based uses
 - *Highly Productive (M-HP)*: areas with better soils for limited farming or forestry
 - *Natural Character (M-NC)*: scenic or undeveloped areas where development is discouraged
- Protection Districts include subzones that safeguard wetlands, floodplains, aquifers, wildlife habitat, mountain terrain, lakeshores, and other sensitive features. These zones impose stricter development standards and often prohibit certain uses altogether.

This zoning framework protects critical natural resources by steering growth into already developed areas and restricting high-impact uses in ecologically sensitive zones. The current zoning districts reflect both physical constraints—like poor soils, steep slopes, or lack of services—and community values emphasizing environmental protection and rural identity.

Approximately 80% of Brighton's land is owned by timber companies, primarily Weyerhaeuser, whose holdings are almost entirely located outside the designated growth areas. These parcels fall within Management or Protection Districts and are managed for long-term timber extraction under the Tree Growth Tax Program. If Weyerhaeuser were to sell large tracts of land, the resulting development pressure would likely occur outside the growth area, where roads, services, and oversight are limited. This possibility

underscores the importance of maintaining strong land use standards across all zoning districts.

No major municipal investments are anticipated to support future land use changes, as the current zoning structure is sufficient to guide the limited growth projected in the next decade.

Anticipated Growth

Based on current zoning, population projections, and recent trends, Brighton Plantation is not expected to experience significant development during the next 10 years. The State Economist projects a population decline from 62 in 2020 to 54 by 2040. This modest decrease, coupled with an aging population and smaller household sizes, suggests that demand will remain flat or shift toward smaller, single-family or seasonal homes.

No new commercial, institutional, or industrial development is anticipated. Survey responses reflect strong public support for conservation-focused land use:

- 58% of residents prefer to limit or discourage commercial uses
- 55% oppose industrial development
- A majority support protecting natural resources and preserving the Plantation's rural character

The most likely development scenario includes:

- Occasional new seasonal camps or homesteads, primarily off-grid
- Small home-based businesses, not requiring new commercial buildings
- Minimal subdivision activity due to large lot sizes and limited demand

If any development occurs, it will likely be located in or near the village area, which already has road access, electricity, and is within the designated growth area. Areas outside the growth zone are largely owned by timber companies or constrained by environmental protections and lack of infrastructure.

Brighton's land use strategy is not to expand growth but to guide any future development into areas already suited for it, maintaining services while protecting open space, shorelands, and working forests. This approach reflects both practical constraints and the community's clearly expressed values.

Land Use Regulation and Monitoring

Brighton Plantation adopted its Land Use Zoning Ordinance and Zoning Map in 1995 to establish local control over land use following decades of state oversight. These documents provide standards for zoning, permitting, subdivision review, and environmental protections, including compliance with the Mandatory Shoreland Zoning Act and basic stormwater and phosphorus control measures.

As of 2025, Brighton is working with KVCOG to update the ordinance and map to ensure compliance with current state law and to better reflect the community's present-day needs. This update will also modernize the Plantation's Subdivision Ordinance, which is currently embedded in the 1995 document. New zoning may be established through the adoption of a revised land use ordinance and zoning map. This may not be a customized version of LUPC's zones as previously adopted, and may be a new system for Brighton Plantation. The regulatory system must be based on Maine shoreland zoning requirements, FEMA requirements, and additional land use regulations appropriate for Brighton Plantation. The Plantation will work with the LUPC to ensure the "not less protective...than those adopted by the Commission" standard is met as they draft the ordinance update.

Development activity in Brighton remains low. Only 28 permits have been issued between 2013 and 2024. Most permits are for small-scale residential work or seasonal camps. Given this limited volume, Brighton does not require a large-scale monitoring system, but there is recognition that permit tracking should be improved. The Administrative Assistant is currently working with the Assessors to digitize permit records and begin maintaining a more usable, accessible database for internal review.

Due to the Plantation's small size and limited budget, Brighton is unable to support a full-time Code Enforcement Officer (CEO), Licensed Plumbing Inspector (LPI), or Local Health Officer (LHO). These roles are currently filled on a part-time or as-needed basis. Recruiting and retaining qualified individuals to fill these positions remains an ongoing challenge. As such, Brighton should consider:

- Exploring a shared or regional CEO and inspector model through KVCOG or nearby towns
- Working proactively to retain existing officials by supporting training and coordination
- Holding annual or biannual coordination meetings with neighboring municipalities (e.g., Athens, Kingsbury, Bingham, Pleasant Ridge) to share resources, address regional issues, and align on zoning or enforcement challenges

To support internal planning and maintain oversight of land use patterns, Brighton should adopt the following practices:

- Continue digitizing permit records and improving access for Planning Board and Assessors
- Produce an annual summary of permits issued, including any seasonal-to-year-round conversions
- Conduct a comprehensive review of the Land Use Ordinance at least every five years, with minor updates as needed following state law changes or local concerns

By improving internal systems and exploring regional partnerships, Brighton can continue to enforce local land use policies and respond effectively to future development, even with limited staff capacity.

Comprehensive Plan Implementation

Given Brighton Plantation's small size and limited administrative capacity, implementation of the Comprehensive Plan will be the shared responsibility of the Planning Board and Board of Assessors, with support from the Clerk/Administrative Assistant. Rather than forming a separate implementation committee, these existing officials will oversee progress and ensure that decisions remain consistent with the community's vision.

It is recommended that the Planning Board and Assessors conduct a formal review of the Plan every five years, ideally in coordination with the annual town meeting or budget process. This review should assess progress in key areas, including:

- Implementation of Future Land Use Plan strategies
- Any growth-related municipal investments and whether they align with designated growth areas
- Location and type of new development relative to growth and rural zones
- Protection of critical natural resources through local actions or partnerships

If the review indicates that aspects of the Plan are outdated or not being followed, the Planning Board may propose amendments or seek technical assistance from KVCOG.

Following adoption of this Comprehensive Plan, KVCOG will lead a full update of Brighton's 1995 Land Use Zoning Ordinance, including revisions to the Subdivision Ordinance and Shoreland Zoning provisions. This work will ensure consistency with current state law, clarify outdated sections, and align local land use policies with the priorities expressed in this Plan. These updates will support the Planning Board and Assessors in applying clear, enforceable standards and maintaining local control over future development.

This approach provides a manageable and realistic framework for Brighton to monitor and implement its land use vision, without creating new committees or placing additional burden on limited municipal staff.

Future Land Use Policies and Strategies

Policies:	Strategies:	Implementing Party/Timeframe:
<p>Land Use Plan: Brighton Plantation's land use ordinances—including the Land Use, Shoreland Zoning, and Subdivision Ordinances—work together to guide modest residential growth while protecting the area's forests, ponds, and rural character. The designated growth area along Route 150 will remain unchanged, as it is not at capacity and there is little pressure for commercial or industrial development. Most new development continues to be seasonal or single-family homes, and residents strongly value the preservation of natural resources like Smith Pond and Kelly Mountain. Future updates to the land use ordinances, led by KVCOG, will help ensure growth remains limited and compatible with the community's priorities.</p> <p>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.</p>		
Policies:	Strategies:	Implementing Party/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.	Board of Assessors / Short-Term.
	1.2 Meet with neighboring communities to coordinate land use designations and regulatory and non-regulatory strategies.	Board of Assessors / 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	Comprehensive Plan Committee, Planning Board / Ongoing.
		Board of Assessors, Planning Board / Ongoing.

Policies:	Strategies:	Implementing Party/Timeframe:
	<p>c. Clearly define protective measures for critical natural resources and, where applicable, important natural resources.</p> <p>d. Clearly define protective measures for any proposed critical rural areas and/or critical waterfront areas, if proposed.</p> <p>2.2 Periodically (at least every five years) evaluate implementation of the plan in accordance with Section 2.7 of the Chapter 208 Comprehensive Plan Review Criteria Rule.</p>	Board of Assessors / Mid-term.
3. To support the level of financial commitment necessary to provide needed infrastructure in growth areas.	3.1 Include in the Capital Investment Plan anticipated municipal capital investments needed to support proposed land uses.	Board of Assessors / Ongoing.
4. To establish efficient permitting procedures, especially in growth areas.	4.1 Provide the code enforcement officer and Planning Board 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.	Board of Assessors / Ongoing.
5. To protect critical rural and critical waterfront areas from the impacts of development.	<p>5.1 Track new development in the community by type and location.</p> <p>5.2: As required by statute, work with the Maine Land Use Planning Commission to ensure the land use ordinance provisions are “not less protective” than the Commission’s Rules.</p>	<p>Planning Board / Ongoing.</p> <p>Planning Board / Ongoing.</p>

Capital Investment Plan

Description of Existing Process

The Capital Investment Plan (CIP) component of the Comprehensive Plan identifies growth related capital investments and a strategy for accommodating them. In Brighton Plantation, the Capital Investments Plan is sometimes referred to as the Capital Improvement Plan, or CIP. The CIP anticipates future expenses, sets priorities and timetables, and proposes a mechanism to fund them. 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 finance the Improvement.

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. Brighton Plantation does very basic capital planning for its municipal facilities. The town should maintain a prioritized list of anticipated capital needs.

As the coordinators for all the Plantation's activities, the Assessors are responsible for the CIP. However, they must rely on the other staff and committees to submit needs and cost estimates and 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.

Brighton Plantation's CIP should continue to be developed by the Board of Assessors, by incorporating the guidelines needed to reach the goals of the initial project list presented in the plan.

The revised CIP will be integrated with the budget process beginning in 2026-2027. The capital investments listed below include both those identified by this plan and other capital improvement projects that have come up in discussions over the past five years.

Why a CIP?

The development and maintenance of a Capital Investments Plan allows Brighton Plantation 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 Brighton Plantation 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 its fund balance policy, Brighton Plantation maintains at least three months of operating expenses in its undesignated fund balance. This reserve ensures that the Plantation can continue to operate in the event of unexpected shortfalls or emergencies. Funds in excess of this minimum requirement may be used for one-time capital expenditures, such as road resurfacing projects, or to address emergency or catastrophic needs that may arise unexpectedly.
- Reserve accounts: Brighton Plantation's use of saving funds in capital reserve accounts to pay for capital improvements has increased from past practice.
- Bonding/lease-purchase agreements: Brighton Plantation has not used bonding, but they have permission to do so, as necessary, for equipment purchases. Permission is through the legislative body.
- Grants: Grants are competitive and cannot be relied upon. 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 is generally traded in towards the purchase of replacement equipment.
- Outside contributions: In many 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 the National Scenic Byway. While these funding sources may be more reliable than grants, it requires coordination with timetables outside of the town's control.

Financing of the CIP may come from any number of sources, but the most crucial 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 Capital Improvement Funds.

Shared Investments

Brighton Plantation has historically taken a practical and collaborative approach to meeting community needs by partnering with neighboring towns and service providers. The Plantation contracts with the Town of Athens for fire protection services and school transportation for local students. Emergency medical services are provided through Redington-Fairview General Hospital in Skowhegan. Additionally, Kingsbury Plantation pays to use Brighton's transfer station, further demonstrating regional cooperation. These arrangements allow Brighton to maintain essential services in a cost-effective manner, consistent with its small size and rural character.

The Capital Investment Plan for Brighton Plantation is designed to comply with Maine's Comprehensive Plan requirements. Because Brighton's population is small and growth is projected to remain minimal, most capital expenses focus on maintaining existing facilities rather than expanding for growth. The Board of Assessors will update the CIP annually as part of the budget process to ensure new priorities are captured and funding is aligned. Each capital item in this plan is assigned a priority level, estimated cost, and funding source, including reserves, undesignated fund balance, state reimbursements, grants, and outside contributions. The Plantation avoids long-term debt when possible but retains bonding authority if future needs require it. Shared and regional investments, such as fire protection, EMS, school transportation, and the transfer station, are recognized as essential to maintaining services in a cost-effective way. This approach ensures the CIP meets state guidelines by identifying needs, setting priorities, forecasting costs, and describing realistic financing strategies.

Priority Level:

L= Low M= Medium H= High

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS

Department	Project/Need	Priority	Estimated Replacement Timeframe	Estimated Cost	Primary Funding Source
Municipal Office	Multiple Repairs (Floor, outside ramp, freezing pipe)	H	1-2 Years	\$10,000	Savings
Church	Replace Steeple	L	10-20 Years	\$50,000+	Grant
Transfer Station	New Building	M	5-10 Years	\$20,000	Grant
Public Works	Culvert Replacement, North Road	H	1-3 Years	\$10,000	Savings
Church	Asbestos Abatement	L	5-10 Years	\$10,000	Grant
Public Works	Winding Hill Road Repaving	M	5-10 Years	\$100,000	Multiple

Regional Coordination

Due to its small population and rural, unincorporated nature, Brighton Plantation has limited formal regional coordination mechanisms. However, the Plantation does collaborate with neighboring communities and regional entities to manage shared services and natural resources in a practical, low-cost manner.

