

TOWN OF MARS HILL

2014

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE



Consultants

Elizabeth A. Della Valle, AICP
Spatial Alternatives, Inc.

This Comprehensive Plan Update builds on data in the 1992 Town of Mars Hill Comprehensive Plan, which, where it has not been updated or changed, is herein incorporated by reference.

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Approved and Accepted by the Mars Hill Town Council July 15, 2013

This Plan was prepared by the Mars Hill Comprehensive Plan Committee with assistance from Elizabeth A. Della Valle, AICP, 64 Wellington Road, Portland, Maine 04103 and Spatial Alternatives, 117 West Main Street, Yarmouth, Maine 04096.

Comprehensive Plan Committee members included:

Steve Hitchcock- Chairman Bill Getman- Co-Chair

Todd Grass Bruce Hussey

Jim Shaw Wendy Todd

Former Town Manager, Dan McClung,
Interim Town Manager, Ray Mersereau, and
Current Town Manger, Karin Petrin



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DOCUMENT 1. INTRODUCTION



I. Planning in Mars Hill



Mars Hill adopted its Comprehensive Plan in 1992 shortly after the State Planning Office (SPO) found it consistent with the Planning and Land Use Regulation Act (also known as the Growth Management Act). In 1996, the SPO found Mars Hill's zoning ordinance consistent with its Comprehensive Plan.

Then in 1998, SPO notified the Town that it had received one of the few Certificates of Consistency awarded as part of the Growth Management Program. More than 20 years have now passed and the Town has now completed a 2013 update of its Comprehensive Plan to provide a path to Mars Hill's claim as the *Gateway to Northern Maine* and the *Healthiest Place to Live in the County*.

In preparing this update, Mars Hill built on the planning foundation it established in its 1992 Comprehensive Plan by examining what goals from that Plan had been achieved, what strategies were implemented, and what had changed in the community. The update explored current trends, assessed the effect of continued decline in population, jobs, and businesses, discussed the issues and implications raised in updating the inventory chapters, and updated the goals, policies, strategies, and various plans to guide community efforts over the coming ten years. It reflects where the Town is now, where it would like to go, and what it needs to do to get there.

Because this document is an update to the 1992 Plan, the inventory builds off of and does not repeat information that is provided in the 1992 Plan, such as the description of environmental features. Most of the policy and plan components are new, though they often reflect past planning directions, for example, the Future Land Use Plan retains most of the designations, with a few adjustments. As a result, where the 2013 Comprehensive Plan updates and builds on data in similar chapters of the 1992 Comprehensive Plan, and has not been updated or changed, it is herein incorporated by reference.

II. Preparation of 2013 Update of Comprehensive Plan

The Mars Hill Comprehensive Plan Committee guided the development of the 2013 update. It discussed numerous ways to involve all stakeholders/citizens in the comprehensive planning process and relied on the following



approaches to soliciting ideas and keeping the community informed about the progress of its work, including:

- Sharing schedules, agendas, minutes, draft and final versions of inventory chapters and plans on the Mars Hill website. The website also included a way to provide feedback for comment. The Committee also posted a few *white papers* including *What Is A Comprehensive Plan?* to provide quick and easy summaries for folks to learn about the comprehensive plan process.
- Personally contacting community members, groups, and organizations to draw them into the process, including Town Councilors, community and business leaders, seniors, teachers, and others. In addition to providing ideas and comments, members of each of these groups were seen as an asset in communicating and promoting the Comprehensive Plan process. Members communicate among themselves and with others a great deal, so keeping them well informed was viewed as a way to involve citizens. If the planning process leads to increased numbers of citizens, then all churches stand to gain.
- Maintaining and sharing regular records of its meetings.
- Meeting with the Town Council to prepare the Capital Investments and Regional Coordination Plan and Implementation Schedule.
- Compiling and sharing a Draft Vision Statement.
- Compiling the draft updated Comprehensive Plan.
- Conducting the required formal public hearing on the updated Comprehensive Plan. (pending)
- Following the hearing, revising the updated Comprehensive Plan. (pending)
- Presenting the update Comprehensive Plan to the Town Council for approval at the July __, 2013 Meeting. (pending)¹
- Vetting all information, findings, and conclusions numerous times in various formats, including on paper, on-line, in public, at community meetings, and in Comprehensive Plan Committee meetings.

As part of this process, the Mars Hills Comprehensive Plan Committee made presentation to the following groups:

- Town Council (several)
- Planning Board
- Junior/Senior High School Teachers

¹ Editor's Note: The following statement was added to the 2013 Comprehensive Plan Update after the Town Council's adoption on September 21, 2013. "The draft 2013 Comprehensive Plan Update was presented to the Town Council on July 15, 2013. A public hearing was held on the draft on August 20, 2013 and minor revisions were made to the document. A public hearing was held and the revised 2013 Comprehensive Plan Update was adopted on September 21, 2013. In addition to those efforts noted above, members of the Mars Hill Comprehensive Plan Committee discussed portions the draft with town officials from Westfield, Blaine, Bridgewater, and E Plantation over the course of preparing the 2013 Comprehensive Plan Update, including workshops, presentations to Rotary, teachers, and other groups, and individual meetings."



- Elementary School Teachers
- Rotary (2)
- Public Meetings (2)
- Fire Department
- Sewer/Water District Board
- Senior Citizen Club

III.
V.
V.
VI.

VII. Call to Implement the Comprehensive Plan

Mars Hill is at an important crossroads. If Mars Hill's population continues to decline, additional jobs and businesses are likely to be lost and the continued viability of some community institutions may become problematic. This visionary and pragmatic Comprehensive Plan lays out a roadmap and way for the community to chart progress toward its goals. Now is the time for Mars Hill residents to step up and get involved in one of the existing or new committees that will be tasked with using this plan to harness the power of the people of Mars Hill to create positive change in the community. These groups include:

- Building Committee for Town Garage (within 2 years of adoption)
- Economic Development Committee (within 2 years of adoption and ongoing)
- Information Technology Committee subcommittee of the Economic Development Committee (within 2 years of adoption and ongoing)
- Housing Committee (within 3 to 5 years of adoption)
- Elder Services Subcommittee of Housing Committee (within 2 years of adoption and ongoing)
- Implementation Committee (within 2 years of adoption and ongoing)
- Recreation Committee (within 3 to 5 years of adoption)
- Trail Subcommittee of Recreation Committee (within 2 years of adoption and ongoing)
- School Advisory Task Force (within 2 years of adoption and ongoing)

Without the involvement of Mars Hill's community leaders, the updated 2013 Comprehensive Plan will express a nice vision for the community, but it will only remain a collection of hopes and wishes. It needs the hands and minds of the community to foster the changes that are within the Town's reach.

DOCUMENT 2. 2023 VISION STATEMENT



The following description of a vision statement and its relationship to a community's comprehensive plan is taken largely from the *Community Visioning Handbook: How to Imagine – and Create – a Better Future*, a publication of the former Maine State Planning Office.

A Vision Statement is a description of what the community's future will look, feel, and be like. Why envision the future? Because only by imagining where we want to go can we figure out how to get there. Mars Hill needs a blueprint to make sure that its regulations, capital investments, and public facilities all work together and to give clear signals to developers about what is wanted in the community. The blueprint for how to achieve the vision is the comprehensive plan. The vision statement is the driving force behind the comprehensive plan.

A vision that works helps a community reach for goals above and beyond what normally might be expected and discover possibilities that may not have been apparent. A good vision is a stretch, but still in the realm of the achievable. A good vision motivates people to take action together. A good vision makes people feel hopeful, optimistic, and focused.

The vision is the dream. The plan is the blueprint.
The vision describes. The plan analyzes.
The vision is poetry. The plan is prose.
The vision is about possibilities. The plan is about policies.
The vision describes what. The plan shows how.
The vision is an aspiration. The plan is a legal document.
The vision appeals to imagination. The plan appeals to reason.
The vision is striven for. The plan is implemented.

A vision says, "This is where we want to go." The rest of the plan provides the concrete data necessary to move the community towards its vision. The vision should represent a stretch for the community, but not be impossible to achieve. In sum, the vision and the rest of the comprehensive planning process should feed off of and support one another. Visioning without planning risks being uninspired. Planning without visioning risks being irrelevant. Good visioning and good planning strengthen each other.¹

¹ What are the different ways a community can use a vision?

- As an **introduction to** the comprehensive plan that describes where the community wants to go.
- As a **yardstick** for determining which goals and policies will best get the community moving in the direction it wants to go.
- As an **enclosure** for grant applications to foundations and government agencies to illustrate how the grant project fits into the community's "big picture."
- As a **guide** for reviewing other town plans and documents, such as ordinances, grant applications, budgets, capital improvement programs, etc to evaluate whether they move the community closer to or further away from its vision.
- As an **annual check-in** to assess whether the community is spending too much time reacting to problems and not enough time initiating positive steps towards achieving the vision.
- As a **stimulus** for new initiatives that do not fall into the purview of existing committees or groups.
- As the **vehicle** for an annual community-wide meeting to reassess community's goals – and progress.

In 2023, Mars Hill's:

Population will grow, with a goal of attaining 500 additional residents to bring us to 2000 residents by 2030. This increased population will provide a built in market to sustain the elementary and junior-senior high schools, the focus and heart of the community. The larger residential population will also attract and grow a wider range of stores, restaurants, services, and recreation/cultural opportunities in the town center. New residents will include those who formerly commuted to existing businesses and who will be drawn to the community because of new job opportunities. A larger proportion of Mars Hill graduates will choose to stay in Mars Hill or will return to the community as young adults and/or parents. Among the new residents will also be retirees, who will be drawn to the community for its excellent senior services and age-in-place facilities as well as for its reputation for and access to healthy living, trails, fishing, hunting, recreation, cultural amenities, and strong sense of community – it's "Mayberry" feel.



Economy will continue to be based in agriculture, but will also include many familiar local businesses as well as an expanded and more diverse array of goods and services that meet residents', workers', and visitors' needs. By 2023 there will be ten more businesses, including a dentist, bakery, ice cream parlor, and consignment shop, among others on Main Street. By 2030 there will be 200 new jobs in Mars Hill, increasing the total number to 800-900. Downtown will continue to be the Town's center of business activity, which will be reflected in the well kept and attractive buildings that form a positive image of the community.



Mars Hill's economic development director and community leaders will be active leaders of existing and new local, regional, and state organizations that promote and coordinate business and economic development interests which are important to the community. The economic development director will also work with local farmers and businesses to support existing businesses and draw new ones to Mars Hill. As a result of planning and economic development efforts, the Town will have worked with public and private interests to create incentives and support that will increase their collective and strategic investment in Mars Hill. The industrial area between Main and Miller streets will be fully occupied with thriving agricultural support facilities, a new computer and data center, and other businesses. The Town, through its economic development director, will partner with Northern Maine Community College to train

workers for the new jobs. Mars Hill will partner with bordering towns to help lift the economies of all and will increase business with Canada by promoting the many family connections that extend across the international border.

Mars Hill will be known as the “Gateway to Northern Maine” – Maine’s last frontier. Mars Hill will regularly draw new tourists to the Town’s four season sports and recreation offerings, which will be anchored at the “home base” of Mars Hill Mountain with new lodging, a campground, banquet and wedding facilities, and educational programs that allow Big Rock and the Country Club to offer lodging/ski-golf trip and other packages. Return visitors will be frequent and will expand their visits over the years to include multiple seasons. The ski facilities, golf course, wind farm, nearby Amish settlements, and other attractions will successfully appeal to Canadian and other tourists. Mars Hill’s other brand, the “healthiest place to live” in the County, will be born out of the expanded, interconnected, and well marketed trail network. People will be able to walk in the Town Center or on back roads throughout the community as well as cross-country ski, snowmobile, mountain bike, and hike. Trails and bike friendly routes will be marked and promoted.

Housing will be in good condition and will be energy efficient to help keep residents’ heating costs down. Compact and modestly sized house lots will support new homes in the \$80,000-\$140,000 range that will be located on public water and sewer within walking distance of the town center in support of Mars Hill’s brand as the “healthiest place to live” in the County. New residents will work at expanded health and nursing care, teaching, potato processing and handling, and other jobs in Mars Hill. The Town will have worked with landowners and developers of new homes to make sure that new housing is affordable and neighborhoods are walkable, near the town center, and fit into the fabric of and reflect the character of existing intown neighborhoods. New “55+ age” housing and the Aroostook Health Center, which will have doubled in size, that allow the elderly to age-in-place will provide a range of housing options for older residents that require less maintenance and care for those who want to stay and for new residents who will be drawn to the community. The mix of ages of new residents will contribute to the richness of life for all age groups in the community and, in turn, will generate more jobs in Mars Hill.



For a number of years, Mars Hill will have performed an annual unoccupied housing survey with the goal of maintaining more useable, energy efficient homes. The survey will have helped reverse the trend of structures deteriorating to the point of requiring demolition by guiding Town leaders to target assistance and secure outside funding to supplement local funds to

improve housing conditions. In 2023, Mars Hill's well maintained housing will support the community's image as a good place to live.

Transportation will continue to be focused on the intersection of Routes 1 and 1A. The back



road from Bridgewater that Canadian visitors use to head north of Mars Hill will have been improved and many visitors will stop to take advantage of the golf course, Big Rock, and associated facilities rather than just stopping for groceries and moving on to other venues as they have done in the past. The air strip will be used far more regularly by new businesses that will have located

in the industrial area. Mars Hill's local roads and bridges will be in good shape, thanks to a decade long commitment to capital planning and investment.

Public Facilities and Services will continue to be diverse to meet the needs of residents

and the numerous workers who continue to commute from nearby communities to jobs in Mars Hill. Town government will continue to improve its overall systems to increase efficiencies and will embrace a positive political climate that will encourage more people to run for office with the intent of bettering the community.



The Town and Utility District will have continued to plan for and invest in infrastructure to maintain the quality and longevity of their systems and will restrict utility extensions to designated areas for growth close to the town center. Utility costs will be kept in line or below those of surrounding, like communities. There will be a new town garage and salt shed. The crime rate will remain low and Mars Hill's reputation as a safe community will be an asset the Town markets to draw new residents from away.

School enrollments at the junior-senior high school will have increased from the current 195 students to 300 students, which will ensure its continued location in the community. In part new families will be drawn to Mars Hill because of the school district's top level performance in many areas, including academics, recreation, technology, and the arts. In part, improvements will be directed by finding out what the kids want; in part, because improvements will be directed by an analysis and strategic plan to evaluate why junior-senior high school enrollments have declined while elementary enrollments remained stable or increased and what could be done to reverse that trend. The economic development director will be successful in securing outside public, private, and foundation funds to support investment in the Town's infrastructure and the arts.

The Mars Hill Health Center will be expanded to 125 beds and will have extensive physical therapy, lab testing, skilled care, Alzheimer's care, and other medical and elderly support services appropriate for an aging population.

Cultural Resources will be maintained, improved, and expanded in keeping with the Town's



brand as "the healthiest place to live in Aroostook County." Among expanded facilities will be tennis, skateboarding, and exercise and other activities to draw young families and senior citizens to the community. In addition, the Town will have

developed a well marked and well marketed network of multiuse trails that crisscross the community and link to a bicycle network and walking in the town center. The Town's trail system will connect with the International Appalachian Trail that goes across Mars Hill Mountain. The Town will have marketed these resources to make Mars Hill a destination that attracts visitors and business. In part, improvements will be guided by an active Recreation Committee that shares ideas, support, and ways for more people to plug in, including the many seniors who would like to be involved but don't know where or how to begin. The Town Office will maintain a central list of needs and opportunities, though the system will be designed to require little effort on the part of Town staff. Increased volunteers will help the Town with beautification, arts and crafts, theater, music, recreation, fundraising, tutoring, visits to the home bound, among others.

Mars Hill Pond will be restored as a prime recreational resource. Water levels will be maintained about two feet below the design level of the dam. The Town will have worked with the Central Aroostook Soil and Water Conservation Service, state agencies, and others to maintain waterfowl nesting habitat as well as improve pond and stream water quality. The Town will work with farmers and others to reduce sediments and chemicals from running off farm fields and plant buffers along the Prestile and feeder streams. Wild roses will be planted along the banks of the pond to help with erosion and to keep geese off the immediate shores of the community gathering areas in the Park. The Park also will be improved with tree plantings and gardens which, along with the band stand at the Fire Station, will create community gathering places for the annual Christmas tree lighting, flag raisings, veteran ceremonies, among other activities and events. There will be new trails and boardwalks that encourage both residents and visitors to fish, watch birds, walk, canoe, and skate on the Pond. The Town will have created, preserved, and promoted access to wild trout fishing on the Prestile Stream. The Town will have also successfully marketed itself to birding enthusiasts who will come to Mars Hill because of its reputation as a birding capital of Northern Maine. This will be

accomplished, in part, by advertising the location of unusual birds on the Town's web site and other internet locations. In 2023, residents will still be discussing whether they would like to see a roadway to the top of the mountain, much like the one on Cadillac Mountain in Bar Harbor.

In addition to efforts to beautify the Prestile Pond Park, the Town will have sited a Town Clock on Main Street, which will also have been improved with new light posts, flower boxes, and seasonal decorations, among other projects.

There will be more, expanded, and improved community activities, supported by increased volunteer involvement in planning and participating in efforts and events. Mars Hill will support and market itself at the Houlton and Presque Isle Fairs and the 2014 Acadian Festival. In part, this will be accomplished by the increased number of interested volunteers who will be informed about community needs and volunteer opportunities.

Mars Hill will have successfully marketed its rich cultural resources to support its population and economic development goals.

Fiscal Capacity will continue to be a focus of the community. The Town will continue to improve its financial and management systems to ensure that local government is cost effective and the community can afford to make the investments that will be necessary to support the Town's vision for 2023. Though the TIF agreement with the wind farm will be coming to a close, the Town will have worked with its major financial interests to support arrangements that will be in the Town's interest, including the coordination and provision of lower cost energy supplies. To attract new residents, Mars Hill's mil rate will have been reduced somewhat or remain stable and sewer and water rates will be no more than 75% of like communities. These rates will have been primarily driven by sound management practices and an increase in tax revenue from planned new development. The Town will have formed a partnership with the wind farm and others to support desired business expansion and long term energy security. The Town will continue to rely on its strong ability to self-fund capital improvements, but it will have institutionalized longer term capital planning, that was adopted with the current Comprehensive Plan, to address anticipated capital needs in a fiscally prudent manner. The Town's economic development director will have successfully secured funds from outside sources to supplement local investments to address infrastructure and development needs.



The Town will have continued efforts to design and improve systems to professionally manage the Town's finances, including reviewing/updating personal property tax records, linking the Town's assessing tax base to its GIS data base, creating a strategic financial plan with a 5-10 year window to address future capital needs, containing operating expenses, and developing and using a process to thoroughly review school spending, among others.

Agriculture and Forestry will continue to play a major role in Mars Hill, both in terms of the



amount of land dedicated to agricultural use and in terms of the economic impact of agriculture within the community. Though trends in farming and land ownership patterns will have changed in keeping with changes in the industry, Mars Hill's community identity will still center on farming. While there may be fewer, bigger family farms, the Town will have worked successfully with organizations like the Maine

Farmland Trust to help interested young farmers purchase land from retired farmers whose family members are no longer interested in commercial farming. Farmland still will be highly valued in the community and little farmland will have been converted to other uses. The trend of locating new residential development closer to the town center and public services will be successful in avoiding the loss of important farmland. At the same time, the Town maintains a low overall residential density in the rural parts of Mars Hill.

To encourage more Mars Hill youth to select farming as a profession, the School District will work with students and local farmers to better support the agriculture program at the junior-senior high school. The Town also will have worked with the School District, nursing home, health center, and other local institutions and the grocery store to increase their use and sale of local agricultural products.

Natural Resources will continue to bless the Town with a strikingly beautiful and healthy natural landscape. The water quality of the Prestile Pond and Stream will be improved due to efforts to reduced contaminated runoff, including affordable ways to provide winter cover crops, restore riparian buffers, and retrofit Town and farm roads to reduce sediment loads. Mars Hill Mountain will continue to be a major natural asset in the community. The long tradition of hunting and trout fishing will still



be important to many citizens. The Pond, Stream, and Mountain, as well as targeted improvement of access to facilities associated with these assets will enhance Mars Hill reputation as a center of recreation in all seasons.

Land Use in Mars Hill will continue to include a large, predominantly agricultural area



surrounding a traditional, compact town center where most residential, commercial, and service development will be located to help control municipal expenses. At the same time, recreation and other developments will have expanded at the base of Mars Hill Mountain, sharing the Town's economic focus with the mountain and additional development in the industrial area intown. New, compact residential neighborhoods, similar to those that currently exist, will be located close to the town center and public facilities and services. The trend of most residential development taking place in rural areas of the community will have been largely eliminated, though new farmsteads and limited residential development with a connection to natural resource-based industries will continue to be developed, albeit on smaller lots to preserve more area for farming operations.

DOCUMENT 3. GOALS, POLICIES, AND STRATEGIES



I. Population

The last decade has seen a dampening of decades of population decline in Mars Hill. Together with continued expansion of Presque Isle's offerings of retail goods and services, Mars Hill's loss of population continues to undermine the market that is necessary to support businesses that provide for local needs. Current projections show a stable or slightly increasing enrollment for the elementary school but a declining enrollment for the higher grades, with no explanation for the decline. Continued decline in high school enrollment could eventually lead to loss of the High School in Town.



A. GOAL: Increase year round population to the historic peak of 2,000 by 2030.

1. *Policy: Encourage and generate jobs to support population growth. See II. Economy.*
 - a. Market Mars Hill's numerous assets, including but not limited to the golf course, ski area, nursing home, water and sewer, town center, library, schools, support infrastructure for the potato industry, access to regional transportation routes, the Prestile Stream and Mars Hill Pond, among other natural and cultural resources.
2. *Policy: Encourage workers to live in Mars Hill.*
 - a. Work with new and existing major employers to market the transportation cost savings and cultural and recreational benefits of living in Mars Hill.

B. GOAL: Increase the secondary school age population to ensure continuation of the location of both the primary and secondary schools in Mars Hill.

3. *Policy: Determine what is behind the loss of secondary school students and develop strategies to reverse the trend of declining secondary school enrollments.*
 - a. Encourage the School District to either perform an in-house study or hire a consultant to evaluate school enrollments, determine what is behind declining enrollments, prepare enrollment projections, recommend strategies to reverse the decline, and establish realistic goals for future enrollments.
 - b. Implement the recommended strategies.
 - c. Monitor future school enrollments annually and periodically assess the success of implementation strategies in stabilizing/growing enrollments, adjust or replace strategies as needed to achieve desired enrollment goals.
4. *Policy: Work with middle and high school students to encourage them to stay in or return to Mars Hill when they have completed their education.*
 - a. Identify the types of careers Mars Hill youth are interested in and adjust the school curriculum and economic development efforts to provide the relevant education and skills.
 - b. Identify the amenities and community features that would attract graduates to live in Mars Hill. Adjust zoning and programmatic support to develop and maintain cultural events and venues to meet those needs.

- c. Continue to support an improved agricultural program at the Junior-Senior High School.

II. Economy

Mars Hill's local economy continues to be based in agriculture. While an agricultural town, Mars



Hill is also a service center within the region. Nevertheless, with declining population trends, Mars Hill businesses have been hard pressed to sustain themselves with a reduced customer and client base and competition from retail and service development in Presque Isle. To a large degree, Mars Hill's economy is dependent on the regional economy of central Aroostook County. Yet there are some local economic development opportunities that could be pursued, particularly those that take advantage of some areas of strength in the regional economy as well as three recent regional economic development initiatives. The current condition and appearance of several prominent structures in the Downtown is shabby and detracts from the image and appearance of the whole Town. The Town should identify appropriate grant programs to pursue Downtown Revitalization, including continuing to seek Community Development Block Grant funds as they become available.

C. GOAL: Maintain and draw businesses to Mars Hill to provide jobs that will meet the daily needs of existing residents and workers and attract new residents to the community.

5. Policy: Enhance capacity of Town for economic development.

- a. Reestablish a full time, municipal economic development position to implement the Town's economic development strategies, support local businesses, bring new businesses to the community, secure outside funds such as but not limited to Community Development Block Grants, and continue to make strategic investments in public facilities and services that support the Town's economic development interests.
- b. Help existing and new businesses reduce energy costs by supporting expanded use of pellet fuel, which will reduce monthly bills and support this regional initiative to recycle as many energy dollars into the local and region's economy as possible.
- c. In addition, explore opportunities to work with the new owners of the Loring Pipeline to bring natural gas to the community and/or otherwise take advantage of emerging economic development opportunities that support Mars Hill's future vision.
- d. If regulations permit or can be adjusted, work with the owners of the wind towers to explore opportunities to reduce local energy costs for local businesses.
- e. Seek opportunities to participate in regional economic development organizations, initiatives, and studies.

6. Policy: Support existing businesses in Mars Hill.

- a. Support enhancements for local agriculture to enable farmers to take advantage of emerging opportunities and trends in the industry. See VIII. Agriculture and Forestry M.

- b. Work with local farmers, Northern Maine Development Commission and County tourism organizations to explore opportunities to create and capitalize on emerging opportunities in agri-tourism.
- c. Work with local businesses to remedy issues that challenge the continuance of existing businesses.

7. *Policy: Draw new businesses to Mars Hill.*

- a. Inventory existing buildings in Downtown to assess their condition and need for renovation and/or reuse. Where the need or opportunity exists, work with landowners to improve the safety and appearance of structures. See **III. Housing E.12.**
- b. Take advantage of Mars Hill's access to Maine's newly expanded high speed internet superhighway to draw new and emerging IT businesses that rely on high speed internet connections.
- c. Attract a data center and/or other computer-related businesses to locate in Mars Hill.
- d. Formalize efforts to market the Town's industrial area.
- e. Work with major employers to provide car pool and/or other ride share services as well as to support the efforts of the Aroostook Regional Transportation Service. Seek grant funds, use municipal bonding and other authorities, as appropriate.

D. GOAL: Use the area's natural beauty as a base for economic development efforts.

8. *Policy: Make Mars Hill a "home base" for those who come to the County for outdoor recreation.*

- a. Brand and market Mars Hill as the "Gateway to Northern Maine" and as a four season tourism destination. See **II. Economy D.9.**
- b. Create an information center for travelers, possibly at the Town Office, passing through the community to and from points further north and east. Advertise tourism destinations and activities in Mars Hill.
- c. Support, encourage, and market local businesses and services that appeal to travelers passing through the community to and from points further north and east.
- d. Use current and emerging social media, as well as more traditional options, to promote and market the community.

9. *Policy: Expand four season tourism and recreation offerings in Mars Hill, especially focused on the base of the mountain.*

- a. Support and encourage the creation of new destinations and attractions in Mars Hill, including a hotel and campground near the base of the mountain. Work with organizations such as the Libra Foundation to develop new destinations and attractions. If opportunities arise, revise zoning to allow the creation of new destinations and attractions in this location.

X. Land Use Q.

- b. Market Mars Hill's trail system, ski area, golf course, wind farm, and proximity to Amish settlements, among other local and regional attractions.
- c. Coordinate marketing efforts with various tourism groups, particularly those associated with skiing and snowmobiling, to create vertically integrated tour packages (lodging, food, activities, music, entertainment, etc.) to maximize revenues during busy times and encourage visitors during less busy times.

- d. Support cross marketing to encourage existing tourists to extend their stays and come back to Mars Hill during other seasons. Target a portion of marketing efforts to draw Canadian residents and visitors to other parts of Maine to Mars Hill.
- e. Brand Mars Hill as the “healthiest place to live” in the County. Identify the location for and construct and/or improve and connect snowmobiling, cross country skiing, mountain biking, and walking trails to create new destinations for tourists/travelers and as an attraction for current and new residents.

10. *Policy: Maintain scenic views.VI.K.22.*

- a. Continue to preserve the Town’s traditional village and working rural landscape pattern of development, laid out in the Town’s Future Land Use Plan.
- b. When development is proposed in areas identified with important scenic views (see Scenic Views Map), the Planning Board will consider the impacts of the proposed development on the views and encourage the developer to adjust his or her development plans to minimize negative impacts on the views.
- c. Periodically monitor impacts of development on Mars Hills’ scenic landscape and, if negative impacts are observed, undertake a more rigorous scenic views inventory and consider stronger regulatory protections as appropriate.

11. *Policy: Seek opportunities to regularly communicate with nearby communities in Canada and create/participate in shared projects.*

- a. Actively look for opportunities to communicate and work with nearby Canadian communities.

III. Housing

The recent change in housing data collected as part of the US Decennial Census makes it difficult to assess the condition of Mars Hill’s existing housing, though it is likely that there are weatherization and energy efficiency issues. Furthermore, undeveloped house lots are scarce in Mars Hill and this condition is making it more difficult for young people to stay in Town and raise their families. Mars Hill needs housing opportunities in the \$80,000 to \$140,000 range for those who work for the Town’s major employers (teachers, nursing home workers, processing and potato handling plants).



E. GOAL: Meet the housing needs of Mars Hill’s current residents and plan for the housing needs of an expanded population.

12. *Preserve Mars Hill’s existing housing stock.*

- a. Assess the condition of existing housing, including energy efficiency and weatherization needs.

- b. Annually, identify unoccupied homes and generally assess their condition as habitable structures (good, fair, poor, or derelict). Create a program to improve housing conditions where the need exists.
 - c. The use of pellet heating has been identified as an economic development opportunity for Northern Maine. When appropriate, link local weatherization efforts with this initiative and/or other alternative heating systems to help reduce household energy costs and support regional economic development efforts.
 - d. Seek public, private, and foundation grants and low interest loans to support rehabilitation and alternative heating efforts.
13. *Policy: Expand opportunities for new workforce housing to provide homes and house lots for employees of existing and new businesses.*
- a. Designate areas within walking distance of the town center that are on public water and sewer, or where services can readily be extended, for residential development on smaller lots to provide for homes in the \$80-140,000 range. See **X. Land Use P.**
 - b. Promote development of these “in-town” locations within walking distance of Downtown as part of Mars Hill’s brand as the “healthiest place to live” in the County. See **II. Economy D.9.e.** and **X. Land Use.**
 - c. Study the feasibility of creating neighborhoods with house lots that would be affordable for an average worker at Mars Hill industries and institutions. Share the results of the study with local developers and landowners.
 - d. Work with developers to address, and where appropriate, modify local, state, and federal regulations to ensure that house lots and homes are affordable for the average workers in the area.
 - e. Where opportunity presents itself, actively engage in supporting the creation of housing and neighborhood development that supports the Town’s housing goals, including but not limited to working in partnership with private landowners, developers, or other appropriate interests; purchasing and/or accepting donation of key properties within walking distance of the town center for future resale and development; seeking public, private, and foundation funds to support the development of compact, walkable, traditional neighborhoods. See **X. Land Use P.**
14. *Policy: Expand options for elderly housing.*
- a. Support development of a range of housing opportunities that target the 55+ age group, including a focus on reducing the demands of maintenance and care, cater to particular needs, and include energy efficient design. The purpose of providing a range of options is to enable Mars Hill residents to “age in place,” especially when temperatures dip below zero.
 - b. Strive to make Mars Hill more livable for the elderly in the winter months by providing transportation services, maintenance services, visitation and checking in programs, among others.

IV. Transportation

Mars Hill is located at the intersection of two major transportation routes, Routes 1 and 1A and



is the first major population center travelers see north of Houlton and could reasonably be branded as the “Gateway to Northern Maine.” Furthermore, many Canadians come across the border at Bridgewater, up the back road, then along the front of the mountain to get north to Presque Isle, Fort Fairfield, and Caribou as well as to get to the Mars Hill’s golf course, Big Rock Ski Area, and groceries. A major ATV and snowmobile trail goes through town along the old Bangor & Aroostook Railroad bed, which should be marketed as economic asset.

F. GOAL: Link transportation and economic development efforts.

15. *Policy: Capitalize on the Town’s location at the intersection of US Routes 1 and 1A. See II.*

Economy D.

- a. Monitor currently “postponed” plans to extend I-95, which would bypass Mars Hill. If federal funding becomes available for this extension, it is critical that Mars Hill has secured its position as a “destination” beforehand.

16. *Policy: Capitalize on the Town’s location along the Canadian border.*

- a. Study Canadian travel routes and business (retail and service) and recreation interests to target and promote economic development efforts in Mars Hill. Work with Blaine and Bridgewater to improve road conditions and coordinate efforts to encourage Canadian exchanges.

17. *Policy: Support Mars Hill’s brand as the “healthiest place to live” in the County. See II. Economy 9.e.*

- a. Expand and connect the various recreation trails in the community to create new destinations and attractions for tourists, travelers and new and existing residents. Identify, improve connections with the Town’s trail system, and promote the International Appalachian Trail system in Mars Hill.
- b. Work with major employers to provide car pool and/or other ride share services as well as to support the efforts of the Aroostook Regional Transportation Service. Seek grant funds, use municipal bonding and other authorities, as appropriate.
- c. Ensure that Town maintenance and construction projects (i.e., culverts) are undertaken in ways that do not inadvertently impede the passage of fish and wildlife.

G. GOAL: Manage Town’s finances to ensure adequate investment in road maintenance.

18. *Policy: Continue to plan for capital investment in local roads.*

- a. The 2013 inventory of road conditions is a good start. Expand the Town’s focus on inventorying conditions and establishing an annual improvement schedule to improve the condition of fair to poor roads and maintain the condition of good to fair roads. Investigate the Maine Department of Transportation’s road maintenance software.

V. Public Facilities and Services

As a service center community, Mars Hill has a wide variety of public facilities and services that meet its residents' needs and those of the numerous workers who commute from other nearby communities to jobs in Mars Hill. Given its historically larger population, Mars Hill has infrastructure to serve more residents and workers than it currently does. Most facilities are in good shape, given ongoing attention and investment over the last two decades; however, there are some facility needs on the horizon, including replacement of the Town Garage and a state-required salt shed. The most pressing public facility issue facing the community is continued declining student enrollments, which may eventually threaten the continued location of the Junior-Senior High School in Mars Hill.



H. GOAL: Increase the secondary school age population to ensure continuation of both the primary and secondary schools in Mars Hill. See I. Population A.

I. GOAL: Continue to plan for capital investment in public facilities and services.

19. *Policy: Continue to plan for capital investment in public facilities and services.*

- a. Formalize the Town's capital investments in an ongoing, multi-year capital improvement planning process. See **VII. Fiscal Capacity**.
- b. Plan for replacement of the Town Garage.
- c. When state funds to support construction of a salt shed become available, construct a new salt shed.
- d. Create a full time municipal economic development position to secure resources that support strategic investments in public facilities and services. See **II. Economy C.5.a**.

VI. Cultural Resources

Mars Hill has a variety of cultural resources that are commonly found in service center



communities, as well as some resources, like Big Rock Ski Area and Mars Hill Country Club, that are relatively uncommon. The Prestile Stream and Mars Hill Pond historically have been a significant focus of recreational activities – skating and horse racing on the Pond in winter, canoeing and gathering

fiddleheads along its banks in the spring, wild trout fishing in the summer. Mars Hill has the opportunity to market its rich cultural resources in support of its population and economic development goals. Most facilities are in good shape, but the Pond requires attention and

investment to reclaim its potential central role in the community. Expanding Mars Hill's brand as a four-season recreation draw, especially at the base of the mountain, will not only provide improved services for existing residents and workers, but could be a tool to leverage support for the Town's population and economic development goals.

J. GOAL: Restore and market the Prestile Stream, Mars Hill Pond, dam, park, and other cultural resources.

20. Policy: Invest in the Prestile Stream, Mars Hill Pond, dam, and park to restore and market an attractive recreational resource and element of beauty to the Town.

- a. Include investment in the Prestile Stream, pond, dam, and park in the Town's multi-year capital improvement plan. See **V. Public Facilities I.** and **VII. Fiscal Capacity.**
- b. Create a full time municipal economic development position to secure resources that support strategic investments in cultural resources. See **II. Economy C.5.a.**

K. GOAL: Use the area's natural beauty and cultural resources as a base for economic development efforts.

21. Policy: Expand four season tourism and recreation offerings in Mars Hill, especially focused on the base of the mountain.

- a. See **II. Economy D.9.**
- b. Create a "home base" for those who come to Mars Hill and the County for outdoor activities, including new lodging facilities at the base of the mountain. See **II. Economy D.**
- c. Expand, connect, and promote/advertise the various recreation trails in the community. See **II. Economy D.9.** and **IV. Transportation F.17.**
- d. Explore opportunities to increase public access to the top of the mountain.
- e. Work with the State Departments of Environmental Protection and Inland Fisheries & Wildlife, Soil and Water Conservation District, Trout Unlimited, Ducks Unlimited, Pathways to America, and others to resolve potential conflicts between local goals and state and federal interests in protecting waterfowl nesting habitat.
- f. Improve Prestile Stream Park with paths and boardwalks to provide a vital and attractive community gathering point, fishing and birding opportunities, and attract people to the Town. Boardwalks and paths should be designed to minimize environmental impacts on important wildlife habitats.

22. Policy: Maintain scenic views. II.D.10.

- a. Continue to preserve the Town's traditional village and working rural landscape pattern of development, laid out in the Town's Future Land Use Plan.
- b. When development is proposed in areas identified with important scenic views (see Scenic Views Map), the Planning Board will consider the impacts of the proposed development on the views and encourage the developer to adjust his or her development plans to minimize negative impacts on the views.

- c. Periodically monitor impacts of development on Mars Hills’ scenic landscape and, if negative impacts are observed, undertake a more rigorous scenic views inventory and consider stronger regulatory protections as appropriate.

VII. Fiscal Capacity

In addition to the wind farm, there is a large proportion of farmland and open space in the community. There are also a number of tax exempt properties that influence the Town’s tax base. Mars Hill’s mil rate decreased 20% from 2000 to 2010, primarily driven by an increase in tax revenue from the wind farm, which will continue to provide the Town with a fixed revenue stream of \$500K per year for a 20 year term. The



average ratio of assessed value to sales price is 69%, which suggests that a townwide revaluation will be needed in the not too distant future in compliance with state law. The Town has demonstrated a strong ability to self-fund municipal capital improvements, but longer term capital planning will be important to address future anticipated capital needs, including those of the school and utility districts, in a fiscally prudent manner. The Town is currently in the process of completing a capital improvement plan to address future infrastructure needs. The Governor’s recent proposed elimination of state revenue sharing and tax incentive programs will create additional financial requirements for the Town.