Shared Resources and Facilities

Brighton shares multiple types of resources and infrastructure with surrounding towns and regional partners, including:

- **Solid Waste Management:** Brighton operates a municipal transfer station on Route 154, which is also used by Kingsbury Plantation through a contractual agreement. While Brighton oversees the facility, regional use during summer months can strain capacity.
- **Fire Protection:** Brighton contracts fire services from the Town of Athens. This agreement avoids the need to staff or equip an internal department and is typical of many small plantations and unorganized territories in Maine.
- **Ambulance Services:** Emergency medical response is provided by nearby towns such as Skowhegan and Harmony. These services are critical due to Brighton's remote geography and lack of its own emergency departments.
- **Law Enforcement:** The Somerset County Sheriff's Department provides policing services to Brighton. While response times are naturally longer in rural areas, this arrangement is consistent with regional practice and resource sharing.
- **Education and Recreation:** Children in Brighton attend schools in neighboring towns such as Athens, with recreational programming often offered in coordination with those communities. Shared youth programs, including sports and swimming, reflect a regional approach to youth services.
- **Lakes, Rivers, and Forestland:** Much of the land in Brighton is owned by large timber companies, primarily Weyerhaeuser. Coordination over land access, conservation, or development is typically informal and reactive, but future sale or subdivision of these lands could significantly impact the region. Any large-scale changes will require regional awareness and coordination, particularly as they relate to access, conservation, and housing pressure.

Policy Conflicts and Coordination

There are no known direct policy conflicts between Brighton and surrounding municipalities. However, the lack of zoning or land use regulations in some neighboring areas can lead to inconsistent approaches to development, especially in recreational corridors and forestland. Brighton is supportive of efforts to conserve regional water quality and wildlife habitat and applies best practices (e.g., MDOT standards for ditching and culvert work) when maintaining roads or undertaking construction near sensitive areas.

Future Coordination Goals

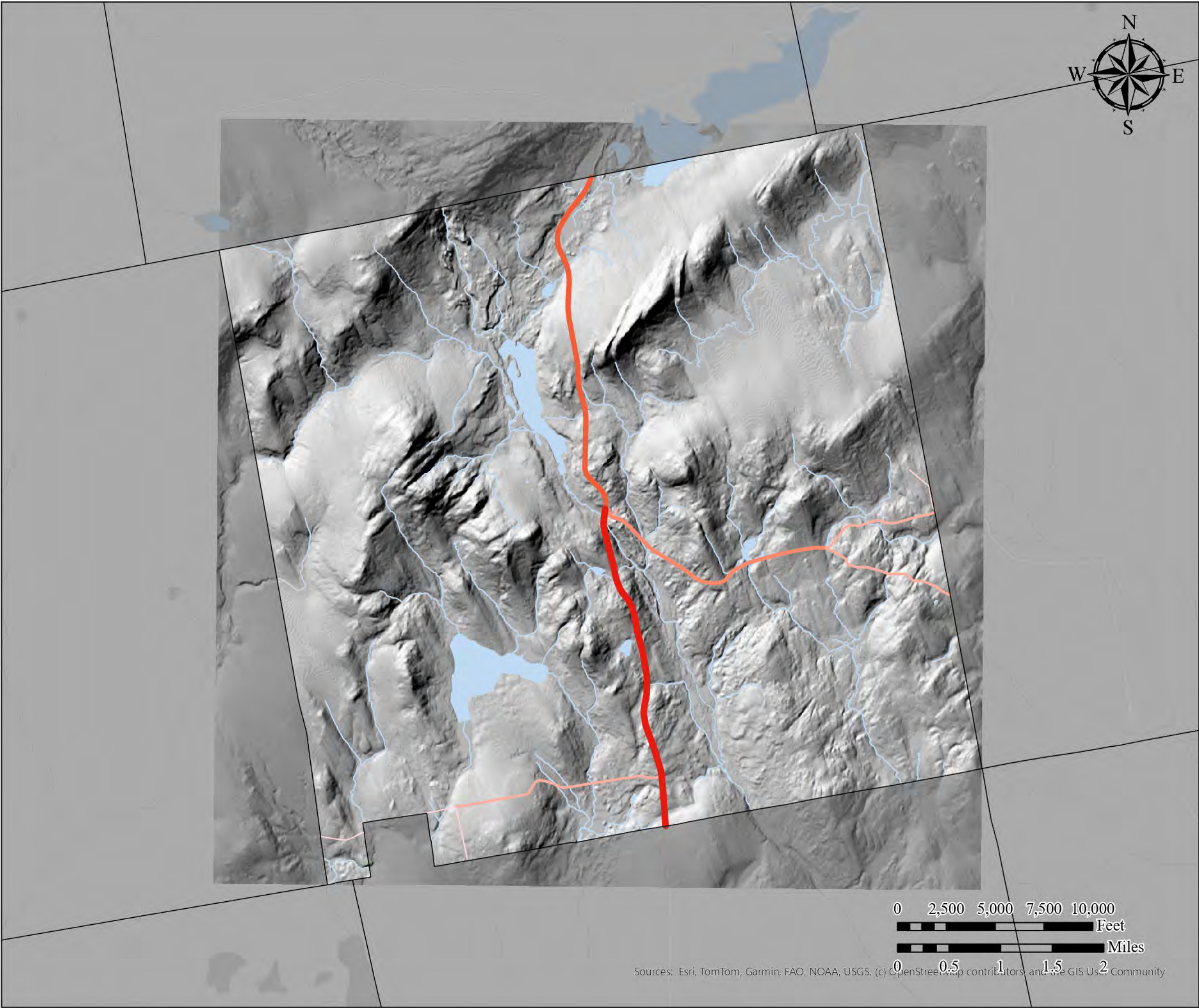
While Brighton does not have the staffing capacity to lead regional efforts, the Plantation remains open to collaboration when feasible. Potential future strategies may include:

- Participating in regional hazard mitigation or emergency response planning through Somerset County.
- Exploring partnerships with land trusts or conservation groups to protect key recreational and ecological assets.
- Continuing to work with nearby towns on recreation programs and public health services.
- Supporting state and regional initiatives that maintain the quality of local aquifers, wetlands, and fisheries.

As a small plantation, Brighton benefits most from practical, informal coordination with its neighbors, but it remains committed to protecting the shared rural character and environmental resources that define the region.

APPENDICES


MAPS:	PAGE:
Annual Daily Traffic	147
Land Cover	148
Agricultural and Forestry Resources	149
Base Planning	150
Critical Natural Resources	151
Crashes since 2024	152
General Transportation	153
Historic Resources	154
Digital Elevation Model	155
Soils	156
Water Resources	157
Existing Land Use	158
List of Acronyms	159
Survey Results	160




Brighton Plantation Somerset County, Maine


Annual Average Daily Traffic 2025 Comprehensive Plan


Map Legend


 Streams


 Waterbodies


Public Roads AADT

 25 - 37

 38 - 83

 84 - 217

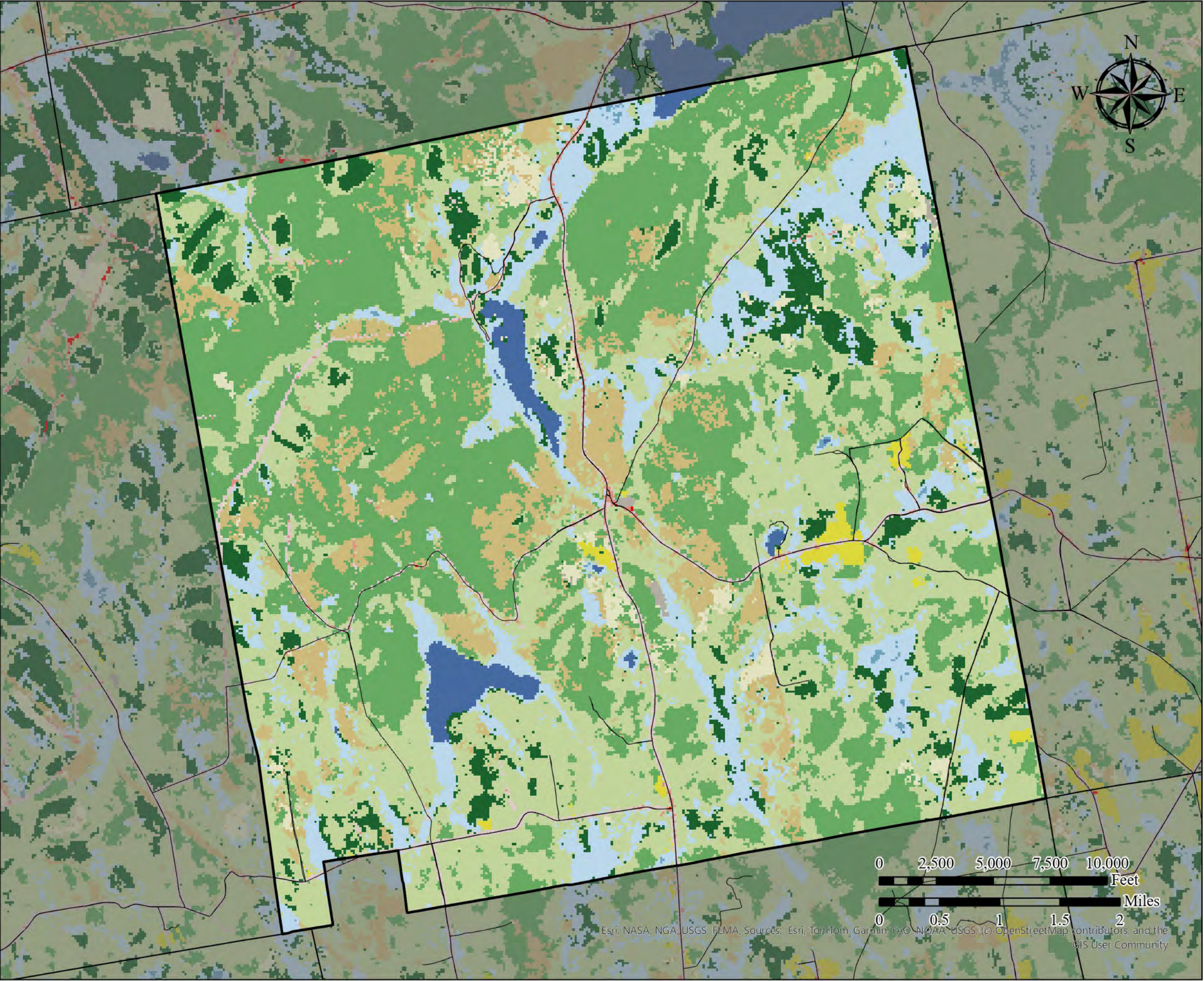
 218 - 383

 384 - 591



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Data sources: Maine Office of GIS, Maine DOT, USGS
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Sources: Esri, TomTom, Garmin, FAO, NOAA, USGS, (c) OpenStreetMap contributors, and the GIS User Community



**Brighton Plantation
Somerset County,
Maine**

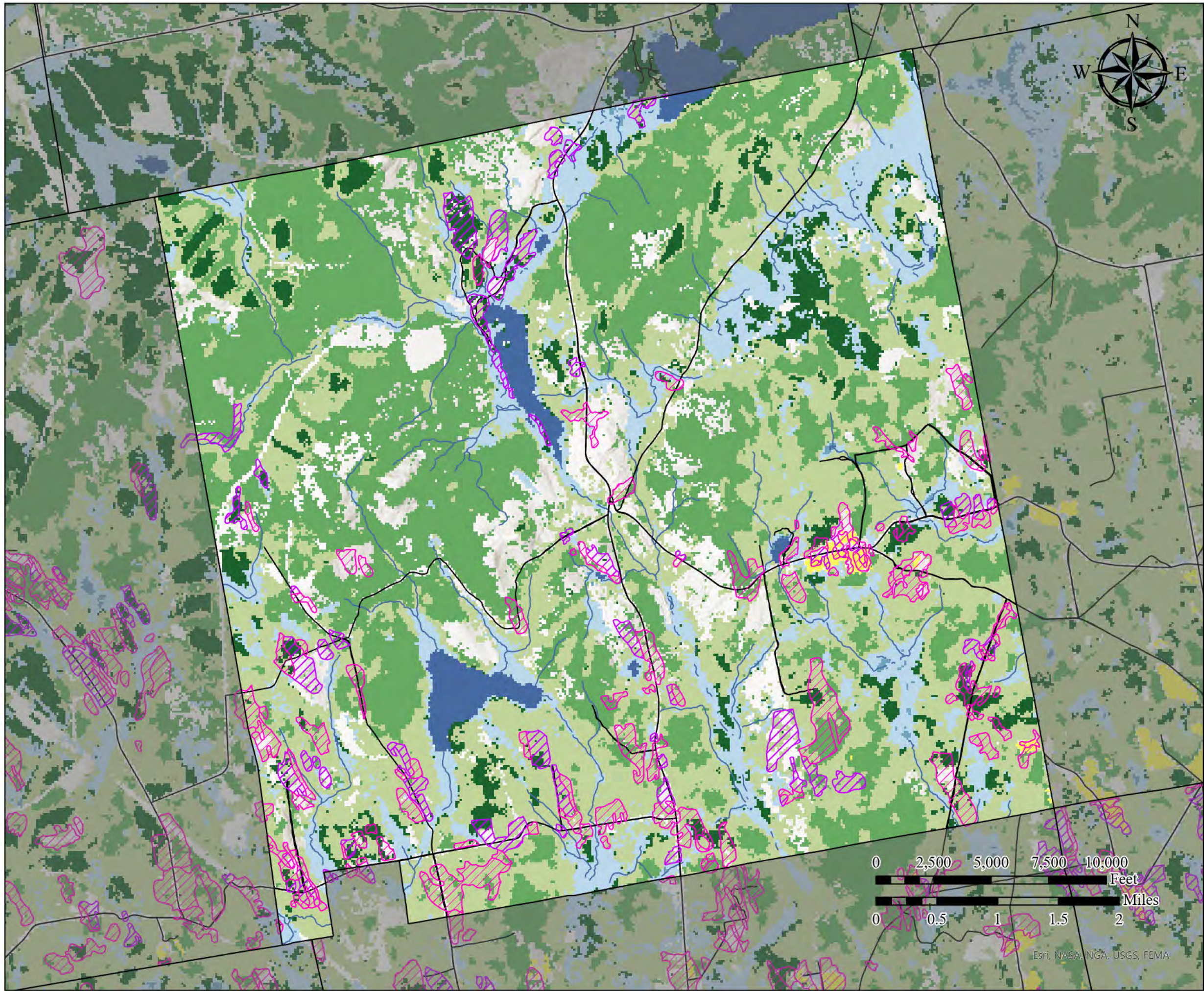
**Land Cover
2025 Comprehensive
Plan**

Map Legend

- Roads
- Unclassified
- Open Water
- Perennial Ice/Snow
- Developed, Open Space
- Developed, Low Intensity
- Developed, Medium Intensity
- Developed High Intensity
- Barren Land (Rock/Sand/Clay)
- Deciduous Forest
- Evergreen Forest
- Mixed Forest
- Dwarf Scrub
- Shrub/Scrub
- Grassland/Herbaceous
- Sedge/Herbaceous
- Lichens
- Moss
- Pasture/Hay
- Cultivated Crops
- Woody Wetlands
- Emergent Herbaceous Wetlands



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Brighton Plantation Somerset County, Maine

Agriculture and Forestry Resources 2025 Comprehensive Plan

Map Legend

Roads

Streams

Farmland

All areas are prime farmland

Farmland of statewide importance

Farmland Land Cover

Cultivated Crops

Pasture/Hay

Forest Land Cover

Deciduous Forest

Evergreen Forest

Mixed Forest

Wetland Land Cover

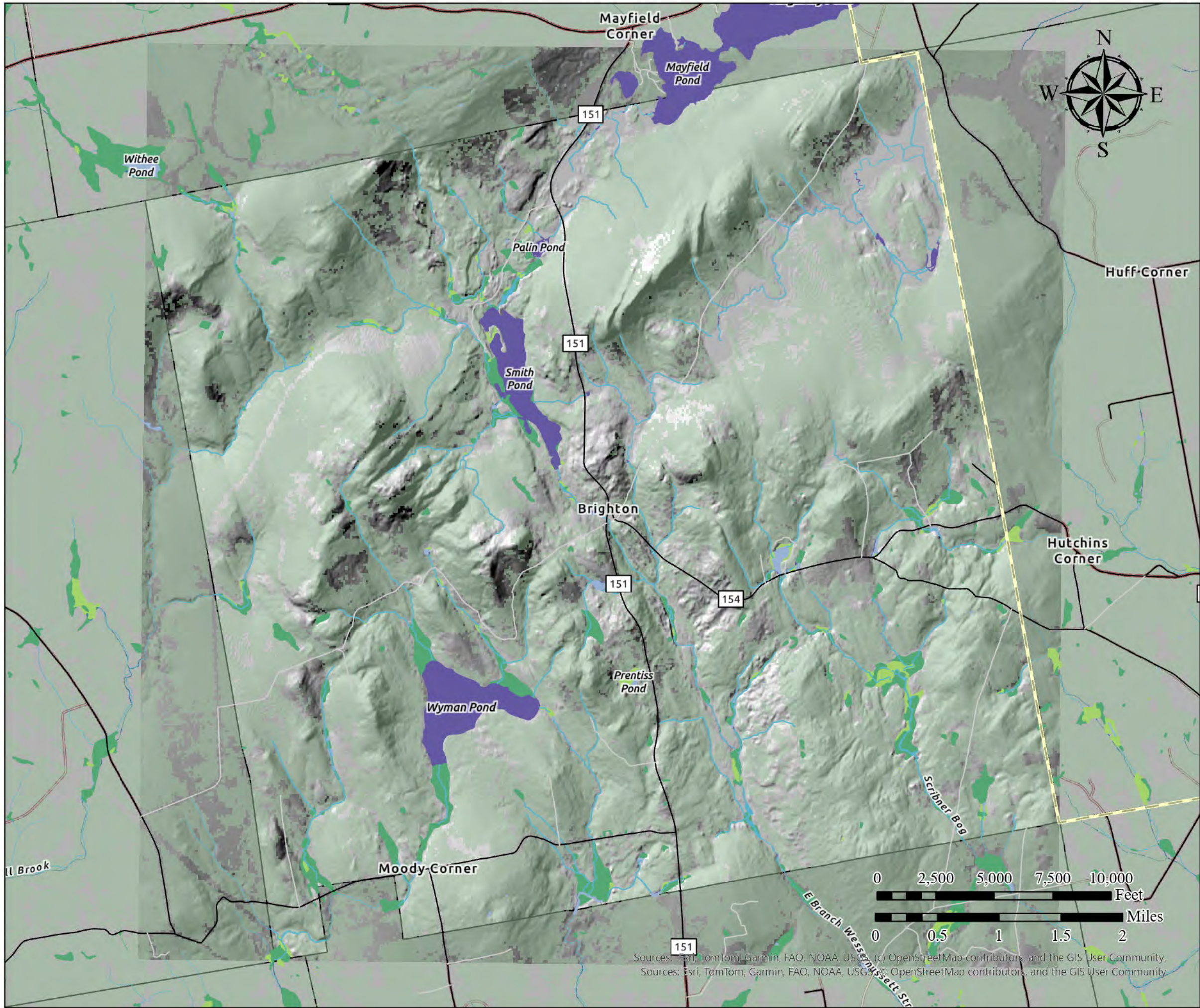
Open Waters

Woody Wetland

Emergent Herbaceous Wetlands



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Brighton Plantation Somerset County, Maine

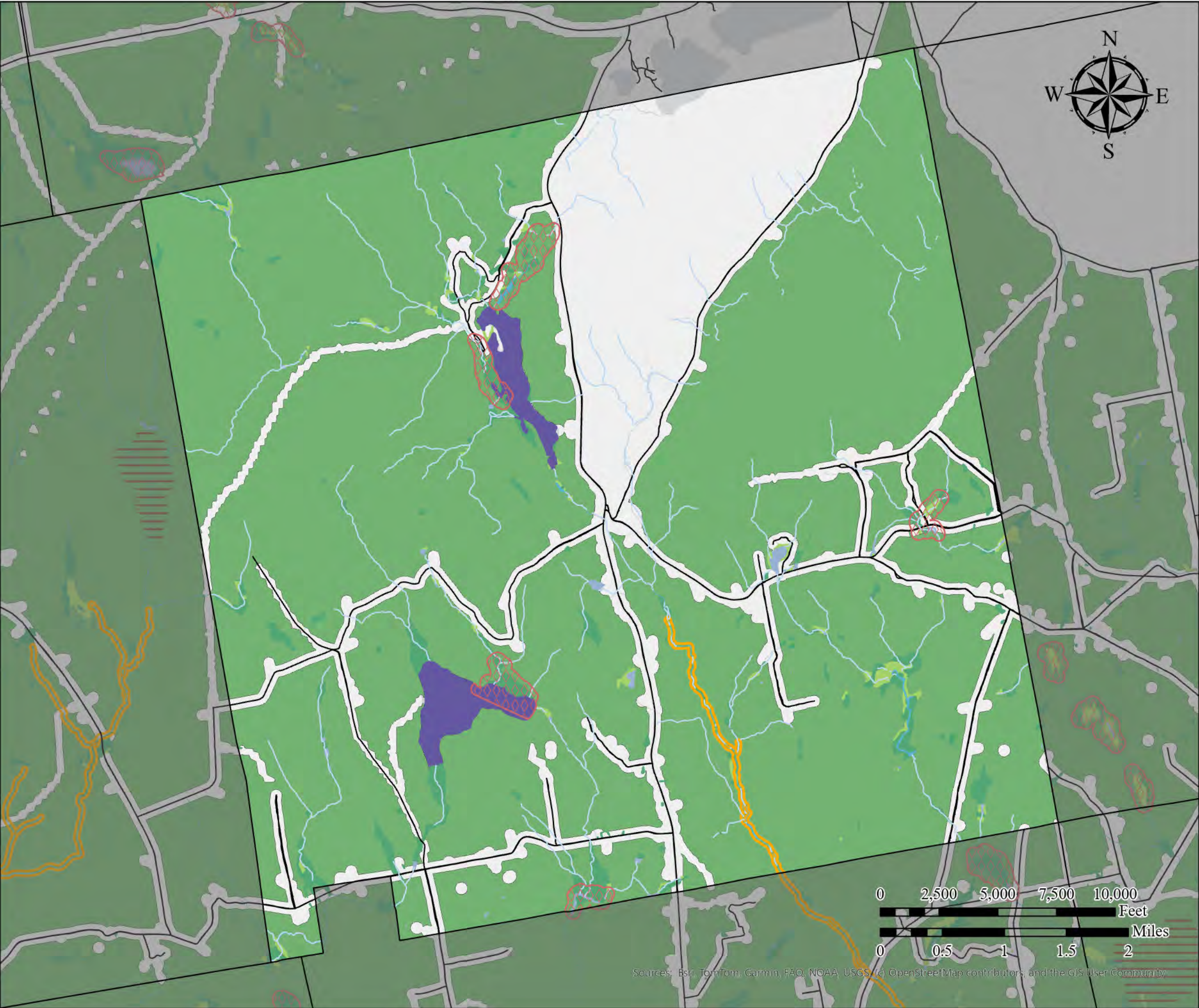
Base Planning Map 2025 Comprehensive Plan

Map Legend

- Public Roads
- Private Roads
- Forests
- Streams and Rivers
- Freshwater Pond
- Lake
- Freshwater Emergent Wetland
- Freshwater Forested/Shrub Wetland



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Data sources: Maine Office of GIS, Maine DOT, USGS
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Brighton Plantation Somerset County, Maine

Critical Natural Resources 2025 Comprehensive Plan

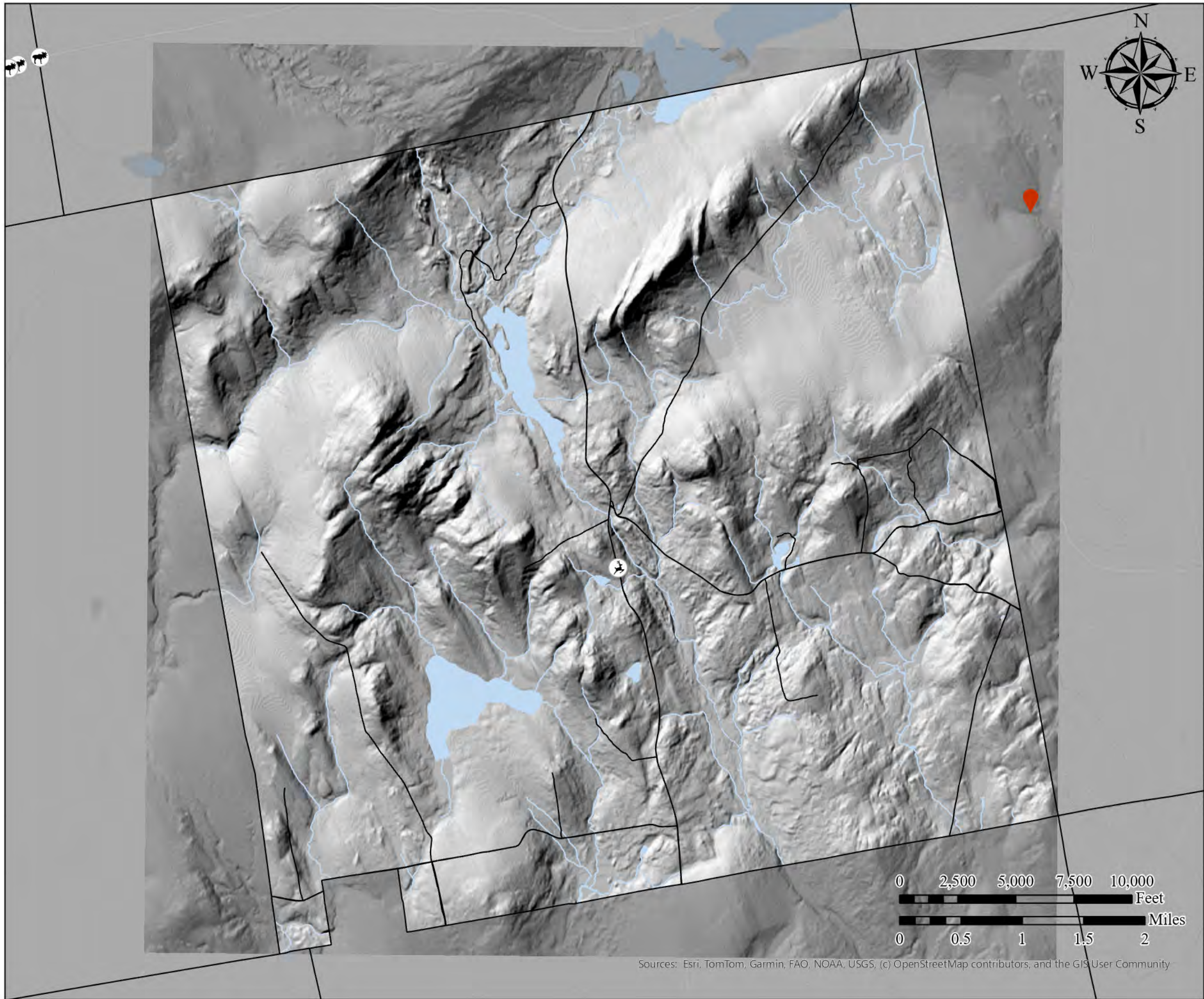
Map Legend

- Streams
- Roads
- Inland Waterfowl and Wading Bird Habitat
- Wild Brook Trout Habitat
- Deer Winter Areas
- Undeveloped Blocks
- No Data
- Freshwater Emergent Wetland
- Freshwater Forested/Shrub Wetland
- Freshwater Pond
- Lake
- Riverine