L. GOAL: Formalize Mars Hill’s ongoing financial management and capital improvements programs to anticipate and stabilize the Town’s fiscal capacity and enable it to better withstand downswings in the local economy.

23. Policy: Build on and institutionalize current efforts to create a 5 year Capital Improvements Plan.

- a. Annually, prepare a 5 year capital improvements plan to anticipate and plan for the creation and upgrading of necessary capital improvements.
- b. Plan for capital spending associated with road maintenance, the Town Garage, a salt shed, improvements to the park associated with the Prestile Stream and Mars Hill Pond, housing initiatives, and other needs identified in this Comprehensive Plan.
- c. Continue to fund capital reserve accounts for anticipated expenditures that are part of the capital improvement plan.
- d. Prepare to undertake a revaluation, as required by state requirements.
- e. Analyze the potential impact of the wind farm’s tax increment financing agreement ending in 2025, only 12 years from now, and plan accordingly.

24. Policy: Continue recent efforts to design and improve systems to professionally manage the Town’s finances.

- a. Review the Town’s personal property tax records.
- b. Link the Town’s assessing tax base to its GIS data base. Maintain and update the GIS database whenever the assessor’s database is updated.

- c. Work with NMDC and/or other organizations to house and update the Town's GIS database as necessary to keep it current and to support assessments to guide municipal economic development, housing, and other initiatives.
- d. Create a strategic financial plan with a 5-10 year window to address future capital needs for Mars Hill, containment of operating expenses, and a process for thorough review of school spending.
- e. Fund a full-time, municipal economic development position.

VIII. Agriculture and Forestry



Agriculture plays a major role in Mars Hill both in terms of the amount of land dedicated to agricultural use and in terms of the economic impact of agriculture within the community. Though trends in farming and land ownership patterns are changing, Mars Hill's community identity has historically and currently continues to center on farming. In recent years, there are fewer, bigger family

farms growing mostly potatoes, rotated with grains, soybeans, and broccoli. Some local farmers are nearing retirement and do not have family members who are interested in continuing to commercially farm their land. Generally, farmland in Mars Hill is highly valued and there has not been much conversion to other uses, though there have been some notable exceptions. The availability of land for residential development has become more of an issue in recent years, though farmers generally have been proactive about acquiring land from retiring farmers, leaving little land available on the open real estate market. As the Town seeks additional house lots in support of its population and economic development goals, it will be important to locate such development closer to the town center and public services and to avoid the loss of important farmland.

M. GOAL: Support agriculture as the primary economic asset of the community.

25. Policy: Support and enhance agriculture.

- a. Support enhancements for local agriculture to take support farmers in taking advantage of emerging opportunities and trends in the industry. See **II. Economy C.6.**
- b. Work with students and the School District to better support the agricultural program at the Junior-Senior High School and increase the engagement of local youth in farming. See **I. Population B.4.c.**
- c. Work with the School District, nursing home, health center, other local institutions, and supermarkets to encourage greater use of local agricultural products where possible.
- d. Continue to work with local farmers to identify and address issues related to the sustainability of agriculture in Mars Hill, including creating and/or expanding local markets, reducing the impacts of stormwater runoff from uncovered winter fields, inadequate stream

buffers, and gravel roads, and other issues that may arise from time to time. See **IX. Natural Resources N.26.**

- e. Work with local farmers and landowners to address issues related to the provision of future public access to their lands.
- f. Encourage farmers who are approaching retirement and who do not have family members who are interested in continuing commercial farming on their property to work with organizations such as the Maine Farmland Trust and others to identify potential new farmers and programs to keep the acreage in active production.

IX. Natural Resources

Mars Hill is blessed with a strikingly beautiful natural landscape. The Prestile Stream and Mars Hill Mountain are major natural assets in the community. There is a long tradition of hunting and trout fishing, which is important to many citizens. A major issue is use of the Prestile Stream and the condition of both the Stream and the Mars Hill Pond, including water quality, sedimentation, the trout fishery, and future stream access to preserve its role as the traditional center of Mars Hill's recreation in all seasons.



N. GOAL: Protect and improve water quality of the Prestile Stream and Mars Hill Pond.

26. *Policy: Work with the State Departments of Environmental Protection, Soil and Water Conservation District, and other groups to reduce sediment loading and improve water quality in the Prestile Stream. See VI. Cultural Resources K.21.*
 - a. Seek an affordable solution to provide winter cover crops, including applying for and securing outside financial support.
 - b. Create a streamside buffer planting program and secure funds to support planting stream buffers along the Prestile Stream and its tributaries in Mars Hill.
 - c. Seek funds to support retrofit of Town and farm roads that are contributing to sediment loading and water quality issues with the Prestile.
 - d. Support the Soil and Water Conservation District's efforts to improve the water quality of the Prestile.
 - e. Make certain that local citizens are continually involved and Town leaders stay informed as to the progress and direction of water quality improvement efforts.
27. *Policy: Restore the Mars Hill Pond and improve the associated park for recreation such as fishing, canoeing, kayaking, birding, and other recreational use.*
 - a. Work with federal, state, regional, and local public, private, and nonprofit groups to fund and implement a strategy to restore water quality in the Pond and improve the park to address the concerns of current and potential users in support of traditional recreational uses.

O. GOAL: Protect Mars Hill’s natural resources.

28. Policy: Work with the State Departments of Inland Fisheries & Wildlife and Beginning with Habitat Program to protect natural resources.

- a. Work closely with the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries & Wildlife and the Beginning with Habitat Program to develop and implement approaches that protect the Town’s natural resources, visit the Beginning with Habitat Online Toolbox (http://www.beginningwithhabitat.com/toolbox/about_toolbox.html), and periodically request updated information in the future to ensure that land use decisions are based on the best available information.

X. Land Use

Mars Hill remains predominantly agricultural, retaining its traditional town center, where most residential, commercial, and service development is located.



This has helped Mars Hill control municipal expenses. At the same time, recreation and other developments have expanded on Mars Hill Mountain, shifting the Town’s economic focus to the mountain and its base, with only limited development in the industrial area. There have been very few residential subdivisions since adoption of the 1992 Comprehensive Plan. To support efforts to brand Mars Hill as the “healthiest town in Aroostook County,” new residential development needs to be on small lots in areas that are within walking distance of businesses and institutions in the core of the community.

P. GOAL: Continue to support compact residential and commercial development in Mars Hill’s town center.

29. Policy: Review and adjust land use regulations in areas that are within walking distance of the town center and areas on public water and sewer, or where services can readily be extended.

- a. Rezone the large parcel on East Ridge Road that is currently being farmed from Residential 2 to Rural Farm.
- b. Rezone the remaining smaller parcels in the Residential 2 to Residential 1 and eliminate the Residential 2 District from the Town’s zoning map and ordinance. This rezoning is intended to encourage entry level residential development near the town center to help create affordable workforce housing and promote walking as part of Mars Hill’s brand as the “healthiest place to live” in the County. See **II. Economy D.9.e.** and **III. Housing E.13.**
- c. Amend land use ordinances to require interconnected streets, limiting dead end roads and cul-de-sacs to responding to environmental or safety issues. Amend land use

ordinances to require streetscape improvements, including sidewalks and shade trees, to promote the walkability of these new neighborhoods. Provide an exemption for the requirement to interconnect streets if needed to avoid negative impacts on natural systems.

Q. GOAL: Create new jobs in emerging technological service businesses near the town center.

30. Policy: Take advantage of opportunities for emerging technologies to locate in Mars Hill.

- a. As opportunities arise to draw one or more emerging technology companies (i.e., computer data storage, call center, etc.) to Mars Hill, expand the existing Commercial Zone to include an area extending south of the existing Commercial Zone toward Clark Road.

R. GOAL: Support expansion of four season tourism and recreation offerings focused on the base of the mountain.

31. Policy: Take advantage of opportunities to expand Mars Hill's four season tourism and recreation at the base of the mountain.

- a. As opportunities to expand tourism and recreation offerings at the base of the mountain arise, revise zoning to allow the creation of new destinations and attractions in this location. See **II. Economy D.9.a.**

XI. Implementation of the Plan

If comprehensive plans are to address major community issues in a manner likely to yield positive results, they must clearly identify desired outcomes. They must also establish a means of measuring performance relative to these outcomes. Without a strong focus on outcomes, there is a tendency to equate success or failure mainly with effort rather than result. Such an emphasis not only hampers current planning efforts, but can also result in the long-term perpetuation of strategies that are ineffective or even counterproductive. The implementation of strong land use measures, for example, is an output that may or may not result in the desired outcome: that of most future development occurring in designated RESIDENTIAL, COMMERCIAL, and INDUSTRIAL AREAS.



This Plan allows the Town to take a fresh look at its policies and strategies and to place a greater emphasis on identifying positive outcomes and establishing targets or benchmarks to strive for and gauge progress. Setting benchmarks relative to designated RESIDENTIAL, COMMERCIAL, INDUSTRIAL AREAS, FUTURE RECREATION, and RURAL AREAS is essential to gauge the Town's success at guiding growth. Even for plan goals that do not lend themselves to precise measurement, the exercise of discussing how success will be evaluated is an extremely valuable one.

S. GOAL: Ensure there are enough volunteers to participate in Town and community affairs, including implementation of the Plan.

32. Policy: Increase volunteer participation in Town and community affairs, including implementation of the Plan.

- a. Create and maintain a bulletin board of volunteer opportunities and needs at the Town Office and on the Town's web site.
- b. Create and maintain a "Wish List" of community needs at the Town Office and on the Town's website to solicit donations in support of implementing this Plan.
- c. The Town Council and Town Manager will identify members of the Implementation Committee, which the Town Council will appoint. The Town Council, Town Manager, and Implementation Committee will identify members for and the Town Council will appoint members to a Building Committee to Replace the Town Garage, Economic Development Committee, Housing Committee, Implementation Committee, and Recreation Committee.

T. GOAL: Implement and monitor success of the updated Comprehensive Plan.

33. Policy: Watch over implementation of this Plan and monitor success in achieving its policies and goals.

- a. Assign oversight of implementation and monitoring of success to a new Implementation Committee, with support from the Town Council and Town Manager. The Town Council shall appoint committees and task forces and assign specific tasks to ensure that the overall implementation schedule is being followed. In addition, the Implementation Committee, with support from the Town Manager and Town Assessor shall evaluate whether implemented policies are leading to positive outcomes, and specifically track progress on particular steps relative to benchmarks established in the plan.
- b. To initiate implementation, the Town Council shall appoint an Implementation Committee, as well as the Building Committee to Replace the Town Garage, Economic Development Committee, Housing Committee, Implementation Committee, and Recreation Committee to implement strategies in this Plan. Together with the Implementation Committee, the Town Council shall schedule a kick-off workshop to discuss the logistics of implementation, reiterate the respective roles different parties will play in the process, discuss plan specifics and views on how to best proceed.
- c. Thereafter, the Implementation Committee will meet annually with each group responsible for implementation in the upcoming year to review and clarify strategies, refine the anticipated schedule for each year's activities, and work with the Town Council to reassign tasks if the group is unable to complete the task. If it is determined that implementation of certain steps is lagging or key performance benchmarks are not being met, the Implementation Committee and Town Council will develop a plan of action.
- d. The Implementation Committee will publish each year's implementation schedule and assess success in guiding growth based on the Future Land Use Plan, Goals and Policies, and specific benchmarks in the Annual Report and regularly post progress on the Town's website.

- e. The Implementation Committee will display an enlarged version of the annual schedule at the Town Office and note progress.
- f. The Town Council will annually acknowledge and celebrate implementation efforts and progress toward achieving policies and goals.

34. Policy: Adopt benchmarks for Mars Hill's ten-year planning period to include:

- a. 85% of residential growth occurs in designated RESIDENTIAL AREAS,
- b. 15% or less growth occurs in designated RURAL FARM AREAS
- c. 50% or more of new year round housing affordable to those making 80% to 120% of the Town's median household income
- d. No more than a 5% decrease in actively farmed acreage

If, by at least the fourth year after adoption of the Comprehensive Plan Update, growth, particularly the percent of growth, is not being directed as desired in the Plan, the Town Council, with assistance from the Implementation Committee and Planning Board, will review the Plan's strategies and adjust them to increase their effectiveness in meeting the benchmarks.

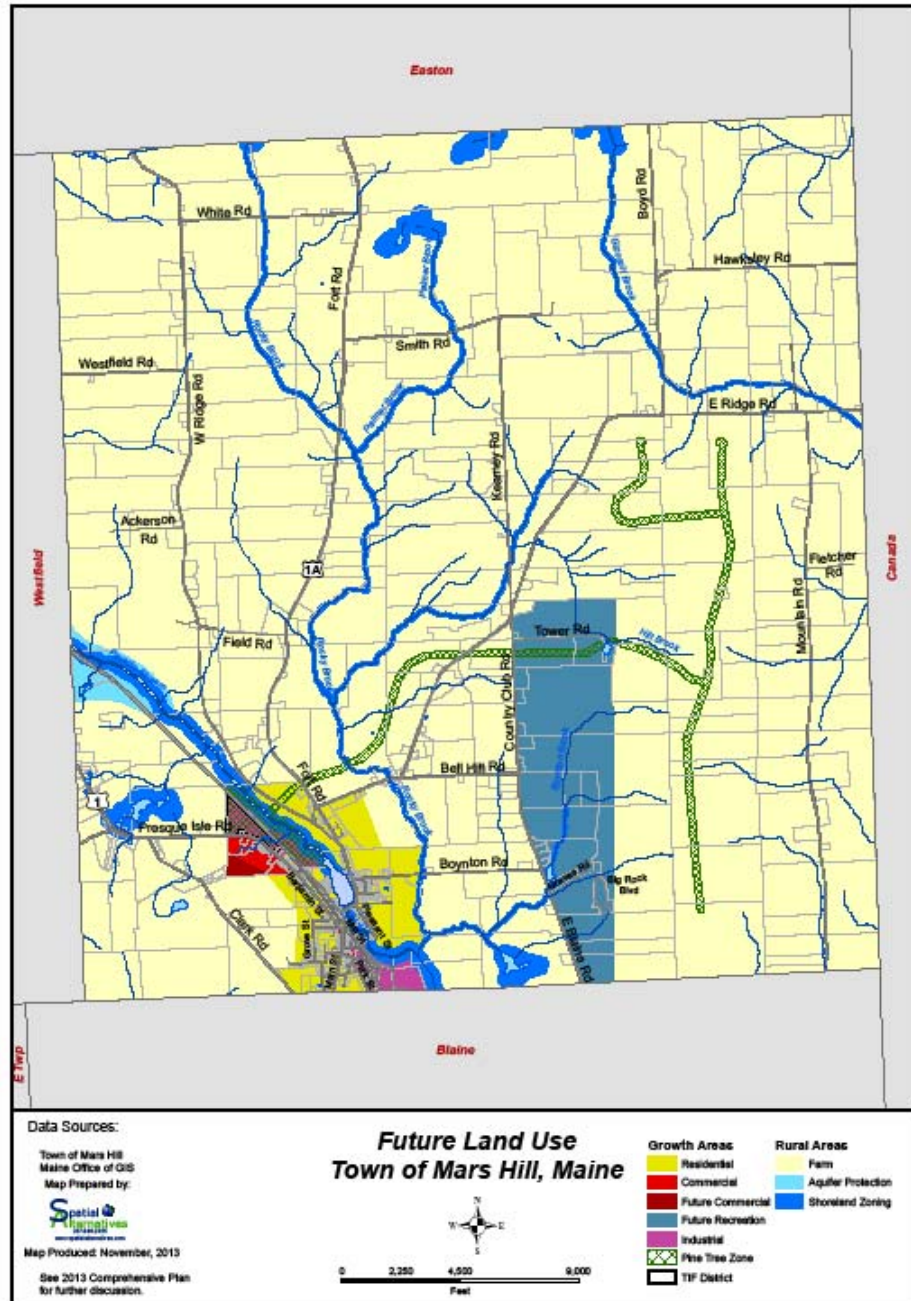


DOCUMENT 4. FUTURE LAND USE PLAN



Mars Hill's Future Land Use Plan is made up of the Future Land Use Map and a written description of the land uses and characteristics of each area defined on the map.¹

Figure 1. Mars Hill Future Land Use Map



¹ Editor's Note: The hand-colored Future Land Use Map, which was included in the draft that was released for public hearing, was replaced with a revised GIS map that reflects the same information.

The Future Land Use Map graphically depicts how Mars Hill plans to direct anticipated growth over the ten-year planning period. It is not a zoning map, and the boundaries of identified areas on the map are general. But the map and associated plan will guide development of future regulations, land use measures, and the capital investments program.

The designations on the map are intended to provide for the best use of the various areas of Town in accordance with community goals and policies. Each designation addresses particular situations and is intended to reflect natural constraints, opportunities of the land, and desires of the community.

The map and plan embody the concept of distinct growth and rural areas. Designation of these areas has evolved directly from:

- The historic development of the community;
- A desire to create and/or preserve the traditional town center surrounded by farmland pattern of development, and to keep the character of each area intact;
- A desire to expand four season tourism and recreation offerings and emerging technological support businesses as opportunities arise;
- The need for new workforce housing that is within walking distance of the town center in areas that are served by public sewer and water, or can readily do so;
- An understanding of Mars Hill’s water, soils, and other natural resource systems. Some present barriers to development, others offer opportunities;
- The need to extend and use public services in the least costly manner possible;
- A desire to brand the community as “the healthiest Town in the County” and “the Gateway to Northern Maine”; and
- The input of comments received at community meetings and other communications.

As suggested by Maine’s Planning and Land Use Regulation Act and rules, each of the two types of areas include lands that:

Growth Areas	Rural Areas
Contain sufficient area to accommodate anticipated growth and development	Consist of large, contiguous open spaces
Can be efficiently served by public facilities	Do not require expansion of public facilities
Are physically suitable for development or redevelopment	Contain critical natural and scenic resources that shall be protected
Promote a compact, rather than a sprawling, pattern of development	Are and shall be maintained relatively free of development sprawl and strip development

For purposes of Mars Hill’s Future Land Use Plan, growth and rural areas are subdivided as follows.

1. Growth Areas

The designation of growth areas is intended to ensure that the Town plans for compact growth and development by directing it to areas most suitable for development and away from areas where it would be incompatible with protection of rural and natural resources. Growth areas may include some land areas that are physically unsuitable for development or redevelopment, such as a stream, small flood prone area, small natural hazard area, small pond, or small critical natural resource if they are of a scale and a level of protection that does not hinder the effectiveness of the growth area.

To encourage development in growth areas, it is important that growth areas offer a high quality of life. To assure that growth areas are attractive, desirable locations for growth, it is important that public amenities, like streetscapes and community parks, and the overall quality of the landscape is not an afterthought, but is front and center in the design of the areas. New neighborhoods of small house lots that are affordable for those who work for the Town’s major employers (teachers, nursing home workers, processing and potato handling plants) are key factors in making growth areas desirable places to live. These neighborhoods will be located within walking distance of the town center, will be served by public water and sewer, and will be similar to existing intown neighborhoods.

Growth areas will continue to be made up of *Residential, Commercial, Industrial* areas. A *Future Commercial Area* south of the existing Commercial Zone and a *Future Recreation Area* at the base of Mars Hill Mountain will be designated if the Town’s economic development efforts are successful in attracting emerging technological support businesses and/or creating a four-season recreation “home base” in the community. This land use strategy will allow most growth to occur where existing public facilities – sewer and water – are located.

a. RESIDENTIAL AREAS –

Uses and densities will remain largely the same as presently allowed in the Town’s R1 Zone, though new development will include more interconnected neighborhood street and fewer dead end roads. Most neighborhoods, new and old, will have sidewalks and shade trees to provide a pedestrian environment in keeping with the Town’s brand as “the healthiest Town in the County.”



The existing R2 Zone will be eliminated. Portions of the R2 Zone will become R1, in keeping with the intent to encourage most residents to live within walking distance of Mars Hill’s traditional

compact town center. The remainder of the R2 Zone will be rezoned Rural Farm (see section 2. below).

b. COMMERCIAL AND INDUSTRIAL AREAS –

Commercial and industrial development shall continue to be concentrated in and around the town center as currently regulated in the zoning ordinance.



c. FUTURE COMMERCIAL AREA –

A *Future Commercial Area* extending south of the existing Commercial Zone toward Clark Road will be designated if the Town is able to draw one or more emerging technology companies (i.e., computer data storage, call center, etc.) can be brought to Mars Hill. Designation of this *Area* will occur if development that houses the business is larger than can be accommodated in the small lots that dominate the existing Commercial Zone and if the business is not compatible with the existing distribution and warehousing facilities that occupy most of the buildable land in the existing Industrial Zone. The intent is not to rezone this *Area* in the short term, but to provide the basis for a future zoning amendment to allow larger, emerging technology businesses to locate within walking distance of the town center in an area that can be served by public sewer and water in a location other than the current Industrial Zone. Most of the Industrial Zone is taken up by larger scale warehousing and distribution facilities for agricultural products. Providing another location for larger scale emerging technology companies will reduce future conflicts between a large number of heavy vehicles and employees who would work at the new technology businesses. Another reason to provide an alternative location is that some technology businesses may have concerns about the vibrations generally associated with multiple warehousing and distribution facilities.

When the Commercial Zone is extended, the Town will develop standards to ensure that the new, larger scale development will provide buffers to protect adjacent residential neighborhoods from unreasonable impacts from noise, glare, and traffic. It will also manage on street parking in residential neighborhoods and require large parking lots to be screened from view of nearby homes.

d. FUTURE RECREATION AREA –

The *Future Recreation Area* is designated to allow the Town in the future to rezone land at the base of the western slope of Mars Hill Mountain to enable its development as a “home base” for four season recreational activities. The intent is not to rezone this *Area* in the short term, nor to designate the zone speculatively, but to provide a basis for



a future zoning amendment to allow tourism and recreation offerings to allow the creation of new destinations and attractions at this location if and when interest is expressed to do so or if it is part of Town-adopted economic development strategy. Appropriate uses in this *Area* shall be lodging facilities, including campgrounds, but not large condominium or residential subdivisions or a large number of retail establishments.

When this Recreation Zone is established, dimensional standards shall be prepared to protect the scenic, rural character of the *Area*, while meeting basic health and safety provisions to provide adequate potable water, safely dispose of sanitary waste, and protect the capacity of Town roads. While the *Future Recreation Area* is relatively large, the Town does not intend the new zone to cover the entire *Area*. When applied, the Town will designate a Recreation Zone to support the proposed development and additional future development that may be reasonably anticipated, but not to cover such a large area that it will encourage dispersed development throughout the larger *Area*. The intent of the designation is to identify an *Area* of the community that is suitable as a starting point for development of the desired “home base” with connections to both the Mountain and the trails that connect with the Town Center.

2. Rural Areas

Rural Areas make up the remainder of the Town, which includes currently designated *Shoreland Areas*, *Special Aquifer Protection Overlay Areas*, and *Rural Farm Areas*. These designations are intended to provide long term protection of agricultural land, important natural features, large blocks of unfragmented habitat and open space, and scenic lands from incompatible development that threatens natural resource-based industries, working landscapes, or the character of Mars Hill. This designation includes those areas of the community that have multiple natural resource constraints, and/or are especially important for resource-based, scenic, and/or recreational opportunities, and/or are especially important for long-term water quality. **Rural Areas** are intended to preserve the open, rural character of Mars Hill by discouraging sprawling residential development activity, and assuring that development that does occur is done in a manner which preserves the natural resource and aesthetic rural character of the community. Land uses shall be focused primarily on the resource values of the area.



The only changes the Future Land Use Plan propose are to rezone a portion of the area:

- currently zoned R2 to Rural Farm as described in section 1.a. above,
- to *Future Commercial* as described in 1.c. above, and
- to *Future Recreation* as described in 1.d. above.

Apart from these changes, current zoning regulations appear to be working well in support of promoting and maintaining an agricultural economy. However, there is evidence of residential

encroachment along the some rural roadways. The Town should regularly monitor development in the *Rural Farm Area*, as discussed below and periodically evaluate growth patterns. If current ordinances are ineffective in discouraging further residential encroachment, in the *Rural Farm Area* the Town will recommend changes to ordinance provisions. These changes may include, but are not limited to, amending rural/growth area boundaries, reducing or holding density constant in the *Rural Farm Area* while allowing smaller minimum lot sizes and/or limitations on the number of new subdivision lots allowed each year and/or a differential rate of growth ordinance that would limit the number of permits for new residential units.

4. Monitoring Effectiveness of Land Use Plan

Annually, the Comprehensive Plan Implementation Committee, with assistance from the Planning Board and Town Assessor, shall assess and describe in the Town’s Annual Report the community’s success in guiding growth as expressed in the Future Land Use Plan and Goals and Policies, including specific benchmarks, and the Mars Hill 2023 Vision Statement. It shall also recount progress toward undertaking and completing strategies laid out in the Plan. If, by at least the fourth year after adoption of the Comprehensive Plan Update, growth, particularly the amount of residential growth in designated **Rural Areas**, is not being directed as desired in the Plan, the Town will review its strategies and make adjustments to increase their effectiveness. By the eighth year after adoption of the Plan, the Town shall evaluate the overall effectiveness



of efforts to achieve the Goals and Policies of the Plan.

DOCUMENT 5. REGIONAL COORDINATION PLAN



Regional Coordination

According to the State, Mars Hill is one of Maine’s 80 service centers. As such the Town serves as a job center, importing workers from surrounding communities, a retail center, with sales exceeding the needs of the local population, and offers an array of social, cultural, health, and financial services to the surrounding region. Mars Hill’s infrastructure and facilities are generally sized for a population that was historically larger than it is today – hence, there is unused capacity and the risk of degraded facilities if the Town cannot sustain a large enough population to support them.

As a member and leader within its region, Mars Hill will work with neighboring communities and interested organizations to support and strengthen the regional economy, meet residents’ needs, efficiently provide public and cultural facilities and services, preserve natural resource based industries, and improve and/or protect the area’s exemplary environment and cultural resources.

Some areas where the Town will focus regional coordination efforts include:

I. Economic Development

The Town will actively seek opportunities to participate in regional economic development organizations, initiatives, and studies.

The Town will coordinate marketing efforts with various tourism groups, particularly those associated with skiing and snowmobiling, to create vertically integrated tour packages (lodging, food, activities, music, entertainment, etc.) and to maximize revenues during busy times and encourage visitors during less busy times.

The Town will work with communities of Bath, Bristol, Centreville, Florenceville, Hartland, Upper Kent, Woodstock, and create and/or participate in organizations for the purpose of extending cross border cooperation to support and take advantage of growth and potential economic opportunity.

II. Housing

The Town will link weatherization and housing improvement efforts with the regional economic development effort to encourage increased use of pellet heating and/or alternative heating systems to help reduce household energy costs and support regional economic development efforts.



Regional Coordination

III. Transportation

The Town will study Canadian travel routes, business opportunities, and recreation interests and work with Blaine, Bridgewater, and MDOT to improve road conditions and coordinate efforts to encourage Canadian exchanges.

IV. Public Facilities and Services

The Town will work with the School District, and towns that are members of the District, to either perform an in-house study or hire a consultant to evaluate school enrollments, determine what is behind declining enrollments, prepare enrollment projections, recommend strategies to reverse the decline, and establish realistic goals for future enrollments.

V. Parks, Open Space, Natural and Cultural Resources

The Town will work with federal, state, regional, and local public, private, and nonprofit groups to fund, create, and implement a strategy to restore water quality in the Pond, maintain the dam, and improve the impoundment, shoreline, and park to address the concerns of current and potential users in support of traditional recreational uses.



The Town will also work with the State Departments of Environmental Protection and Inland Fisheries & Wildlife, Soil and Water Conservation District, Trout Unlimited, Ducks Unlimited, Pathways to America, and others to resolve potential conflicts between local goals for an attractive and usable community park and impoundment and state and federal interests in protecting waterfowl nesting habitat.

VI. Agricultural and Forest Resources

The Town will work with local and regional farmers and the Department of Environmental Protection, Soil and Water Conservation District, and other groups to reduce sediment loading and improve water quality in the Prestile Stream by planting winter cover crops, planting/expanding stream buffers, and retrofitting public and farm roads to reduce the impacts of runoff and nutrient enrichment.

DOCUMENT 6. CAPITAL INVESTMENTS PLAN



The capital facilities of local governments are essential to meeting the service needs of the community in an efficient and cost-effective manner. Mars Hill maintains a simple capital budgeting process, largely managed by the Town Manager and Town Council. While the Town has used a Capital Improvement Program (CIP) in the past, it has not consistently used this important capital planning approach. The Town maintains a limited number of capital reserve accounts designated for a specific purpose and has bonded for capital improvements sparingly in the past.



A CIP is a document that includes an assessment of all existing and anticipated public facilities and services such as, but not limited to, roads, sewers, water systems, schools, parks, open space, fire and police services, etc. required to meet the town's planned growth and economic development. It is generally a multi-year plan, often five years, for the maintenance, replacement and expansion of existing public facilities and equipment or the construction or acquisition of new facilities and equipment, including projections of when and where such facilities and equipment will be required, how much they are anticipated to cost, how the costs will be funded, and a schedule of when the improvements will be needed.

Mars Hill's updated Comprehensive Plan supports adopting and continuing to use a CIP as part of the Town's annual budgeting and administrative process. The Town would benefit from formalizing the process to plan for improvements identified in the Comprehensive Plan.

Lacking a more formal CIP, the temptation may be to defer needed spending on capital projects when the budget is tight and approve whatever is proposed when funds are available. This approach can result in scarce capital dollars being spent on projects that do not reflect the greatest needs of the community. As importantly, project-by-project budgeting can result in unexpected future costs for major projects that are essential or are mandated by state or federal requirements.

A CIP is designed to assist the Town in planning for its needed capital expenditures on a rational and systematic basis. The CIP is designed to identify Mars Hill's needed capital expenditures, to evaluate the priority of the various needs, and to structure a spending program for meeting the more important of these needs on an affordable basis.

A CIP as compared to a Capital Investments Plan (CInP), which is a state required element of a local comprehensive plan, is a more detailed working document sufficient for annual budgeting for needed capital improvements.

On the other hand, a CInP establishes a framework for programming and financing the new or expanded public facilities that are needed to accommodate projected growth

and development and which are major investment for which the community is fiscally responsible. The CInP sets forth general funding priorities among needed community investments and identifies potential funding sources and financing mechanisms.

To be consistent with the state’s Community Planning and Investment Act, Mars Hill’s CInP should:

- identify the need to improve, replace, and/or expand capital facilities and public services necessary to support projected growth and development, address important challenges that have a fiscal component, and protect the environment and health, safety, and welfare of the public consistent with the vision, challenges, goals, policies, and strategies identified in the Comprehensive Plan;
- estimate when the improvement, replacement, and/or expansion will be needed within the ten-year planning period;
- estimate the costs of those facilities and services;
- establish general funding priorities among the various capital improvements; and
- identify potential funding sources and funding mechanisms.

The CInP should reasonably reflect priorities contained within the Comprehensive Plan and assure that the siting and construction of all public facilities are consistent with the Future Land Use Plan. It need not include all investments identified in the Comprehensive Plan; however, it should reflect the key elements of the community’s growth management program and not conflict with other policies and strategies of the Comprehensive Plan.

I. Financial Considerations

The need for capital spending must be balanced against the ability of the Town to pay for capital projects. This means that while some projects may be desirable, the Town simply may not be able to afford them. To help maintain a high bond rating and ease with which the Town sells its bonds, the Town should create a debt management policy that specifies how much, on average and as an upper limit, the Town anticipates spending on capital investments each year.



The Town has used two approaches to finance capital projects in the recent past. It has used bonds to finance capital projects and established annual reserves for equipment replacement, minor road repair, and normal building maintenance to fund necessary projects in the CIP. In general, the Town only bonds when the reserve accounts are not adequate for the project.

The long-term debt carried by the Town of Mars Hill as of 2013 includes:

- Bonds payable maturing in 2025 (Fire Station) at 3.05% to 9.0% payable in installments of \$17,500 plus interest totaling \$227,500

Mars Hill's total outstanding debt of \$227,500 as of 2013 was 0.2% of its statutory debt limit. As a rule of thumb, 5% of valuation is the recommended limit for a town to bond; 15% is the legal limit on a town's bonding ability.

II. Adequacy of Existing Facilities and Systems

This subsection analyzes the adequacy of Mars Hill's existing facilities to meet current its current needs and to accommodate projected growth. The analysis looks at the facilities function-by-function. A basic description of these facilities is found in the inventories and analyses.

A. Main Street Revitalization



To support existing businesses and draw new businesses and professionals who create jobs and serve local needs to Mars Hills and in recognition of the Town's goal of preserving and enhancing the Town Center, the Town will need to invest in revitalizing Main Street. Both investments in businesses as well as physical improvement of the streetscape are important to encourage private investment in the community.

B. Housing

Based on the Housing Committee's assessment of the condition and need for weatherization, energy systems, and general retrofit, the Town may need to create a program to improve housing conditions. As appropriate, the Town should seek public, private, and foundation grants and low interest loans to support rehabilitation and alternative heating efforts. No cost estimate is available at this time.

C. Water and Sewer Service

Public water and sewer is provided by the Mars Hill Utility District. The system is in relatively good shape as the District has made significant investments in source water protection, distribution, and waste water treatment since adoption of the previous comprehensive plan. The District anticipates a long term need to replace the 1940's water pipe under Route 1A (Fort Street), at an estimated cost of \$2-3 million, sometime after the ten year planning period for this Comprehensive Plan. A second stand pipe also

may be needed sometime after the planning period on the east side of the Stream at a cost of approximately \$500,000. The District also has identified a need to replace three waste water filter beds in 2017, 2020, and 2022, each at a cost of \$12,000.

D. Fire Protection

With the move of the Fire Department to the new Fire Station on Market Street and regular investment in equipment, the Departments facilities are in good shape. The Fire Chief has identified the need for a new pumper to replace the 1991 pumper by 2016 at an estimated cost of \$250,000 and a 2,500 gallon tanker by 2020 at an estimated cost of \$100,000.



E. Schools

According to the School Superintendent, the infrastructure in all school buildings should be positioned to meet the District’s educational needs for the next 10-15 years with



general maintenance. While the District has addressed two of its priorities expressed in the current Comprehensive Plan, developing a regulation softball field and paving needs at the High School, development of a greenhouse for use by the science and agriculture

departments at the high school has not been achieved.

The most significant concern regarding the school system is the need to develop an understanding of what is behind the continuing loss of enrollment at the junior and senior high school. Reversing losses in enrollment is a major focus of Mars Hill’s updated comprehensive of plan. While no cost estimate is available for this study, the Town should work with the School District to develop a cost estimate for it and Mars Hill should budget for it in its CIP.

F. Highway System

The Town invests between \$50,000 and \$100,000 a year in road maintenance. Many Town roads are in good shape and some are in very good condition. There are several gravel roads in Town that require constant vigilance.

Funds should be budgeted annually to maintain, construct, and improve sidewalks, streetscapes, and pedestrian improvements in the Town Center. No cost estimate is available.

New equipment needs include:

- New loader in 2021, approximate cost of \$200,000
- New plow in 2022, approximate cost of \$200,000

The Town Garage, located on the West Ridge Road, is actually a structure relocated from the Loring Air Force Base. It is not in good shape and will need to be upgraded or replaced in the next several years. The cost estimate for its replacement in 2015 is \$850,000.

According to the state, the Highway Department needs a salt shed, estimated to cost \$200,000 for the Town, though it is not required to provide it until the state provides funding for a new facility.

G. Prestile Stream Dam and Park

The Town has had continuing problems with the flash boards on the Prestile Stream Dam, and as of this date, has not determined the best resolution to the problem. One solution is to remove tree snags that wash into the Pond in the spring, install two foot high flash boards on June 15th and remove them on October 1st. Another solution may be to install hydraulic splash boards.



While the Park is generally in good condition, as is the ramp and picnic area, the updated Comprehensive Plan identifies the desire to restore and enhance the Park with paths and boardwalks to attract people and businesses to Town. No cost estimate is available.

H. Recreational Center and Swimming Pool

Facilities at the gym have been improved in recent years, but have greater potential.



According to the Recreation Director, it would take approximately \$50,000 to upgrade the existing rudimentary weight room at the Recreation Center to raise the facility to the desired level. The Department currently is seeking a \$100,000 grant to restore the stage area. Estimates to improve the facility's gravel parking lot are approximately \$100,000. A cost

estimate to repair the pool and bring it into compliance with state standards is being prepared and currently ranges from \$35,000 to \$400,000.

I. Walking/Biking Trails

A key recommendation of the updated Comprehensive Plan is to upgrade existing trails and construct new ones as one of the basis for branding Mars Hill as “the healthiest town in Aroostook.” No cost estimates are available.



J. Natural Resources

There are three areas the Town should invest in to help improve the Prestile Stream’s water quality.

All of the strategies will require collaboration among a number of local, regional, and state groups and individual. The three key strategies are:

- Seek an affordable solution to provide winter cover crops, including applying for and securing outside financial support.
- Create a streamside buffer planting program and secure funds to support planting stream buffers along the Prestile Stream and its tributaries in Mars Hill.
- Seek funds to support retrofit of Town and farm roads that are contributing to sediment loading and water quality issues with the Prestile.

K. Revaluation

The sale prices of Mars Hill properties in recent years are generally lower than tax assessments, within the area of what is minimally acceptable to state tax authorities. The cost of a revaluation is estimated at \$90,000. The revaluation for Mars Hill began in August, 2013 and will be finalized for the 2015 tax commitment.

In general, the Town needs to work with regional and state agencies and interest groups to refine strategies and prepare cost estimates for the various needed investments.

III. Facilities Necessary to Support Anticipated Growth

Capital investments required to implement anticipated growth include:

- Main Street revitalization;
- housing investments;
- replace waste water filter beds;
- new pumper and tanker for Fire Department;
- school enrollment study
- highway investments
- maintenance, construction, and improvement of sidewalks, streetscape, and pedestrian improvements

- new loader and plow for Highway Department
- Town Garage
- walking and biking paths.

IV. Municipal Priorities

The Town must invest in a number of its facilities and services to accommodate existing and anticipated needs. These include areas necessary to correct deficiencies (or anticipated deficiencies due to facility or equipment obsolescence) that create public health, safety, or welfare problems. They also may be required to meet state or federal mandates. Some of these needs may be **URGENT**; some may be **NECESSARY** but could be provided within one or two years without creating serious problems.

As noted in the previous section, some municipal facilities must or should be addressed to accommodate projected growth.