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Sources: Esri, TomTom, Garmin, FAO, NOAA, USGS, (c) OpenStreetMap contributors, and the GIS User Community



Brighton Plantation Somerset County, Maine

Crashes Since 2024 2025 Comprehensive Plan

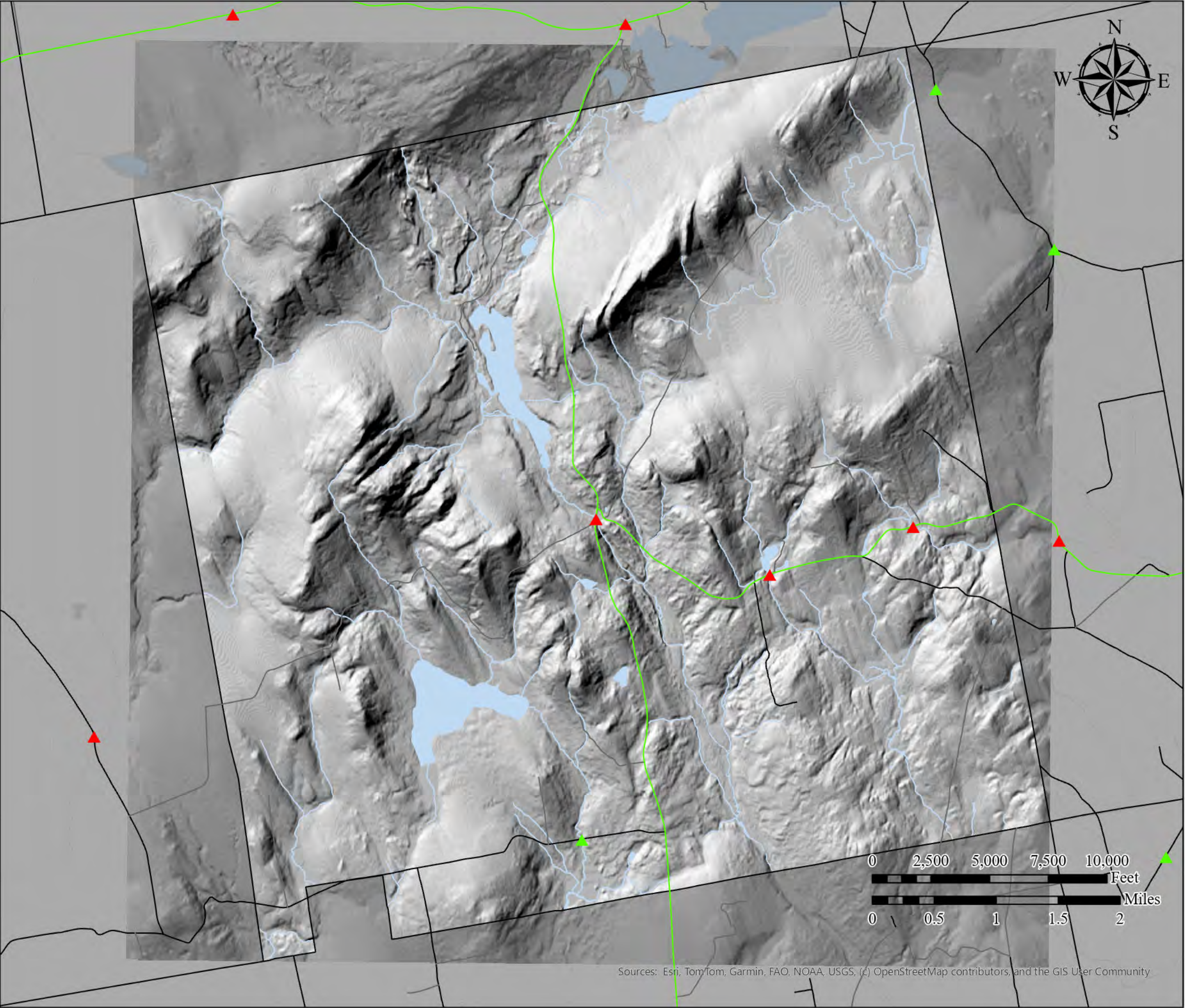
Map Legend

- Roads
- Streams
- Waterbodies
- Crash Type**
- Deer
- Moose
- Went Off Road



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Sources: Esri, TomTom, Garmin, FAO, NOAA, USGS, (c) OpenStreetMap contributors, and the GIS User Community

Brighton Plantation Somerset County, Maine

General Transportation 2025 Comprehensive Plan

Map Legend

- Streams
- Waterbodies
- Roads**
 - State aid
 - Local
 - Private
- Bridges**
 - State
 - Town



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Data sources: Maine Office of GIS, Maine DOT, USGS
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Brighton Plantation Somerset County, Maine

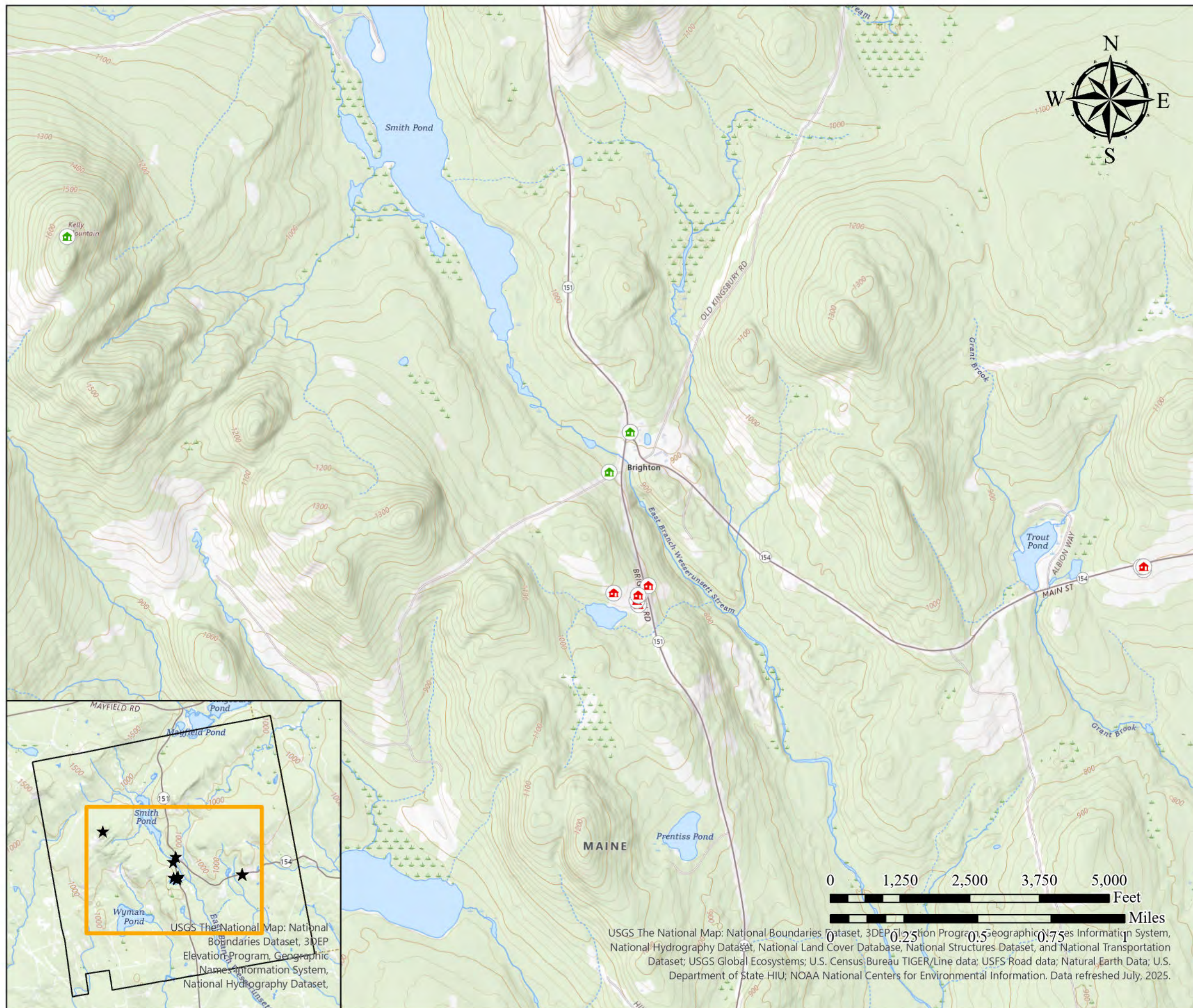
Historic Resources 2025 Comprehensive Plan

Map Legend

-  Local Historic Site
-  State
-  Recognized Historic Site



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Data sources: Maine Office of GIS, Maine DOT, USGS
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Brighton Plantation Somerset County, Maine

Digital Elevation Model 2025 Comprehensive Plan

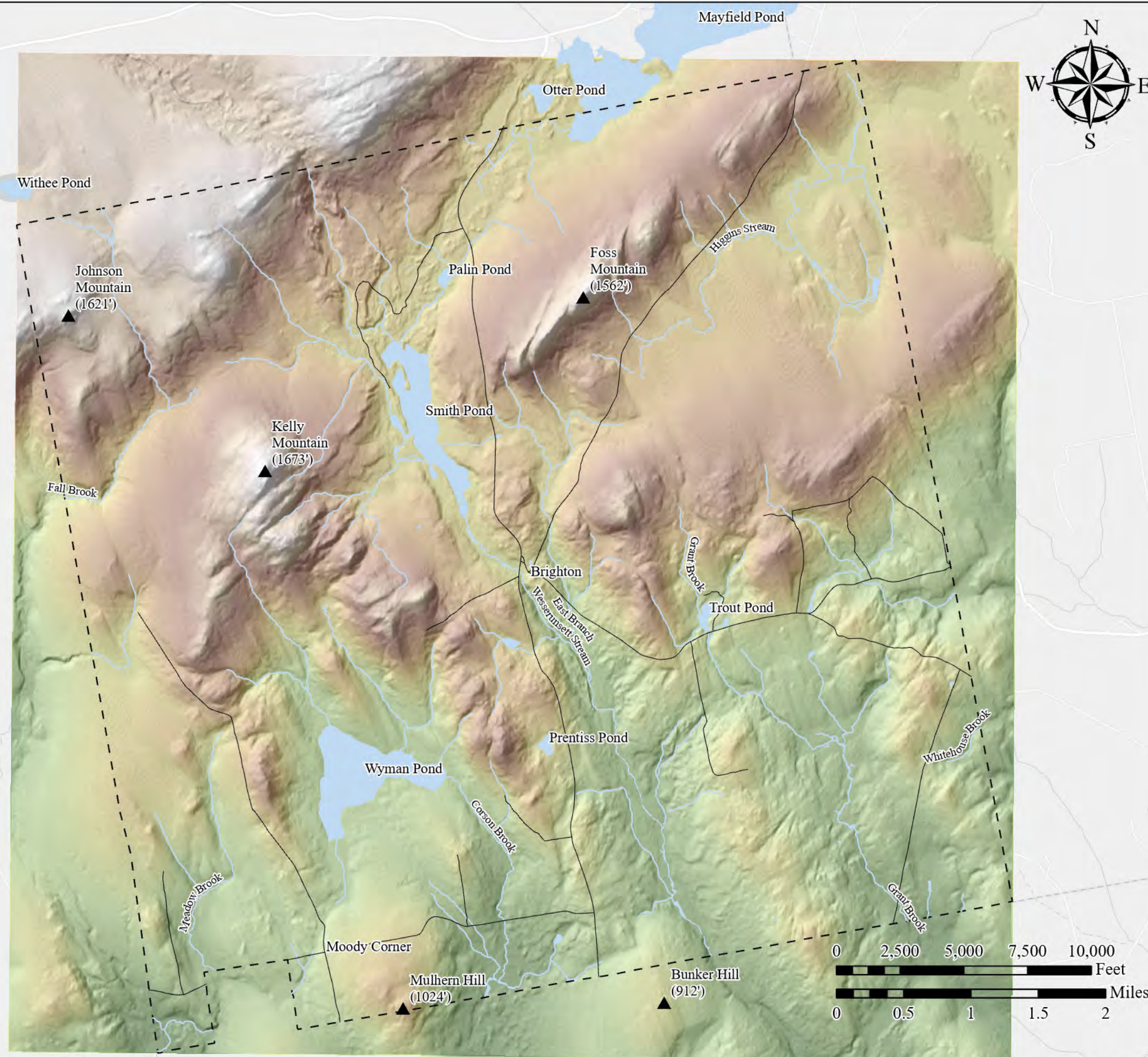
Map Legend

- Roads
- Streams
- - - Brighton Plantation Town Boundary
- Waterbodies

Elevation (ft)