In addition, the Town has other capital needs which are **DESIRABLE** but not necessary to address existing needs. They include some areas, which, if not acted upon in the foreseeable period, could become lost opportunities.

And finally, the Comprehensive Plan identifies a number of desirable projects that should be undertaken if funding is available over the coming decade, but which could be **DEFERRED** without risking an absolute or significant loss of opportunity .

The following chart illustrates the recommended schedule for undertaking projects to address municipal capital needs. For each project, a brief description, anticipated date of need, municipal rating, recommended schedule in the short term (within two years of adoption of the Comprehensive Plan), midterm (within five years of adoption), and long term (more than five years from adoption), preliminary cost estimates (if available), and potential funding source is identified:

Project Description	Date Needed	Municipal Rating	Schedule	Cost Estimate	Possible Funding Sources
Main Street Revitalization	FY 2016	Des	M	\$250,000	operating budget, reserves, bonds, grants
Housing investments	targeted annually	Des	M	unknown \$15,000	grants, low interest loans
Water pipe under Route 1A	beyond FY 2023	Def	L	\$2-3 million	reserves, bond, grants
2 nd stand pipe east of Prestile Stream	beyond FY 2023	Def	L	\$500,000	reserves, bonds, grants
Replace 3 water filter beds	FY 2017, FY 2020, FY 2022	N	S	total of \$36,000	reserves, bonds, grants
Fire equipment New pumper	FY 2020	Des	L	\$250,000	reserves, bonds, grants

Figure 2. Capital Investments Municipal Priorities					
Project Description	Date Needed	Municipal Rating	Schedule	Cost Estimate	Possible Funding Sources
New 2,500 gallon tanker	FY 2020			\$100,000	
School Regulation softball field paving greenhouse	FY 2016 FY 2018 FY 2016	Des	L	unknown	reserves, bonds, grants, donations
School District enrollment study	FY 2013	U	S	\$50,000	operating budget, other District communities, grants
Highway investments	annually	N	Annual	\$100,000	operating budget, bonds
Sidewalk & streetscape investments	annually	Des	M	\$15,000	operating budget, bonds, grants
Highway equipment New loader New plow	FY 2021 FY 2022	Des	L	\$ 50,000 \$200,000	reserves, bonds, grants reserves, bonds, grants
Town Garage	FY 2015	N	S	\$850,000	reserves, bonds, grants, donations
Salt shed	state funding	Def	Annual	\$200,000	reserves, bonds, grants, donations
Prestile Stream Dam	FY 2017	Des	M	\$250,000	reserves, bonds, grants, donations
Prestile Stream Park	FY 2018	Des	M	unknown	reserves, bonds, grants, donations
Recreation Center Pool Weight room Stage area Parking lot	FY 2016 FY 2017 FY 2016 FY 2018	N Des Des Des	S-M N M L	\$35,000- unknown \$50,000 \$100,000 \$100,000	operating budget, reserves, bond, grants, donations
Walking & biking paths	FY 2015	Des	S	unknown	reserves, bonds, grants, donations
Prestile Stream initiatives Winter crop cover Streamside buffers Retrofit roads	annually	Des	L	unknown \$5,000 \$10,000	reserves, bonds, grants, donations reserves, bonds, grants, donations reserves, bonds, grants, donations
Revaluation	FY 2013	N	S	\$90,000	operating budget

Municipal Rating: U=URGENT, N=NECESSARY, DES=DESIRABLE, DEF=DEFERRED Term: S= SHORT, M=MID, L=LONG



V. Summary

The capital investments set forth in this section represent an ambitious goal for the community and are put forward with the recognition that some projects may not be able to be accomplished during the next decade or that projects desirable to enhance the quality of life may need to be scaled back, deferred, or funded through private sources.

Other areas of capital investment may become evident as time goes on. With each annual review of its CIP, the Town Manager, Town Council, and Town Departments should continue to assess anticipated needs over the next five years.

The funding of investments may require that the Town absorb the majority of costs through the local property tax. Outside public financial assistance is available for some housing, water, sewer, waste disposal, school, highway, sidewalk, tree planting, public safety, transportation, park, recreation, trail, water quality, and habitat protection improvement projects. The Town has a history of using tax increment financing (TIF) to support economic development initiatives. The proceeds of future TIFs might be directed toward improvements that are intended to retain existing residents and draw new ones to Mars Hill.

If the Town decides to utilize its bonding capability, the costs for most capital projects should be financed through borrowing for a period appropriate to the project (shorter for equipment, longer for major buildings and facilities). To help maintain a high bond rating and ease with which the Town sells its bonds, the Town should create a debt management policy that specifies how much, on average and as an upper limit, the Town anticipates spending on capital investments each year.



DOCUMENT 7. IMPLEMENTATION SCHEDULE



Definitions	Regional & State Agencies, Departments, & Groups
GIS - Geographic Information System	ACAP - Aroostook County Action Program
NGOs - Nongovernmental Organizations	AoA - Agency on Aging
TIF - Tax Increment Financing	DEP - Maine Department of Environmental Protection
	IF&W - Maine Department of Inland Fisheries & Wildlife
Responsibility Abbreviations	MPB - Maine Potato Board
Local Groups, Organizations, & Clubs	MDOT - Maine Department of Transportation
AHC- Aroostook Health Center	MFT- Maine Farmland Trust
DS - School District Superintendent	MTB - Maine Tourism Bureau
F - Farmers	NMCD - Northern Maine Development Commission
PG - Pastors' Group	SWCD - Soil & Water Conservation District
Town Boards Existing	Town Committees or Task Forces to Create
PB - Planning Board	BC - Building Committee for Town Garage
SB - School Board	EDC - Economic Development Committee
TC - Town Council	ITC - Information Technology Committee subcommittee of the Economic Development Committee
EDD - Economic Development Director	HC - Housing Committee
TA - Town Assessor	ES - Elder Services Subcommittee of Housing Committee
TM - Town Manager	IC - Implementation Committee
	RC - Recreation Committee
Time Frame Abbreviations	TrC - Trail Subcommittee of Recreation Committee
O = Ongoing	SAT - School Advisory Task Force
S = Short term- within 2 years	
M = Mid term - within 2 to 5 years	
L = Long term - 5 years or longer	

Goal/Policy/ Strategy	Description	Timeframe	Responsibility
<p>I. Population. The last decade has seen a dampening of decades of population decline in Mars Hill. Together with continued expansion of Presque Isle’s offerings of retail goods & services, Mars Hill’s loss of population continues to undermine the market that is necessary to support businesses that provide for local needs. Current projections show a stable or slightly increasing enrollment for the elementary school but a declining enrollment for the higher grades, with no explanation for the decline. Continued decline in high school enrollment could eventually lead to loss of the High School in Town.</p>			
<p>I.A. GOAL: Increase year round population to the historic peak of 2,000 by 2030.</p>			
<p><i>I.A. Policy: Encourage & generate jobs to support population growth.</i></p>			
I.A.1.a.	Market Mars Hill's numerous assets.	S, O	<u>EDD</u> , EDC, TC, TM
1.A.2.a.	Market benefits of living in Mars Hill.	S, O	<u>EDD</u> , EDC, TC, TM
<p>I.B. GOAL: Increase secondary school age population.</p>			
<p><i>I.B.3. Policy: Determine what is behind the loss of secondary school students & develop strategies to reverse the trend of declining enrollments.</i></p>			
I.B.3.a.	Evaluate declining enrollments, prepare projections, recommend strategies to reverse the decline, establish realistic goals for future enrollments.	S	<u>DS</u> , SAT, SB
I.B.3.b.	Implement recommended strategies.	M	<u>DS</u> , SAT, SB
I.B.3.c.	Monitor enrollments annually & periodically assess success in growing enrollments, adjust strategies as needed.	M, O	<u>DS</u> , SAT, SB
<p><i>I.B.4. Policy: Work with students to encourage them to stay or return to Mars Hill.</i></p>			
I.B.4.a.	Adjust school curriculum & economic development efforts to include careers students are interested in to provide relevant education and skills.	M	<u>DS</u> , SAT, SB, EDD
I.B.4.b.	ID amenities & features that would keep graduates in Mars Hill & adjust zoning & support to develop & maintain events & venues to meet needs	L	<u>DS</u> , PB, SB
I.B.4.c.	Continue to support improved agricultural program at school.	O	<u>DS</u> , SAT, SB

Goal/Policy/ Strategy	Description	Timeframe	Responsibility
<p>II. Economy. Mars Hill's local economy continues to be based in agriculture. While an agricultural town, Mars Hill is also a service center within the region. Nevertheless, with declining population trends, Mars Hill businesses have been hard pressed to sustain themselves with a reduced customer & client base & competition from retail & service development in Presque Isle. To a large degree, Mars Hill's economy is dependent on the regional economy of central Aroostook County. Yet there are some local economic development opportunities that could be pursued, particularly those that take advantage of some areas of strength in the regional economy as well as three recent regional economic development initiatives. The current condition & appearance of several prominent structures in the Downtown is shabby & detracts from the image and appearance of the whole Town. The Town should identify appropriate grant programs to pursue Downtown Revitalization, including continuing to seek Community Development Block Grant funds as they become available.</p>			
<p>II.C. GOAL: Maintain & draw businesses to Mars Hill to provide jobs that will meet the daily needs of existing residents & workers & attract new residents to the community.</p>			
<p><i>II.C.5. Policy: Enhance capacity of Town for economic development.</i></p>			
II.C.5.a.	Reestablish a full time, municipal economic development position.	S	TM, EDC, TC
II.C.5.b.	Help existing & new businesses reduce energy costs.	M	EDD, TM
II.C.5.c.	Explore opportunities to work with the new owners of the Loring Pipeline.	S	EDD, TC, TM
II.C.5.d.	Work with the owners of the wind towers to explore opportunities to reduce local energy costs.	M	EDD, TC, TM
II.C5.e.	Seek opportunities to participate in regional economic development organizations, initiatives, & studies.	O	EDD, EDC, TM
<p><i>II.C.6. Policy: Support existing businesses in Mars Hill.</i></p>			
II.C.6.a.	Support enhancements for local agriculture.	O	EDD, EDC, F
II.C.6.b.	Work with farmers, NMDC, & tourism organizations to capitalize on emerging opportunities in agri-tourism.	O	EDD, EDC, F
II.C.6.c.	Work with local businesses to remedy challenging issues.	O	EDD, EDC, TM
<p><i>II.C.7. Policy: Draw new businesses to Mars Hill.</i></p>			

Goal/Policy/ Strategy	Description	Timeframe	Responsibility
II.C.7.a.	Inventory Downtown to assess condition & work with landowners to improve safety & appearance.	S	<u>EDD</u> , EDC, TM
II.C.7.b.	Take advantage of high speed internet superhighway to draw IT businesses.	S, O	<u>EDD</u> , EDC, TM
II.C.7.c.	Attract a data center &/or other computer-related businesses.	M	<u>EDD</u> , EDC, TM
II.C.7.d.	Formalize efforts to market the Town's industrial area.	M	<u>EDD</u> , EDC, TM
II.C.7.e.	Work with employers on transit	M	<u>EDD</u> , EDC, TM
II. D. GOAL: Use the area's natural beauty as a base for economic development efforts.			
<i>II.D.8. Policy: Make Mars Hill a "home base" for those who come to the County for outdoor recreation.</i>			
II.D.8.a.	Brand & market Town as "Gateway to Northern Maine" & a four season tourism destination.	M	<u>EDD</u> , EDC, TM
II.D.8.b.	Create an information center for travelers & advertise local tourism destinations & activities.	M	<u>EDD</u> , EDC, TM, MDOT, MTB NMDC
II.D.8.c.	Support & market local businesses & services that appeal to travelers.	O	<u>EDD</u> , EDC, TM, MTB
II.D.8.d.	Use current & emerging social media & more traditional options to market the community,	S, O	<u>EDD</u> , ITC, TM
<i>II.D.9. Policy: Expand four season tourism & recreation offerings in Mars Hill, especially focused on the base of the mountain.</i>			
II.D.9.a.	Support new destinations & attractions, including revising zoning to support a hotel & campground near base of mountain, if opportunities arise. Work with others to develop new destinations & attractions.	S	<u>EDD/PB</u> , EDC, TC, TM
II.D.9.b.	Market Mars Hill's local & regional attractions.	S, O	<u>EDD</u> , EDC, TM
II.D.9.c.	Coordinate marketing efforts with various tourism groups to create tour packages.	M	<u>EDD</u> , EDC, TM, MTB, NMDC

Goal/Policy/ Strategy	Description	Timeframe	Responsibility
II.D.9.d.	Support cross marketing to extend length & season of visits. Target some marketing to Canadians & visitors to other parts of Maine.	M	EDD, EDC, TM, MTB, NMDC
II.D.9.e.	Brand Town as “healthiest place to live” in County. ID, construct, improve, & connect various trails to create new destinations.	S - connect M - build O - rest	EDD, EDC, TC, TM, TrC
<i>II.D.10. Policy: Maintain scenic views.</i>			
II.D.10.a.	Implement the Future Land Use Plan.	S	PB, TC, TM
II.D.10.b.	Consider impact of proposed development on designated scenic views.	S	PB, TC, TM
<i>II.D. 11. Policy: Seek opportunities to regularly communicate with nearby communities in Canada & create/participate in shared projects.</i>			
II.D.11.a.	Look for opportunities to work with nearby Canadian communities.	M, O	EDD, TM, TM
III. Housing. The recent change in housing data collected as part of the US Decennial Census makes it difficult to assess the condition of Mars Hill’s existing housing, though it is likely that there are weatherization & energy efficiency issues. Furthermore, undeveloped house lots are scarce in Mars Hill & this condition is making it more difficult for young people to stay in Town & raise their families. Mars Hill needs housing opportunities in the \$80,000 to \$140,000 range for those who work for the Town’s major employers (teachers, nursing home workers, processing & potato handling plants).			
II.E. GOAL: Meet the housing needs of Mars Hill’s current residents & plan for the housing needs of an expanded population			
<i>III.E.12. Policy: Preserve Mars Hill’s existing housing stock.</i>			
III.E.12.a.	Assess housing conditions, including need for efficiency & weatherization.	M	HC, EDD
III.E.12.b.	Annually, ID unoccupied homes & condition, & create program to improve where need exists.	M, O	HC, EDD
II.E.12.c.	Link weatherization efforts with Aroostook pellet heating &/or other heating alternatives to reduce costs & support regional economic	M	HC, EDD

Goal/Policy/ Strategy	Description	Timeframe	Responsibility
	development efforts.		
II.E.12.d.	Seek grants & loans to support rehabilitation & heating efforts.	O	<u>HC</u> , EDD
<i>III.E.13. Policy: Expand opportunities for new workforce housing to provide homes & house lots for employees of existing & new businesses.</i>			
III.E.13.a.	Designate areas within walking distance of town center & on services, or where they can be extended, for residential development on smaller lots.	S	<u>HC</u> , EDD, PB
III.E.13.b.	Promote development of “in-town” neighborhoods as part of Town's brand as the “healthiest place to live” in County.	S, O	<u>EDD</u> , EDC, HC
III.E.13.c.	Study feasibility of creating neighborhoods with affordable house lots & share results with developers & landowners.	M	<u>EDD</u> , EDC, HC
III.E.13.d.	Work with developers to ensure that house lots & homes are affordable.	M	<u>EDD</u> , EDC, HC, PB
III.E.13.e.	Where opportunity presents, actively support creation of housing & neighborhood development that supports the Town’s housing goals.	O	<u>EDD</u> , EDC, HC, TC, TM
<i>III.E.14 Policy: Expand options for elderly housing.</i>			
III.E.14.a.	Support housing development for 55+ group to reduce maintenance & costs & cater to particular needs to allow residents to “age in place.”	S,O	<u>HC</u> , EDD, PB
III.E.14.b.	Make Mars Hill more livable for the elderly in the winter months.	S, O	<u>ES</u> , EDD, ACAP, AoA, PG
IV. Transportation. Mars Hill is located at the intersection of two major transportation routes, Routes 1 & 1A & is the first major population center travelers see north of Houlton and could reasonably be branded as the “Gateway to Northern Maine.” Furthermore, many Canadians come across the border at Bridgewater, up the back road, then along the front of the mountain to get north to Presque Isle, Fort Fairfield, & Caribou as well as to get to the Mars Hill’s golf course, Big Rock Ski Area, & groceries. A major ATV and snowmobile trail goes through town along the old Bangor & Aroostook Railroad bed, which should be marketed as economic asset.			

Goal/Policy/ Strategy	Description	Timeframe	Responsibility
IV.F. GOAL: Link transportation & economic development efforts.			
<i>IV.F.15. Policy: Capitalize on the Town's location at the intersection of US Routes 1 & 1A.</i>			
IV.F.15.a.	Monitor plans to extend I-95.	O	<u>TM</u>
<i>IV.F.16. Policy: Capitalize on the Town's location along the Canadian border.</i>			
IV.F.16.a.	Study Canadian travel routes, business, & recreation interests to promote economic development. Work with Blaine & Bridgewater to improve roads & coordinate efforts.	M	<u>EDD</u> , EDC, TM, MDOT, MTB, NMDC
<i>IV.F.17. Policy: Support Mars Hill's brand as the "healthiest place to live" in the County.</i>			
IV.F.18.a.	Expand, connect, & promote various trails to create new destinations & attractions.	S - expand, M - connect, O - promote	<u>EDD</u> , EDC, TC, TM, TrC
IV.F.17.b.	Work with employers on transit	M	<u>EDD</u> , EDC, TM
IV.F.17.c.	Ensure road projects do not impede wildlife travel	O	<u>TM</u>
IV.G. GOAL: Manage Town's finances to ensure adequate investment in road maintenance.			
<i>IV.G.18. Policy: Continue to plan for capital investment in local roads.</i>			
IV.G.18.a.	Expand the 2013 road inventory & establish annual improvement schedule to improve & maintain conditions. Investigate MDOT road maintenance software.	S	<u>TM</u> , TC
V. Public Facilities & Services. As a service center community, Mars Hill has a wide variety of public facilities & services that meet its residents' needs & those of the numerous workers who commute from other nearby communities to jobs in Mars Hill. Given its historically larger population, Mars Hill has infrastructure to serve more residents & workers than it currently does. Most facilities are in good shape, given ongoing attention & investment over the last two decades; however, there are some facility needs on the horizon, including replacement of the Town Garage & a state-required salt shed. The most pressing public facility issue facing the community is continued declining student enrollments, which may eventually threaten the continued location of the Junior-Senior High School in Mars Hill.			

Goal/Policy/ Strategy	Description	Timeframe	Responsibility
V.H. Goal: Increase the secondary school age population to ensure continuation of both the primary & secondary schools. See I. Population A.			
V.I. GOAL: Continue to plan for capital investment in public facilities & services.			
<i>V.I.19. Policy: Continue to plan for capital investment in public facilities & services.</i>			
V.I.19.a.	Formalize Town’s capital investments in an ongoing, multi-year CIP.	S, O	<u>TM</u> , IC, TC, PB
V.I.19.b.	Plan for replacement of the Town Garage.	S	<u>TM</u> , BC, TC,PB
V.I.19.c.	When state funds are available, construct a new salt shed.	O	<u>TM</u> , TC, PB
V.I.19.d.	Create economic development position to secure resources to support strategic investments.	S	<u>TM</u> , EDC, TC
<p>VI. Cultural Resources. Mars Hill has a variety of cultural resources that are commonly found in service center communities, as well as some resources, like Big Rock Ski Area & Mars Hill Country Club, that are relatively uncommon. The Prestile Stream & Mars Hill Pond historically have been a significant focus of recreational activities – skating & horse racing on the Pond in winter, canoeing & gathering fiddleheads along its banks in the spring, wild trout fishing in the summer. Mars Hill has the opportunity to market its rich cultural resources in support of its population & economic development goals. Most facilities are in good shape, but the pond requires attention & investment to reclaim its potential central role in the community. Expanding Mars Hill’s brand as a four-season recreation draw, especially at the base of the mountain, will not only provide improved services for existing residents & workers, but could be a tool to leverage support for the Town’s population & economic development goals.</p>			
VI.J. GOAL: Restore & market the Prestile Stream, Mars Hill Pond, dam, park, & other cultural resources.			
<i>VI.J.20 Policy: Invest in the Prestile Stream, Mars Hill Pond, dam, & park to restore & market an attractive recreational resource & element of beauty to the Town.</i>			
VI.J.20.a.	Include the Prestile Stream, pond, dam, & park in the Town’s CIP.	S, O	<u>TM</u> , IC, TC
VI.J.20.b.	Create economic development position to secure resources to support strategic investments.	S	<u>TM</u> , EDC, TC
VI.K. GOAL: Use the area’s natural beauty & cultural resources as a base for economic development efforts.			
<i>VI.K.21. Policy: Expand four season tourism and recreation offerings in Mars Hill, especially focused on the base of the mountain.</i>			

Goal/Policy/ Strategy	Description	Timeframe	Responsibility
V.K.21.b.	Create a “home base” for those who come to Town & County for outdoors.	O	<u>EDD</u> , EDC, TC, TM, TrC
VI.K.21.c.	Expand, connect, & promote various trails.	S- expand, M - connect, O - promote	<u>EDD</u> , EDC, TC, TM, TrC
VI.K.21.d.	Explore opportunities to increase public access to top of mountain.	L	<u>EDC</u> , EDD
VI.K.21.e.	Work with DEP, IF&W, SWCD, & others to resolve conflict between local goals, state, & federal interests in waterfowl habitat.	M	<u>RC</u> , TM, DEP, IF&W, NGOs, WCD
VI.K.21.f.	Improve Prestile Stream Park.	M, O	<u>RC</u> , EDD, TrC
<u>VI.K. Policy: Maintain Scenic views.</u>			
VI.K.22.a.	Implement the Future Land Use Plan.	S	<u>PB</u> , TC, TM
VI.K.22.b.	Consider impact of proposed development on designated scenic views.	S	<u>PB</u> , TC, TM
<p>VII. Fiscal Capacity. In addition to the wind farm, which accounts for 14% of Mars Hill’s tax base, there is a large proportion of farmland & open space in the community. There are also a number of tax exempt properties that influence the Town’s tax base. Mars Hill’s mil rate decreased 20% from 2000 to 2010, primarily driven by an increase in tax revenue from the wind farm, which will continue to provide the Town with a fixed revenue stream of \$500K per year for a 20 year term. The average ratio of assessed value to sales price is 69%, which suggests that a townwide revaluation will be needed in the not too distant future in compliance with state law. The Town has demonstrated a strong ability to self-fund municipal capital improvements, but longer term capital planning will be important to address future anticipated capital needs, including those of the school & utility districts, in a fiscally prudent manner. The Town is currently in the process of completing a vigorous capital improvement plan to address future infrastructure needs. The Governor’s recent proposed elimination of state revenue sharing & tax incentive programs will create additional financial requirements for the Town.</p>			
<p>VII.L. GOAL: Formalize Mars Hill’s ongoing financial management & capital improvements programs to anticipate and stabilize the Town’s fiscal capacity & enable it to better withstand downswings in the local economy.</p>			
<i>VII.L.23. Policy: Build on & institutionalize current efforts to create a 5 year Capital Improvements Plan.</i>			

Goal/Policy/ Strategy	Description	Timeframe	Responsibility
VII.L.23.a.	Annually, prepare 5 year CIP to anticipate & plan for the creation & upgrading of necessary capital improvements.	S, O	<u>TM</u> , IC, TC, PB
VII.L.23.b.	Plan for capital spending identified in this Comprehensive Plan.	S, O	<u>TM</u> , IC, TC, PB
VII.L.23.c.	Continue to fund capital reserves for expenditures that are part of CIP.	O	<u>TM</u> , TC
VII.L.23.d.	Undertake revaluation, as required by state requirements.	S	<u>TM</u> , TC
VII.L.23.e.	Analyze impact of end of wind farm's TIF in 2025 & plan accordingly.	L	<u>TM</u> , EDC, EDD, TC
<i>VII.L.24. Policy: Continue recent efforts to design & improve systems to professionally manage the Town's finances.</i>			
VII.L.24. a.	Review the Town's personal property tax records.	S	<u>TM</u> , TA,TC
VII.L.24. b.	Link assessing tax base to GIS data base & update GIS database whenever assessor's database is updated.	S,O	<u>TM</u> , TA
VII.L.24. c.	Work with NMDC & others to house & update the GIS database as necessary.	O	<u>TM</u> , EDD, PB, TA
VII.L.24.d.	Create 5-10 year financial plan to address future capital needs, operating cost containment, & review of school spending.	S, O	<u>TM</u> , IC, TC, PB
VII.L.24.e.	Fund economic development position.	S	<u>TM</u>
<p>VIII. Agriculture & Forestry. Agriculture plays a major role in Mars Hill both in terms of the amount of land dedicated to agricultural use & in terms of the economic impact of agriculture within the community. Though trends in farming & land ownership patterns are changing, Mars Hill's community identity has historically and currently continues to center on farming. In recent years, there are fewer, bigger family farms growing mostly potatoes, rotated with grains, soybeans, & broccoli. Some local farmers are nearing retirement & do not have family members who are interested in continuing to commercially farm their land. Generally, farmland in Mars Hill is highly valued and there has not been much conversion to other uses, though there have been some notable exceptions. The availability of land for residential development has become more of an issue in recent years, though farmers generally have been proactive about acquiring land from retiring farmers, leaving little land available on the open real estate market. As the Town seeks additional house lots in support of its population & economic development goals, it will be important to locate such development closer to the town center & public services and to avoid the loss of important farmland.</p>			
VIII.M. GOAL: Support agriculture as the primary economic asset of the community.			

Goal/Policy/ Strategy	Description	Timeframe	Responsibility
<i>VIII.M.25. Policy: Support & enhance current & future agricultural uses.</i>			
VIII.M.25.a.	Support enhancements for local agriculture.	O	<u>EDC</u> , EDD, F
VIII.M.25.b.	Work with students & School District to better support agricultural program.	O	<u>SB</u> , DS, SAT
VIII.M.25.c.	Work with School District, nursing home, health center, other institutions, & supermarkets to encourage greater use of local agricultural products.	M, O	<u>EDD</u> , AHC, F, NGOs, SD
VIII.M.25.d.	Continue to work with farmers to ID & address issues related to sustainability of agriculture.	O	<u>EDD</u> , EDC, F
VIII.M.25.e.	Work with farmers & landowners to address issues related to public access to their lands.	O	<u>EDD</u> , EDC, F, TM
VIII.M.25.f.	Encourage farmers who are approaching retirement, with no family members interested in continuing commercial farming, to work with organizations to ID potential new farmers.	O	<u>EDD</u> , EDC, F, TM, MFT, NGOs
<p>IX. Natural Resources. Mars Hill is blessed with a strikingly beautiful natural landscape. The Prestile Stream & Mars Hill Mountain are major natural assets in the community. There is a long tradition of hunting & trout fishing, which is important to many citizens. A major issue is use of the Prestile Stream & the condition of both the Stream & the Mars Hill Pond, including water quality, sedimentation, the trout fishery, & future stream access to preserve its role as the traditional center of Mars Hill's recreation in all seasons.</p>			
IX.N. GOAL: Protect & improve water quality of the Prestile Stream & Mars Hill Pond.			
<i>IX.N.26. Policy: Work with the State Departments of Environmental Protection, Soil & Water Conservation District, & other groups to reduce sediment loading & improve water quality in the Prestile Stream.</i>			
IX.N.26.a.	Seek affordable solution for winter cover crops, including securing outside financial support.	M	<u>TM</u> , DEP, NGOs, SWCD
IX.N.26.b.	Create streamside buffer planting program & secure funds to plant buffers.	M	<u>TM</u> , DEP, IF&W, NGOs, SWCD
IX.N.26.c.	Seek funds to retrofit roads that are contributing to sediment loading	M	<u>TM</u> , EDD, TC, DEP,

Goal/Policy/ Strategy	Description	Timeframe	Responsibility
	of the Prestile.		F, SWCD
IX.N.26.d.	Support SWCD's efforts to improve the water quality of the Prestile.	O	<u>TM</u> , TC, SWCD
IX.N.26.e.	Make certain locals are continually involved & Town leaders stay informed about water quality improvement efforts.	O	<u>TM</u> , TC, SWCD
<i>IX.N.27. Policy: Restore the Mars Hill Pond & improve the associated park for recreation such as fishing, canoeing, kayaking, birding, & other recreational use.</i>			
IX.N.27.a.	Work with federal, state, regional, & local interests to fund & implement strategy to restore water quality in Pond & improve park.	M	<u>RC</u> , TM, DEP, IF&W, NGOs, SWCD
IX.O. GOAL: Protect Mars Hill's natural resources.			
<i>IX.O.28. Policy: Work with state agencies to protect natural resources.</i>			
IX.O.a.	Work with state agencies to protect natural resources	S, O	<u>PB</u> , EDD, <u>TM</u>
X. Land Use. Mars Hill remains predominantly agricultural, retaining its traditional town center, where most residential, commercial, & service development is located. This has helped Mars Hill control municipal expenses. At the same time, recreation & other developments have expanded on Mars Hill Mountain, shifting the Town's economic focus to the mountain & its base, with only limited development in the industrial area. There have been very few residential subdivisions since adoption of the 1992 Comprehensive Plan. To support efforts to brand Mars Hill as the "healthiest town in Aroostook County," new residential development needs to be on small lots in areas that are within walking distance of businesses & institutions in the core of the community.			
X.P. GOAL: Continue to support compact residential & commercial development in Mars Hill's town center.			
<i>X.P.29. Policy: Review & adjust land use regulations in areas that are within walking distance of the town center & areas on public water & sewer, or where services can readily be extended.</i>			
X.P.29..a.	Rezone large parcel on East Ridge Road to RF to discourage residential development associated of farmland.	S	<u>PB</u> , TC, TM

Goal/Policy/ Strategy	Description	Timeframe	Responsibility
X.P.29.b.	Rezone remaining smaller parcels on East Ridge Road to R-1.	S	<u>PB</u> , TC, TM
X.P.29.c.	Amend ordinances to require interconnected streets & streetscape improvements to promote walkability.	S	<u>PB</u> , TC, TM
X.Q. GOAL: Create new jobs in emerging technological service businesses near the town center.			
<i>X.Q.30. Policy: Take advantage of opportunities for emerging technologies to locate in Mars Hill.</i>			
X.Q.30.a.	As opportunities to expand emerging technology companies, expand existing Commercial Zone.	M	<u>EDD/PB</u> , TC, TM
X.R. GOAL: Support expansion of four season tourism & recreation offerings focused on the base of the mountain.			
<i>X.R. 31. Policy: Take advantage of opportunities to expand Mars Hill's four season tourism & recreation at the base of the mountain.</i>			
X.R.31.a.	As opportunities to expand tourism & recreation offerings at the base of the mountain arise, revise zoning to allow creation of new destinations & attractions.	M	<u>EDD/ PB</u> , TC, TM
<p>XI. Implementation of the Plan. If comprehensive plans are to address major community issues in a manner likely to yield positive results, they must clearly identify desired outcomes. They must also establish a means of measuring performance relative to these outcomes. Without a strong focus on outcomes, there is a tendency to equate success or failure mainly with effort rather than result. Such an emphasis not only hampers current planning efforts, but can also result in the long-term perpetuation of strategies that are ineffective or even counterproductive. The implementation of strong land use measures, for example, is an output that may or may not result in the desired outcome: that of most future development occurring in designated RESIDENTIAL, COMMERCIAL, and INDUSTRIAL AREAS. This Plan allows the Town to take a fresh look at its policies and strategies and to place a greater emphasis on identifying positive outcomes and establishing targets or benchmarks to strive for and gauge progress. Setting benchmarks relative to designated RESIDENTIAL, COMMERCIAL, INDUSTRIAL AREAS, FUTURE RECREATION, and RURAL AREAS is essential to gauge the Town's success at guiding growth. Even for plan goals that do not lend themselves to precise measurement, the exercise of discussing how success will be evaluated is an extremely valuable one.</p>			
X.S. GOAL: Ensure there are enough volunteers to participate in Town and community affairs, including implementation of the Plan.			
<i>X.S.32. Policy: Increase volunteer participation in Town and community affairs, including implementation of the Plan.</i>			
X.S.32.a.	Create bulletin board for volunteer opportunities and needs.	S	<u>TM</u> , IC

Goal/Policy/ Strategy	Description	Timeframe	Responsibility
X.S.32.b.	Create "Wish List" to solicit donations.	S	<u>TM</u> , IC
X.S.32.c.	Appoint committees to implement the Plan.	S, O	<u>TC</u> , IC, TM
X.T. GOAL: Implement and monitor success.			
<i>X.T.33. Policy: Watch over implementation and monitor success.</i>			
X.T.33.a.	Appoint committees and assign tasks.	S	<u>TC</u> , IC, TM
X.T.33.b.	Kick off workshop.	S	<u>IC</u> , TC, TM
X.T.33.c.	Meet annually with committees	O	<u>IC</u> , TC, TM
X.T.33.d.	Publish implementation schedule and progress in Annual Report.	O	<u>IC</u>
X.T.33.e.	Post implementation schedule at Town Office and on web site.	O	<u>IC</u>
X.T.33.f.	Annually celebrate efforts.	O	<u>TC</u> , IC, TM
<i>X.U.34.. Policy: Monitor and report on benchmarks and adjust strategies as needed.</i>			
X. T.34.a-d.	Monitor and report on benchmarks and adjust strategies as needed.	O, M, L	<u>IC</u> , TC, TM



SECTION 1. POPULATION



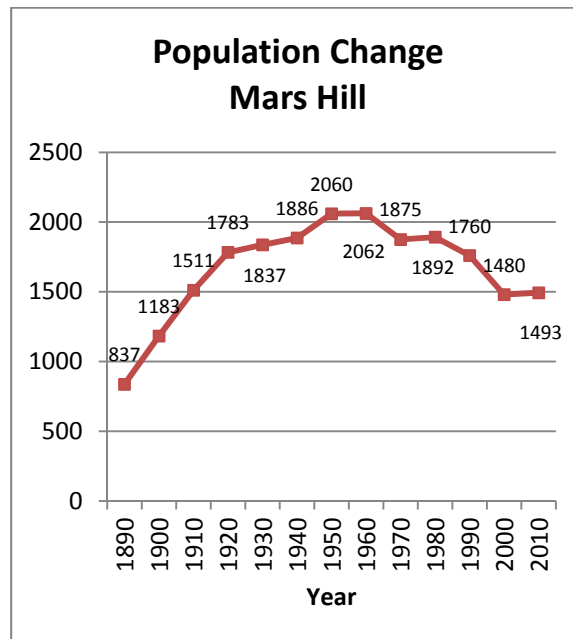
A. Population Trends

Figure 3. Overall Population Levels and Changes, 1890-2010

Year	<i>Mars Hill</i>	Aroostook County	State of Maine
1890	837	49,589	66,1087
1900	1,183	60,744	694,466
1910	1,511	74,664	762,371
1920	1,783	81,728	768,014
1930	1,837	87,843	797,423
1940	1,886	94,436	847,226
1950	2,060	96,039	914,950
1960	2,062	106,064	970,689
1970	1,875	94,078	993,722
1980	1,892	91,344	1,125,043
1990	1,760	8,5400	1,218,153
2000	1,480	86,936	1,274,923
2010	1,493	73,938	1,328,361
2011 estimate,	1,486	71,482	1,328,188
1960-1970 change	-9.1%	-11.3%	2.5%
1970-1980 change	0.9%	-3.0%	13.2%
1980-1990 change	-7.0%	-6.5%	8.3%
1990-2000 change	-15.9%	1.8%	4.7%
2000-2010 change	0.9%	-15.0%	4.2%
1990-2010	-15.2%	-13.4%	9.0%
1940-2010 change	-20.8%	-21.7%	56.8%

Source: US Censuses, 1890-2010, Maine Office of Policy and Management

Figure 4. Population Change, Mars Hill



Source: US Censuses, 1890-2010

Mars Hill experienced steady population growth between 1890 and 1960, rising from 837 residents to a peak of 2,062 residents. Population dropped 25% between 1960 and 1970, then increased slightly between 1980 and 1990, then dropped again in 2000, when it plateaued while the County's population continued to decline. Mars Hill's population in 2010 was 1,493, about the size it was in the early twentieth century. Mars Hill, like many other communities in Aroostook County, has experienced out-migration of young and middle-aged individuals, potentially in search of employment following the trends of consolidation and mechanization of agriculture and the closure of the Presque Isle and Loring Air Force bases.