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Sources: Esri, TomTom, Garmin, FAO, NOAA, USGS, (c) OpenStreetMap contributors, and the GIS User Community

Brighton Plantation Somerset County, Maine

Soils 2025 Comprehensive Plan

Map Legend

— Roads

Major Variants

Dixmont

Monarda

Thorndike-Plaisted

Other Soils

Brayton Very Stony

Colton Gravelly Sandy
Loam

Dixmont Silt Loam

Dixmont Very Stony Silt
Loam

Mixed Alluvial Land

Monarda Silt Loam

Monarda Very Stony Silt
Loam

Peat and Muck

Plaisted Gravelly Loam

Plaisted Very Stony Loam

Skowhegan Loamy Fine
Sand

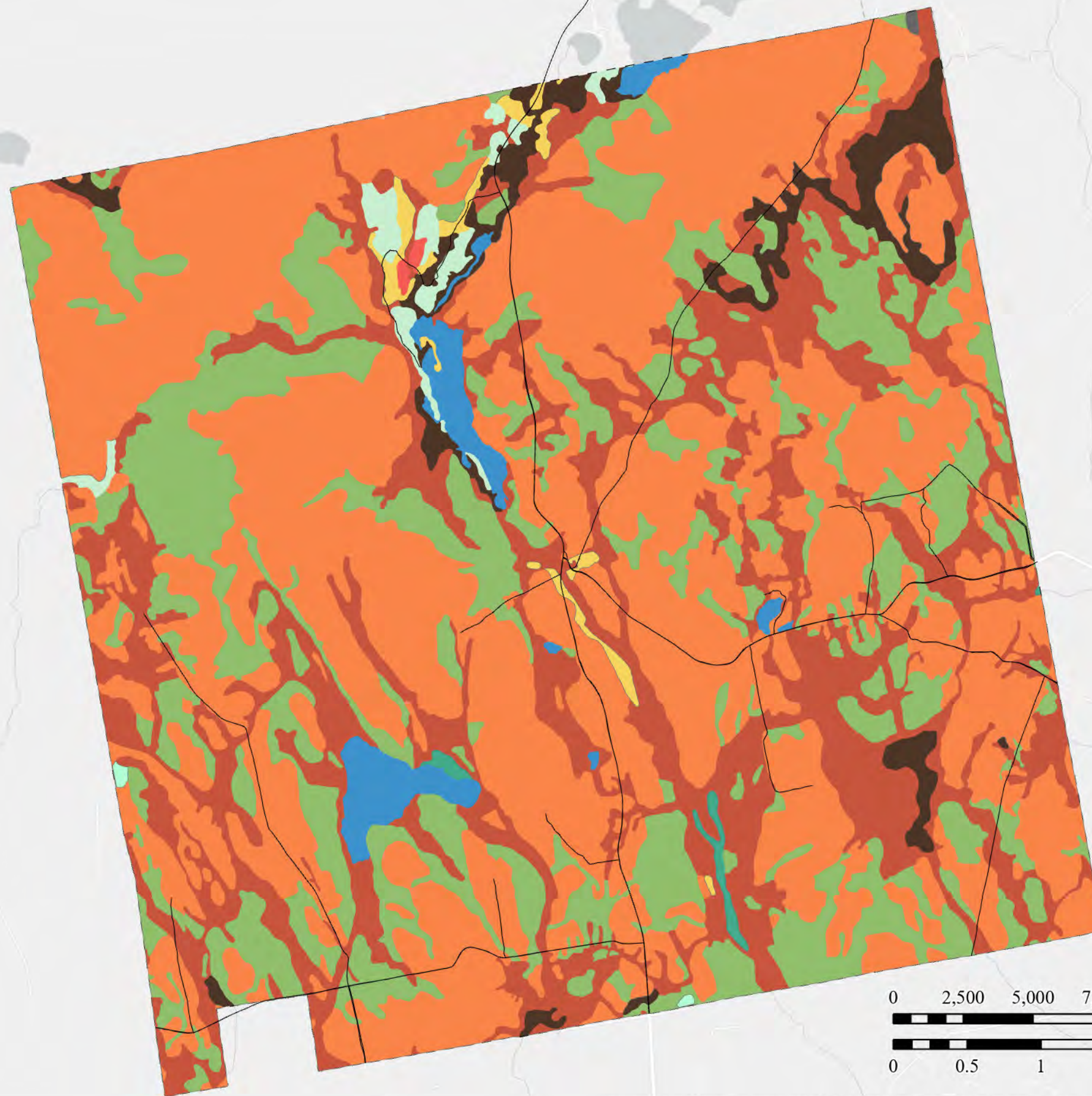
Stetson Fine Sandy Loam

Thorndike Very Rocky Silt
Loam

Thorndike-Bangor Silt
Loams

Thorndike-Plaisted Loams

Water Bodies greater than
40 acres

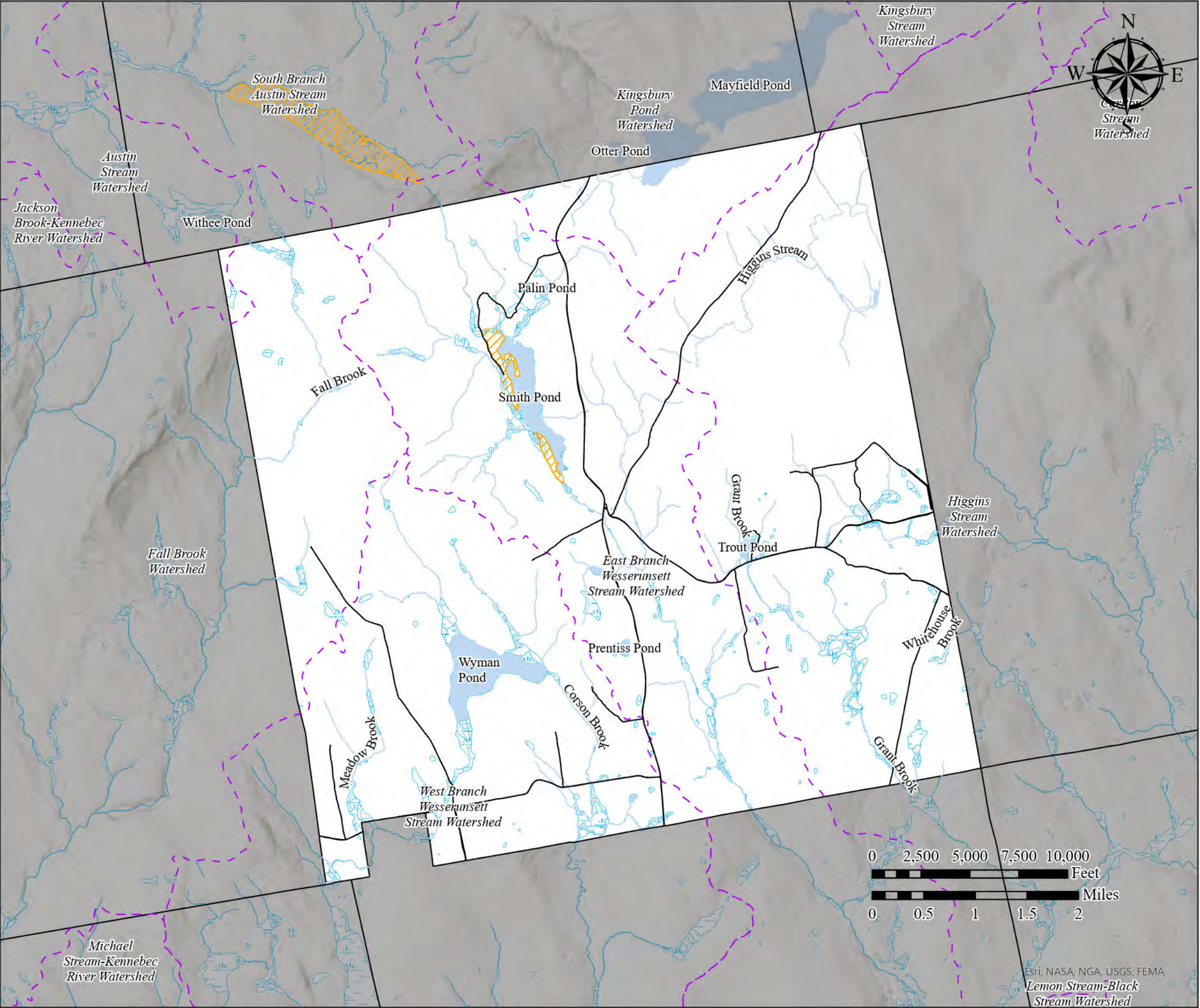


0 2,500 5,000 7,500 10,000 Feet
0 0.5 1 1.5 2 Miles

Sources: Esri, TomTom, Garmin, FAO, NOAA, USGS, (c) OpenStreetMap contributors, and the GIS User Community



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Data sources: Maine Office of GIS, Maine DOT, USGS
Created 08-2025 by TA



**Brighton Plantation
Somerset County,
Maine**

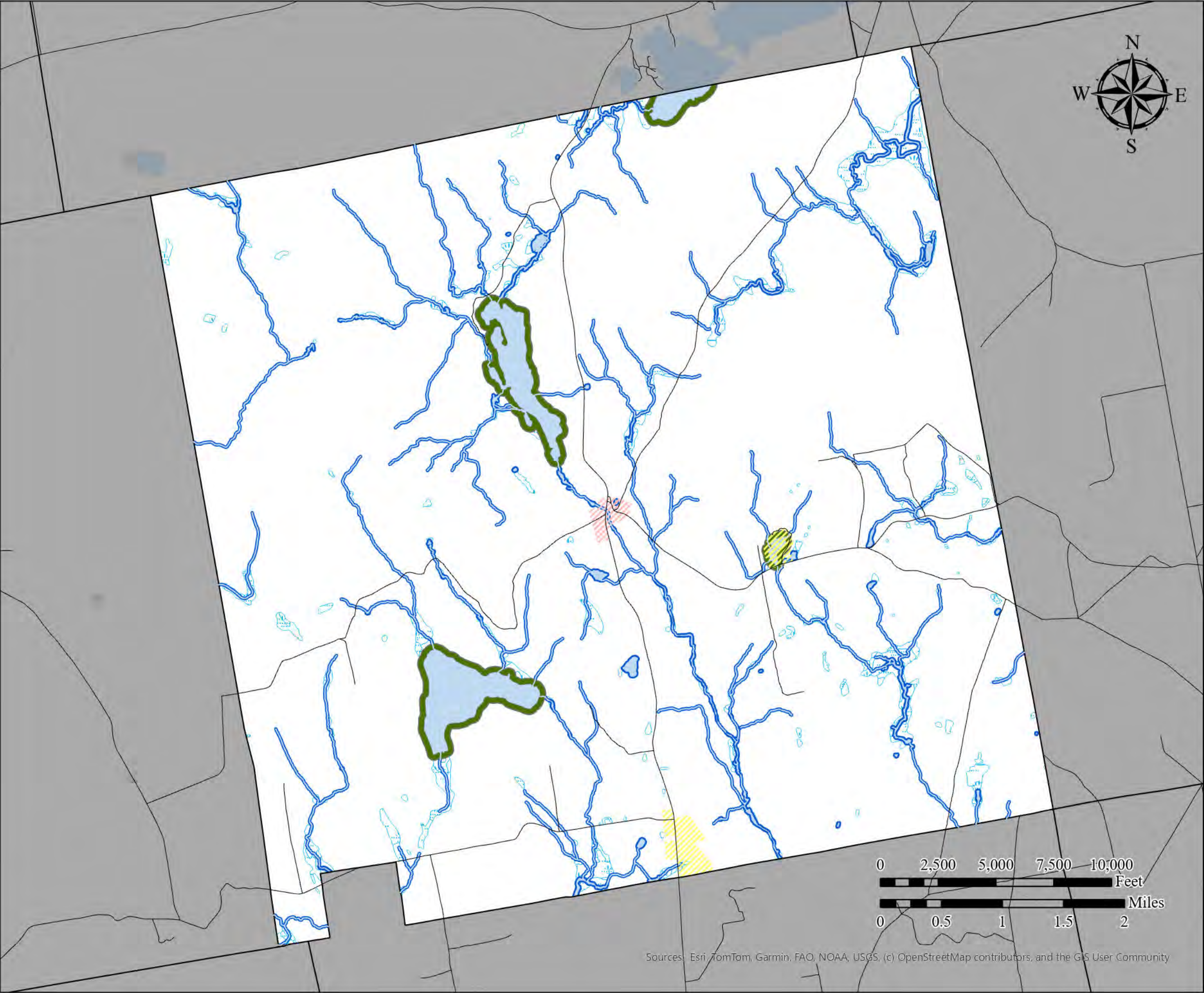
**Water Resources
2025 Comprehensive
Plan**