Figure 5. Comparative Population Change, 1980-2010

	1960	1980	1990	2000	2010	% Change 1960-2010	% Change 1980-2010	% Change 2000-2010
Blaine	945	922	784	806	726	-23.18%	-21.26%	-9.93%
Easton	1,389	1,305	1,291	1,249	1,287	-7.34%	-1.38%	3.04%
Fort Fairfield	5,876	4,376	3,998	3,579	3,496	-40.50%	-20.11%	-2.32%
Mapleton	1,514	1,895	1,853	1,889	1,948	28.67%	2.32%	3.12%
Mars Hill	2,062	1,892	1,760	1,480	1,493	-27.59%	-15.17%	0.88%
Presque Isle	12,886	11,172	10,550	9,511	9,692	-24.79%	-13.25%	1.90%
Westfield	569	647	589	559	549	-3.51%	-15.15%	-1.79%
Aroostook County	106,064	92,463	91,331	86,936	73,938	-30.29%	-20.04%	-14.95%
State of Maine	974,000	1,125,043	1,227,928	1,274,923	1,328,361	36.38%	18.72%	4.24%

Source: US Censuses, 1980-2010



Figure 6. Population in Region, 2010

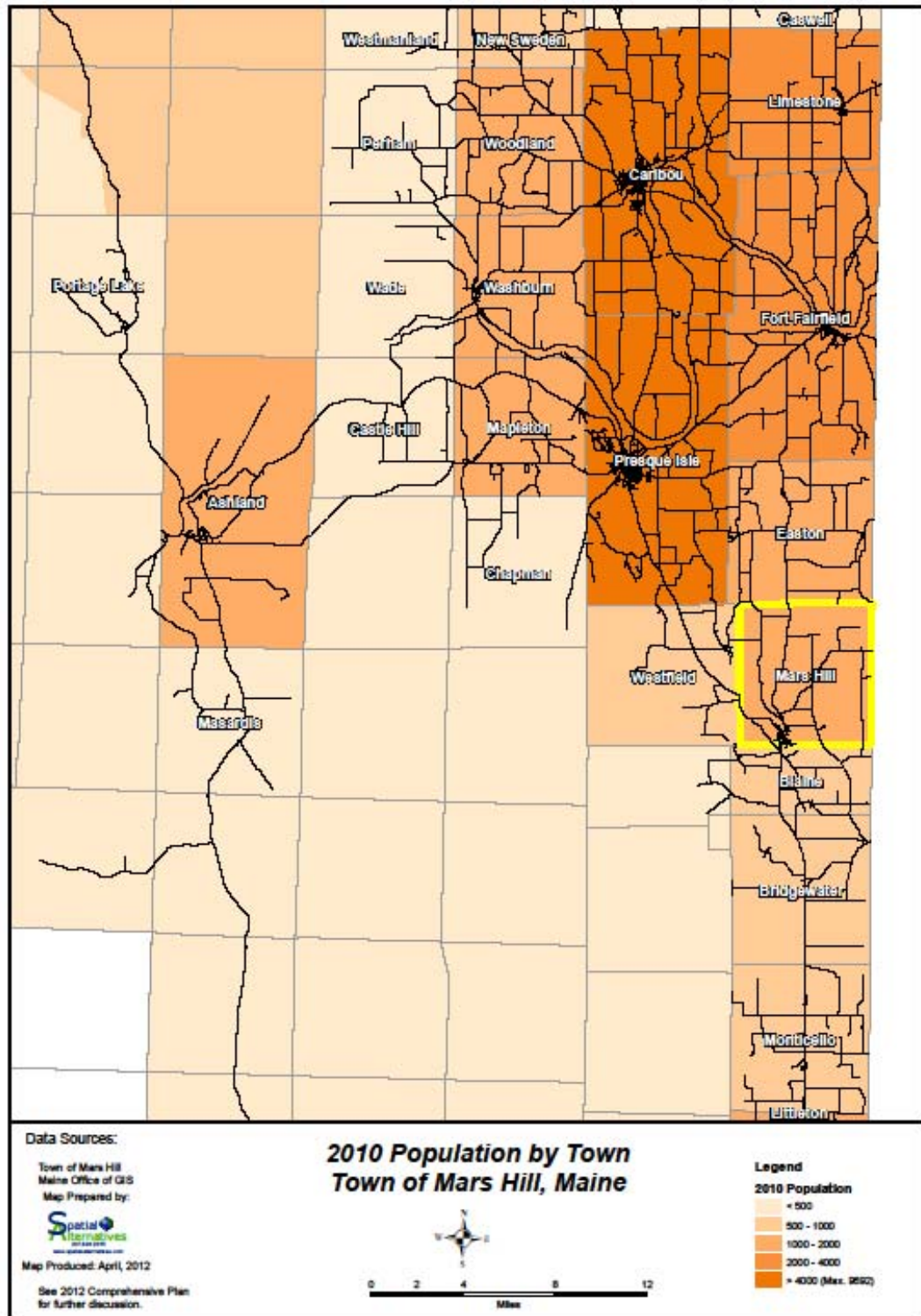
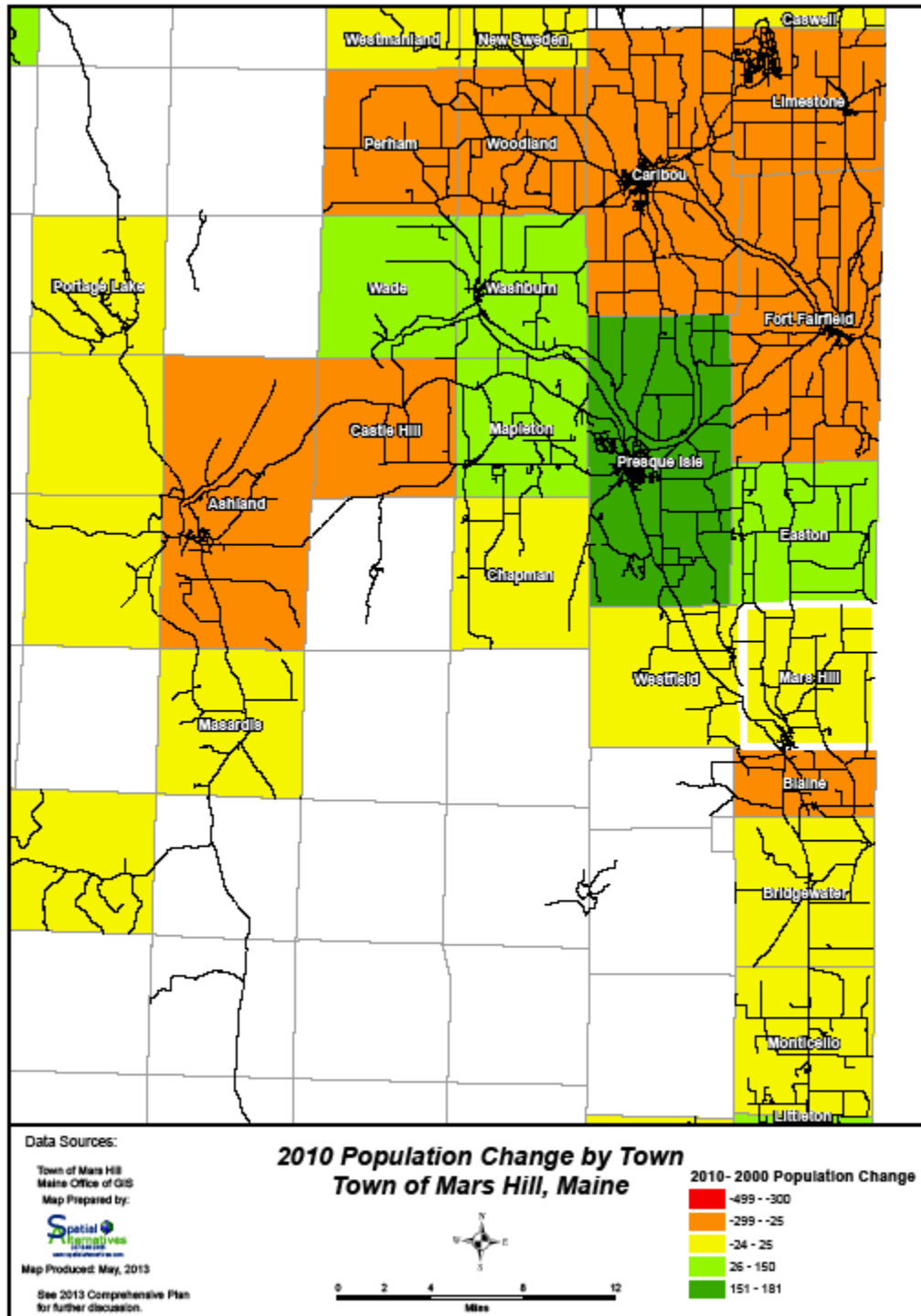


Figure 7. Population Change in Region, 2000-2010



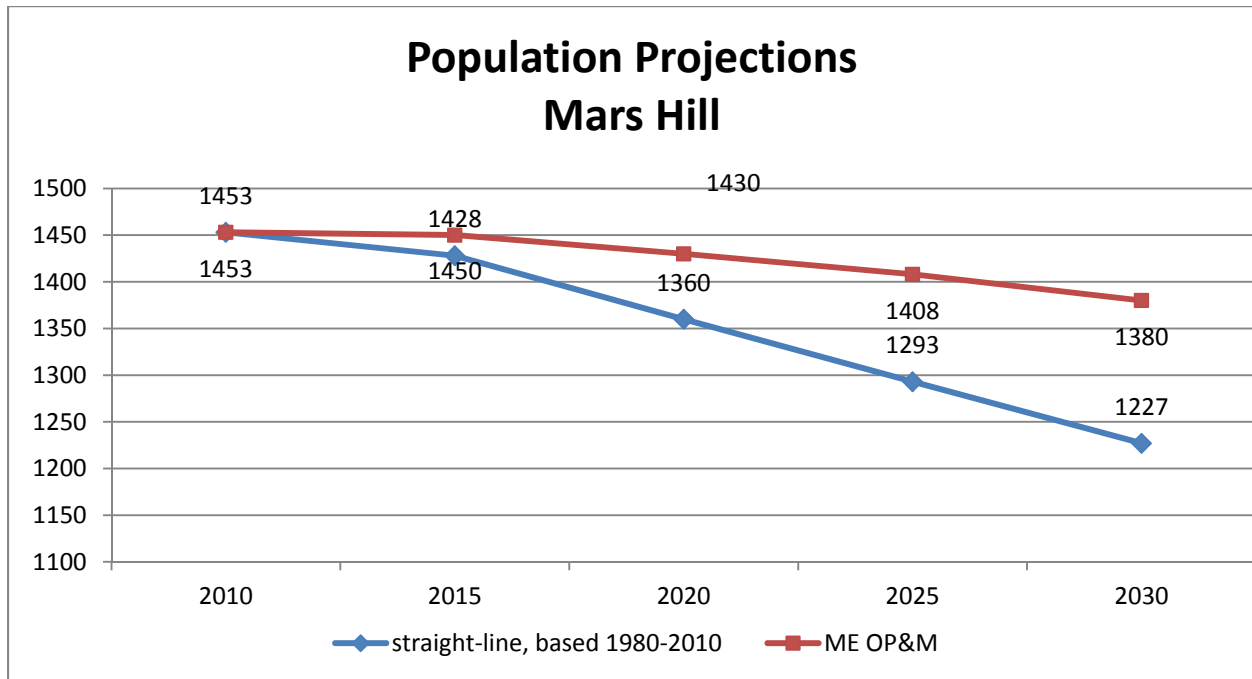
Between 1960 and 2010, Mars Hill lost more than 25% of its population (between 1980 and 2010, Mars Hill lost more than 15% of its population), less than Aroostook County as a whole, but far more than all comparison communities except Fort Fairfield. During the same period, the population of Mapleton and Presque Isle increased by 5-8%. Between 2000 and 2010, Mars Hill's population grew slightly, but less than Easton and Mapleton. These two towns are bedroom communities to Presque Isle. They are perceived to have a lower cost of living and strong and vibrant recreation programs. Mapleton is also a member of SAD #1, which is considered an asset. Easton's population grew significantly since 2009 due to a large influx of Amish residents, estimated at nearly 10% of its population. Mars Hill may potentially benefit from this new group of residents as vacant farmland is becoming more difficult to obtain in both Easton and Fort Fairfield. The County's population continued to decline over the past decade.

B. Population Projections

Figure 8. Population Projections					
	State of Maine	Aroostook County	<i>Mars Hill, based on straight-line 2000-2010</i>	<i>Mars Hill, based on straight-line 1980-2010</i>	<i>Mars Hill projection from Maine OP&M</i>
1980	1,125,043	91,344			
1990	1,218,153	85,400			
2000	1,274,923	86,936			
2003	1,302,729	72,582			
2008	1,316,456	71,676			
2010	1,328,361	73,938	1,453	1,453	1,453
2015	1,329,823	70,883	1,558	1,428	1,450
2020	1,331,607	70,059	1,623	1,360	1,430
2025	1,330,821	69,125	1,688	1,293	1,408
2030	1,325,751	67,923	1,753	1,227	1,380

Source: Maine State Planning Office; Elizabeth A. Della Valle, AICP; 2012; Maine Office of Policy and Management, 2012

Figure 9. Population Projections, Mars Hill



Source: Maine State Planning Office; Elizabeth A. Della Valle, AICP; Maine Office of Policy and Management; 2012

The Maine Office of Policy and Management recently released population projections for Mars Hill that suggest continued moderate decline in population of 273 residents between 2010 and 2030. A straight line projection based on population change between 1980 and 2010 also suggests a continued, but more significant, decline in Mars Hill’s population by 226 residents over the same 20 year period.

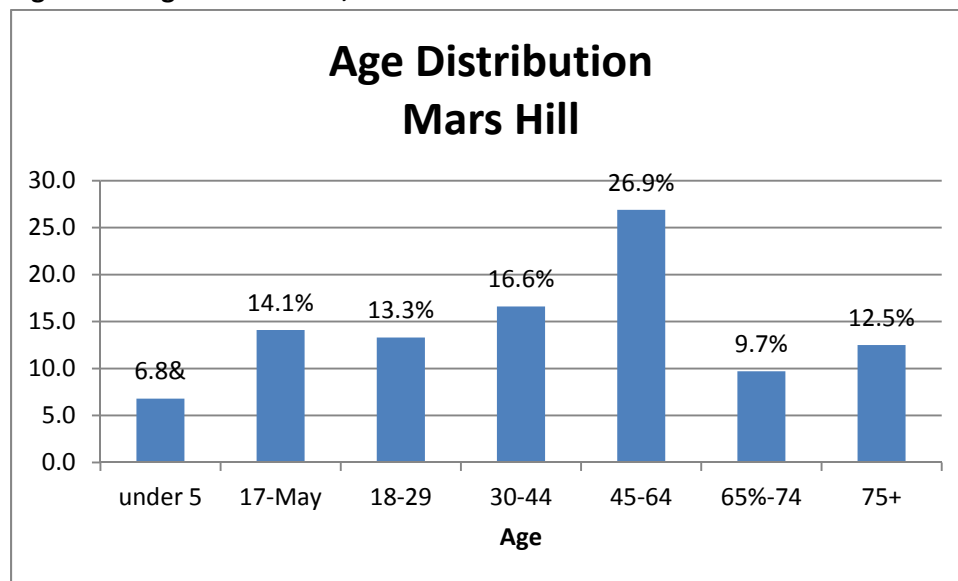
C. Age and Age Distribution

	% under 5	% 5-17	% 18-29	%30-44	% 45-64	% 65%-74	%75+
Blaine	5.9%	14.9%	12.5%	18.7%	30.6%	10.3%	7.0%
Easton	6.5%	17.2%	12.4%	17.0%	31.0%	8.8%	7.1%
Fort Fairfield	5.3%	17.2%	11.6%	17.9%	30.8%	9.6%	7.6%
Mapleton	5.6%	15.0%	12.8%	18.8%	33.3%	9.9%	4.6%
Mars Hill	6.8%	14.1%	13.3%	16.6%	26.9%	9.7%	12.5%
Presque Isle	5.0%	14.6%	18.7%	17.7%	27.7%	7.5%	8.7%
Westfield	3.8%	15.1%	9.7%	17.3%	35.0%	9.7%	9.5%
Aroostook County	4.9%	15.1%	12.7%	16.9%	31.4%	10.0%	9.0%
State of Maine	5.2%	15.4%	14.2%	18.3%	30.9%	8.5%	7.4%

Source: 2010 US Census

Mars Hill’s population distribution is similar to that of the County as a whole, with a somewhat higher percent of residents at both ends of the spectrum - under the age of 5 and 65 or older.

Figure 11. Age Distribution, Mars Hill



Source: 2010 US Census

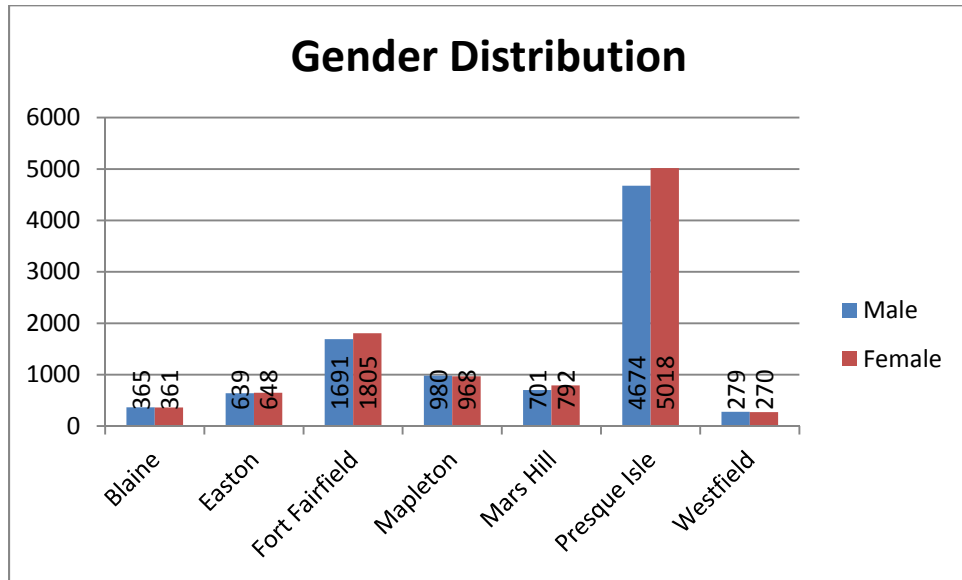
In 2010, over a quarter of the population was between 45 and 64, accounting for Mars Hill’s median age of 41.9, which was lower than the median age of Aroostook (44), but only slightly lower than the State as a whole (42). Approximately 1/5 of the population is under 18, about the same amount as those who are 75 or older, which may be due, in part to the fact that Mars Hill has more rental units than a lot of Aroostook County towns. These figures should be considered in light of the fact that Maine as a whole has an older population, the oldest in the country.

D. Gender Distribution

	Male	Female
Blaine	365	361
Easton	639	648
Fort Fairfield	1,691	1,805
Mapleton	980	968
<i>Mars Hill</i>	701	792
Presque Isle	4,674	5,018
Westfield	279	270
Aroostook County	35,607	36,805
State of Maine	649,666	677,999

Source: 2010 US Census

Figure 13. Gender Distribution, Mars Hill



Source: 2010 US Census

In 2010, Mars Hill’s population was made up of 701 males and 792 females, not too dissimilar from comparable towns.

E. Households

	Size
Blaine	2.43
Easton	2.40
Fort Fairfield	2.34
Mapleton	2.38
Mars Hill	2.33
Presque Isle	2.19
Westfield	2.40
Aroostook County	2.26
State of Maine	2.32

Source: 2010 US Census

There were 631 households in Mars Hill in 2012, with an average household size of 2.33, somewhat larger than Aroostook as a whole and about the same as the State.

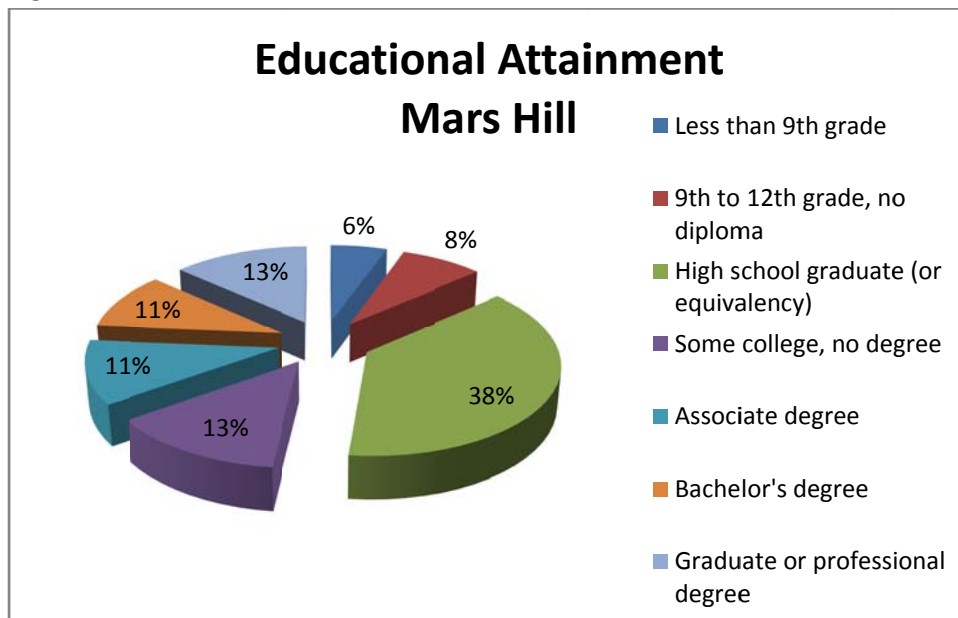
F. Educational Attainment

Figure 15. Educational Attainment, 2010

	<i>Mars Hill #</i>	<i>Mars Hill %</i>	<i>Aroostook #</i>	<i>Aroostook %</i>	<i>State #</i>	<i>State %</i>
Less than 9th grade	70.8	5.4%	4,091	7.9%	35,313	3.8%
9th to 12th grade, no diploma	106.2	8.2%	4,246	8.2%	59,475	6.4%
High school graduate (or equivalent)	496.8	38.2%	20,197	39.0%	327,114	35.2%
Some college, no degree	173.6	13.3%	10,254	19.8%	178,425	19.2%
Associate degree	146.2	11.2%	4,609	8.9%	82,707	8.9%
Bachelor's degree	134.8	10.4%	6,111	11.8%	159,839	17.2%
Graduate or professional degree	173.6	13.3%	2,278	4.4%	87,354	9.4%
% High School Graduate or Higher		73.2%		83.9%		89.8%
% Bachelor's Degree or Higher		23.7%		16.2%		26.5%

Source: 2010 US Census

Figure 16. Educational Attainment, Mars Hill



Source: 2010 US Census

Educational attainment in Mars Hill in 2010 was slightly higher than that for the County, but less than the State as a whole. About 13.6% of Mars Hill’s population did not have a high school diploma compared to 16.1% in Aroostook County and 10.2% statewide. Approximately 38.2% of Mars Hill residents had at least a high school diploma and 13.3% had completed four or more years of college. Comparable figures for Aroostook County were 39.0% and 4.4%.

G. Issues and Implications

1. The last decade has seen a dampening of decades of population decline in Mars Hill. Together with continued expansion of Presque Isle's offerings of retail goods and services, Mars Hill's loss of population continues to undermine the market that is necessary to support businesses that provide for local demands. The loss of inhabitants is happening despite the fact that Mars Hill's population has greater educational attainment, its under 5 population is higher than that of the County, and its median age and household size are higher than that of the County and comparable to that of the State. So, what is going on? What does Mars Hill need to do to retain/attract population? If youth and middle-aged residents are leaving in search of employment, what employment would convince them to stay?
2. The populations in Easton and Mapleton have grown in recent years. What are those towns doing to draw new residents? What do they offer that Mars Hill doesn't offer? Presque Isle's population has also grown. Are there characteristics of those communities that are drawing residents from Mars Hill and other areas that Mars Hill might emulate? Is it more than jobs?
3. Mars Hill has a larger percent of its population under 5 than that of the County; however the proportion of school-aged residents is lower. Why is the Town losing school-aged residents? Where are they going?
4. Are there any other demographic issues that pertain to Mars Hill?



SECTION 2. ECONOMY



A. The Regional Economy

Figure 17. Sources of Earnings by Selected Sector, Aroostook County and US, 2001			
Sector/item	Earnings by industry (\$1,000)	Share of earnings Aroostook	Share of earnings US
Farm earnings	\$24,959	2.5%	0.6%
Nonfarm earnings	\$973,310	97.5%	99.4%
Private earnings	\$747,432	74.9%	83.4%
Fishing, hunting, & trapping	\$4,693	0.5%	0.0%
Agriculture & forestry	\$3,889	0.4%	0.4%
Utilities	\$1,963	0.2%	0.2%
Construction	\$38,359	3.8%	6.3%
Manufacturing	\$162,160	4.4%	13.3%
Wood product manufacturing	\$44,059	2.8%	0.3%
Food manufacturing	\$28,076	6.6%	0.9%
Paper manufacturing 2	\$66,089 est.¹	6.6%	0.5%
Wholesale trade	\$33,133	8.9%	5.3%
Retail Trade	\$88,663	1.0%	6.8%
Gasoline stations	\$9,927	1.0%	0.3%
Transportation & warehousing	\$39,622	4.0%	3.3%
Rail transportation	\$2,787	0.3%	0.2%
Truck transportation	\$27,705	2.8%	1.0%
Information	\$30,173	3.0%	4.5%
Finance & insurance	\$26,261	3.6%	7.4%
Credit intermediation	\$24,507	2.5%	2.2%
Real estate & rental & leasing	\$5,755	0.6%	1.8%
Professional and technical services	\$24,240	2.4%	9.2%
Management of companies	\$12,307	1.2%	2.2%
Administrative & waste services	\$19,577	2.0%	3.8%
Educational services	\$1,872	0.2%	1.2%
Health care & social assistance	\$155,734	15.6%	8.8%
Ambulatory health care services	\$31,153	6.1%	4.2%
Hospitals	\$39,443	4.0%	2.8
Nursing & residential care services	\$35,456	3.6%	1.1%
Social assistance	\$19,682	2.0%	0.7%
Arts, entertainment, & recreation	\$1,760	0.2%	1.2%
Accommodation & food services	\$30,330	3.1%	3.2%
Accommodations	\$5,680	0.6%	0.8%
Food services & drinking places	\$24,650	2.5%	2.4%
Repair & maintenance	\$15,839	1.6%	0.9%
Government & govt enterprises	\$225,878	22.6%	15.9%
Federal, civilian	\$44,687	4.5%	3.0%
Military	\$8,663	1.9%	1.3%
State & local	\$172,528	17.3%	11.6%
State government	\$46,149	4.6%	3.3%
Local government	\$126,379	12.7%	8.3%

¹ Employment and income for paper manufacturing in Aroostook County are not reported because there are too few firms to disclose the data. The 1997 Economic Census reported paper employment in the 1,000 to 2,499 range. While employment is certainly lower today because of known plant closings, dependence on these three sectors remains high. The earnings for paper manufacturing are estimated based on national averages of the earnings to employment ratio applied to the midpoint of estimated Aroostook employment.

Source: Planning Decisions, Inc. Aroostook County Economic Cluster Report; Part 1: Analysis; for Northern Maine Development Commission, 2003; US Department of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis

Aroostook County is heavily dependent on natural resource based manufacturing, including its associated support structure and an aging population that has created a service economy dependent on transfer payments. Over 80% of manufacturing income and employment in the County is derived from paper, wood products, and food processing (13% for US as a whole). Aroostook is highly specialized and dependent on these industries. Combined, they provide 28% of all earnings in County (the national average is 5%).

Figure 18. Sales per Dollar of Payroll			
Sector	Aroostook	US	Aroostook/US
Manufacturing	\$7.14	\$6.72	106.3%
Food	\$11.30	\$11.00	102.7%
Wood	\$6.52	\$6.19	105.3%
Paper (estimated)	\$6.76	\$6.76	100.0%
Source: Planning Decisions, Inc. <u>Aroostook County Economic Cluster Report; Part 1: Analysis; for Northern Maine Development Commission. 2003; US Department of commerce, 1997 Economic Census</u>			

The sectors where Aroostook’s share of earnings exceeds that of the US are those with above average concentrations (bold in Figure 17). Sectors where Aroostook has some sort of competitive advantage relative to the rest of the US include wood products and paper (highest) and food processing (next highest).

This productivity data highlights the dilemma facing Aroostook County. To remain competitive in the increasingly global economy, Aroostook’s key industries must continually invest in new equipment. This often means replacing traditional jobs with machines and creating new, more highly technical jobs, that are generally fewer in number than the traditional jobs. In short, the core of the County’s economy cannot be counted on to provide a continuing supply of new jobs for the natural growth of the labor force. That task must be accomplished by related support businesses and entirely new businesses in entirely different sectors.

The second major characteristic of the Aroostook County economy is its aging population. Between 1990 and 2000, the County suffered a decrease in its working age population, an even greater decline in its future working age population (those under 18), and an increase in its elderly population that exceeded the national rate. Aroostook’s natural resource based industries and their support structures have not generated sufficient employment opportunities to maintain the population and, as a result, a supportive economy dependent on transfer payments, mostly medical, has developed to serve the aging population.

Aroostook County has had a long involvement in economic development efforts, since at least 1969. The Economic Development District Council (EDDC) was established by the Northern Maine Development Commission (NMDC) in 1992 to increase local involvement in forming and implement a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDs). With assistance of the

EDDC, the County developed a strategic plan and was designated a Rural Champion Community in 1999 and then an USDA-Rural Development Empowerment Zone (EZ) in 2002. The EDDC, now called the Northern Maine Empowerment Council (NMEC), is the central organizing force that ensures a cohesive and comprehensive strategic plan for the region, incorporating requirements of both the CEDS and EZ programs.

Recognizing that the County must address the major issues of outmigration, increasingly elderly population, and need to maintain the quality of life, in 2009, the NMDC updated its CEDS to provide a more holistic and integrated strategic plan, not just a focus on job creation/retention, but on all issues influencing economic growth (social services, healthcare, education, natural resources, Native Americans, youth services). The strategy calls for resources to be focused on four goals:

- Goal I – Support business success by creating an environment that supports the success of existing as well as new businesses,
- Goal II – Develop a well-educated and well-trained work force through educational and training opportunities,
- Goal III – Improve health and social services by providing comprehensive programs for the enrichment of all residents, and
- Goal IV – Steward Aroostook’s natural resources and way of life by balancing development with the need to protect valuable natural resources and the rural character of its communities.

Much of Northern Maine’s potential for growth and sustainability lies in one of its five existing and potential economic clusters – forest products, agriculture, tourism, information technology/telecommunications, and precision manufacturing. From 2006 to 2008, 26% of the County’s significant business growth was related to woods products, 12% were call-center related, food processing associated, back office services, and military-related production/repair.



The *forest products industry* employs about 3,500 people in timber harvesting, lumber and paper mills, biomass plants, trucking and railroad transport, equipment and chemical supplies. The industry is at a down point in its economic cycle because of weak overall demand and international competition (largely from Canada). The bright spots are hardwood veneer

production, panel products, and cedar wood products. In the short term, this cluster would be helped by cost relief and in the longer term, by strengthening the rail system and diversifying new products and markets.

The *agriculture cluster* employs 3,000 on farms, in equipment and chemical supplies, wholesaling, transportation, and food processing. Nearly $\frac{3}{4}$ of production is in potatoes; the rest is in vegetables like broccoli and oats. Livestock, like beef, holds great promise. The County's potato cluster could strengthen its competitive position by increasing irrigation, building new storage facilities, rotating crops and by adding new potato processors and



diversifying the farm industry by increasing the production of organic products and beef. The food processing industry has invested heavily in modern equipment and increased productivity, while farmers' investments vary widely depending on the operation. NMDC notes that if the approximately 400 growers now cultivating approximately 64,000 acres make a commitment to increasing their yields and growing the product their customers want, the industry can maintain its cluster of support businesses and look forward to a bright future.

The tourism cluster provides thousands of jobs that create or enhance attractions (such as



snowmobile clubs and festivals), lodging, food (restaurants), stores and services that support tourists (crafts, the Mall, fishing gear suppliers, gas stations, marinas, bait suppliers, sports equipment sellers/renters). About $\frac{1}{2}$ million tourists take pleasure trips to the County each year – half for outdoor activities (snowmobiling, cross country skiing, bicycling, fishing,

hunting). While fishing and hunting days declined in Maine between 1996 and 2001, nonresidential wildlife watching increased. Aroostook also attracts a significant number of people to family reunions, festivals, and fairs. Strategies to increase tourism include developing new destination attractions, cross marketing to existing tourists to come back during other

seasons, drawing tourists from New Brunswick and Bar Harbor, and encouraging existing tourists to lengthen their stays. According to a 2003 Planning Decisions, Inc. study, *Aroostook County Economic Cluster Report; Part 1: Analysis*, Aroostook County Tourism is an effective regional group, but needs to become stronger in order to market effectively against competitors. To capitalize on opportunities for ski resorts and the summer outdoor dollar, Aroostook needs to become vertically integrated to provide advertising and trip packages that include lodging, food, activities, music and shows to maximize revenue in busy times and encourage visitors during less busy times.

A 2006 Global Resorts, Inc. Feasibility Study and Development Assessment found that the County has all the attributes for resort development and cluster like smaller projects. Mars Hill, located, is in the center of the County and at the gateway to Northern Maine and Aroostook County, is an ideal home base for those who come for outdoor activities. The Global Resorts study indicated that the Big Rock Ski Area, together with its nearby golf facilities, offers promising development opportunities if the hotel component can be addressed. Global Resorts suggests the associated development might take an international spin (Germany, Scandinavia, Europe).

The information *technology (IT) cluster* includes computer software and web design, database management, internet services, and data backup and disaster recovery services. Jobs in this cluster typically pay twice the average salary within the region and have the potential to be the region's number 1 growth industry in the next decade.



Figure 19. Three Ring Binder Project

‘Three Ring Binder’ route

A 1,100-mile fiber network providing high-speed Internet service to rural communities has been completed six months ahead of schedule and under budget. The \$31.7 million project, which included \$25.4 million in federal stimulus money, creates a high-speed core network that telecommunications companies can link to as they expand broadband service.



Source: Maine Fiber Company, Inc., 2010

The recently completed Three Ring Binder project created a 1,100 mile fiber optic network in Maine, including 91 miles in Aroostook County. The concept of the system is the creation of three redundant rings of fiber optic cable in Downeast, Southern (to New Hampshire), and Northern (Fort Kent to Danforth) Maine. This “last mile” of high-speed Internet infrastructure extended service and removed an obstacle to improving data transmission in many areas of the state. The physical backbone of the system consists of a ¾ inch black cable containing twelve squares of twelve fiber optic strands (a total of 144 strands). Internet service providers, such as Pioneer Broadband, lease individual strands to in turn provide high speed internet connection to their customers. Individual companies with sophisticated Information Technology (IT) capability can also lease strands. One fiber optic strand is able to handle 250,000 customers. This new system provides genuine redundancy which is an important business upgrade. The former system was weak in this feature. \$25.4 million of federal stimulus money from the Department of Commerce, together with \$7 million in matching funds from Maine Fiber Co., were used to construct the new “middle-mile” network and open up new opportunities for economic growth in rural Maine. With these improvements, the County now has excellent

access to high-speed internet services, redundant broadband pathways for internet-dependent businesses, and three institutions of higher education – all essential infrastructure for IT. However, the region still lacks in-depth research and development in the field, networking opportunities for local professionals, and high energy costs. To build this industry cluster, the County's redundant internet capacity should be marketed to the outside world (especially those involved in data backup and emergency services). Local hospitals, banks, and schools should be encouraged to upgrade with local business providers, colleges should build up their IT research and training, and industry networking opportunities should be expanded. Data backup and recovery services provide the County a unique opportunity in software development and data aggregation which could establish it as the disaster recovery Mecca for northern New England and Maritime Canada. The presence of First Wind in Mars Hill suggests potential opportunities for the Town to competitively position itself to attract new computer and software businesses if it can develop cooperative relationships to reduce energy costs.

Precision manufacturing of metal products is a small but important activity in the County. Acme-Monaco in Presque Isle, First Technology in Caribou, Smith and Wesson in Houlton, plus other local metals fabricators serve the agriculture and wood products industries. There are not enough businesses in the County to comprise a cluster, but there are a number of large metals firms just across the border in New Brunswick, which increases the market for developing needed industry supports. Of particular importance is the expansion of the metals technology program at Northern Maine Community College to create a potential source of well-trained (and well-paid) employees for the growing metals industry.

Planning Decisions identified common themes across all of the clusters.

- New Brunswick is a resource for the County's economic growth. Traditionally Canada is seen as a low cost (and sometimes unfairly advantaged) competitor, and this tension will always exist and must always be managed. But the analysis shows that, in many cases, cooperation with New Brunswick can help businesses on both sides of border. Creating institutions to extend cross border economic cooperation is important to the County's future growth. Frequent contact and shared projects between industry and government in both areas will likely produce dividends for Aroostook industries.
- The nascent IT industry is important in its own right, but also for other sectors. Tourism is moving to internet and must be used as effectively as it is in New Brunswick. Wood products and agriculture now depend on state-of-the-art communications and control systems to stay ahead of the market.
- The County has three institutions of higher education, which is a great asset that attracts people to come to and live in the County. These schools can provide a trained workforce that is needed to compete in a high-tech economy. They help attract and

keep talented people by contributing to the region's overall quality of life and cultural opportunities.

- Transportation is important across the board. Frequent/reliable air service is essential to businesses that must serve and be in communication with national markets (IT companies, manufacturing firms, producers of agricultural and forest products, and tourism in the long run). Rail is important to natural resource industries, especially forest products. This is an area of weakness for the region which must be strengthened.

Significant factors in the region's current economy

- Loring Commerce Center is home to 19 organizations that occupy over 1.6 million square feet and employ approximately 1000 people in the aviation, manufacturing, agriculture, education, health care, commercial, financial, and service sectors.
- Forestry – In 2007, there were 168 primary processing mills, 77 portable sawmills, 46 loggers and brokers, 23 concentration yards, and 11 mills that burned some form of wood for energy.
- Agriculture – Aroostook saw an increase of 162 farms between 2002 and 2007, with 16,107 acres being taken out of production and the loss of 50 people with farming as their primary occupation. Farming continues to be sustained for a number of crops in the County because of sophisticated farming equipment, quality farmland (prime farmland soils), and dedicated people. Potatoes remain the top crop with almost 64,000 acres planted in 2007 and 81,803 acres planted with forage, barley, and oats combined, grossing \$146.4 million in 2007.
- Tourism – Tourists most frequently come to the County for outdoor trips to experience the natural environment and engage in outdoor activities (camping, hunting, fishing, hiking, rafting); 38% of overnight visitors spend time doing activities in the outdoor while 24% attend special events, 17% visit for business or pleasure, 7% spend time touring.

In addition to the Three Ring Binder project, another initiative that holds promise for Aroostook County and Mars Hill is Mobilize Maine (MM), a program that focuses on four core components of agriculture, forestry, renewable energy, and manufacturing. This proactive, assets-based, grassroots effort was funded by a \$1.9M grant from the US Economic Development Administration in 2011. MM builds on the “indigenous strengths and authentic assets of northern Maine people, places, and businesses.”¹ Working with consultants from ViTAL Economy, the Aroostook Partnership for Progress and the Northern Maine Development Commission provide leadership and resources to support regional and local public, private, and nonprofit leaders to form working groups and action teams in the two industry clusters that

¹ *Mobilize Northern Maine*. <http://www.nmdc.org/mobilize/about.html>

have been identified to date – renewable energy and information technology. MM’s core principles include:

- Defines regional uniqueness, one strategy does not fit all!
- Is a consistent CED approach across the state
- Integrates existing studies with regional asset mapping
- Enables knowledge transfer to build long term capacity
- Is grassroots-based with a bottom up trajectory
- Is action-driven and results-oriented
- Strengthens and expands local leadership
- Creates linkages, connect assets and resources across EDD regions

MM’s focus on renewable energy resources, including wind, biomass, and excess energy, that are within the region’s control and that can be developed and connected to result in increased wealth and job creation. Wind generation at Mars Hill and the University of Maine Presque Isle, as well as the Northern Maine Community College’s recent creation of a wind technology program, are examples of current efforts that support development of wind energy. Aroostook is also well positioned to take advantage of converting wood byproducts to energy. A related opportunity is to work with businesses that operate wind farms and biomass facilities to use excess energy, though there is a need to improve transmission line capacity. Commercial use of biomass, wood pellets, and other “green” products, which are manufactured in the County, provide an opportunity to heat homes while enhancing the region’s economy, producing the product locally using local labor, and reducing the need for expensive fossil fuel.