Map Legend

- Roads
- Streams
- ▨ Aquifers
- - - Watersheds
- Waterbodies
- ▤ Wetlands



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Data sources: Maine Office of GIS, Maine DOT, USGS
Created 07-2025 by TA



Brighton Plantation Somerset County, Maine

Existing Land Use 2025 Comprehensive Plan

Map Legend

- Roads
- Streams
- Wetlands
- Rivers, Lakes, Ponds
- Zoning Districts**
 - General
 - Residential
 - Shoreland Zone 250ft
 - Shoreland Zone 75ft



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Data sources: Maine Office of GIS, Maine DOT, USGS, Brighton Pfr. Land Use Guidance Map 1995
Created 08-2025 by TA

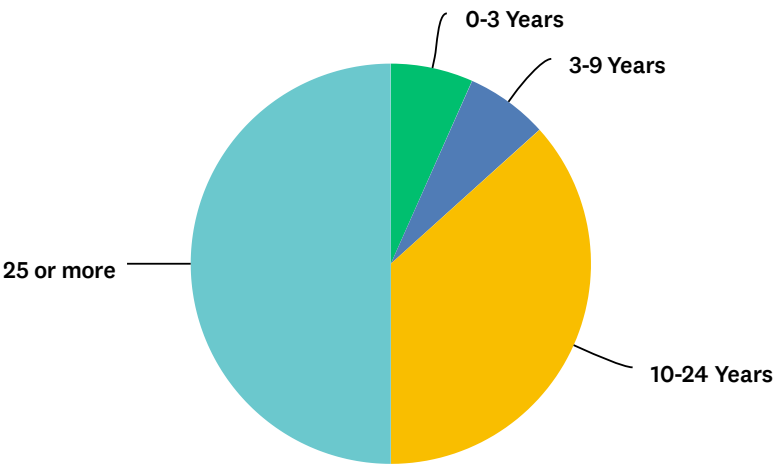
Sources: Esri, TomTom, Garmin, FAO, NOAA, USGS, (c) OpenStreetMap contributors, and the GIS User Community

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
LUPC = Land Use Planning Commission
LURC = Land Use Regulation Commission
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 Brighton Plantation?

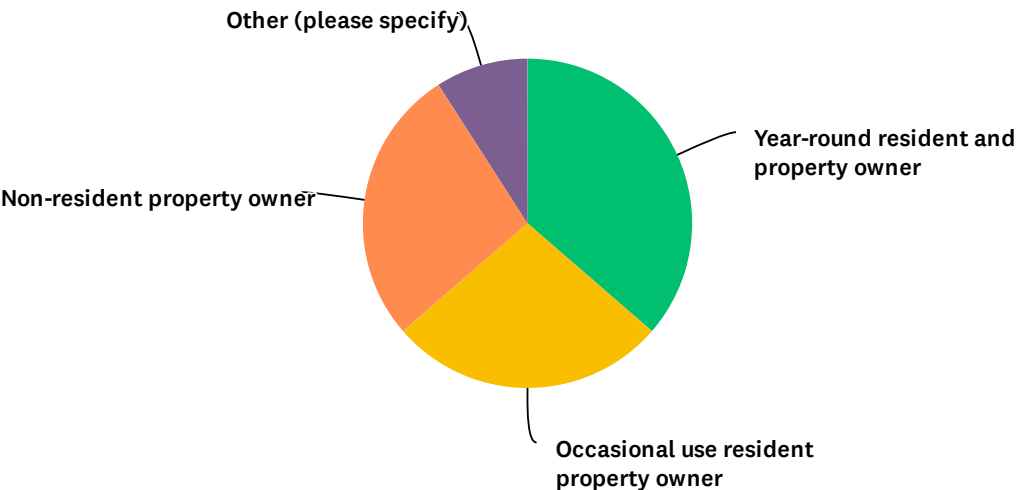
Answered: 30 Skipped: 3



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
0-3 Years	6.67%	2
3-9 Years	6.67%	2
10-24 Years	36.67%	11
25 or more	50.00%	15
TOTAL		30

Q2 What best describes you?

Answered: 33 Skipped: 0



Brighton Plantation

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Year-round resident and property owner	36.36% 12
Year-round resident renting property	0.00% 0
Occasional use resident property owner	27.27% 9
Occasional use resident renting property	0.00% 0
Non-resident property owner	27.27% 9
Other (please specify)	9.09% 3
TOTAL	33

#	OTHER (PLEASE SPECIFY)	DATE
1	lease land owner/camp	4/1/2025 10:59 AM
2	We live in Brighton 6 months/year	4/1/2025 10:48 AM
3	camp lease	3/24/2025 10:37 AM

Q3 What is your age?

Answered: 32 Skipped: 1

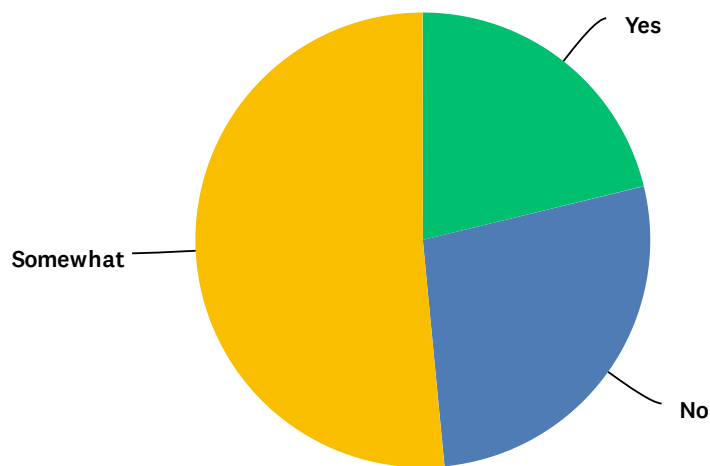
#	RESPONSES	DATE
1	73	4/29/2025 10:37 AM
2	53	4/12/2025 7:17 AM
3	56	4/11/2025 4:33 PM
4	76	4/9/2025 12:00 PM
5	75	4/7/2025 11:14 AM
6	75	4/7/2025 11:11 AM
7	68	4/2/2025 1:39 PM
8	78 + 38	4/2/2025 1:37 PM
9	77	4/1/2025 11:03 AM
10	70	4/1/2025 11:01 AM
11	70	4/1/2025 10:59 AM
12	69	4/1/2025 10:57 AM
13	75	4/1/2025 10:55 AM
14	90	4/1/2025 10:53 AM
15	78	4/1/2025 10:48 AM
16	43	4/1/2025 10:43 AM
17	69	4/1/2025 10:39 AM
18	69	4/1/2025 10:37 AM
19	70+	4/1/2025 10:36 AM

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20	61	4/1/2025 10:32 AM
21	80	4/1/2025 10:30 AM
22	76	4/1/2025 10:28 AM
23	64	4/1/2025 10:26 AM
24	65	3/24/2025 11:42 AM
25	67	3/24/2025 11:41 AM
26	36	3/24/2025 11:37 AM
27	77	3/24/2025 11:34 AM
28	81	3/24/2025 11:32 AM
29	40	3/24/2025 11:30 AM
30	69	3/24/2025 10:46 AM
31	60	3/24/2025 10:37 AM
32	69	3/24/2025 10:34 AM

Q4 Are you familiar with the current ordinances in Brighton Plantation?

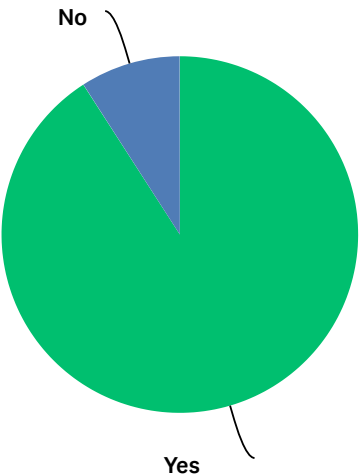
Answered: 33 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	21.21%	7
No	27.27%	9
Somewhat	51.52%	17
TOTAL		33

Q5 Are you aware that permits are required for most types of building and development in Brighton Plantation?

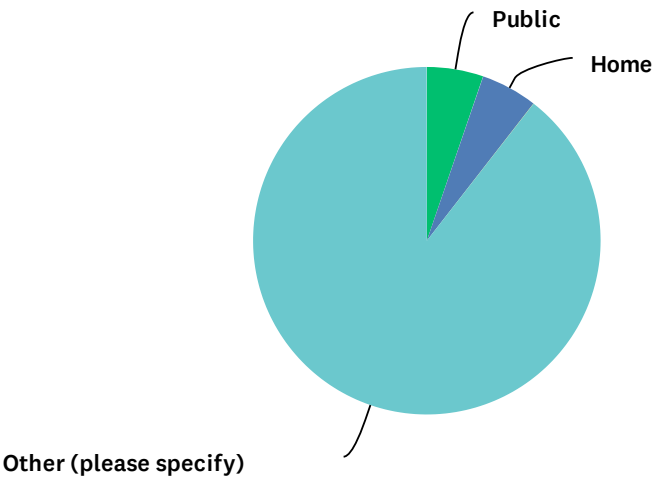
Answered: 33 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES		RESPONSES	
Yes		90.91%	30
No		9.09%	3
TOTAL			33

Q6 If you have school aged children, what type of school program are they enrolled in?

Answered: 19 Skipped: 14



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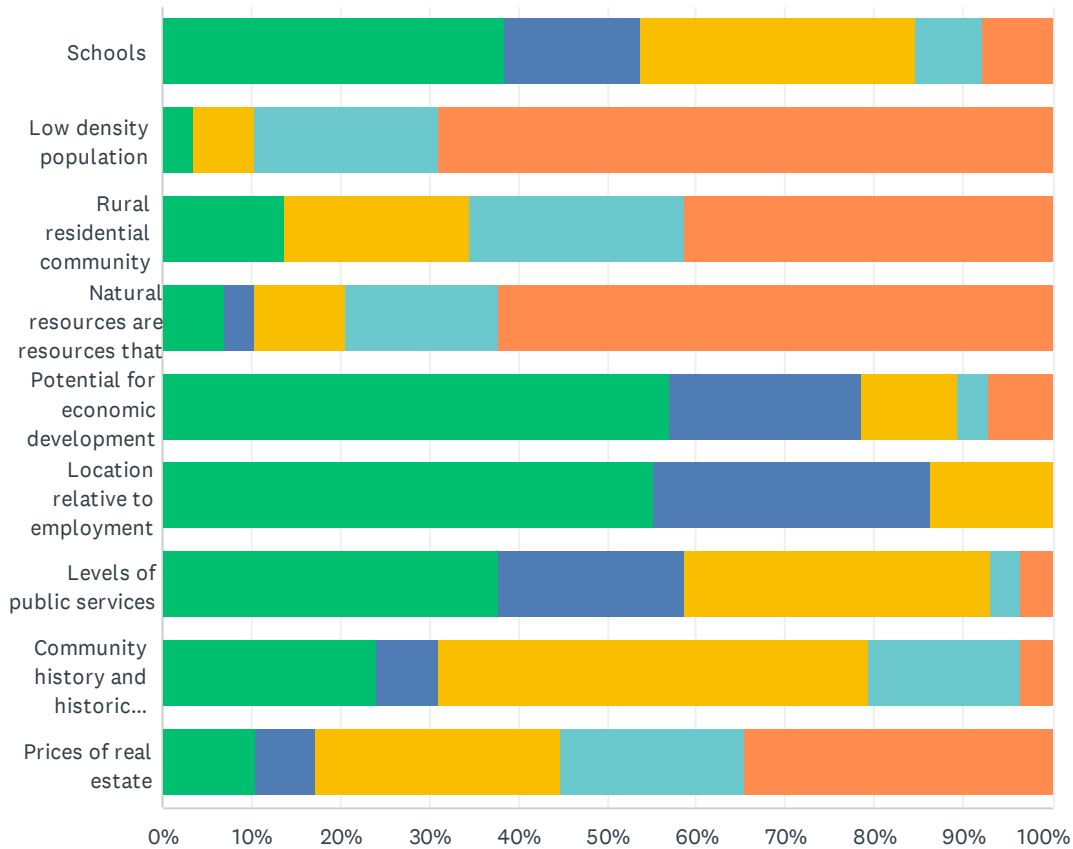
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Public	5.26%	1
Home	5.26%	1
Private	0.00%	0
Other (please specify)	89.47%	17
TOTAL		19

#	OTHER (PLEASE SPECIFY)	DATE
1	No school kids	4/11/2025 4:33 PM
2	no children	4/9/2025 12:00 PM
3	n/a	4/2/2025 1:39 PM
4	n/a	4/1/2025 11:01 AM
5	n/a	4/1/2025 10:59 AM
6	n/a	4/1/2025 10:57 AM
7	n/a	4/1/2025 10:53 AM
8	no school age children	4/1/2025 10:48 AM
9	no children	4/1/2025 10:39 AM
10	none	4/1/2025 10:28 AM
11	n/a	4/1/2025 10:26 AM
12	no children in school	3/24/2025 11:37 AM
13	n/a	3/24/2025 11:32 AM
14	n/a	3/24/2025 11:30 AM
15	n/a	3/24/2025 10:46 AM
16	no children	3/24/2025 10:37 AM
17	n/a	3/24/2025 10:34 AM

Q7 How important were each of the following to you when choosing to live in Brighton Plantation?