Furthermore in 2012, Montana-based Gas Natural Inc., which owns Penobscot Natural Gas Co., acquired a \$4.5 million lease for the 189-mile Loring Pipeline that extends from Searsport to Limestone. The company plans to repurpose the liquid pipeline to accommodate natural gas for industries, businesses, and residents in northern Maine. Access to cheaper fuel is expected to bolster industry in the region. Built in the 1950s, the pipeline was once used to send jet fuel from tanks on the coast to Loring Air Force Base. The corridor is owned by the Loring Development Authority.

Challenges that the County continues to face include the impact of the dramatic drop in population between in 1963 and 1997 because of the closure of the Presque Isle and Loring Bases as well as the consolidation and mechanization of agriculture. In addition, there were several difficult years in the potato industry just preceding base closure. The negative effects of Canadian trade policies and exchange rates are of continued concern as is the continuing trend of outmigration of primarily the 18-24 age group leaving region for education and job opportunities.

Figure 20. Average Unemployment						
Aroostook	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2011
Labor Force	37,840	38,715	35,090	35,540	35,400	34,542
Employed	35,970	36,873	32,780	33,210	33,140	31,266
Unemployed	1,870	1,842	2,320	2,330	2,250	3,276
Rate	4.9%	4.8%	6.6%	6.6%	6.4%	9.50%
Source: Maine Department of Labor, Division of Labor Market Information Services						

Average unemployment rate in County for 2007 was 6.4%, while state average was 4.7%. In 2011, the County's unemployment rate was 9.5%

Outmigration of Youth

Aroostook County has been facing the problem of outmigrating youth for decades. A 2004 University of Southern Maine Center for Business and Economic Research analysis, *Migration and Youth Migration from Aroostook County: Trends, Factors, and Implications* found that

- Aroostook youth more likely to leave for other destinations in Maine than for out-of-state (Penobscot County being most popular),
- migration patterns are not significantly different than trends in other parts of northern, western, and eastern Maine;
- the common perception that youth are leaving in search of better career/income prospects is generally true though there are other factors that determine location decisions (types of careers sought, depths of connections to County, gender to some extent);
- those with lower incomes tend to be the ones to leave;
- Aroostook colleges have already captured important part of those who stay;
- high school and college students report strong preferences to live in rural areas or smaller urban areas.

The principal factor affecting outmigration is the desire for additional education to improve career and income prospects. Where appropriate education is available and offers good prospects, youth will tend to stay. It will be easiest to attract youth to stay for careers in health, social services, education – most attractive to woman who also report slightly higher preference to leave. Where it will be most difficult to retain youth is in the professions, scientific, artistic, and technological occupations. Economic development efforts to grow opportunities in these areas will be most successful in attracting and retaining youth. State programs such as the Creative Economy initiative, support for research and development, Maine Technology Institute, and tourism – in areas key to growth of jobs and opportunities that will retain youth. The attractive features for youth are institutions of higher education, affordable rural lifestyle, and recreational opportunities. But the region cannot overcome

perceived lack of career opportunities in certain fields. It may be possible to encourage some youth to return. Strategies that improve the prospects of youth by virtue of improved careers will also be key to attracting youth to return. The attractiveness of small cities and rural areas focuses attention on growth and development in places like Presque Isle, Houlton, Fort Kent, and Madawaska – where urban amenities such as cultural events, night life, shopping, etc. are available will be part of the consideration of youth seeking attractive locations to live and work.

Some of the economic development organizations that are active in the County include the:

- Aroostook Partnership for Progress (APP) – initiated public private partnership to spearhead economic growth with a goal of attracting 1,500 jobs and \$50 million in new investment by 2012.
- Maine Manufacturing Extension Partnership – works directly with area manufactures to provide expertise and services tailored to their most critical needs.
- Northern Maine Finance Corporation (NMFC) – enables business development by purchasing buildings and/or properties that have been vacated due to business closure.
- Aroostook Investment Exchange (AIX) – provides entrepreneurs who are seeking risk capital to make brief presentations to audiences of potential investors.
- Small Business Development Center – provides comprehensive business assistance and information services to the small business community.

B. The Mars Hill Economy

Figure 21. Mars Hill Major Employers, 2012		
	# Full Time Employees	# Part Time Employees
Aroostook Health Center	110	
Naturally Potatoes	105	
Northern Lighthouse Home for Children	30 (residents) 75 (nonresidents)	
School System (K-12)	70	15
Sargent/Tweedie Truck Brokerage	70	
Big Rock Ski Area at base of mountain	30 (winter only)	
SuperSpuds (McCrum Family)	25	
Al's Diner	10	5
First Wind (wind farm on mountain)	10	
Mars Hill Pharmacy	8	
Katahdin Savings Bank	7	
Maine Savings Bank	6	
Circle K Convenience/Gasoline (South end of Town)	6	
Convenience Store (North end of Town)	6	
Pallet Mill	6	
House of Pizza	4	2
Source: Mars Hill Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee		

Mars Hill’s largest employers are the Aroostook Health Center, Naturally Potatoes, Northern Lighthouse Home for Children, the School System, Sargent/Tweedie Truck Brokerage, Big Rock Ski Area, and SuperSpuds.

Mars Hill is a service center community, one of 80 municipalities, urban compact areas, or census designated places designated by the state in 2013. Service centers vary tremendously in size and appearance, but share three attributes – they are job centers, that is they host more jobs in the community than can be filled by its residents; they are retail centers, that is they generate sales by more than just its residents; and they offer an array of social, cultural, health and financial services to the surrounding region.



1. Labor Force and Unemployment

Figure 22. Civilian Labor Force and Unemployment, 2011

	<i>Mars Hill</i>	<i>Aroostook</i>	<i>Maine</i>
Civilian Labor Force	710	34,542	704,078
Number Employed	652	31,266	651,038
Unemployment Rate	8.20%	9.50%	7.50%

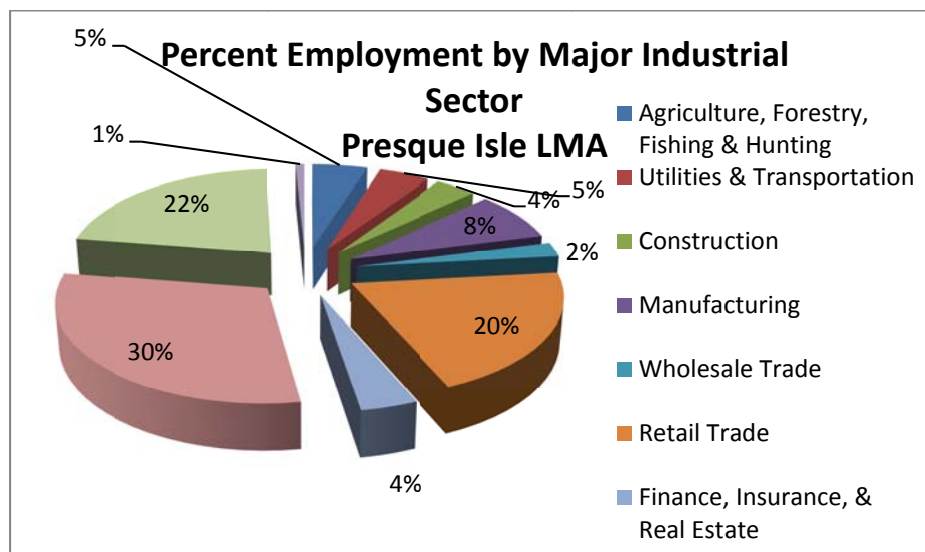
Source: Maine Department of Labor

Mars Hill had a labor force of 652 people in 2011 with an unemployment rate of 8.2%, which was lower than that of the County but higher than that of the State as a whole. NOTE: the high unemployment rate is reflective of the slow recovery from the recent “Great Recession.”

Figure 23. Employment by Major Industries, Presque Isle Labor Market Area, 2010			
	Establishments	Average Employment	% Total Employment
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing & Hunting	148	993	5%
Utilities & Transportation	152	936	5%
Construction	168	753	4%
Manufacturing	71	1643	8%
Wholesale Trade	63	482	2%
Retail Trade	328	4197	20%
Finance, Insurance, & Real Estate	109	796	4%
Professional and technical services	454	6203	30%
Health Care & Social Assistance	187	4487	22%
Arts, Entertainment, & Recreation	28	157	1%
Total	1708	20647	100%

Source: 2010 US Census

Figure 24. Percent Employment by Major Industrial Sector, Presque Isle Labor Market Area



Source: 2010 US Census

Nearly a third of jobs in the Presque Isle LMA are in some form of professional and technical services industry, which also includes management companies and enterprises, administrative and waste services, educational services, public administration, information, and other services. Health care and social assistance provide slightly more than a fifth of jobs, followed closely by retail trade, which

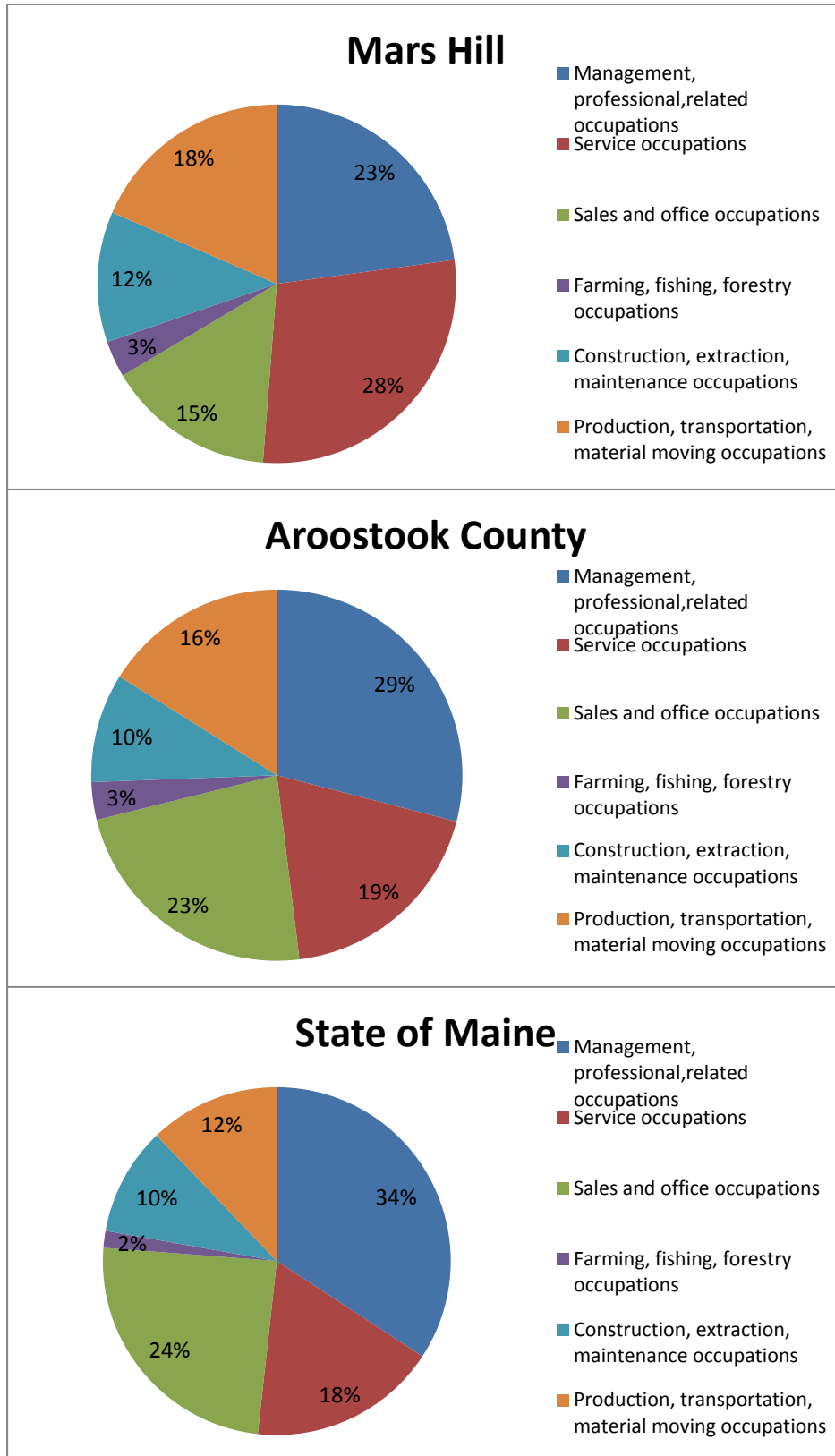
includes lodging and restaurants. Agriculture, forestry, fishing, and hunting make up 5% of Mars Hill's jobs.

2. Occupations

Figure 25. Civilian Labor Force and Unemployment, 2010			
	<i>Mars Hill</i>	Aroostook County	Maine
Service occupations	28%	19%	18%
Management, professional, related occupations	23%	29%	34%
Production, transportation, material moving occupations	18%	16%	12%
Sales and office occupations	15%	23%	24%
Construction, extraction, maintenance occupations	12%	10%	10%
Farming, fishing, forestry occupations	3%	3%	2%
Source: 2010 US Census			



Figure 26. Occupations, 2012



Mars Hill has a significantly higher proportion of service occupations than the County or the State.

Mars Hill has a considerably lower proportion of management, professional, and related service occupations than the County or the State.

Production, transportation, and material moving occupations in Mars Hill is comparable to that in the County and is noticeably higher than for the State.

Source: 2010 US Census

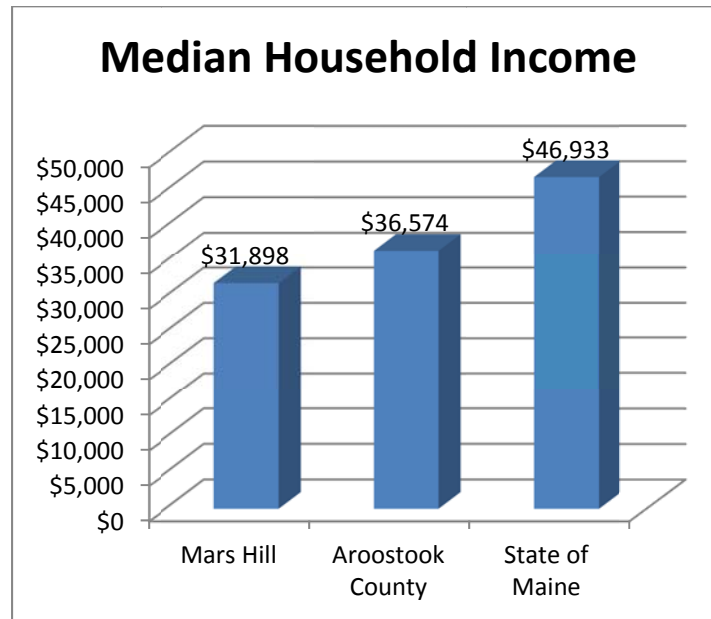
C. Income

1. Household Income

Figure 27. Median Household Income, 2009		
	Median Household Income	% County Median Income
Blaine	42,574	116.4%
Easton	38,000	103.9%
Fort Fairfield	32,440	88.7%
Mapleton	50,167	137.2%
Mars Hill	31,898	87.2%
Presque Isle	36,563	100.0%
Westfield	41,125	112.4%
Aroostook County	36,574	
State of Maine	46,933	

Source: 2010 US Census

Figure 28. Mars Hill Median Income, 2012



Source: 2010 US Census

Figure 29. Households Below Poverty, 2009			
	Mars Hill	Aroostook County	Maine
Households	631	30,672	551,125
Below Poverty	170	4,905	70,488
% Households Below Poverty	26.9	16	12.8

Source: 2010 US Census

Mars Hill’s median household income in 2009 was just over 87% of that of Aroostook County. This was comparable to the median household income in Fort Fairfield, but significantly less than all of the other comparable communities and the State. More than a quarter of Mars Hill’s households have income that is below the poverty level.

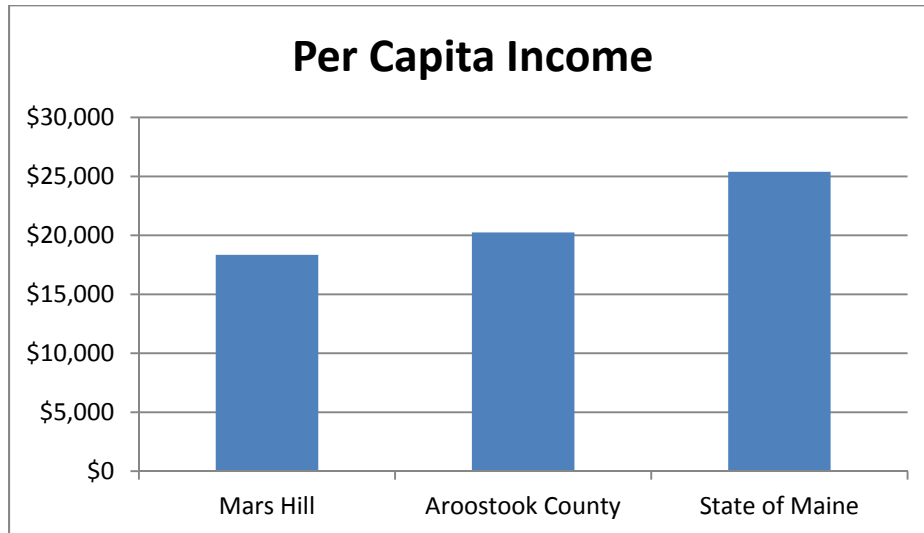
2. Per Capita Income

Figure 30. Per Capita Income, 2009

	Income	% County Income
Mars Hill	\$18,349	90.6%
Aroostook County	\$20,251	
State of Maine	\$25,385	

Source: 2010 US Census

Figure 31. Per Capital Income, 2012



Source: 2010 US Census

Mars Hill’s per capita income is just over 90% of that of the County and less than ¾ of that of the State.

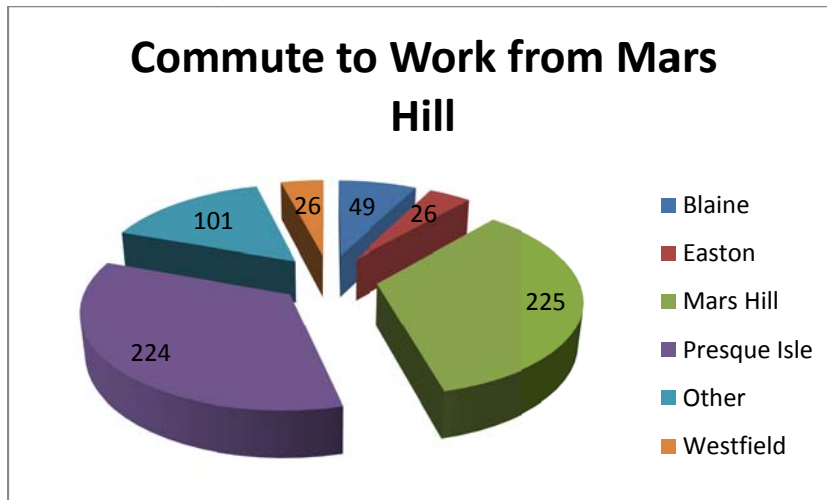
D. Commute to Work Information

Figure 32. Commute to Work from Mars Hill, 2010

	Number	Percent
Blaine	49	7.5%
Easton	26	4.2%
Mars Hill	225	34.6
Presque Isle	224	34.4%
Washburn	26	4.0%
Other	101	15.5%

	651	100.0%
Source: 2010 US Census		

Figure 33. Commute to Work from Mars Hill



Source: 2010 US Census

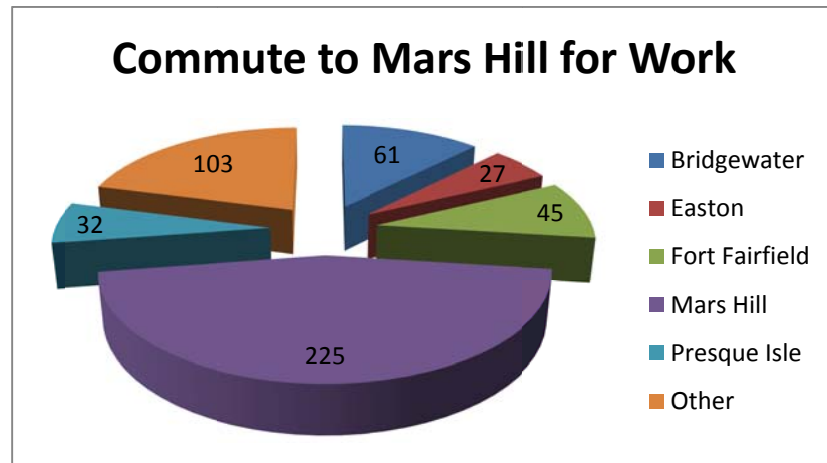
More than a third of Mars Hill’s residents work in another community, most in Presque Isle.

Figure 34. Commute to Work in Mars Hill, 2010

	Number	Percent
Bridgewater	61	12.4%
Easton	27	5.5%
Fort Fairfield	45	9.1%
Mars Hill	225	45.6%
Presque Isle	224	6.5%
Other	103	20.9%

Source: 2010 US Census

Figure 35. Commute to Mars Hill for Work



Nearly half of Mars Hill’s employed residents work in Mars Hill. Just over 20% of employed Bridgewater residents and just under 20% of Fort Fairfield residents commute to Mars Hill for work.

E. Canadian Trade

In 2006, the US and Canada agreed to end a large portion of litigation over trade in softwood lumber and to unrestricted trade during favorable market conditions. When the lumber market is soft, Canadian exporting provinces can choose either to collect an export tax that ranges from 5 to 15% as prices fall or to collect lower export taxes and limit export volumes. The agreement also included provisions to address potential Canadian import surges, provide for effective dispute settlement, distribute antidumping and countervailing (anti-subsidy) duty deposits currently held by the US, and discipline future trade cases.

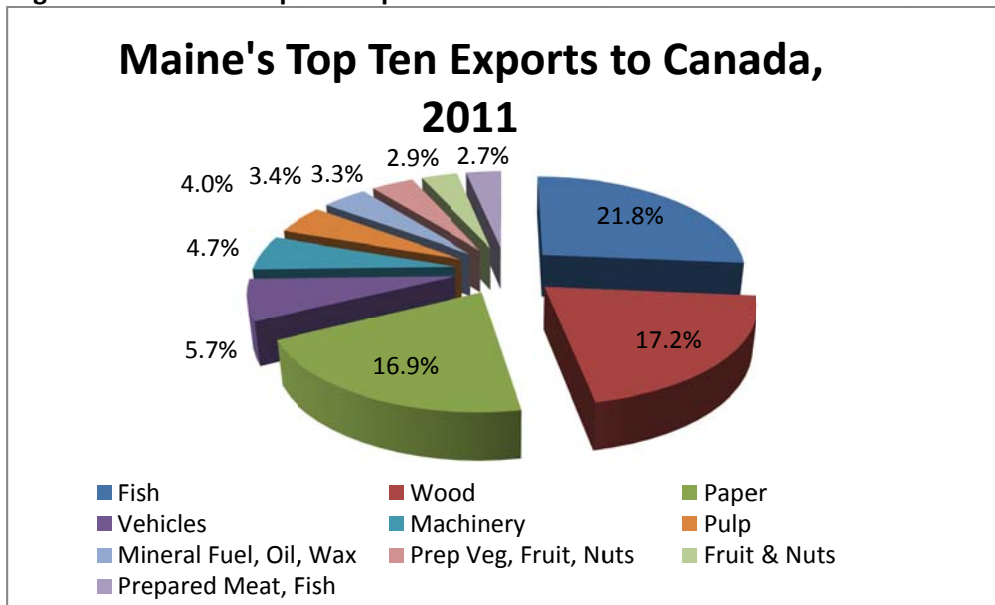
In 2010, the US signed an agreement with Canada on government procurement. The agreement provides for permanent US access to Canadian provincial and territorial procurement contracts in accordance with the World Trade Organization (WTO) Government Procurement Agreement (GPA).

In 2011, Maine exported \$3.46 billion to other countries. Maine’s exports grew relatively consistently between 2001 and 2011, with a slight dip in 2005 and a significant decline in 2009 during the Great Recession. Overall from 2001 to 2011, exports increased by 9.38% and between 2010 and 2011, exports increased by 7.64%. Maine’s largest trading partner is Canada.

Description	2011 (dollars)	% Change 2010-2011
TOTAL ALL COMMODITIES	1,122,889,118	7.64
Fish, Crustaceans, & Aquatic Invertebrates	245,096,976	3.8
Wood & Articles of Wood; Wood Charcoal	193,100,602	-9.93
Paper & Paperboard & Articles (including Pulp)	190,200,513	6.49
Vehicles & Parts, Except Railway or Tramway	64,103,077	-0.04
Industrial Machinery, including Computers	53,207,544	12.88
Wood Pulp; Recovered (Waste & Scrap)	45,233,269	11.46
Mineral Fuel, Oil; Mineral Wax	38,633,629	236.03
Prep Vegetables, Fruit, Nuts, or Other Plant Parts	36,504,010	-12.53
Edible Fruit & Nuts; Citrus Fruit or Melon Peel	32,259,973	42.87
Edible Preparations of Meat, Fish, Crustaceans, etc.	30,311,174	7.04

Source: Maine International Trade Center, 2012

Figure 37. Maine's Top Ten Exports to Canada



Source: Maine International Trade Center, 2012

78% of Maine's agricultural exports went to Canada in 2010, totaling \$79 million, and including:

- \$27 million in prepared chicken
- \$14 million in cranberries
- \$4 million in frozen fries
- \$3 million in potatoes
- \$3 million in livestock

In 2010, Maine imported \$150 million from Canada, including:

- \$40 million in frozen fries
- \$16 million in plants
- \$11 million in breads and pastries
- \$11 million in animal feed
- \$11 million in margarine

In 2011, Canada accounted for 32% of the state's exports and was Maine's top importer of wood pulp. US exports of agricultural products to Canada, the US's largest agricultural export market, totaled \$19.0 billion in 2011. Leading categories included fresh vegetables (\$1.7 billion), fresh fruit (\$1.7 billion), snack foods (\$1.6 billion), red meats, fresh/chilled/frozen (\$1.4 billion), and processed fruit and vegetables (\$1.2 billion).

Maine's export of prepared vegetables, fruit, nuts, or other plant parts declined more than 12% between 2010 and 2011 while edible fruit and nuts, citrus fruit or melon peel increased nearly 43%.

F. Issues and Implications

1. Before 1994, Mars Hill employed a community or economic development director, who was very successful in securing grants to replace or provide public infrastructure and facilities. Should the Town re-create this staff position or is current staffing adequate?
2. To a large degree, Mars Hill's economy is dependent on the regional economy of central Aroostook County. What can and should Mars Hill do to become better informed about and more involved in regional economic development efforts?
3. Agriculture is an important industry in Mars Hill. Have Mars Hill's farmers kept pace with necessary investments to increase productivity, marketability, and profitability? What can the community do to help support local farmers and associated industries?
4. While rail transport is less important for agriculture than it is for forest products, what opportunity does the State's recent acquisition of the Montreal, Maine, & Atlantic railroad offer? Is rail transport a feasible cost savings measure? What would have to change to make it feasible? Should the Town work with NDMC and MDOT to make sure that Mars Hill's interests are considered in future improvement and investment plans for the rail line?
5. What can and should Mars Hill do to support existing businesses? To draw new businesses and professionals who serve local needs, Mars Hill and nearby communities may have to expand their population and/or rigorously recruit, both difficult tasks. How active does Mars Hill want to be in tackling these problems? Is the community willing to focus energy and funds for such efforts?
6. Energy costs in Mars Hill are high; however, the Town potentially has access to several emerging opportunities that could help reduce energy costs for local businesses (and possibly residents) – tapping into wind generation, new natural gas capacity associated with the Loring Pipeline, and pellet fuel, a regional initiative, to take advantage of plentiful local resource. If the Town is able to tap into these and other energy generation sources, it could help reduce operating costs for local businesses and create a competitive advantage in the region. Should the Town explore opportunities associated with these energy opportunities?
7. Global Resorts notes the opportunity for Mars Hill to expand its tourism offerings around the Big Rock Ski Area and nearby Golf Course. Should Mars Hill investigate and promote the development of a "resort" or a package of amenities to capitalize on potential expanded tourism opportunities? How can this development be pursued in such a way as to promote

a four, or at least expanded, season tourist attraction? Would it be a good idea for representatives of the Town to visit other Maine towns that have ski/golf amenities to discuss how they manage packages, etc.?

6. While review of data about Canadian trade suggests limited opportunities for Mars Hill, primarily associated with agriculture, there may be more there than meets the cursory eye. Canadian business could be more important to Mars Hill. Many Canadians come across the border at Bridgewater and up the East Ridge Road along the front of the mountain to go north to Presque Isle, Fort Fairfield, or Caribou. They also come to Mars Hill's golf course and Big Rock Ski Area or for groceries. Many shop at Walmart in Presque Isle. Note the Global Resorts, Inc. Feasibility Study and Development Assessment found that Mars Hill is located at the gateway to Northern Maine and Aroostook County and is an ideal home base for those who come for outdoor activities. One problem is that the first mile or so of this access route in Bridgewater is a rough and muddy dirt road in wet weather followed by a somewhat rough section in Blaine, which may be a deterrent to business. Should the Town work with Bridgewater, Blaine, and the State to improve this travel route? Besides promoting a "resort" package of amenities (see item 5 above), what else might Mars Hill do to capture business from those heading north for outdoor activities?
7. Some residents noted a lot of excitement and business just across the border in places like Bristol and account for it primarily because of young people. Should the Town talk with the Town of Bristol about what it is doing to attract and retain young residents to assess strategies that might be applied to Mars Hill to expand its youthful population and generate more business within the community?
8. What else might Mars Hill do to keep Canadian business in mind when progressing through this plan?

SECTION 3. HOUSING

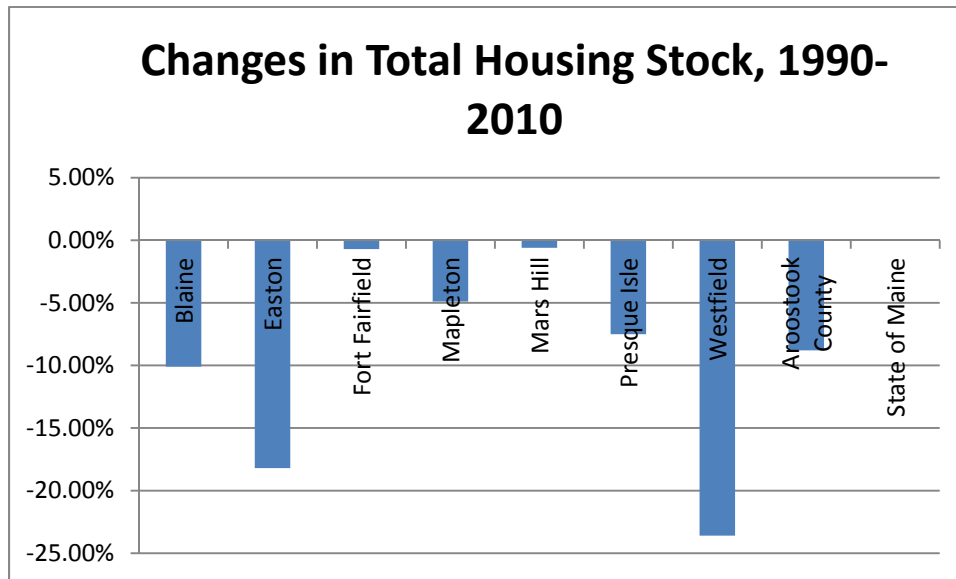


A. Changes in Housing Stock

	Total Housing Units		% Change	# Change
	1990	2010	1990-2010	1990-2010
Blaine	326	293	-10.1%	-33
Easton	560	458	-18.2%	-102
Fort Fairfield	1,614	1,602	-0.7%	-12
Mapleton	780	742	-4.9%	-38
Mars Hill	691	687	-0.6%	-4
Presque Isle	4,345	4,019	-7.5%	-326
Westfield	229	175	-23.6%	-54
Aroostook County	33,638	30,672	-8.8%	-2,966
State of Maine	550,431	551,125	0.1%	694

Source: US Census

Figure 39. Changes in Total Housing Stock, 1990-2010



Source: US Census, 1990 & 2010

There were 687 housing units in Mars Hill in 2010, approximate 0.5% (4 units) fewer than in 1990. This loss of housing is comparable to the loss experienced in Fort Fairfield and the State of Maine and less than what Aroostook County and many surrounding towns have experienced.

There has been very little subdivision activity in Mars Hill in many years. In the mid-1990's, the Town approved 9 residential lots off the Bell Hill/Country Club roads and another 3-4 residential lots north of the Bell Hill Road intersection with Country Club Road in the first decade of the 2000's. In 2012, the Town approved a 14-lot subdivision off Clark Road.

B. Selected Characteristics of Housing Units

Figure 40. Selected Housing Characteristics, 2010

	Total Housing Units	Occupied Housing Units		Vacant Housing Units		Home owner Vacancy Rate	Rental Vacancy Rate	Year-round		Seasonal	
	#	#	%	#	%			#	%	#	%
Blaine	360	299	83.1	61	16.9	4.2	14.0	342	95	18	5.0
Easton	596	536	89.9	60	10.1	1.7	3.5	578	97	18	3.0
Fort Fairfield	1,674	1,494	89.2	180	10.8	2.9	6.1	1,634	98	40	2.4
Mapleton	864	816	94.4	48	5.6	1.7	4.0	854	99	10	1.2
Mars Hill	687	614	89.4	73	10.6	3.5	5.2	461	97	22	3.2
Presque Isle	4,608	4,201	91.2	407	8.8	2	8.5	4,540	99	68	1.8
Westfield	240	216	90	24	10	1.1	0.0	231	96	9	3.8
Aroostook County	39,482	30,672	77.7	8,810	22.3	4	8.1	34,083	86	5,399	13.7
State of Maine	714,270	551,125	77.2	163,145	22.8	2.3	7.5	595,960	83	118,310	16.4

Source: 2010 US Census

Nearly all of Mars Hill's housing stock is year-round (97%), which is essentially unchanged since 1990. This percentage is considerably higher than that of the County (86%). Owner occupied units represent the vast majority of the housing stock (nearly 90%). In 2011, Mars Hill had a vacancy rate of 4.6% for homeowners and 5.8% for renters.

Data on the number of housing units on public water and sewer were not available through the 2010 Census. Given the small number of new homes constructed since 1992, the 1992 figures for homes on public water (nearly 75%) and sewer (just over 70%) may still be fairly accurate.

The 2010 Census includes limited data about the type of structure. The six new housing units identified in 2006 were single family homes. In 1992, nearly 70% of all occupied housing units were single family; 7.5% were duplexes, and 17% were multifamily.

C. Age and Condition of Housing

Figure 41. Housing Conditions, 2010

	Total Dwelling Units	Lack Complete Plumbing		Lack Complete Kitchen	
		#	%	#	%
Blaine	293	5	1.7%	9	0.03
Easton	458	0	0.0%	0	0.00
Fort Fairfield	1,602	15	0.9%	20	0.01
Mapleton	742	10	1.3%	13	0.02
Mars Hill	631	5	0.8%	0	0.00
Presque Isle	4,019	19	0.5%	23	0.01
Westfield	175	0	0.0%	7	0.04
Aroostook County	30,672	243	0.8%	159	0.01
State of Maine	551,125	4,915	0.9%	4,890	0.01

Source: 2010 Census

The 2010 Census provided limited information about housing condition. Less than one percent of all housing in Mars Hill did not have complete plumbing facilities, which was comparable to the County as a whole in 2010. All housing in Mars Hill had complete kitchen facilities in 2010.

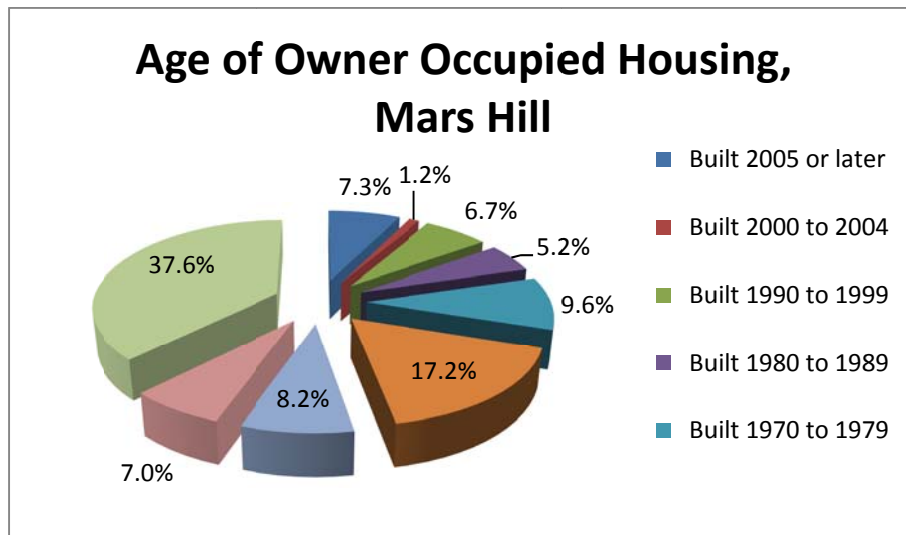
Figure 42. Housing - Age of Home by Tenure, 2010

	Mars Hill		Aroostook County	Maine
	#	%	#	#
TOTAL	631		30,672	551,125
OWNER OCCUPIED	343		22,116	402,907
Built 2005 or later	25	7.3	408	13,266
Built 2000 to 2004	4	1.2	867	29,036
Built 1990 to 1999	23	6.7	2,108	57,429
Built 1980 to 1989	18	5.2	2,440	64,584
Built 1970 to 1979	33	9.6	3,957	59,968
Built 1960 to 1969	59	17.2	2,019	29,963
Built 1950 to 1959	28	8.2	2,455	30,388
Built 1940 to 1949	24	7.0	2,005	19,509
Built 1939 or earlier	129	37.6	5,857	98,764
RENTER OCCUPIED	288		8,556	148,218
Built 2005 or later	0	0.00	89	3,375
Built 2000 to 2004	9	3.1	154	6,026
Built 1990 to 1999	0	0.0	581	12,633
Built 1980 to 1989	50	17.4	1,560	19,858
Built 1970 to 1979	89	30.9	1,429	22,752

	Mars Hill		Aroostook County	Maine
	#	%	#	#
Built 1960 to 1969	47	16.3	685	10,958
Built 1950 to 1959	15	5.2	991	11,226
Built 1940 to 1949	3	1.0	604	8,172
Built 1939 or earlier	75	26.0	2,463	53,218

Source: 2010 US Census

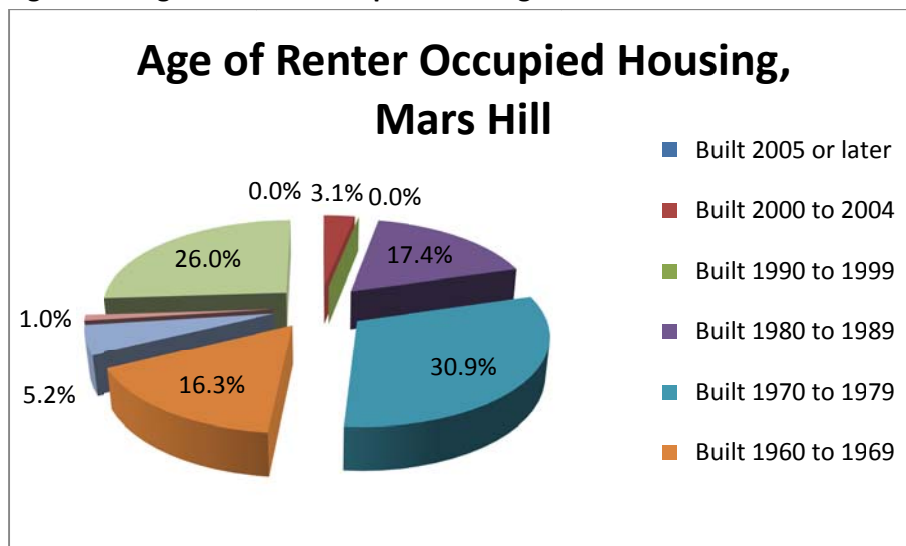
Figure 43. Age of Owner Occupied Housing



Source: 2010 US Census

More than half of Mars Hill’s owner occupied homes were built before 1960. Nearly another 20% was built between 1960 and 1969.