Answered: 29 Skipped: 4

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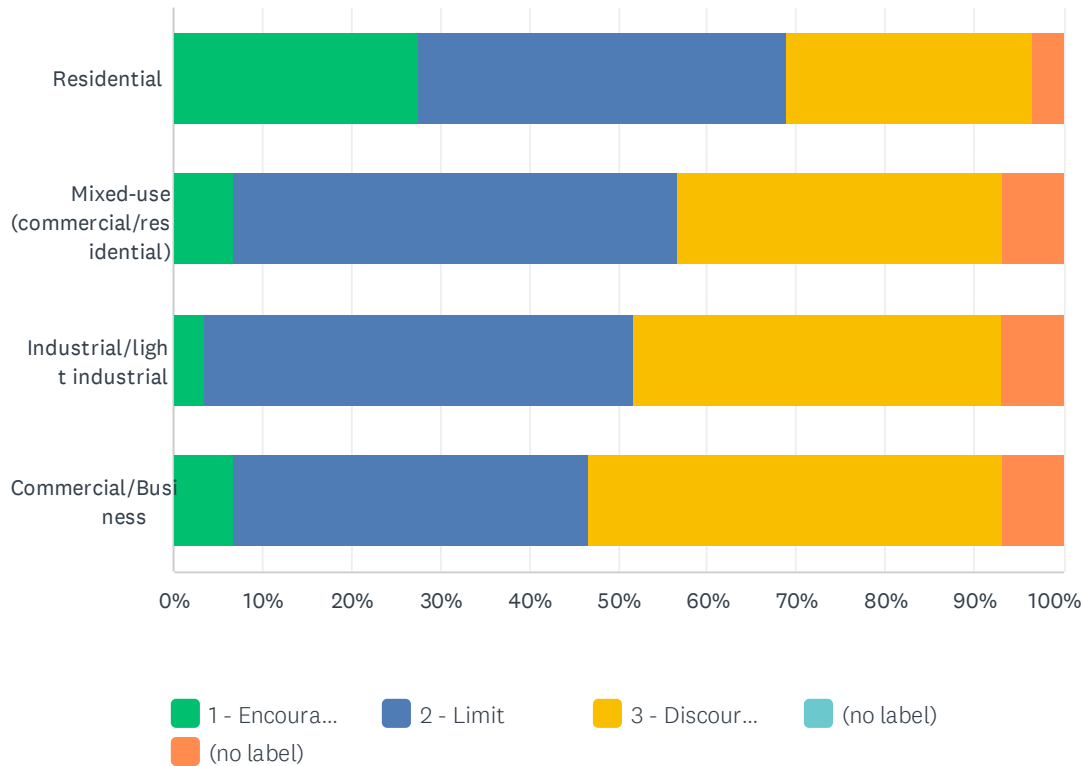


■ 1 - Very Uni...
 ■ 2 - Unimpo...
 ■ 3 - Neutral
 ■ 4 - Important
 ■ 5 - Very Im...

	1 - VERY UNIMPORTANT	2 - UNIMPORTANT	3 - NEUTRAL	4 - IMPORTANT	5 - VERY IMPORTANT	TOTAL
Schools	38.46% 10	15.38% 4	30.77% 8	7.69% 2	7.69% 2	26
Low density population	3.45% 1	0.00% 0	6.90% 2	20.69% 6	68.97% 20	29
Rural residential community	13.79% 4	0.00% 0	20.69% 6	24.14% 7	41.38% 12	29
Natural resources are resources that	6.90% 2	3.45% 1	10.34% 3	17.24% 5	62.07% 18	29
Potential for economic development	57.14% 16	21.43% 6	10.71% 3	3.57% 1	7.14% 2	28
Location relative to employment	55.17% 16	31.03% 9	13.79% 4	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	29
Levels of public services	37.93% 11	20.69% 6	34.48% 10	3.45% 1	3.45% 1	29
Community history and historic buildings	24.14% 7	6.90% 2	48.28% 14	17.24% 5	3.45% 1	29
Prices of real estate	10.34% 3	6.90% 2	27.59% 8	20.69% 6	34.48% 10	29

Q8 To what extent should Brighton Plantation encourage additional types of development by expanding development zones and/or applying for economic development grants?

Answered: 30 Skipped: 3

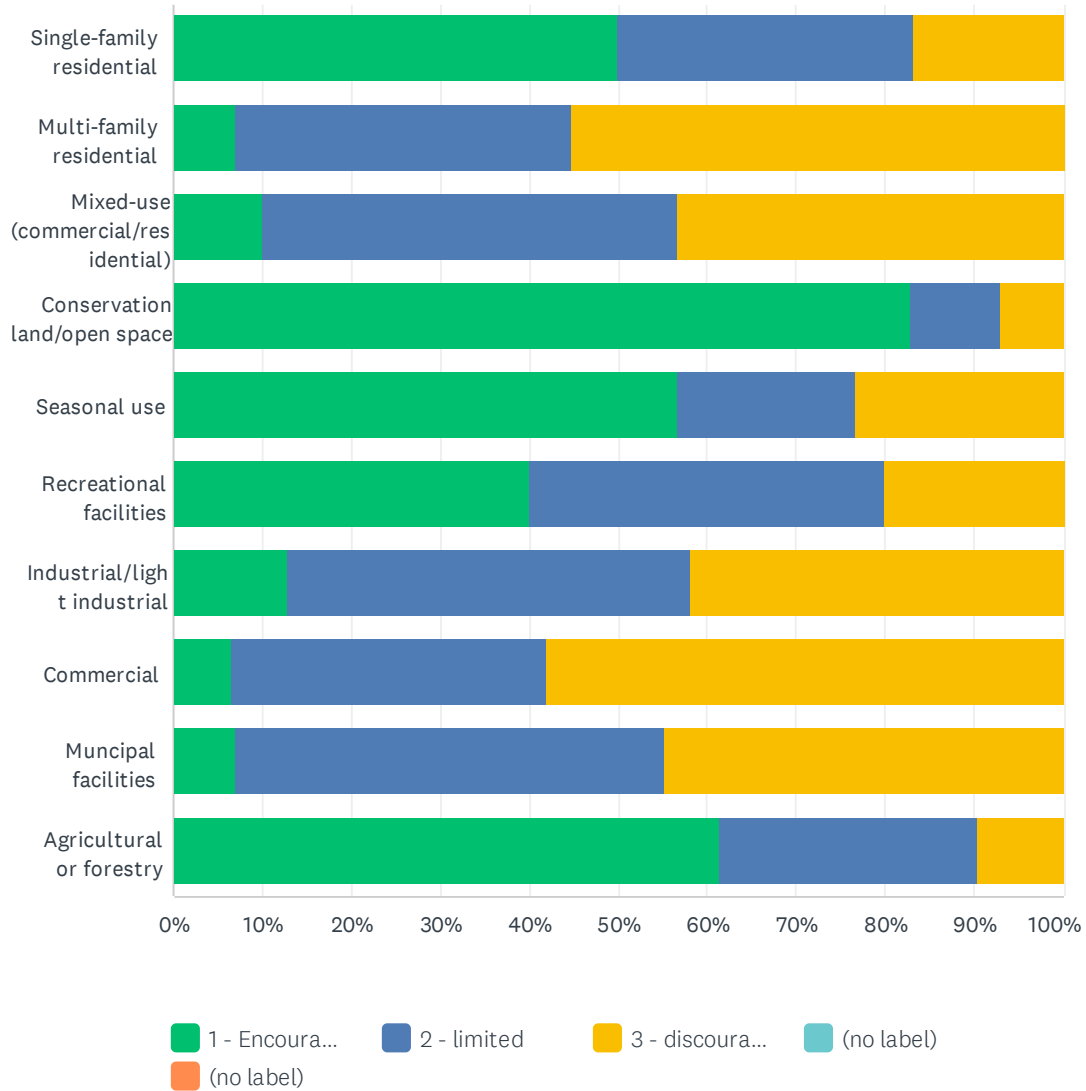


	1 - ENCOURAGE	2 - LIMIT	3 - DISCOURAGED	(NO LABEL)	(NO LABEL)	TOTAL
Residential	27.59% 8	41.38% 12	27.59% 8	0.00% 0	3.45% 1	29
Mixed-use (commercial/residential)	6.67% 2	50.00% 15	36.67% 11	0.00% 0	6.67% 2	30
Industrial/light industrial	3.45% 1	48.28% 14	41.38% 12	0.00% 0	6.90% 2	29
Commercial/Business	6.67% 2	40.00% 12	46.67% 14	0.00% 0	6.67% 2	30

#	OTHER (PLEASE SPECIFY)	DATE
1	A lot of this depends on overall population growth.	4/7/2025 11:14 AM
2	Protecting the natural beauty of Brighton Plantation is most important to me.	4/2/2025 1:37 PM
3	no wind or solar farms	4/1/2025 10:43 AM
4	No development wanted. No windmills or solar panels.	4/1/2025 10:36 AM
5	I like Brighton Plantation the way it is.	3/24/2025 11:37 AM

Q9 Please indicate whether the following land use types should be encouraged, limited, or discouraged.

Answered: 31 Skipped: 2



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	1 - ENCOURAGED	2 - LIMITED	3 - DISCOURAGED	(NO LABEL)	(NO LABEL)	TOTAL
Single-family residential	50.00% 15	33.33% 10	16.67% 5	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	30
Multi-family residential	6.90% 2	37.93% 11	55.17% 16	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	29
Mixed-use (commercial/residential)	10.00% 3	46.67% 14	43.33% 13	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	30
Conservation land/open space	82.76% 24	10.34% 3	6.90% 2	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	29
Seasonal use	56.67% 17	20.00% 6	23.33% 7	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	30
Recreational facilities	40.00% 12	40.00% 12	20.00% 6	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	30
Industrial/light industrial	12.90% 4	45.16% 14	41.94% 13	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	31
Commercial	6.45% 2	35.48% 11	58.06% 18	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	31
Municipal facilities	6.90% 2	48.28% 14	44.83% 13	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	29
Agricultural or forestry	61.29% 19	29.03% 9	9.68% 3	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	31

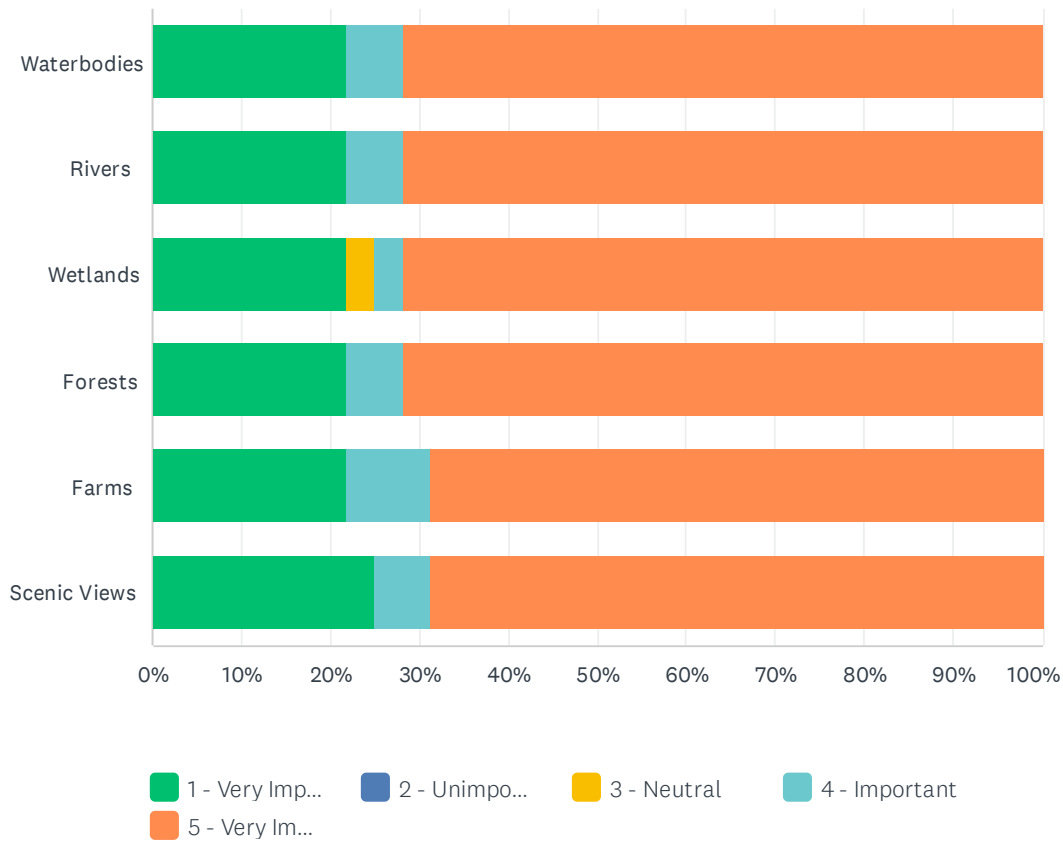
Q10 Do you feel that there are any specific natural resource areas in Brighton Plantation that should be preserved?

Answered: 13 Skipped: 20

#	RESPONSES	DATE
1	The woodland and water	4/12/2025 7:17 AM
2	All historical,Cemeteries	4/11/2025 4:33 PM
3	Forestry	4/9/2025 12:00 PM
4	Smith Pond, Kelly Mtn Fire Tower Wyman Pond, 4-H Camp	4/7/2025 11:14 AM
5	Wyman Pond, Trout Pond, Kelly MTN, Smith Pond	4/7/2025 11:11 AM
6	I wish all lumbering were required to follow best forestry practices to maintain the beauty of the landscape. I would like to see the church maintained and preserved. It's beautiful and could become a venue in the future.	4/2/2025 1:37 PM
7	Trout brooks	4/1/2025 10:55 AM
8	Our forest	4/1/2025 10:48 AM
9	undeveloped land	4/1/2025 10:43 AM
10	Smith Pond, Wyman Pond	3/24/2025 11:42 AM
11	Smith Pond, Wyman Pond	3/24/2025 11:41 AM
12	NO	3/24/2025 10:46 AM
13	all water and water ways	3/24/2025 10:37 AM

Q11 Please indicate how important each of the following natural resources are to you:

Answered: 32 Skipped: 1

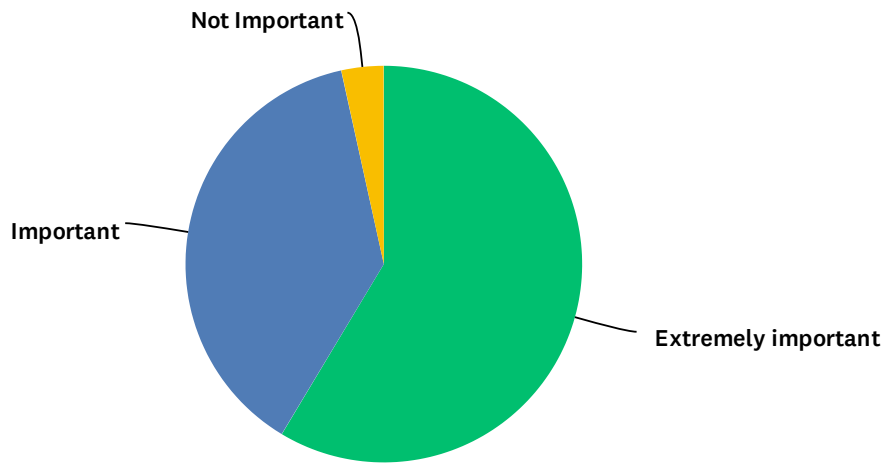


	1 - VERY IMPORTANT	2 - UNIMPORTANT	3 - NEUTRAL	4 - IMPORTANT	5 - VERY IMPORTANT	TOTAL
Waterbodies	21.88% 7	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	6.25% 2	71.88% 23	32
Rivers	21.88% 7	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	6.25% 2	71.88% 23	32
Wetlands	21.88% 7	0.00% 0	3.13% 1	3.13% 1	71.88% 23	32
Forests	21.88% 7	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	6.25% 2	71.88% 23	32
Farms	21.88% 7	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	9.38% 3	68.75% 22	32
Scenic Views	25.00% 8	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	6.25% 2	68.75% 22	32

Q12 How would you rate the importance for the protection and promoting the development or retention of farms and farmland?

Answered: 29 Skipped: 4

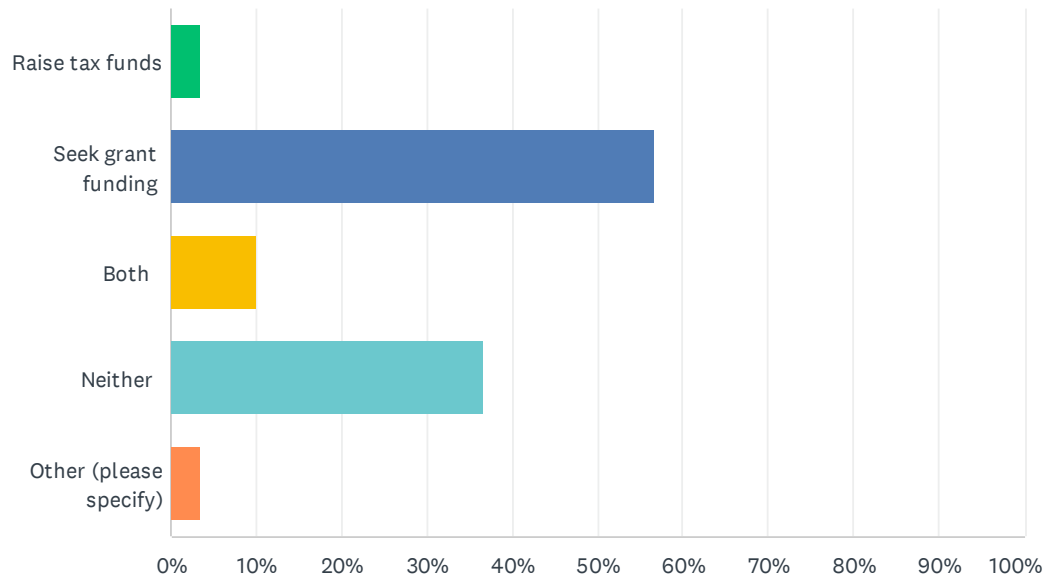
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ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Extremely important	58.62%	17
Important	37.93%	11
Not Important	3.45%	1
TOTAL		29

Q13 Do you think Brighton Plantation should raise tax funds or seek grant funding to buy and maintain open space?

Answered: 30 Skipped: 3



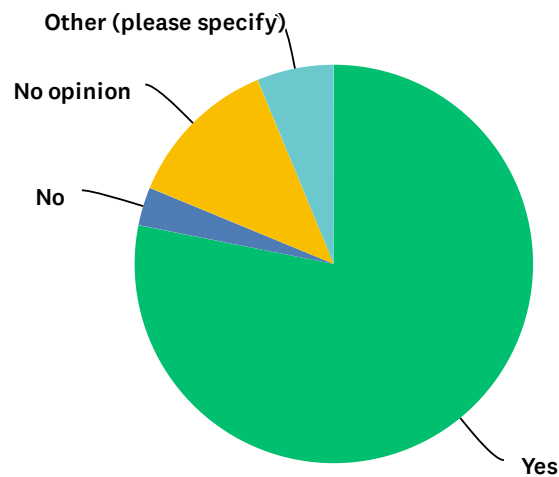
Brighton Plantation

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Raise tax funds	3.33%	1
Seek grant funding	56.67%	17
Both	10.00%	3
Neither	36.67%	11
Other (please specify)	3.33%	1
Total Respondents: 30		

#	OTHER (PLEASE SPECIFY)	DATE
1	Taxes are high enough all ready!! The money we are paying KVCOG is to much!! to do this	3/24/2025 10:46 AM

Q14 Are you satisfied with the town's network of roads?

Answered: 32 Skipped: 1

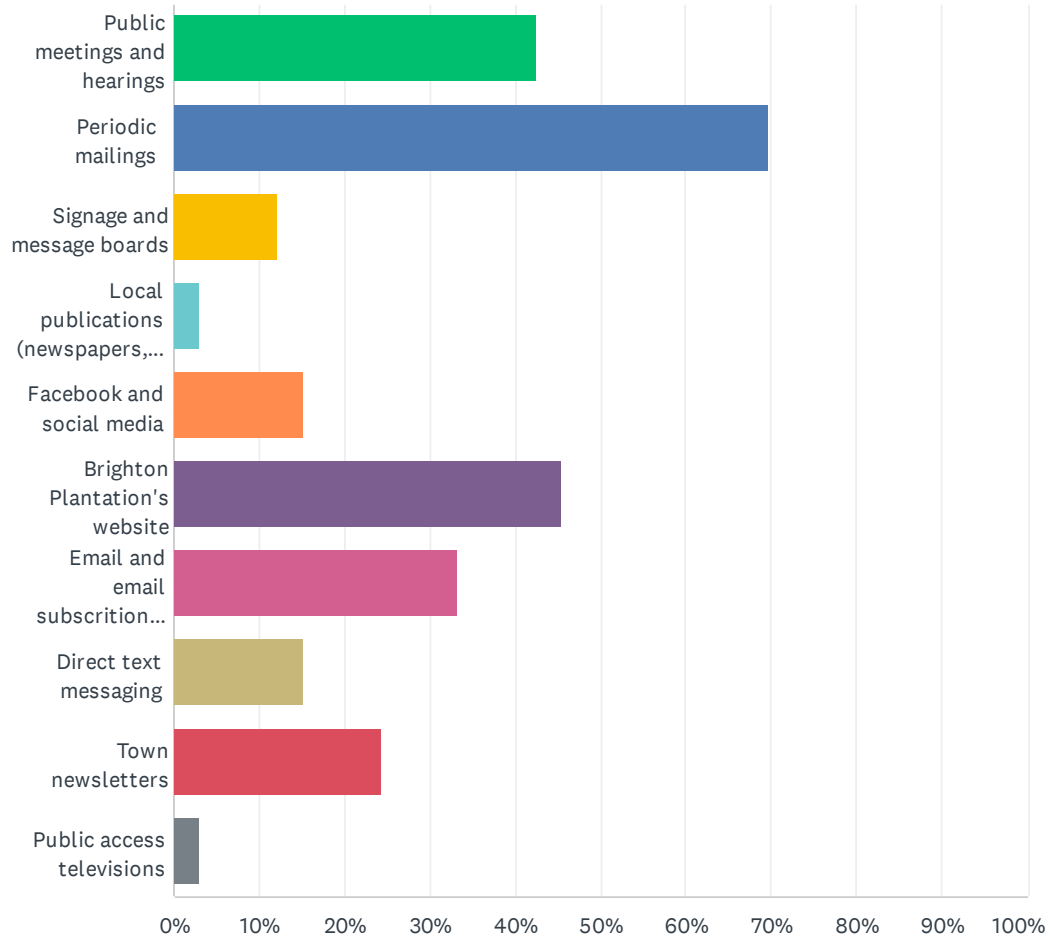


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	78.13%	25
No	3.13%	1
No opinion	12.50%	4
Other (please specify)	6.25%	2
TOTAL		32

#	OTHER (PLEASE SPECIFY)	DATE
1	You do better than Athens.	3/24/2025 11:39 AM
2	Road commisioner has no training on how to maintain roads he is just doing it for the money and is related to the assessors	3/24/2025 10:46 AM

Q15 How would you like to be kept informed about happenings in Brighton Plantation?

Answered: 33 Skipped: 0



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ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Public meetings and hearings	42.42%	14
Periodic mailings	69.70%	23
Signage and message boards	12.12%	4
Local publications (newspapers, etc.)	3.03%	1
Facebook and social media	15.15%	5
Brighton Plantation's website	45.45%	15
Email and email subscription lists such as E-alerts	33.33%	11
Direct text messaging	15.15%	5
Town newsletters	24.24%	8
Public access televisions	3.03%	1
Total Respondents: 33		

Q16 misc comments

Answered: 4 Skipped: 29

#	RESPONSES	DATE
1	Weyheuser, a corporate giant and the largest landowner in Brighton threatens the way of living the residents enjoy. We need more power to limit what they can do.	4/12/2025 7:17 AM
2	#12 Trick Question! We want to protect existing land and farmland not promote development of any kind.	4/1/2025 10:43 AM
3	Website seems to not work!!	3/24/2025 10:46 AM
4	207-521-4218	3/24/2025 10:34 AM