Figure 44. Age of Renter Occupied Housing



Source: 2010 US Census

Nearly half of Mars Hill’s rentals were built before 1970. Nearly another 20% of Mars Hill’s rentals were built between 1970 and 1979.

D. Housing Affordability

Figure 45. Housing Affordability				
	Affordable at Median Income	Income Needed for Median Price	Median Sale Price	Average 2Bdr Rent with Utilities
Mars Hill	83,659	16,398	44,500	493
Aroostook County	101,305	27,810	80,000	594
State of Maine	137,198	61,568	185,900	847

Source: Maine State Housing Authority

Based on the Maine State Housing Authority data, the current homeowner housing market is affordable for those households that have or exceed Mars Hill’s median income.

Today, there are approximately 11 houses for sale in Mars Hill ranging in price from \$25,000 to \$279,000. Houses that sell now are in the \$80K to \$140K range. In Presque Isle there are 70 houses on the market from \$17K to \$315K and in Fort Fairfield there are 33 houses for sale ranging from \$28K to \$370K. The higher priced home in Fort includes farm land.¹

While there are an adequate number of homes in Mars Hill that have an affordable purchase price, the Town is concerned about the cost of ongoing operation for many residents. Smaller, more tightly constructed homes will reduce the cost of heating during the long winter season and make the household more affordable for their residents.



¹ Mars Hill Comprehensive Plan Committee, 2012.

Figure 46.

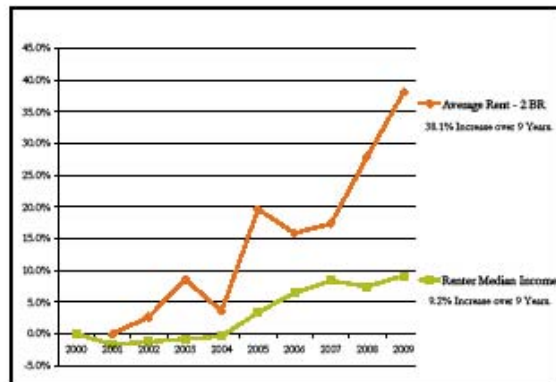
Aroostook County Rental Housing Facts 2009

Rental Affordability Index

Area	Year	Affordability Index	Average 2-BR Rent ¹	Renter Household Median Income	Income Needed to Afford Average 2-BR Rent	2-BR Rent ² Affordable at Median Income	Households Unable to Afford Average 2-BR Rent
Aroostook County	2000	-	-	\$21,037	-	\$526	-
	2005	0.95	\$575	\$21,745	\$22,998	\$544	4,343 (52.4%)
	2006	1.01	\$557	\$22,401	\$22,273	\$560	4,175 (49.7%)
	2007	1.00	\$569	\$22,798	\$22,758	\$570	4,218 (49.9%)
	2008	0.95	\$594	\$22,606	\$23,765	\$565	4,428 (52.3%)
	2009	0.87	\$664	\$22,967	\$26,544	\$574	4,716 (56.2%)
Presque Isle	2009	0.95	\$645	\$24,563	\$25,804	\$614	825 (52.1%)
Limestone	2009	1.41	\$655	\$37,018	\$26,217	\$925	102 (36.5%)
Caribou	2009	0.96	\$609	\$23,358	\$24,376	\$584	596 (52.3%)
Houlton	2009	0.84	\$616	\$20,725	\$24,629	\$518	578 (57.2%)
Madawaska	2009	1.24	\$459	\$22,850	\$18,374	\$571	240 (41.2%)
Fort Fairfield	2009	0.82	\$680	\$22,433	\$27,197	\$561	269 (57.2%)
Washburn	2009	1.27	\$543	\$27,592	\$21,702	\$690	50 (38.0%)
Mars Hill	2009	1.05	\$493	\$20,693	\$19,702	\$517	101 (48.3%)
Ashland	2009	1.10	\$543	\$23,928	\$21,702	\$598	73 (46.1%)
Easton	2009	0.98	\$600	\$23,518	\$24,000	\$588	65 (51.0%)
Grand Isle	2009	0.91	\$572	\$20,713	\$22,874	\$518	17 (55.0%)

The affordability index is the ratio of 2-Bedroom Rent Affordable at Median Renter Income to Average 2-Bedroom Rent. An index of less than 1 means the area is generally unaffordable – i.e., a renter household earning area median renter income could not cover the cost of an average 2-bedroom apartment (including utilities) using no more than 30% of gross income.

Relative Increases in Household Income and Rent²



The affordability of the rental housing market is another story. Nearly half of Mars Hill’s households (48.3%) were unable to afford the average 2-bedroom rent in 2008. While the median income of renters in Aroostook County increased by 9.2% between 2000 and 2009, the average rent for a 2-bedroom rental increased 38.1%.

Figure 47. Subsidized Housing Units, 2008			
	<i>Mars Hill</i>	Aroostook County	Maine
Disabled Units		56	460
Family Units	44	650	11,517
Housing Choice Vouchers	29	886	11,369
Senior Units	52	1,406	14,073
Special Needs Units		47	1,846
Total	125	3,045	39,265
Source: Maine State Housing Authority			

There are 125 housing units that are subsidized in some fashion.

E. Issues and Implications

1. While the development of owner occupied housing has been fairly consistent from one decade to the next, there has been very little rental housing development since 1990. In fact, nearly 65% of the Town’s rental housing was developed between 1960 and 1990; another 26% of Mars Hill’s rental housing was developed before 1940. If Mars Hill wants to draw younger residents to the community, does it need to promote the development of additional, new rental units?
2. Given the lack of affordable rental housing, should the Town encourage the development of additional rental units? How do unaffordable rents affect the Town’s interest in drawing and/or retaining younger residents? How can the Town assure that these units are built in areas served by public water and sewer? Should the Town undertake a study to assess how to best attract and provide for young residents who cannot afford a home, but who could afford a rental unit in Mars Hill?
3. The lack of data on housing conditions makes it difficult to determine whether there is a need for resources to support housing rehabilitation. Would some type of low interest loan fund be useful? What about loan interest weatherization loans to tap into the County’s new wood pellet heating initiative and help reduce homeowners’ heating bills? Should the Town try to establish a renovation and/or weatherization loan program?
4. If the Town wants to attract new professionals and other residents to Mars Hill, does it need to invest in housing rehabilitation and/or encourage new residential subdivisions? If so, how can the Town encourage the creation of new neighborhoods on public water and sewer close to downtown? There are few homes in the range of \$80K to \$140K available and there are few house lots. If a new business were to be attracted to our community, where could

the employees build a home if they so wished? Should the Town encourage residential subdivisions in the area located between Benjamin Street (Route 1 toward Presque Isle) and Clark Road located to the west over a hill and generally parallel to Benjamin Street? Are there areas near downtown that might be appropriate for residential subdivision?

5. There was discussion about the possibility of constructing a 55+ development made up of small energy efficient duplex ranches. Since the Town has an above average number of seniors, this might be an attractive opportunity. What might the Town do to encourage this development?
6. If Mars Hill is interested in branding itself as the “healthiest place to live,” should the Town promote the development of new housing, owner occupied and rental, within walking distance of the community core and downtown?



SECTION 4. TRANSPORTATION



A. Mars Hill Transportation

Figure 48. Mars Hill Transportation

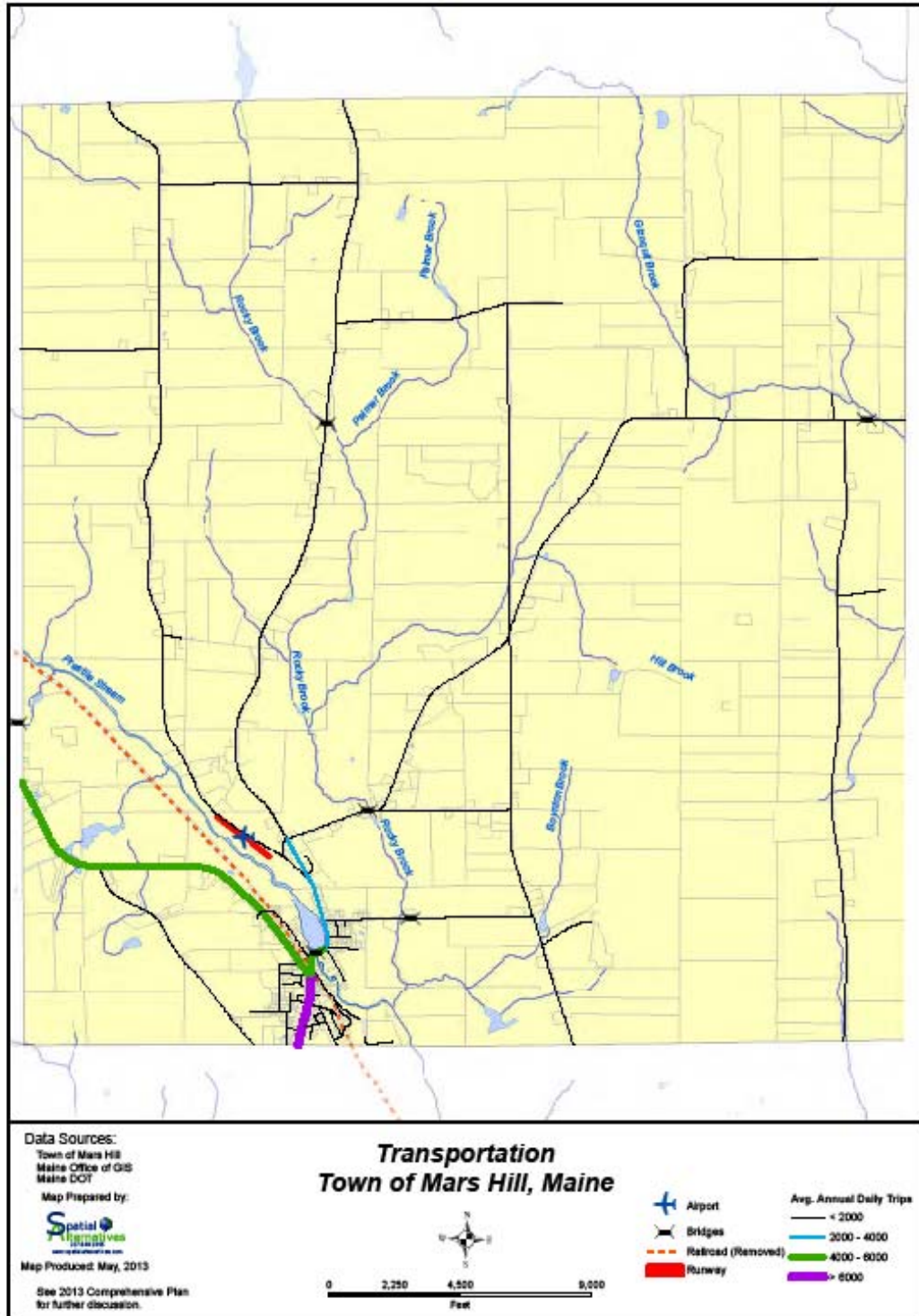
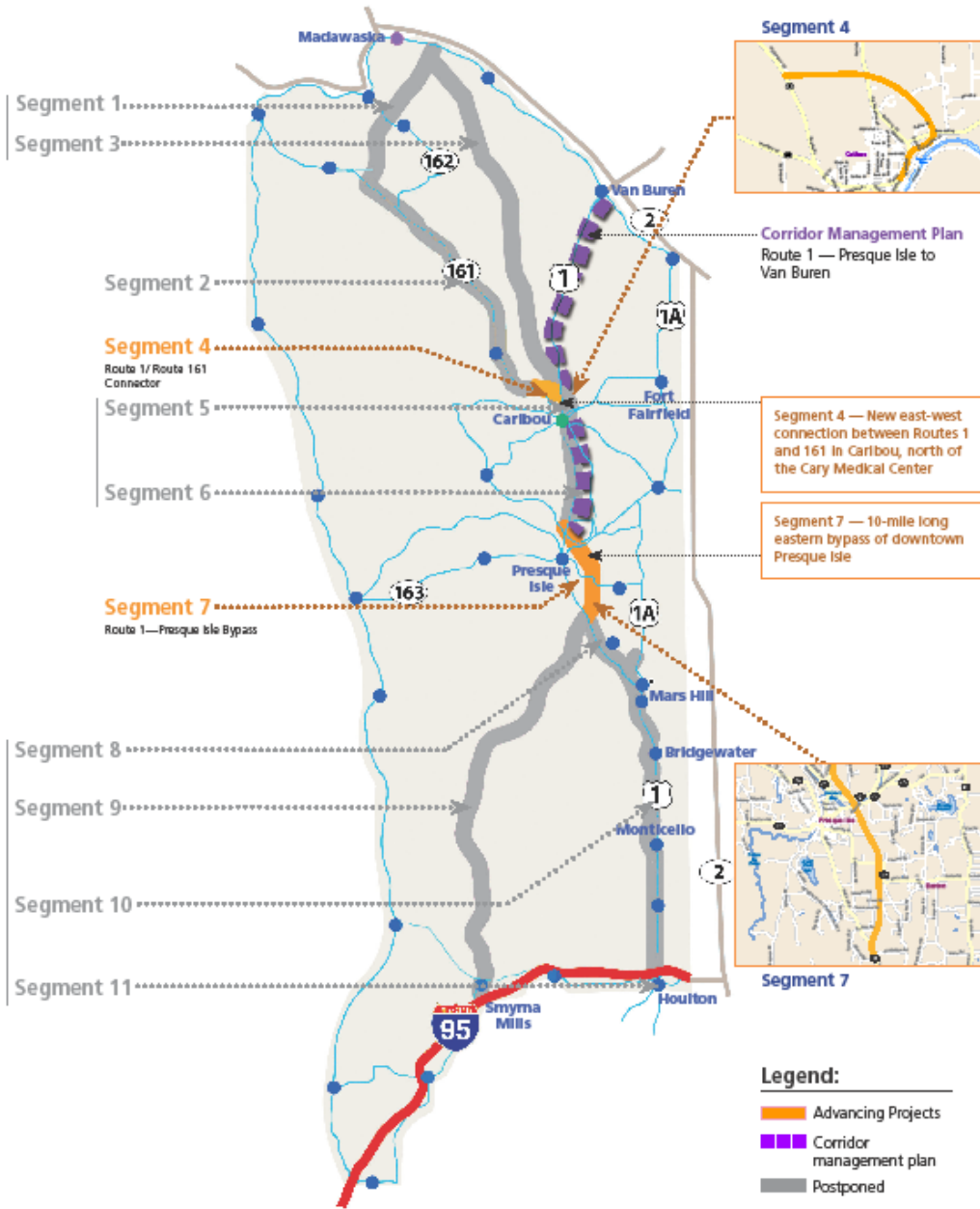


Figure 50. Route I 95 Extension Proposals, Federal Environmental Impact Assessment

Final Environmental Impact Statement Corridor Segments



B. Accidents

Figure 51. Crash Locations in Mars Hill, 2008-2010		
MDOT Code	Locations	# Accidents
Node ID 8376	Route 1	6
Node ID 8372	Route 1	1
Node ID 8378	Route 1	1
Node ID 8374	Route 1	1
Node ID 8579	Route 1A	1
Node ID 8581	Route 1A	1
Node ID 8586	Route 1A	1
Node ID 8822	Route 1A	1
Element 181839	Route 1	12
Element 182100	Route 1A	3
Element 178168	West Ridge Road	3
Element 178171	Route 1A	3
Element 178176	West Ridge Road	3
Element 181844	Route 1	3
Element 181849	Route 1	3
Element 182096	Route 1A	3
Element 182102	Route 1A	3
Element 182248	Route 1A	3

Source: Maine Department of Transportation

There were 53 accidents in Mars Hill between 2008 and 2010. All but 6 of the accidents were on Route 1 or Route 1A.

There were 9 accidents at intersections with Route 1, all but 1 in the core of the community south of the intersection with Route 1A. There were also 12 accidents along the length of Route 1 in the same area. Another 6 accidents occurred on Route 1 close to the town boundary with Westfield. There were 4 accidents at intersections with Route 1A, 3 south of the intersection with West Ridge Road and 1 at the intersection with Smith Road. There were also 15 accidents along the length of Route 1A, 12 between the intersection with West Ridge Road and Smith Road and 3 south of West Ridge Road. There were 6 accidents along the length of West Ridge Road. None of the accident locations meet the Maine Department of Transportation’s (MDOT) criteria to be designated a High Accident Location.



C. Road Conditions

The Town invests approximately \$50,000-\$ 100,000 a year in roads. Many Town roads are in good and some are in very good condition. There are several gravel roads in Town that require constant vigilance. Mountain Road, the road behind Mars Hill Mountain, requires regrading and new gravel each year. White Road, running from West Ridge Road to Rt 1A toward Easton, is also requires regular regrading. Clark Road is unpaved and is fairly rough, which helps reduce travel speeds. Both Clark and White roads become very soft in the spring and in some years, Clark Road has to be closed for a while. There is also a short gravel road between West Ridge Road and Rt 1A, near the Town Garage and East Ridge Road that often needs attention and regrading. Field Road, which also runs between West Ridge and Rt 1A, is a seasonal road that is not kept open in winter except for a small section for two homes near West Ridge Road.

Figure 52. Mars Hill Road Conditions		
Street Name	Date Rebuilt	Comments
POOR CONDITION		
Ackerson Road		Discontinued field road
Clark Road	1994	Needs rebuilding, gravel road breaks up badly in spring, closed some years, requires improvement in sections with homes
Cross Road		Needs overlay, short 100 yard connector of Rt 1A to West Ridge Road, needs reconstruction and paving
Nutter Street	2000	Town hot top
POOR TO GOOD CONDITIONS		
Silver Street	1996	CDBG/storm drains and sidewalk resurfaced 2008, south half Good/north half <i>Poor</i> (not crowned)
FAIR CONDITIONS		
Field Road	1998	Partial rebuild/discontinued field road
Industrial Street	2000	Top gravel added
Mill Street	2000	Town hot top over binder
Rideout Lane		Private road, 150 feet
FAIR TO GOOD CONDITION		
Fort Road	1998	State resurfaced in 2008, south section Good, north section beyond pallet factory <i>Fair</i>
Kearney Road	2006	Resurfaced sections 2003 and 2006, 1 mile overlay in south in 2012, Good in south, <i>Fair</i> in north
GOOD CONDITION		
ACI Street	1992	CDBG/storm drains and sidewalk
Adelmen Street	2008	Hot top length of Park
Bell Hill Road	1994	Resurfaced in 2011
Benjamin Street	2003	State rebuilt
Boyd Road	2000	Town rebuilt gravel in 2008
Boynton Road	1996	State overlaid; possibility State may return to Town
Boynton Street	1996	State resurfaced in 2009; possibility State may return to Town
Church Street	2005	Resurfaced but patched from sewer/water work in 2012
Country Club Road	2000	Town hot top/resurfaced 2009
East Blaine Road	2000	Town hot top/overlaid 2007
East Ridge Road	1998	State overlaid
Fletcher Road		Gravel road, little use
Gilman Street	1995	Town hot top overlaid in 2010, patched for sewer/water work
Graves Road	2000	Rebuilt with hot top/overlay 2007

Figure 52. Mars Hill Road Conditions		
Street Name	Date Rebuilt	Comments
Grove Street	1991	CDBG/storm drains and sidewalks
Hallett Street	2006	Hot top, overlaid in 2011
Hansen Street	1980	Resurfaced in 2002
Hawksley Road	1997	Town rebuilt/gravel, little used field road
Highland Avenue	2000	CDBG/storm drains and sidewalks
Hillside Street		Private ownership
Lincoln Street	1995	Town hot top
Main Street		State road/sidewalks need work, patched, state plans to repave Main Street from Blaine to north end of Town possibly in 2015-16
Main Street/US 1		Overlaid in 1998, need sidewalks, see note above
Maple Street	1981, 1993, 1997, 2006	Resurfaced in 2006
Market Street	1994	Town hot top/resurfaced in 2004
Miller Street	1995	Town hot top
Mt. View Street		Private ownership
Mountain Road	1994-1998	Town rebuilt, gravel 2008-09
Orser Street		Private ownership
Park Street	2000	Town hot topped over binder in 1995
Pleasant Street	2005	Resurfaced, patched for sewer/water work
Presque Isle Road	1995	State rebuilt
School Street	2002	Rebuilt/storm drains and sidewalks, overlay in 2009
Scovil Street	1998	Town hot topped/resurfaced 2008
Shaw Street	2001	Town hot topped/resurfaced 2008
Smith Road	2000	Town rebuilt/gravel
Sylvester Street	2001	Town hot topped/resurfaced 2008
Tower Road		Private road, rebuilt 2006
US 1 North		State Highway
West Ridge Road		State overlaid in 2012, possibility State may return to Town
Westfield Road		State overlaid in 2012, possibility State may return to Town
White Road	2000	Town rebuilt/gravel 2009, breaks up badly in spots in spring
York Street	1986	Overlaid in 2010

Source: Town of Mars Hill, 2013

D. Bridges

There are five bridges in Mars Hill, three are owned and maintained by the State. These bridges include the bridge over the:

- Prestile Stream on Route 1A near the intersection with Route 1,
- Rocky Brook on Boynton Road, and
- Tributary to Prestile Stream on Route 1 at the Town boundary with Westfield.

The Town is responsible for maintaining the Rocky Brook Bridge (Kings Grove) on East Ridge Road and Customs House Bridge (two culverts) which spans the Gizoquit Brook in the northwest area of the community. This bridge formerly served a Customs House, which has been removed. Currently, the bridge crosses Gizoquit Brook to a gated roadway that leads to a single family home in Canada.

Figure 53. Condition of Bridges in Mars Hill		
Bridge	Condition	Comments
Prestile Stream on Route 1A near the intersection with Route 1	Satisfactory	Abutment spalling under beams
Rocky Brook on Boynton Road	Good	
Rocky Brook on East Ridge Road	Fair	
Tributary to Prestile Stream on Route 1 at Town boundary with Westfield	Fair	Slab spalling with exposed rebar Spalling of wings
Customs House Bridge which spans the Gizoquit Brook	Serious	Pipes are distorted

Source: Maine Department of Transportation, 2012

The Town’s Customs House Bridge is in poor condition.

E. Airport

There is a privately owned airport in Mars Hill on the West Ridge Road which is used for light aircraft and other flying craft on occasion. It is available for public use at the user’s own risk. The airport is registered with the Federal Aviation Administration.

F. Rail

Figure 54. Maine Railroad Network



The State of Maine recently purchased the Montreal, Maine and Atlantic Railway, LTD (MMA) to avoid its discontinuation and to continue to provide dependable transportation of products into and from the Aroostook region. According to the *Due Diligence Report: Montreal, Maine & Atlantic Railway*, prepared for MDOT in 2010, if the State can provide consistent and reliable service, the rail line operations, upon which the forestry industry depends, can be profitable. Based on a conversation with Rob Elder, Director of Freight and Rail for MDOT, the State has arranged for the Northern Maine Railroad (NMR, an Irving company) is operating what is left of the MMA line and is providing considerably improved service. NMR is reliably running 100 car trains 4 times a week. While currently the primary user of rail transport is the forestry industry, the State's goal is to encourage more transport of agricultural products by rail.

While Figure 46 indicates a rail line parallel to the Prestile Stream, the Town's 1992 Comprehensive Plan indicates that the Bangor & Aroostook tracks in Mars Hill were taken up in 1987 and the line does not appear on MDOT's maps.

MDOT offers an Industrial Rail Access Program (IRAP) to encourage the development of access to rail. The program is a 50:50 match, with the State providing half and either the rail company or a manufacturer providing the other half of the cost of building spurs. Fort Fairfield participated in the program and though its project was not initially successful when the rail was owned by MMA, the State took back the line and it appears to be working well under NMR's management. The State is about to announce another 10 projects and there will be other rounds in competition for State funds for this program.

G. Pedestrian Ways

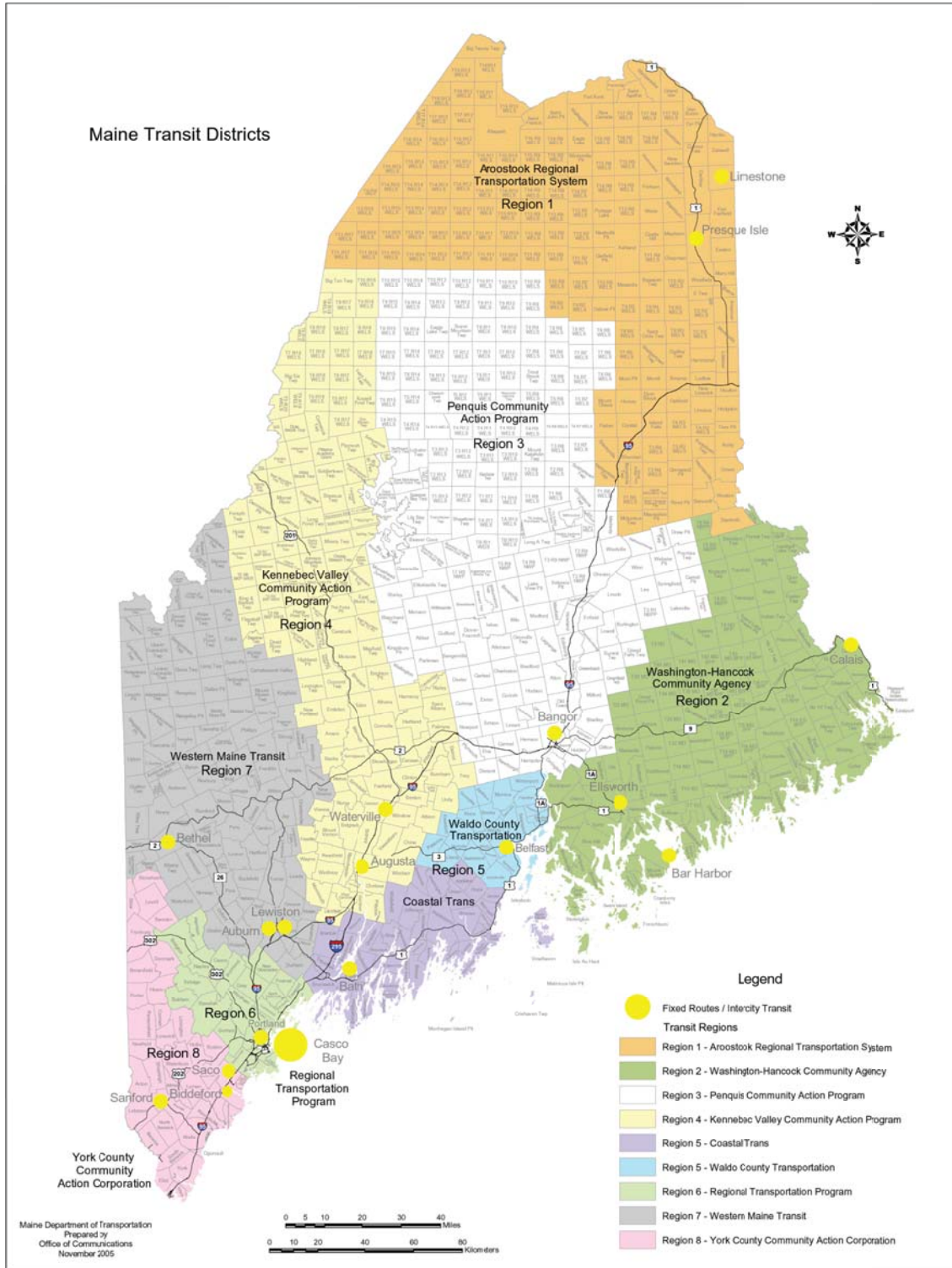
The 1992 Comprehensive Plan indicates that there are sidewalks on Main Street, Route 1A almost to the Town Office, Pleasant Street, York Street, ACI Street, Highland Avenue, part of Benjamin Street, and Grove Street.

To support Mars Hill's brand as "the healthiest Town in the County" and improve traffic safety by slowing the speed of traffic and traffic noise and by encouraging more people to walk on Main Street, the Town might work with the Maine Department of Transportation to reduce the width of travel lanes and widen sidewalks in the town center. Slowing traffic and widening sidewalks would improve pedestrian safety and comfort and provide an opportunity to expand the street life and liveliness of Mars Hill's Downtown.

There is a walking path from the High School to the base of the Mountain, though conditions are inconsistent along its pathway.

H. Public Transit

Figure 55. Maine Transit Districts



The Aroostook Regional Transportation System, Inc. (ARTS) – provides service to Mars Hill. ARTS provides general public transportation throughout Aroostook County with service for each town to the nearest commercial center at least once a week. Services are available to all members of the general public and pick-up services are available for the elderly and handicapped.

There are two establishments in Mars Hill that either serve sizeable populations or employ a significant number of staff – the Aroostook Health Center and Northern Lighthouse. The Aroostook County Center provides long term care and rehabilitation services for 72 residents and other out-patients. Northern Lighthouse employs 85-90 people who serve families and children with varying disabilities. Yet employees and families of those served by these facilities live in many other communities besides Mars Hill. According to Grow Washington-Aroostook Counties (Gro-WA), “Nearly 80% of people in Aroostook County drive alone and 8.6% carpool...The occupation and industry of workers in the region often require long commutes to jobs that are not conducive to carpooling... The ARTS transportation service does not meet the demands of persons who must attend medical appointments and therefore they must travel to and from appointments in single vehicle runs.”¹ Gro-WA recommends that “ARTS should work with the region’s largest employers to develop schedules that accommodate employees living in outlying communities. At a minimum, ARTS should develop centralized drop-off and pick-up locations in the region’s service centers [Mars Hill is a service center.] and along transportation corridors. The development of Park-and-Ride lots should also be accomplished.” It also recommends that the MaineCare brokers and provider system needs to be improved to ensure that MaineCare clients are able to attend non-emergency medical appointments. Additional recommended actions include:

- Increase demand and use of public transit through better marketing of the service available in the region.
- Provide additional service from small, rural communities to the region’s service center.
- Obtain funding through the BoP process for capital improvements and infrastructure for ARTS.
- Seek alternative funding opportunities, such as the New Freedom grant, to provide service to non-traditional users of the system.
- Review schedules from service centers to employment centers and determine if van pooling/commuter services can be implemented and/or increased.
- Develop an “information highway” to facilitate services, scheduling, and ride-sharing.

Gro-WA also recommends that homebuyers consider home and work locations. Mars Hill’s demographic and economic strategies should include work with major employers to help

¹ Grow Washington-Aroostook Counties, Component C: Housing and Transportation. 2014.

provide information about the financial as well as the cultural and recreational benefits of both living and working in Mars Hill.

The Aroostook Health Center has a dedicated, wheelchair accessible, bus which is used daily for doctor's appointments, treatments, and activity trips (about twice a month, residents are taken to Presque Isle or Houlton for lunch, shopping, scenic drives, and other activities. This bus provides the primary share of patient travel, though some travel (about 10% of travel activities) is provided by family members. On rare occasions, patients have hired the Aroostook Regional Transportation System (ARTS) service for a small fee. Taxi service is generally not used by patients.

Many patients have mobility issues or medical conditions which require the specially equipped bus as well as patient handling lifts from the Health Center.

Employees of the Health Center travel to and from work, largely by individual vehicle. The Manager of the Health Center, Kelly Lundeen, has on occasion offered to coordinate schedules so that folks can car pool but there is little demand (two employees from Presque Isle do car pool). On rare occasion employees use a taxi when they are in a pinch.

Northern Lighthouse provides counseling and training for troubled families and children. Most of its 200 clients are located throughout Aroostook County and most of the services are provided in the home. While there are 90+ employees who live in communities ranging from Fort Kent to Houlton, most work in the field and come together in Mars Hill only once every month or two. Residential clients housed in Mars Hill include up to 6 young people, who are transported to local schools by Northern Lighthouse. Because of the problems faced by these clients, they are quite tightly controlled and supervised. Transportation, if needed, is provided by Northern Lighthouse. The only public transportation available to clients is the Aroostook Regional Transportation System or private taxi, which are not used to great extent.

On site staff include 12 to 18 people, depending on scheduling, who generally commute in individual vehicles. Monthly meetings gather staff from afar which makes car pooling difficult.

I. Roads and Wildlife

Roads can be a hazard and barrier for terrestrial wildlife species moving across the land and to aquatic species traveling up and down streams. Wildlife needs to be able to freely move across the landscape and waterways to find food, mates, and different habitats and to adapt to range shifts as a result of a changing climate. Town road maintenance and construction projects (i.e., culverts) often inadvertently impede fish and wildlife passage. For more information on the effects of roads on wildlife visit:

http://www.maine.gov/doc/mfs/fpm/water/docs/stream_crossing_2008/MaineStreamCrossingPoster.pdf and http://www.beginningwithhabitat.org/pdf/Conserving_Wildlife_in_MDF.pdf.

J. Issues and Implications

1. Mars Hill is located at the intersection of two major transportation routes, Route 1 and 1A. While some traffic travels north on Route 11 to the East, most traffic uses the roads through our town. A major ATV and snowmobile trail goes through town also located on the old Bangor & Aroostook Railroad bed. Upon leaving Route 95 in Houlton and skirting the actual city of Houlton, the first major population the traveler sees coming north is Mars Hill. How can the Town capitalize on its position as a “Gateway to the Northern Aroostook?”
2. If the State extends I 95 and bypasses Mars Hill, it will be important that the Town establish itself as a destination beforehand or it will lose the economic advantage that its current location on the highway system provides.
3. Many Canadians come across the border at Bridgewater, up the back road, then along the front of the mountain to get north to Presque Isle, Fort Fairfield, and Caribou. They also follow this route to get to Mars Hill’s golf course, ski tow, and groceries. Many shop at Walmart in Presque Isle. However, the first mile or so, in Bridgewater, is a dirt road, rough, and muddy in wet weather. The road continues to be somewhat rough as it goes through Blaine. The poor condition of roads along this route may be a detriment to business. Should the Town work with Bridgewater, Blaine, and MDOT to improve this route and develop a consistent signage strategy to guide travelers to Mars Hill and other destinations along the route?
4. MDOT indicates that the condition of the Customs House Bridge is “serious;” however, there is no longer a need for this bridge since it only leads to a blocked gate in Canada unless the Town is concerned about the damage to the culvert under the road from frost heaving.
5. What can and should the Town do to promote use of the air strip as an economic asset?
6. Should the Town work with local farmers to explore the value of a rail siding to provide access for Mars Hill’s agricultural products?
7. Many younger people focus much of their recreational activity on walking, hiking, and biking. As part of promoting Mars Hill as the “healthiest place to live” should the Town invest in upgrading existing sidewalks and trails and constructing new ones to support efforts to cast the Town as a destination for incoming tourists and travelers?

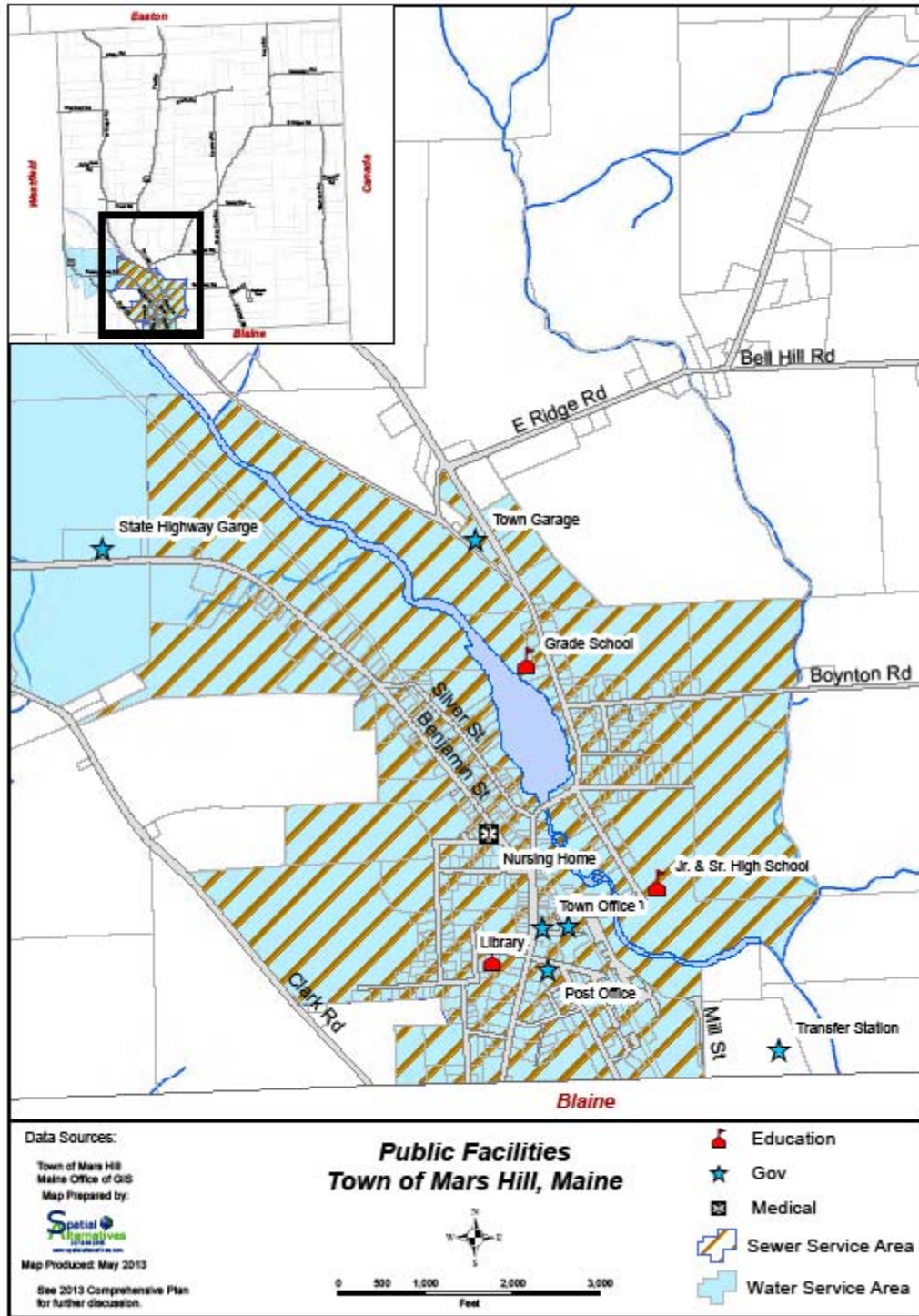
8. What should Mars Hill do to encourage large employers to promote car pooling, improvement of services and use of ARTS, or other approaches to reduce the number of miles traveled in individual vehicles to access employment, goods, and services?

SECTION 5. PUBLIC FACILITIES AND SERVICES



A. Mars Hill Public Facilities

Figure 56. Mars Hill Pubic Facilities



Most public facilities and services are within or near the Downtown.

B. Drinking Water and Wastewater Disposal

1. Utility District

The Mars Hill and Blaine Water Company, as part of the Mars Hill Utility District, provides public water to approximately 1,800 customers in Mars Hill and portions of Blaine and Westfield. District customers consume approximately 64 million gallons per year.

The source of water continues to be Youngs Lake, where no significant land use threats have been identified in the District's 2003 *Maine Public Drinking Water Source Water Assessment Program Mars Hill and Blaine Water Company Youngs Lake Watershed* prepared for the Maine Source Water Assessment Program at the Drinking Water Program in the Maine Department of Human Services. The primary land use in the watershed, which is primarily in Westfield and E-Plantation, is timber harvesting. Occasional harvesting should not pose a significant threat to water quality as long as reasonable harvesting practices are followed. Public access to the lake and reservoir is limited by a gate and sign; therefore, recreational activity is infrequent and primarily limited to camp owners. Portions of the watershed are also protected by a conservation easement.

The District has undertaken an ambitious upgrade of its transmission and distribution system. A water filter plant was constructed in 1993. A new water treatment plant, with a minimum life expectancy of 50 years, went on-line in 1995. By 1995, 72% of the District's transmission and distribution system was new since 1985, with a life expectancy of 80-100 years and by 1999, the District had installed all new water lines from the water plant to the standpipes. The District installed a new 500,000 standpipe in 1995 and removed a 250,000 gallon standpipe from service in 2010. A second standpipe also may be needed sometime after the planning period on the east side of the Stream at a cost of approximately \$500,000.

In 1995, the District used grant funds to purchase 138 acres from Great Northern Paper Company around Youngs Lake to help protect the District's source water.

By 2003, the District was warning customers about changes to federal standards to treatment methods, source water protection, and other standards governing small public water systems. In response to new standards, the District identified two options for new wells on the water treatment plant property in 2004. The District received a 75% grant package to undertake improvements from the Maine Drinking Water State Revolving Loan Fund and completed the project in 2005 (\$331,000 project). Benefits of the project are lower use of disinfectants, better

tasting water, improved color during summer months, smaller withdrawals from Youngs Lake, and greater security for source water in the event of surface water contamination.

In December 2011, the Mars Hill and Blaine Water Company entered a Taste Test competition in Freeport and placed third.

The Utility District also provides a public sewer system and waste water treatment for the village area of Mars Hill. In 1993, the Legislature expanded the boundaries of the service area of



the Sewer Utility District into a portion of Blaine. Currently, the system is licensed for 1 million gallons per day of discharge (designed for a maximum of 1.6 million gallons per day). The District has 32 million gallons holding capacity. Average daily use is 80,000-100,000 gallons per day. There were 583 Mars Hill households in the public sewer system and 623 households in the public water system in 2010.

A new sewer treatment plant, with a minimum life of 50 years, and two pump stations were constructed in 1993. Over 49% of the sewer collection system was new or replaced between 1975 and 1993. If properly maintained these improvements should last 50-100 years.

The District has worked with its member towns to optimize the use of Community Development Block Grant funds to meet the multiple purpose of upgrading public water and sewer lines while reconstructing roads and improving associated streetscapes. Reconstruction and expansion projects were undertaken for Grove and Institute streets, South Main Street, Silver Street, Mill Street, Old Houlton Rd as far as the Pierce Rd (in Blaine), Highland Avenue, Benjamin Street, Bowery Road (Blaine), Hansen Street, School Street, Miller Street, Gilman Street, and Church Street.

In 1997, the Utility District received two awards for its wastewater treatment plant – the Regional Outstanding Facility Award from the Maine Wastewater Control Association and the EPA Region 1 – New England for Most Improve Wastewater Treatment Plant in NE.

In 2002, the District undertook a complete camera assessment of most underground wastewater pipes to guide systematic upgrading of older sections to eliminate clay pipe, which are cracked and taking on groundwater which increases operation and maintenance costs. In 2010, the District began to replace 10,000' of cast iron water mains and 2000' of clay sewer mains with \$2.5 million in grants and \$1million in loans for a combined cost of \$3.5 million.

In 2011, the Utility's total capital assets, net of depreciation, totaled \$13.3 million for both water and wastewater processing.

While the wastewater treatment system operated beyond expectations for a few years, unusually high inflow of wastewater, due to higher than normal precipitation for a couple years, and an unintentional discharge of a pollutant into the collection system in 2007 temporarily upset the treatment system. Operational problems have been resolved and the system continues to operate without significant problems.

2. On-site Water Systems

Mars Hill has 2 water systems that the state defines as “community” public water systems. They provide water for the Mars Hill Country Club and Big Rock Ski Area/Restaurant. Both are bedrock wells with thickness of overburden unknown, drilled to depths between 260 and 360 feet. The Maine Drinking Water Program identifies contamination risk for these water systems based on:

- well type and site geology (thickness of overburden);
- existing and future risk of acute contamination from bacteria, nitrates, septic systems, and animal feedlot or manure piles; and
- current and future risk of chronic chemical contaminants or significant sources of contamination from parking lots, fuel storage tanks, landfills, or industrial waste disposal sites.

The well at the Country Club is at “moderate” risk based on well type and geology and for existing risk from acute contamination, but is listed as “low” risk for future risk from acute contamination. While testing found no bacteria, no nitrates greater than 5ppm, and no animal feedlots/manure piles within 300 feet of the well, it did find septic system(s) within 300 feet of the well. Because the proprietor owns land within 300 feet of the water supply source, it is listed as low risk for future risk of acute contamination.

The well at the Big Rock Ski Area/Restaurant is also listed as “moderate” risk based on well type and geology, but is listed as “low” risk for existing and future risk from acute contamination because there are no septic systems or feedlots/manure piles within 300’ of the well and because the proprietor owns land within 300 feet of the water supply source.

A new state law enacted in 2000 (PL 761) gives public water suppliers “abutter status” for certain proposed activities that require a permit within a given source protection area, including automobile recycling facilities or junkyards, expansion of structures using subsurface waste disposal systems, conditional and contract zoning, subdivisions, and other land use projects.

C. Stormwater

Stormwater drainage systems were upgraded as part of street reconstruction projects, including Main Street and School Street.

The remnants of Hurricane Irene created some storm drainage issues throughout the community in the fall of 2011, although according to Ray Mersereau, Town Manager in Mars Hill for 20 years, the Town did not have serious road erosion problems and those that occurred were handled by Town employees. The Town cleans storm drains blocked with ice and snow in late winter/early spring to protect bridges, culverts, and roads from flooding. A professor and students from the University of Maine Presque Isle recently worked with Mars Hill high school students to map the community's entire storm drain system.



D. Community Development

Mars Hill has been quite successful in securing Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) to reconstruct public facilities, including reconstruction of:

- Grove and Institute streets (1990-1991)
- Silver Street (1995)
- Park Street (1997)
- Highland Avenue and Benjamin Street (2000)
- School Street (2002)

When the previous Comprehensive Plan was adopted, the Town employed a Community Development Director. His title was changed to Economic Development Director in 1992 when the focus of his efforts shifted to concentrating on improving public facilities and enlarging the Town's commercial area. In 1993, he left the Town's employ and the position was not filled.

E. Solid Waste Management

In 1993, the Town stopped accepting waste at its landfill and began trucking it to an offsite disposal facility for a "tipping fee." The Town adopted a pay per bag, municipal curbside collection system. The Town crew built a licensed Transfer Station and Recycling Center off Route 1 south of Downtown and in the vicinity of a tributary to Rocky Brook. The Town also adopted an agreement with Penobscot Energy Recovery Company (PERC) to handle municipal garbage and recyclables. It also disposed of 82 tons of stockpiled tires and designated a leaf

composting area on the Utility District’s property. In 1998 the Town signed an agreement to extend its solid waste disposal contract with PERC until 2018.

PERC is a private partnership that owns and operates a waste-to-energy facility in Orrington. The facility accepts municipal solid waste, which it processes into refuse-derived fuel that it burns to produce steam to run turbine-generators that generate electricity. In 2010, the PERC facility accepted and processed over 311,000 tons of MSW and generated over 166,000 megawatts of electricity, enough to power 16,600 homes and the equivalent of 1,232 billion cf of natural gas of 14.2 million gallons of #2 fuel oil. The partners in PERC include the general partner, USA Energy Group, LLC, based in Minneapolis, MN; a private partner with limited partnership interests, PERC Holdings, LLC, also based in Minneapolis; and 86 Maine municipal entities that have limited partnership interests .

Pine Tree Waste, a division of Casella Resource Solutions, provides curbside pickup for Mars Hill. The cost of waste removal to the citizens is \$2 per bag. Pine Tree also provides dumpster services and operates the Town transfer station which is open on Saturday and Wednesday evening during the summer. Pine Tree also provides transportation of waste from the Transfer Station to the PERC facility for the Town.

Figure 57. Recycling Summary						
Base Rate		Return Bottle Credit		Compost Credit		2010 Adjusted Recycling Rate
18.6%	+	5.0%	+	0%	=	23.60%

Source: Maine State Planning Office, 2010 Municipal Recycling Report

Figure 58. Municipal Recyclables								
	Tons			Tons			Tons	
	Res.	Com.		Res.	Com.		Res.	Com.
Office Paper	0	0	Mixed Metals	0	0	Mixed Plastics	0	0
Mixed Paper	0	0	Alum Cans/Foil	0	0	PETE/PET (#1)	0	0
Cardboard (OCC)	101.71	0	Tin Cans	0	0	HDPE (#2)	0	0
Newspaper (ONP)	0	0	WTE Metal	32.46	0	PVC (#3)	0	0
Magazines (OMG)	0	0	White Goods	72.59	0	LDPE (#4)	0	0
Mixed News/Mag.	0	0	Clearing Debris	0	0			0
Mixed Glass	0	0	(compost)	0	0	Comingled Paper	0	0
(beneficial)	0	0	(energy)	0	0	Comingled Cont.	0	0
Clear Glass	0	0	Leaf/Yard	0	0	Single Stream	38.57	0
(beneficial)	0	0	(compost)	0	0	Sheetrock	0	0
Green Glass	0	0	Mixed CDD	0	0	(beneficial)	0	0
(beneficial)	0	0	(beneficial)	0	0	Shingles	0	0
Brown Glass	0	0	(energy)	0	0	(beneficial)	0	0
(beneficial)	0	0	Wood CDD	75	0	Cooking Oil	0	0
Car Batteries	0	0	(energy)	0	0	Reuse Tons	0	
Tires	6.92	0	Carpet	0	0	Other:		
(beneficial)	0	0	Ash (beneficial)	0	0		0	0

(energy)	0	0					
Source: Maine State Planning Office, 2010 Municipal Recycling Report							

According to the former State Planning Office (SPO), Mars Hill’s municipal adjusted recycling rate¹ was 23.60% in 2010. All of the municipal recycled materials were generated by residential households. The majority of municipal recycled materials was cardboard, tires, WTE metal, white goods, and single stream waste.

Figure 59. Universal Waste								
	Tons			Tons			Tons	
	Res.	Com.		Res.	Com.		Res.	Com.
Monitors & TVs	2.42	0.1	Mercury Therm.	0	0	Other:		
Computers	0.11	0.12	Other Mercury	0	0			
Mercury Lamps	0	0	Batteries	0	0		0	0
CFLs	0.003	0.0177	Intact PCB Ballasts	0.0018	0.0088		0	0
Source: Maine State Planning Office, 2010 Municipal Recycling Report								

Both residential households and commercial entities contributed to Mars Hill’s universal waste stream and included monitors & TVs, computers, CFLs, and intact PCB ballasts.

Figure 60. Municipal Solid Waste						
	Tons		Tons		Subtotal Recycled 4	327.24
	Res.	Com.	Res.	Com.		
	Landfilled		Incinerated		Reused Materials	0
MSW	397.38	0	985.34	0	Universal Waste	2.78
Mixed CDD	36.47	0	0	0	Total Recycled	330.03
Ash	25	0	0	0	Total MSW	1444.19
Source: Maine State Planning Office, 2010 Municipal Recycling Report						

Mars Hill landfilled about 1/3 of its residential waste (31.8% or 4458.86 tons) and incinerated nearly 2/3 of its residential waste (68.3%).

F. Police Protection

Mars Hill continues to rely on the State Police and County Sheriff’s Department for police services, as it has for the last 20 years. Two sheriffs are assigned to Mars Hill which is working well. The Town paid Aroostook County \$103,000 for services in 2011.

There has been some discussion about the need and/or desirability a local police presence. Recently Mars Hill agreed to provide office turn around space for the assigned sheriffs in Town Hall. The presence of police vehicles parked near or on Main Street is viewed as a deterrent for potential problems. This arrangement is working well and is a win win for both sides.

¹ The adjusted rate is the base rate plus a credit for returnable beverage containers.

G. Fire Protection

The Fire Department built and moved to a new Fire Station on Market Street in the Downtown area in 2005. By 2007, the Town had completed a park around the Fire Station.

There are 30 part-time paid volunteers. The Fire Department serves the towns of Mars Hill, Blaine, E Plantation, and Robinson and has mutual aid agreements with Bridgewater, Presque Isle, and Westfield. The ISO rating is 5 for Downtown and 8B for the more rural areas of Town, an improvement from a previous designation of 9.

The Town purchased the following equipment since adoption of the current Comprehensive Plan:

- Pumper (1991)
- High bank radio equipment (1993)
- 4 new Scott Air Packs with voice enhancers (1998)
- Initial purchase, then replacement of thermal imaging camera (1999, 2012)
- 1995 Ford Diesel Tractor to pull tanker
- Mounted 3,000 gallon tank that was on the old 1965 Chevy onto 1980 International Tractor previously used to haul the tanker (2002)
- Unsuccessful in search for grant money to build Fire Station
- 2003 4X4 King Cab Chevrolet Pickup to transport firefighters and equipment to/from fire scenes (2003)
- AED machine (2003)
- Personal protective equipment and self-contained breathing apparatuses
- 2010 E-One 1250 gallon per minute pumper truck with a compressed air foam system (2009)
- 4X4 pickup for jaws of life (2009)
- Narrow band radio system (2012)

The 2009 equipment purchases put the Department in good shape for major equipment needs for the foreseeable future, though the Chief notes the need for a new pumper to replace the 1991 pumper by 2016 at an estimated cost of \$250,000 and a 2,500 gallon tanker by 2020 at an estimated cost of \$100,000.

The following improvements have been made to Department facilities since adoption of the current Comprehensive Plan:

- Repaired roof of old Fire Station (1995)

- Update 5,000 gallon water tank to 6,000 gallon aluminum tank (1997)

In 1994, the Town moved fire dispatch to the County Sheriff’s Office in Houlton.

In 1996, the Town’s E-911 Committee began renaming streets and the GIS survey in Mars Hill. E-911 addressing was completed in 2000.

H. Ambulance Service

Ambulance and rescue services are provided by Crown Ambulance, a department of the Aroostook Medical Center since 1988. Crown Ambulance was recently named EMS Service of the Year by the Mid-Coast EMS. “This is the third time Crown has received this state-wide award in the last 20 years,” said Jim McKenney, TAMC’s Vice President of Ancillary Patient Services. “It is a tribute to Crown’s employees and the effort they have put forth to make the service one of the best in the entire state.”

Mars Hill contracts with Crown Ambulance for emergency ambulance service at an annual cost of \$17,500 with no per call charge. Service is quick and excellent. Two vehicles are garaged at the Mars Hill Health Center next to the nursing home.

I. Schools

1. Public Schools

Figure 61. Description of School Facilities, 2012					
School	Date Built	Latest Addition	Acres	Current Enrollment	Enrollment Capacity
Fort Street School	1955	1988	11.5	204	300
Central Aroostook Junior-Senior High School	1976		104	195	400

Source: SAD #42 Superintendent’s Office, 2012

The two school sites are used for a variety of student activities. The Fort Street School has a playground, an outdoor basketball court, two outdoor volleyball courts, a world fitness center, and a multipurpose athletic field. The Junior-Senior High School includes a baseball field, softball field, three soccer fields, large agricultural field used by the FFA for crop production, and 40-acre forested area which is used for wood lot management.



Other District facilities include a 1,628 square foot central office building and 2,240 square foot, 2-story storage facility. Located adjacent to the high school, these facilities were completed in 1988 and 1989, respectively.

While the District has addressed two of priorities expressed in its current Comprehensive Plan, a regulation softball field and paving needs at the High School, development of a greenhouse for use by the science and agriculture departments at the high school has not been achieved.

Figure 62. Fort Street Elementary School Enrollment

	Pre-K	K Grade	1 st Grade	2 nd Grade	3 rd Grade	4 th Grade	5 th Grade	6 th Grade	Total
1989 ^a	0	27	29	28	35	37	35	24	215
2006	20	34	29	27	28	16	27	30	211
2007	28	24	35	26	262	30	17	30	216
2008	30	27	26	31	24	26	31	15	210
2009	19	35	29	32	36	21	27	32	231
2010	33	21	40	30	35	39	28	27	253
2011	26	36	19	38	30	30	40	31	250
2012	29	30	26	16	26	20	30	27	204

^a – In 1989, Fort Street Elementary School included Pre-K through 8th Grade. Total in chart includes enrollments from Pre-K through 6th Grade.
Source: SAD #42 Superintendent’s Office, 2012

Enrollments at the Fort Street Elementary School have declined over the past seven years, though they are relatively consistent with enrollment figures for 1989. Preliminary figures for the 2011-2012 school year indicate that 229 students are enrolled in Pre K through 6th Grade, a 12.3% increase from the previous year.

Figure 63. Central Aroostook Junior-Senior High School Enrollments

	7 th Grade	8 th Grade	9 th Grade	10 th Grade	11 th Grade	12 th Grade	Total
1989 ^a	24	21	20	18	26	33	142
2006	30	46	39	47	23	45	230
2007	42	28	44	38	41	23	216
2008	34	35	28	45	36	37	215
2009	20	31	36	26	46	27	186
2010	41	22	35	43	28	40	207
2011	33	41	29	35	34	29	201
2012	31	34	40	27	32	31	195

^a – In 1989, the Central Aroostook Junior-Senior High School included Grades 9-12. The total in this chart includes enrollments from Grades 7 and 8 that were then housed at the Fort Street Elementary School.
Source: SAD #42 Superintendent’s Office, 2012.

Enrollments at the Aroostook Junior-Senior High School have declined significantly over the past seven years, though the current enrollment level is higher than it was in 1989. Preliminary figures for the 2011-2012 school year indicate that 196 students are enrolled in Grades 7 through 12, essentially the same as in the previous school year.

Figure 64. NWEA Achievement Status and Growth Summary Report Results, SAD #42, 2008-2012

Grade	2008-2009 %			2009-2010 %			2010-2011 %			2011-2012 %		
	Reading	Math	Lang	Reading	Math	Lang	Reading	Math	Lang	Reading	Math	Lang
3	33.3	36.4	30.3	33.3	75.9	39.3	60.7	43.3	66.7	38.7	21.9	29.0
4	50.0	57.9	42.1	75.0	62.2	74.3	64.3	60.7	71.4	50.0	67.9	48.1
5	39.1	34.8	39.1	70.8	66.7	83.3	56.8	57.1	58.3	48.4	33.3	58.1
6	42.9	37.0	29.6	48.0	72.0	88.0	53.8	61.5	66.7	60.0	51.4	54.3
7	25.0	40.0	21.4	41.4	40.2	59.0	17.2	48.3	46.7	64.0	23.1	73.1
8	30.7	25.0	41.9	43.8	50.0	33.3	28.9	37.8	44.4	85.2	44.4	71.4
9	38.7	34.8	38.7	55.2	73.1	57.1	65.2	52.2	43.5	94.1	67.6	53.1
10				21.5	81.3	82.1	84.4	66.7	74.2	66.7	52.4	52.4

Note: Shaded area indicates test results exceeded District's 55% goal.
Source: Northwest Evaluation Association, 2008-2012

Each year, the State administers the Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA) assessment Test to students in the 4th, 8th, and 11th grades. The Fort Street School scored below the state averages in reading in 2011-2012. The Junior- Senior High School continued to improve its performance in critical reading and mathematics over the two previous academic years, but still score below the state average. Scores in writing and science were the same as the previous year, still below the state average. Overall, the District consistently exceeded its 55% goal in reading in all grades and exceeded its goal in math and language in some grades.

Figure 65. MSAD #42 Enrollment Projections for Fort Street Elementary School

Year	Pre K	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	Total
2013	28	31	29	27	18	27	22	30	212
2014	31	31	32	30	28	19	28	26	225
2015	30	34	30	30	31	27	18	18	218
2016	26	33	33	31	29	29	26	28	235
2017	19	29	32	33	29	31	30	27	230
2018	24	22	28	31	31	31	30	29	226
2019	26	26	21	29	30	32	30	29	223
2020	27	28	25	20	27	31	32	28	218
2021	25	31	27	24	21	28	32	33	221

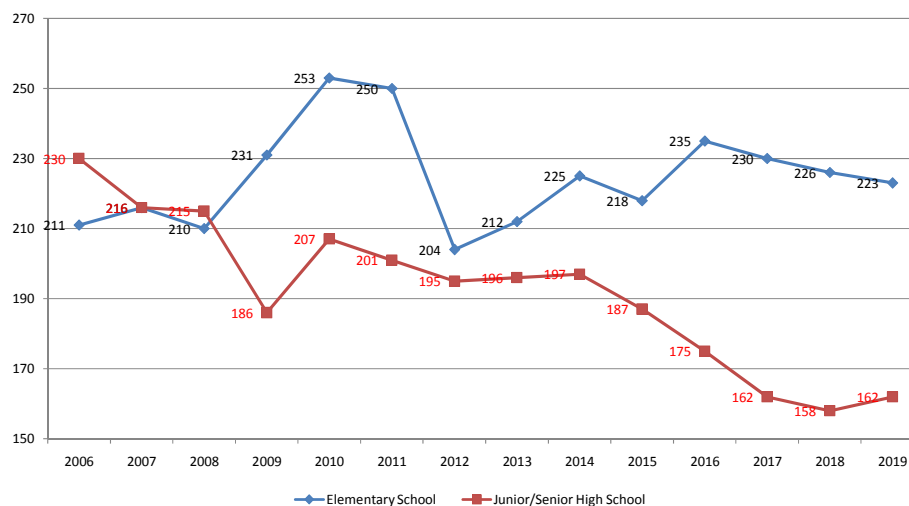
Note: Based on annual averages of past 10 years.
Source: SAD #42 Superintendent's Office, 2012.

Year	7	8	9	10	11	12	Total
2013	28	32	35	40	28	33	196
2014	32	30	31	36	39	29	197
2015	21	33	32	30	34	40	187
2016	27	20	32	30	31	34	175
2017	18	28	22	31	31	32	162
2018	27	19	29	21	32	30	158
2019	31	28	22	27	22	32	162
2020	30	32	30	21	26	21	157
2021	29	29	30	29	21	27	165

Note: Based on annual averages of past 10 years.
Source: SAD #42 Superintendent's Office, 2012.

Figure 67. School Enrollments & Projections, 2006-2021

School Enrollments & Projections 2006-2021



Source: SAD #42 Superintendent's Office, 2012.

The Superintendent's Office provided simple projections of school enrollments, based on an average of the past 10 years. These projections suggest that elementary school enrollment will grow from 2012 levels, but will be less than 2011 levels. They also suggest that junior-senior high school enrollments will continue to decline below 2012 levels. While these are not scientifically generated futures, they reflect the general trend of the last seven years.

During the last ten years, major capital improvements were completed in both school buildings. All lighting fixtures were retrofitted with low energy fluorescent lights and motion sensors manage all gymnasium lighting. In addition, the floors in both gymnasiums were sanded and refinished and the bleacher seating was completely refurbished.

In the Junior-Senior High School, the underground heating oil tank was replaced with an EPA compliant tank that is monitored and inspected annually. In addition, the two oil fired boilers were replaced with new high efficiency boilers. Both flues were replaced at the same time. Domestic hot water was also supplied to the kitchen through two on-demand LP gas hot water heaters to allow the boilers to be shut down in late April until mid-October. The main entrance doors at the Junior-Senior High School were been replaced, which greatly reduces heat loss and improves energy efficiency.

The infrastructure in all school buildings should be positioned to meet the District's educational needs for the next 10-15 years with general maintenance.

Several years ago, the District joined efforts with several members of the community to install state of the art field lighting on one of the District's soccer fields. The field is situated in such a way that vehicles can park and spectators can watch from the comfort of their vehicles. It has become a community focal point during the fall soccer season.

2. Private Schools

There are four nursery schools in Mars Hill. The largest is operated in the former high school building which is now the Town's Community Center. A private nursery school operator rents space in the former school from the Town and serves between 15 and 20 children. Another private operator serves 7 to 8 kids in a Fort Street nursery school. A new nursery school recently opened on Boynton Street and serves 3 to 4 children. There is also a small nursery school on Silver Street.

Mars Hill's Head Start Program is operated out of the Town's grade school on Fort Street.

Mars Hill also hosts Northern Lighthouse, a small residential care facility for children that require out of home placement. In 2012, Northern Lighthouse employed 85-90 employees and offered the following services to assist families and children that have varying disabilities – Home and Community Treatment, Case Management, Residential Treatment, Outpatient Therapy, and Section 28 Services.

J. Highway Department

Since adoption of the current Comprehensive Plan, the Highway Department acquired the following equipment:

- International Wheeler all season sander body for the 1989 plow truck (1995)
- Converted old stainless steel sander from wheeler to single axle truck to apply salt/calcium to plow town streets, reverse-a cast plow to improve plowing capacity in (1995)
- Caterpillar loader to replace 1967 Hough Loader with new Caterpillar Loader (1996)
- Snow blower that attaches to the bucket on payloader to open and widen roads; also completed major overhaul on grader (1998)
- 2002 single axle plow truck, designed for urban area of town (2001)
- New sand/dump body for 1995 plow truck (2004)
- New plow truck (2007)
- New pickup truck and plow (2010)
- New plow (2013)
- New grader (2013)

New equipment needs include:

- New loader in 2021, approximately cost of \$200,000
- New plow in 2022, approximately \$200,000

The Town Garage, located on the West Ridge Road, is actually a structure relocated from the Loring Air Force Base. It is not in good shape and will need to be upgraded or replaced in the next five to ten years. The cost estimate for its replacement in 2015 is \$850,000.

The following improvements have been made to the Town Garage since adoption of the current Comprehensive Plan:

- Connecting the Town Garage to the public sewer system to meet DEP/EPA mandates for floor drains (2003)
- New hot air furnace for Town Garage (2003)
- Replaced furnace in Town Garage (2010)

According to the state, the Highway Department needs a salt shed, estimated to cost \$200,000, though it is not required to provide it until the state provides funding for a new facility.

K. Municipal Buildings

In 2005, the Town Office moved from West Ridge Road to 37 Main Street to take advantage of the availability of the former People's Heritage Bank building. The building is in fair condition and is expected to meet the Town's needs for the foreseeable future.

In 2011, a new electronic sign was installed at Town Office to help improve communications about town activities. A new town website was also developed to actively promote Mars Hill and expand the ability of residents to communicate with Town officials.

L. Health Care Facilities

The Mars Hill Health Center, next to the Mars Hill Pharmacy on Main Street, joined The Aroostook Medical Center in July, 1996, when it was known as the Mars Hill Primary Care Center. This convenient location offers patients easy access and patient privacy.



The Aroostook Health Center, located on Highland Avenue, provides long-term care and rehabilitation services to 72 residents. The staff takes a holistic approach to providing care. This includes creating a plan of care that fits the unique needs of every resident, including the physical, mental, emotional, social, and spiritual aspects of health.

The Center's Rehabilitation Program allows residents to relearn activities of daily living, recover sooner, and regain the ability to care of themselves upon returning home. Rehabilitation services help bridge the gap between hospital and home. The Center also cares for residents who can no longer perform everyday tasks.

M. Communications

The Town's contract with Frontier Vision for cable service was negotiated in 1998. The contract extends until 2013.

N. Cemeteries

There are a number of cemeteries in Mars Hill, including:

- Kings Grove on Bell Hill Road,
- Pierce on Fort Road, and
- Snow, the oldest cemetery in Town, on Clark Road.

The town has budgeted significant funds over the past several years to straighten and reset stones as part of a maintenance push.

In 2002, the Highway Department installed 500 gallon water tanks at both King's Grove and Pierce cemeteries.

O. Social Services

Mars Hill has an active Meals On Wheels program which is operated through the Aroostook Agency on Aging. There is a local coordinator. Hot meals are prepared at the Nursing Home five days per week. The Agency attempted to move to a frozen meal program several years ago but local folks who deliver and operate the program would not hear of it. Hot meals and personal daily contact are now subsidized by private citizens.

The Community Food Cupboard and WIC program operate out of the Town's Community Center. Counseling services are available through the health center or the Aroostook Medical Center. The Aroostook Community Action Program (CAP) is active in Mars Hill.



P. Energy

In 2003, Evergreen Wind Power proposed to locate a 28-turbine, 50 megawatt wind farm on Mars Hill Mountain, the first utility scale wind project in New England. In 2005, the Town Council approved a tax increment financing² (TIF) district agreement to help finance the facility³. In 2006, Evergreen Wind Power completed a \$50 million plus wind farm on Mars Hill Mountain. See discussion about tax benefits of the facility in the Fiscal Capacity Chapter. The TIF with First Wind, the current owner of the facility, expires in 2024.

High energy costs put Mars Hill and the region at a disadvantage in maintaining and attracting businesses with high energy demand, such as back room computer services. If the Town can develop ways to work with First Wind and others to reduce energy costs to benefit local businesses and homes, this disadvantage might be transformed into a competitive advantage. This opportunity may require changes to state utility law.

In addition to opportunities with wind power, the Town might look to opportunities provided by access to compressed natural gas. McCain's potato processing plant in Easton is in the



² Tax increment financing, or TIF, is a financing mechanism available to Maine municipalities and the Unorganized Territory to capture and leverage new property taxes within a district and invest part of all of those taxes into locally-approved activities and projects to provide new employment opportunities, improve and broaden the tax base, and improve the general economy of the State. Each district and related development program requires approval of the local legislative body and may include a credit enhancement agreement (CEA) between the eligible entity and a company or developer. Following approval by council, town meeting, or commissioners, the state Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD) reviews the proposed district and development program for statutory compliance. After approval by DECD, management of the district and program is the sole responsibility of the eligible entities.

³ The term of the TIF was 20 years, expiring in 2025. As part of the TIF, the Town bills First Wind annually and keeps \$500,000 of the revenue paid by First Wind, which is used to "enhance" the tax rate. The Town then cuts First Wind a check for the remainder, which is used to pay down the debt service for the project.

process of converting to compressed natural gas, bringing six trucks through Mars Hill daily. Similar changes may be in store for other potato processors like Naturally Potatoes in Mars Hill.

Q. Issues and Implications

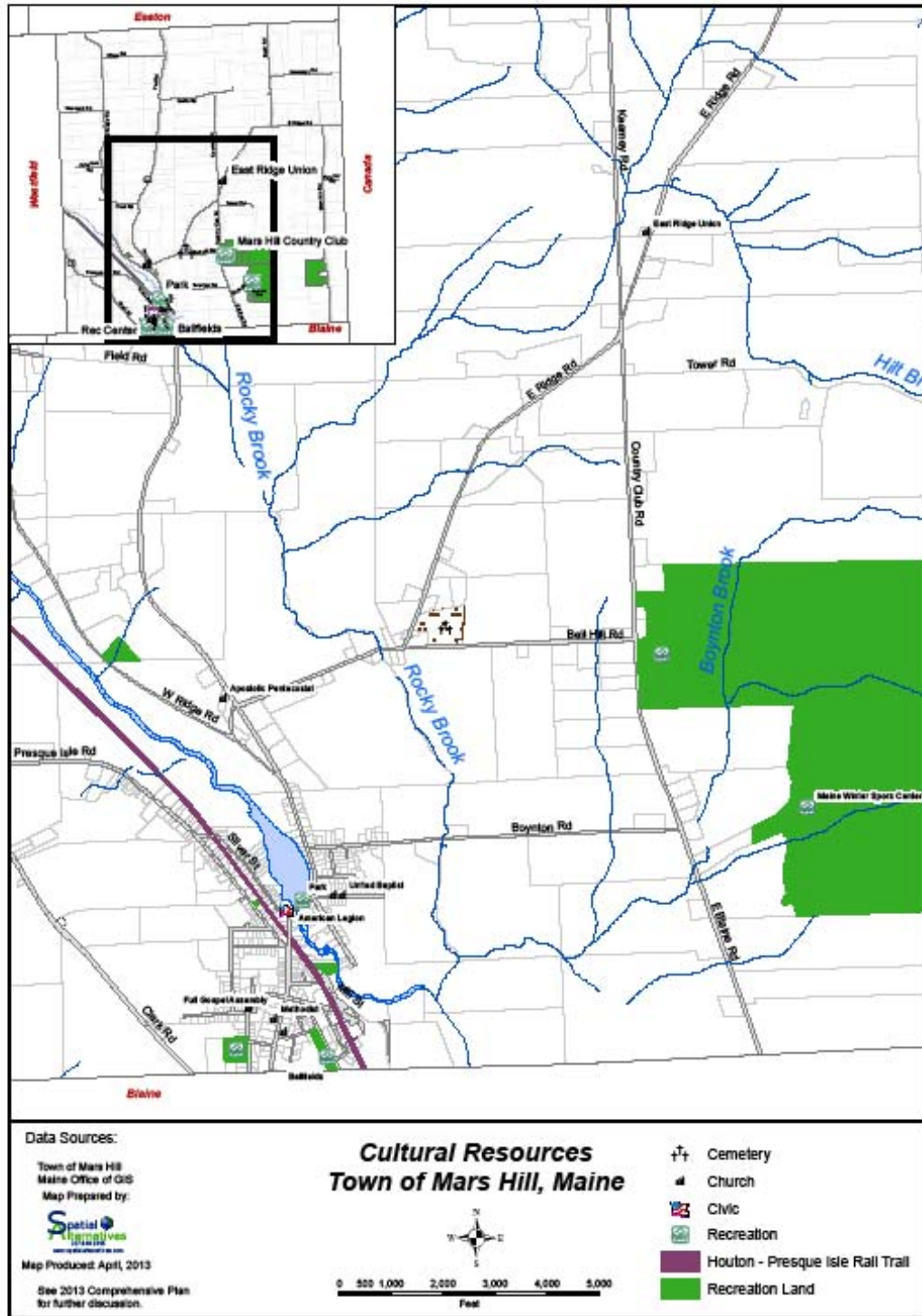
1. Before 1994, Mars Hill employed a community or economic development director, who was very successful in securing grants to replace or provide public infrastructure and facilities. Should the Town re-create this staff position or is current staffing adequate?
2. There has been some discussion about the desirability of a local police presence. In recent years, some counties have identified and located an officer in a specific community in direct response to municipalities' request for assistance. The communities pay for the service without the need to create an entirely separate department. Should the Town explore the pros and cons as well as various alternative arrangements, including working with the County, to provide a local police presence?
3. It appears that the Town Garage may be in need of replacement. In addition, the Town does not have a salt shed. Are there other public facility needs? Should the Town undertake a study of facilities and yards to identify and prioritize building and improvement needs?
4. Apart from encouraging residential development, what can the Town do to stem the decline in school enrollments? A number of options were identified in other chapters of this inventory that might come into play in this discussion.
5. Are there gaps in the mix of health care professionals and services in Mars Hill? How might the Town best draw key individuals to the community?
6. What elements or concerns should be addressed in negotiating the upcoming contract with Frontier Vision?
7. Should the Town explore opportunities for MH to expand access to wind power and/or compressed natural gas, including ways to reduce the cost of energy for existing and new businesses?

SECTION 6. CULTURAL RESOURCES



A. Mars Hill Cultural Resources

Figure 68. Mars Hill Cultural Resources



B. Updated History

Potato farming grew from its use for starch in 1878 to include certified seed and table stock. During the 50's and 60's there were over 100 farmers in Mars Hill raising families and making a living on farms as small as 50 acres. Most families had several children and farmers employed "hired hands" to tend crops. In the fall both elementary and high schools recessed for about a month when parents and children picked potatoes. Many men worked throughout the winter racking, packing, and shipping potatoes.

Over the past 20 years, consolidation, mechanization, and crop rotation have changed the makeup of farms dramatically. Presently there are about eight farmers who work all the farmland in Mars Hill. Approximately half are large acreage and the rest are smaller. A portion of the tilled land in Town is operated by people from outside the community and some local farmers have substantial land in other towns.

Tilling, planting, cultivating, and harvesting equipment have become very large and more automated. Larger farms, with the most advanced equipment, can work crops much more quickly than in the past. A small farm in 1960 might have grown 50 acres of potatoes and taken all fall to harvest them. The mechanized equipment of today can harvest this acreage in one morning.



All potato farms rotate crops between potatoes and a combination of barley, grain, and clover on a two to one basis. There is some indication that this may change to a one to one basis for best crop results.

The foregoing all combines to reduce the number of local folks working on farms, living on their own farms, and reduces population in general and more importantly in schools.

The landscape of the Town also changed significantly in 2007 with the addition of 28 wind power turbines along the top of Mars Hill Mountain. The generated power is directed to the overall power grid and sold as a commodity. No power is fed directly to any Town residence or business. This was the first wind farm in Maine and has become a permanent part of Mars Hill's landscape.

C. Walter T.A. Hansen Memorial Library

The Walter T.A. Hansen Memorial Library was established after a local businessman, Walter Hansen, provided a substantial financial contribution in his will. The wood frame and brick veneer structure was constructed in 1951. It has several larger rooms for book display and reading and several smaller rooms for meetings, storage, and offices. The library is managed by a Board of Trustees with five members. There are two librarians on staff.

The Library serves Mars Hill and Blaine as well as "D" and "E" Plantations. Patrons include 730 adults, 361 juveniles, three schools, and three other libraries.

There are 14,500 books in the Library's collection with 710 new titles added in 2011. During 2011, the Library circulated 3,763 materials, including 23 magazine subscriptions. The Library also offers an interlibrary loan program wherein books from other libraries are secured for patrons.

Over the years there have been many improvements to the facility both inside and out; however, the building and grounds have aged significantly, including the heating and lighting systems. The roof and the brick veneer in addition to the pavement and landscaping had deteriorated badly. The Library is in the final phase of spending approximately \$20,000 from USDA and Steen and Tabitha King grants to upgrade electrical service, insulate exterior walls, and providing new lighting.

D. Big Rock Mountain Ski Area

The former Mars Hill Ski Area is now owned and operated by the Libra Foundation and is now called the Big Rock Mountain Ski Area. Big Rock continues to include 300 acres and has three ski lifts. Big Rock added a snowboarding facility and trail in 2011. The area also now has snow making capability.



E. School Recreation Facilities

The Central Aroostook Junior-Senior High School continues to own and maintain two ball fields, two soccer fields, and a gym. In 2009, the School District started a weed control and fertilizing program on the fields, which are also aerated annually. Recently, the District started using an absorbent, biodegradable product to mix with the soil to make the field softer and dry out better. The District uses one soccer field for games and the other for practice, because practice tears up the game field too much.

The Fort Street Elementary School has one softball field, one basketball court, two playgrounds, and a gym. The playground and fields get the same fertilizing and weed control program as the Junior-Senior High School.



According to John York, all the fields are in good shape. There is adequate capacity in all our fields at this time with no major capital needs.

The gyms are also in good shape. The elementary gym floor was redone several years ago.

F. Prestile Stream Dam and Park

The Prestile Stream has been dammed at Mars Hill for many years. The Pond was a significant focus of recreational activities in the 40's and 50's. Many remember horse racing on the frozen Pond in the winter. A number of people from Town and the general area kept horses and raced them throughout the area using sulkies. There was ice skating in winter and bon fires here and there.

In early spring when water was running high, local men would assemble a group of several canoes with outboards and go upstream toward Westfield. When the water receded to normal

levels and the fiddleheads came up in May, folks would pick them and start to fish in the Pond and stream. The Prestile Stream was fished a great deal by locals and somewhat by fishermen from away.

The Prestile Stream at times in the past has enjoyed national fame because of its wild trout



fishery. There have been highs for this natural resource such as in the 50's when the water flowed clear and clean and the Pond was generally deep and clean. There have also been lows such as during the 60's

when a sugar beet processing plant up stream polluted the stream to a wretched stench.

The greater Pond area is 27 acres and the current open water area is 9 acres. The difference is the area that filled in over the years because of natural sediment buildup in the calm water behind the dam. In the 60's, most of the 27 acres was open water. The grassy area has grown since then.

The former dam washed out about 1975 during a heavy storm. The spillway could not handle the volume of water coming down stream and began to flow around the ends of the dam, eventually washed out the embankment, and destroyed the dam.

In 1984, a replacement dam and recreation area was constructed. It was designed with a larger spill way to accommodate water flow from a large storm. It was also designed without a fish way so that the section of the Prestile Stream from the dam upstream to the headwaters in Easton and Fort Fairfield could be maintained as a brook trout fishery only. Other species such as bass cannot pass up stream of the dam.

The entire width and height of the spillway is needed to handle 100 year design stormwater flow. However, the bottom of the spillway opening is approximately two feet below the level of water held back by the former dam. Wooden walls called "flash boards" were installed in the new dam to maintain the historical water level. The flash boards were initially designed and installed with hinges at the bottom and bolts at the top to shear and allow the flash boards to fall when it is necessary to provide for full flow.

The flash boards were problematic. They would not reliably hold back the intended two feet of water and spring ice and debris tore them from their anchors. Several heavier designs were tried but they also failed. Standing the flash boards up or installing new ones in the spring did not work either. If workmen tried to do the flashboard work with water flowing over the spill way, the slippery surface and flowing water became a safety problem. If the gate at the bottom of the dam was opened and the pond was drained enough to dry the spill way, it created an

unsightly upstream condition and interfered with animal nesting. In 2003 the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) and the Maine Department of Inland Fish & Wildlife (IFW) raised concerns relative to waterfowl nesting in the spring.

There are approximately 27 acres of water in front of the dam that is rated and mapped as high importance by the IFW and identified as significant wildlife habitat under the state's Natural Resources Protection Act (see Figure 89 and discussion on page II.9-13 in the Natural Resources Chapter). IFW indicates that restrictions on the timing of flash board installation and removal is necessary as the most critical period for waterfowl and wading birds in Northern Maine occurs during spring and summer (April-July). This period is when birds are establishing breeding grounds, nesting, and having broods. In order to avoid major impacts on these critical habitats during this time period, IFW recommends the initiation of drawdown in lakes, streams, rivers, and ponds be no earlier than July 15th. The seasonal timing of the rising and lowering of water levels is important to numerous wildlife species since many depend on stable water levels when establishing nesting sites and food caches throughout the season. When water levels were raised prior to July 15th by adding flashboards and increasing water depth, many waterfowl species, primarily black ducks and mallards' nests are flooded out during nesting and incubation. When boards are taken down, lowering water levels after October 1st, beaver lodges and food caches are left high and dry without allowing adequate time to be reestablished for iced up winter months. Flash boards have not been installed since about 2004 or 2005.

One possibility going forward is to remove the tree snags that wash down into the existing pond area in the spring, install the two foot high flash boards on June 15th and remove them on October 1st. Another solution may be to install hydraulic splash boards, estimated to cost \$250,000.

Sediment has filled the current open water area so that the Pond has become quite shallow. The Pond was drained in the fall of 1993 and frozen sediment was trucked to and stored at the Transfer Station over the winter. In the summer, the sediment was spread over the Town's closed landfill. Permitting for dredging today would involve the DEP, IFW, US Fish & Wildlife Service (USF&W), Army Corps of Engineers, and perhaps others. Sediments would have to be tested for contaminants and dealt with accordingly. It is likely that the permit process would be detailed and lengthy and that the cost of dredging and disposal would be high.

In the early 90's the grassy area, which was formerly part of the Pond, was designated by USF&W as a significant Inland Wading Bird & Waterfowl Habitat. It is rated as a high nesting area and construction and disturbance within 250 feet is limited. Over the years an ever increasing number of ducks and geese used the Pond for resting, roosting, and nesting.

Droppings from these birds have created a high nutrient load in the water, which causes algae blooms.

The Prestile Stream and Pond are used for canoeing, kayaking, and fishing. Some folks also enjoy watching waterfowl and other birds. Occasionally there are birds in and around the Pond that are quite rare in the area. They attract birdwatchers from afar. There may be potential to develop the Park with paths and boardwalks to attract people and business to Town. Collins Pond in Caribou and a wetland walk in Bangor may be worth looking at for examples.

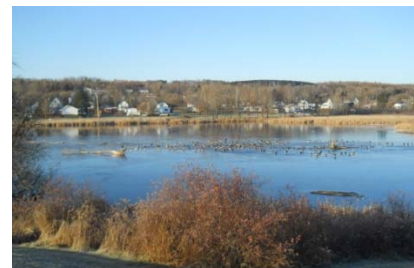
Organizations such as Trout Unlimited, Ducks Unlimited, Pathways to America, and others might be a helpful in defining and funding a study of the Stream and Pond to explore potential for the future. The Town might also explore potential for a walking/biking path north to Westfield and Easton and South to Blaine and Bridgewater. Committee members see the pond as a huge asset that should be managed for the benefit of townspeople.

The Prestile Stream itself was well known as a fine trout fishery. It still is a good fishery but access is mostly through private land. If fishing is to be promoted to folks from outside, access must be developed and promoted.

The Park is generally in good condition, as is the ramp and picnic area. There is a building on the site that might be activated for community use.

Currently, a number of people canoe and kayak from Westfield to Mars Hill, then continue onto the border at Bridgewater. People also fish in the Pond, below the dam, and in the Stream where it is accessible. Some access is public such as at the landing in the pond area off Silver Street. Most access is informal and crosses private property. Future access needs to be addressed in the Comprehensive Plan. The Maine departments of Conservation, Transportation, and IFW provide programs to help municipalities secure and develop public access opportunities.

Prestile Stream and its tributaries are managed under General Law fishing regulations which means there is a daily bag limit of five brook trout and minimum length of six inches. There is currently no stocking in the Prestile watershed so the sport fishery is entirely supported by wild fish, which are highly valued by Maine anglers. Stricter regulation of the sport fishery is possible, but water quality degradation and other habitat issues may preclude significant improvements in trout numbers and size by regulation alone. If the Stream and Pond are promoted as a destination for outside fishermen, perhaps the Town should work with IFW to review catch and keep regulations and restoration efforts that may be necessary to maintain or expand fish populations.



G. Mars Hill Recreation Program and Complex

The Recreation Center, the former high school building with its gym, and an outdoor swimming pool, which was constructed in 1973, are dedicated mostly to the Mars Hill Recreation Program and are an asset to the Town. According to Dave Collins, Mars Hill Recreation Director, some of the space is rented to a day care facility.



In the spring of 2013, the swimming pool was found to be in need of repairs and upgrades to bring it into compliance with state regulations. Cost estimates are being prepared. In the meantime, the pool will not be opened for the summer.

The following recreation programs are available to children and adults:

- Summer
 - Tee Ball (Blastball)
 - Minor League (ages 7-9)
 - Major League (ages 10-12)
 - Junior High School Girls Softball (ages 10-12)
 - Pony League Baseball (ages 13-15)
 - Senior High School Girls Softball (ages 13-15)
 - High School League Baseball (Grade 9-12)
 - Field Day for Fort Street Elementary School
 - Hershey Track and Field
 - Karate
 - Pitch, Hit, and run
 - Power Aid Youth Golf
 - Open Swim
 - Swim Lessons
 - Summer Day Camps
 - Summer Feeding Program
 - Summer Soccer (Grades 3-6)
 - Adult Canoeing and Kayaking
 - Adult Gardening Club
 - Adult Homecoming Days Festival
 - Adult Informal Soccer
 - Adult Karate
 - Adult Lap Swim
 - Adult Walking
- Fall
 - After School Programs
 - Field Trips
 - Grades 1 and 2 Soccer
 - Grades 3 and 4 Soccer
 - Grades 5 and 6 Soccer
 - Halloween Events/Programs
 - Harvest Break Activities
- Winter
 - After School Program I
 - After School Program II
 - Easter Events/Programs
 - Elks Hoop Shoot
 - February and April Break Activities
 - Field Trips
 - Friday Movie Lounge
 - Grades 1 and 2 Basketball
 - Grades 3 and 4 Basketball
 - Grades 5 and 6 Basketball

- Indoor Soccer Leagues
- Karate
- Letters from the North Pole
- MRPA Hot Shots
- Ski 4 Life Program
- Wiffle Ball League
- Winter Carnival at Fort Street
- Adult Basketball
- Adult Community Theater Group
- Adult Indoor Soccer
- Adult Karate
- Adult Walking

The Recreation Department recently started a Day Camp for children from 8 am until 2 pm with breakfast and lunch. The Camp plans two craft or other activities in the morning and field trips in the afternoon. The Camp is expected to average 20 children per day.

The gym is heavily used by senior citizens for walking exercise throughout the year. In winter it is used more because of icy and snowy walking conditions outdoors. In March the gym and stage are used for several beauty pageants in Town, which are very well attended and important to the community.

The facilities have been improved in recent years, but have greater potential. The heating system and lighting systems in the building are being or have recently been upgraded. The Town does not have a fitness center and there is little weight training for high school students. The Town's young athletes would be safer and would be stronger on the court and in the fields with better weight training.

While there is a rudimentary weight room at the Recreation Center, according to the Recreation Director, Dave Collins, it would take approximately \$50,000 to raise the facility to the desired level.

The Department currently is seeking a \$100,000 grant to restore the stage area.

The parking lot for the facility is gravel. Paving is estimated to cost approximately \$100,000.

The Recreation Director notes that the Program offers some canoeing and kayaking activities for children, but has to go out of town. He notes that if the Pond were restored and deepened, the Program would provide these activities in Mars Hill.

H. Walking/Biking Trails

There is an existing walking trail from the High School to the base of Mars Hill Mountain, who's focus might be expanded to include winter cross country skiing. The Houlton-Presque Isle Rail Trail is located within the right-of-way for the former Bangor & Aroostook rail line and is currently used for multiple purposes, including for walking and ATVs, and snowmobiles.

Many younger people focus much of their recreational activity on walking, hiking, and biking. The Committee has discussed the value of developing and adding to the Town’s walking/biking path systems to provide a destination for incoming tourists and travelers. A walking path system along the river might attract people and be used a good deal.



The makeup of the people who came to the “run up the mountain” that Mark Shea organized last year were from out of town which is an indication of the potential for more recreational activity and business in Mars Hill. The Town might consider organizing bike and/or foot races around the mountain or elsewhere as part of its recreational mix and business attraction.

The International Appalachian Trail extends through Mars Hill and over the mountain.

I. Mars Hill Country Club and Golf Course

The Mars Hill Country Club is located at the base of Mars Hill. It includes an 18-hole golf course through rolling greens amidst stands of hardwood trees and small ponds. Mars Hill Country Club is one of very few clubs to be rated among the top 10% in Northern Maine by the New England Golf Guide.

J. Scenic Resources

Scenic features, including Prestile Stream and the Mars Hill Mountain, have not changed since 1991, except for placement of the wind towers and generators.



It is difficult to identify specific scenic areas to protect in Mars Hill as the entire community is scenic, including its compact pattern of development, surrounded by a landscape of working farms and rolling hills punctuated by wooded areas around Mars Hill Mountain (1990 Comprehensive Plan), streams, wetlands, and

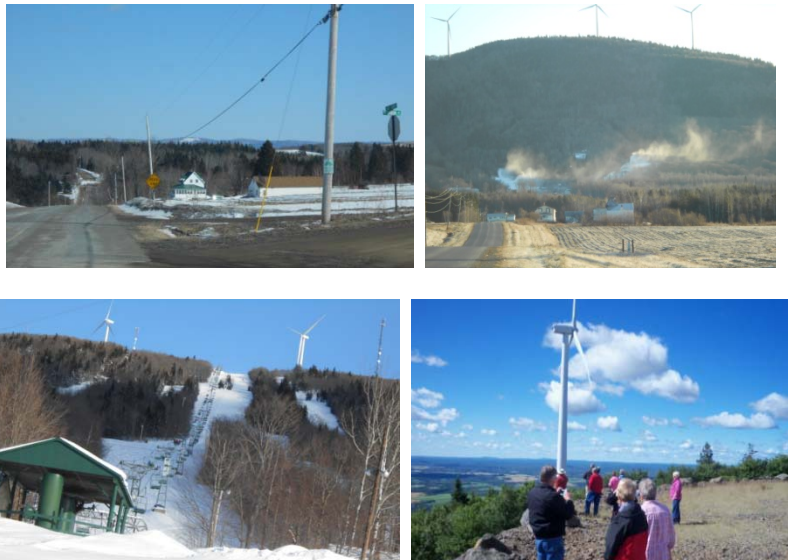
ponds, and Mars Hill Mountain itself with its ski and hiking trails. Views of the Mountain, agricultural fields, and forests are available from 90% of the streets and roads, particularly at high points throughout Town.¹ People frequently ride around the Mountain to see moose and deer.

¹ See photos of scenic views on the following pages of this Comprehensive Plan – 4 photos on cover (fields, Mars Hill Mountain, Pond, Aroostook Health Center Parking Lot), acknowledgements page (view from the Mountain), pages I.1- 1 (ballfield, village from Church Street hilltop), I.2-1 (Pond), I.2-3 (2 of the Mountain), I.2-4 (Dam), I.2-5 (Dam), I.2-8 (agricultural field, Pond), I.3-2 (the Mountain), I.3-3 (the Mountain

Some of the most highly valued scenic views are of agricultural fields and activities. Residents and visitors enjoy watching the cycles of agriculture – spring tilling and planting; greening up of potatoes, grains, soy beans, grasses, clovers, and fallow fields; blossoming; harvest; winter cover; and reappearance of soil in the spring; as well as the traversing of harvest equipment and working machinery throughout Town.



Mars Hill Mountain, including the Big Rock Ski Area and Evergreen Wind (identified by the community as “windmills”), is another ubiquitous view in Mars Hill. One can see the Mountain from almost everywhere in Town. Exceptional views of the Mountain can be seen from the easterly parking lot and sitting room of the Aroostook Health Center and from Clark Road at the top of the ridge on the western side of Town. The views of the Mountain from the east as well as from the Mountain further east toward Canada and the St. John River Valley are also exceptional.



from Aroostook Health Center), 1.3-13 (view from top of the Mountain), 1.3-15 (view from top of the Mountain) , 1.4-1 (agricultural fields), 1.4-5 (golf course, the Mountain, wind towers), 1.5-2 (village from Church Street), 1.5-3 (Pond with marsh in background), 1.6-1 (agricultural fields, the Mountain, wind towers), 1.6-8 (Pond, village from elementary school), 1.7-1 (Pond, the Mountain, wind towers), II.1-1 (the Mountain, wind towers), II.2-1 (the Mountain, village, wind towers, ski trail from Clark Road), II.2-5 (ski trail close up, Christmas trees), II.2-15 (agricultural activity), II.3-1 (village from Church Street hill), II.5-1 (Dam, Pond), II.5-6 (memorial at Park), II.6-5 (the Mountain ski trail), II.6-6 (Pond, Park), II.6-7 (Pond), II.6-7 (Pond), II.6-11 (Pond), II.7-9 (Dam, Park), II.8-1 (agricultural activity), II.9-1 (Pond, Park, the Mountain, wind towers, ski trail), II.10-5 (Snow House on Church Street), II.10-9 (the Mountain, wind towers), II.10-10 (Christmas trees, the Mountain).



Hikers, bikers, ATVers, and snow machine operators have some of the best scenic views of the region in all directions from the top of the Mountain and the International Appalachian Trail. The owner of most of the top of the Mountain envisioned an auto road, similar to the one on Mount Cadillac in Bar Harbor, for viewing scenery when originally purchased. Views of the ski trails in spring, summer, and fall then in winter with lighted trails at night are highly valued as are views from trails when skiing and hiking. Views from the Mountain looking west toward the valley with the village nestled at the bottom are also outstanding. The wind generation towers are scenic to some and an eye sore to others.



The Prestile Stream runs through Mars Hill. Views of the Prestile downstream from the bridge and from Mill and Pleasant Streets are scenic as are views observed from canoe and kayak travelers on the Stream from Westfield to Blaine.



Distant views of the mountains, hills, and fields to the west of Mars Hill are striking. These views can be compromised and negatively impacted by the actions and developments of other towns and unorganized territories. Over 100 wind turbines are planned for the Number 9 Lake area which can be viewed to the southwest of Mars Hill. There is a line of hills/mountains within

several miles of Town to the west called the Green Mountains which, if developed, would sandwich Mars Hill between two nearby wind farms.



As noted, when asked what the Town values, members of the community repeatedly reference the community's rural landscape (defined by active farms, various water resources, and Mars Hill Mountain) and the various outdoor recreation opportunities (hiking, snowmobiling, hunting, fishing, birding, canoeing, and kayaking), including the area associated with the Mars Hill Park, Dam, and Pond. Rather than identifying specific views to be protected from development, the FLUP presents a far more thoughtful approach of providing protection for the community's general and traditional development pattern (compact village surrounded by an active and passive rural landscape and a mountain that is actively used for downhill skiing and electric power generation). The fundamental basis for economic development and increase in population in Mars Hill, to preserve the community's traditional pattern of a compact village surrounded by rural hinterlands, will do far more to preserve scenic views than targeting particular resources as there are so many and so little development pressure.



Within this context, the Town has designated the scenic views in Figure 69 as particularly important.

Figure 69. Mars Hill Designated Scenic Views

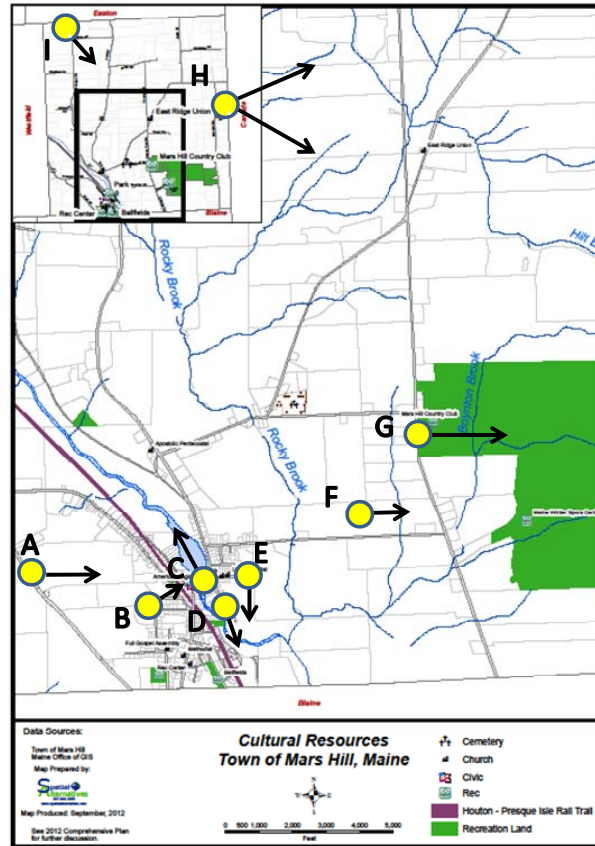
Scenic Views

A Panoramic views from ridge on Clark Road west of the village looking east toward Mars Hill Mountain, ski lift, and golf course.

B Distant views of Mars Hill Mountain to the east from Aroostook Health Center parking lot.

C View of Pond, Park, and Dam at Mars Hill Pond from parking lot between Park and Dam.

D Close up views of the Prestile Stream from the south side of the bridge on Route 1A.



E Panoramic view of Central Aroostook High School with playing fields to the south, agricultural fields to the east, and the village nestled in the valley to the west.

F Views from Boynton Road east to ski trails and wind generators on Mars Hill Mountain.

G Close views of the golf course from Country Club Road.

H View of the St. John River Valley to the east from behind north end of Mars Hill Mountain.

I Distant view of Mars Hill Mountain and agricultural fields from Smith Road.

These areas are described more fully below.

- A. Panoramic views from ridge on Clark Road west of the village looking east toward golf course, Mars Hill Mountain, and ski trails



- B. Distant view of Mars Hill Mountain to the east from the Aroostook Health Center parking lot.



- C. Mars Hill Park and Pond – views from the Park; the east side of bridge; from Fort Road up to the elementary school; from canoes and kayaks on the Pond; observation of the Pond and open water, the wetland/cattail waterfowl nesting area, and water flowing over the Dam from the Park’s parking lot; the head of Pond behind the elementary school; waterfowl viewing from hatching to their trip south; eagles/hawks; views from canoes and kayaks on the Pond



D. Close up views of the Prestile Stream from the south side of the bridge on Route 1A



E. Panoramic view of Central Aroostook High School with playing fields to the south, agricultural fields to the east, and the village nestled in the valley to the west



F. Views from Boynton Road of ski trails and wind generators on Mars Hill Mountain



- G. Golf course at the base of Mars Hill Mountain – close views of golf course from Country Club Road and from afar, views to the west from the golf course specifically the tee on the side of the Mountain



- H. View of the St. John River Valley to the east from behind the north end of Mars Hill Mountain



- I. Distant view of the Mars Hill Mountain and agricultural fields from Smith Road



- J. Special buildings and sites – oldest cemetery in Town on Clark Road, Masonic Hall on Main Street (Katahdin Bank Building), Seth Snow House on Church Street



Mars Hill is facing little development pressure and most development that does occur does so within the traditional compact downtown area. The most balanced approach to protecting scenic views in the community is to:

- Continue to preserve the Town’s traditional village and working rural landscape pattern of development, laid out in the Town’s Future Land Use Plan and
- When development is proposed in areas identified with important scenic views (see Scenic Views Map), the Planning Board will consider the impacts of the proposed development on the views and encourage the developer to adjust his or her development plans to minimize negative impacts on the views.
- Periodically monitor impacts of development on scenic landscape of Mars Hill and, if negative impacts are observed, undertake a more rigorous scenic views inventory and consider stronger regulatory protections as appropriate.

K. Lodging

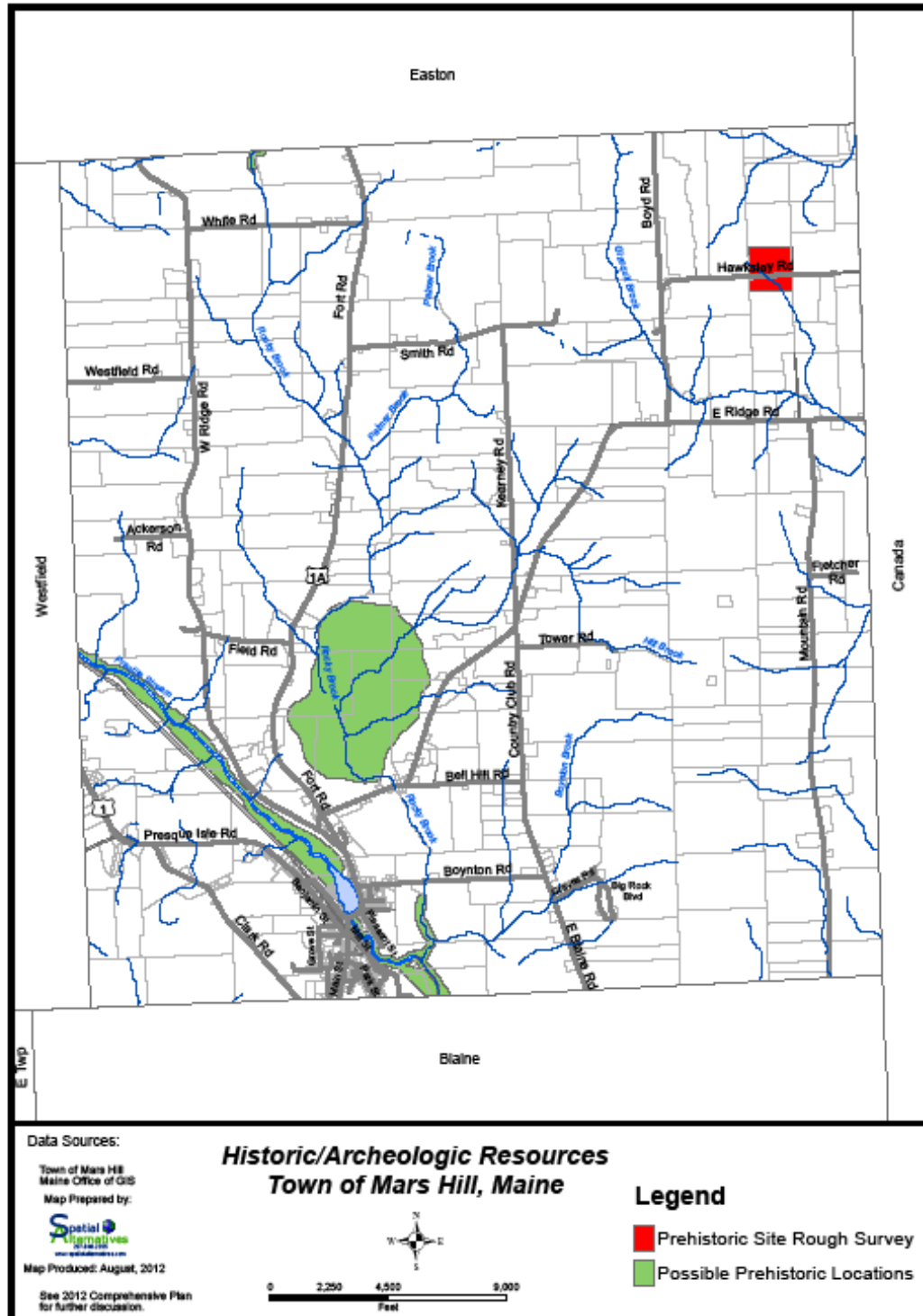
A 2006 Global Resorts, Inc. Feasibility Study and Development Assessment found that the County has all the attributes for resort development and cluster like smaller projects. Mars Hill, located, is in the center of the County and at the gateway to Northern Maine and Aroostook County, is an ideal home base for those who come for outdoor activities. The Global Resorts study indicated that the Big Rock Ski Area, together with its nearby golf facilities, offers promising development opportunities if the hotel component can be addressed.

With the abundance of natural beauty in Mars Hill, another alternative to provide lodging might be a campground near the base of the mountain. Many folks use large self-contained campers to travel to destinations. Mars Hill may want to endeavor to make Mars Hill one of these destinations. The Amish settlements in the region could be part of a tour package as well as the wind farm. The Town might seek grants to study the feasibility of creating a hotel, campground, or other lodging businesses and services to capitalize on this opportunity.



L. Archaeological Resources

Figure 70. Mars Hill Archaeological Resources



The Maine Historic Preservation Commission (MHPC) has identified one prehistoric archaeological site in the northeast quadrant of Mars Hill (site 168.2). Limited areas of the Town have been surveyed by professional archaeologists, including the top of Mars Hill for the windpower project and a corridor along the western town boundary for a powerline/utility corridor. The MHPC notes that archaeologically sensitive areas that need survey in advance of construction include the Prestile Stream valley and areas around Rocky Brook.

The MHPC indicates that there are no historic archaeological sites are documented for the Town to date. The MHPC notes that no professional surveys for historic archaeological sites have been conducted to date in Mars Hill and recommends that future archaeological survey should focus on the 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.

M. Historic Resources

According to the MHPC, there are no historic buildings, or objects documented in Mars Hill. The MHPC recommends that a comprehensive survey of Mars Hill's above-ground historic resources should be undertaken to identify those properties that may be eligible for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places.

N. Historical Society

The Central Aroostook Historical Society was established in January 2010 with the formation of a committee of local individuals. The Mars Hill Rotary Club sponsored the start up of this group which includes the communities of Mars Hill, Blaine, Robinson, E-Plantation, and Westfield. After a great deal of work, the organization was designated as a nonprofit by the Internal Revenue Service. In May 2013 the Town of Blaine gave the Society the former Blaine Grange building and land located adjacent to the Blaine Town Hall as a home for the new group and will house documents, photographs, and artifacts important to the history of the area.

O. Issues and Implications

1. Should Mars Hill invest in restoring the pond and the dam operated to make it a community focal point and center of beauty and recreational activity? Should the building on the site be used for community purposes?
2. Is access to Prestile Stream and the pond adequate? Should access be improved? Where are opportunities to create or improve access?

3. Should the Town promote use of the Stream and pond for canoeing, kayaking, and fishing? If so, should the Town work with MIF&W to review, and potentially modify, catch and keep regulations to maintain fish stocks?
4. Should the Town approach organizations such as Trout Unlimited, Ducks Unlimited, Pathways to America, Maine Department of Conservation, and others to help define and fund a study of the Stream and pond to explore potentials for the future?
5. Should the Town plan for and create a system of trails, boardwalks, and amenities along Prestile Stream and the pond to create a destination to draw others to the Town and to provide additional facilities for the community? Should the Town promote, support, and/or encourage the development of trails elsewhere in/beyond Town, such as north to Westfield and Easton and south to Blaine and Bridgewater? If so, where? Should the existing walking trail between the High School and the Mountain be expanded to include cross-country skiing?
6. Should Mars Hill develop a fitness center for its student athletes?
7. Global Resorts notes the opportunity for Mars Hill to expand its tourism offerings around the Big Rock Ski Area and nearby Golf Course. Should Mars Hill investigate and promote the development of lodging – a hotel, B&Bs, and/or a campground, with or without a “resort” or a package of amenities, to capitalize on potential expanded tourism opportunities? How can this development be pursued in such a way as to promote a four, or at least expanded, season tourist attraction?



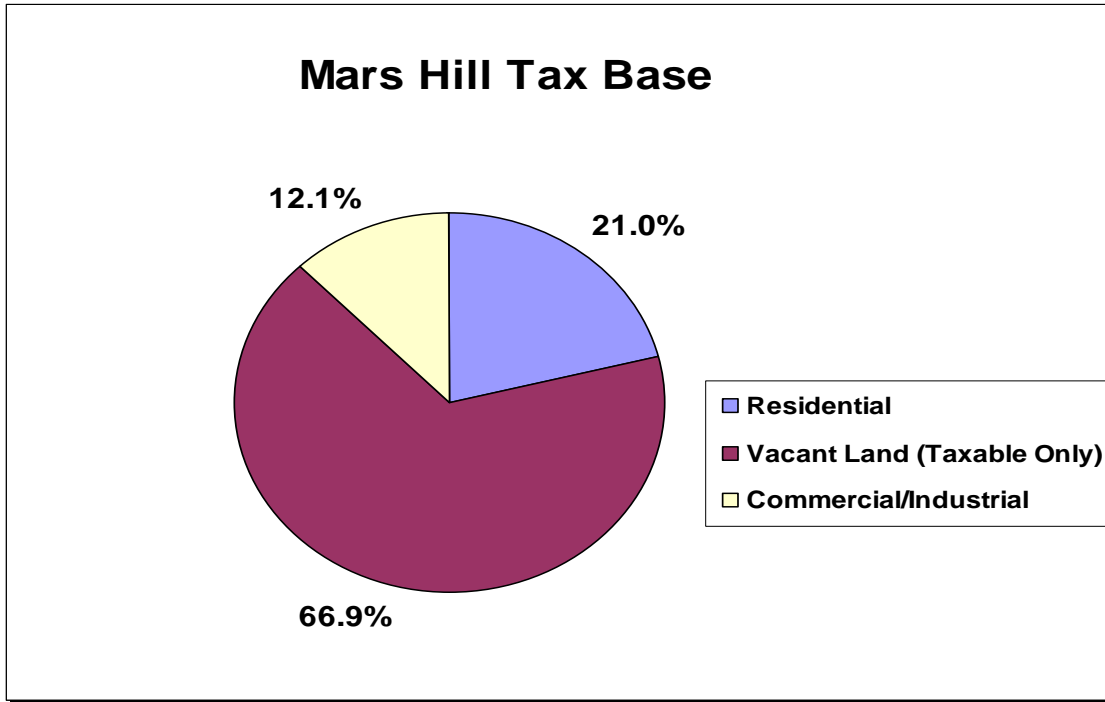
SECTION 7. FISCAL CAPACITY



A. Tax Base

Figure 7071. Mars Hill Tax Base		
Residential	\$ 22,022,115	21.0%
Vacant Land (Taxable Only)	\$ 70,147,495	66.9%
Commercial/Industrial	\$ 12,689,305	12.1%
Total Taxable Real Estate	\$ 104,858,915	
Source: Mars Hill Town Manager, 2012		

Figure 7172. Mars Hill Tax Base

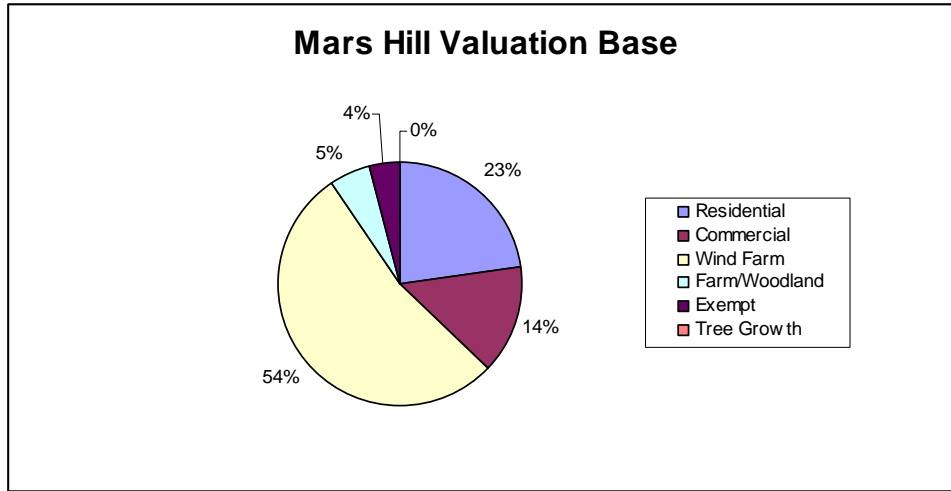


Source: Mars Hill Town Manager, 2012

Two thirds of the value of Mars Hill tax base is derived from undeveloped or vacant land. This category contains the Wind Farm valuation (~\$59M and approximately 54% of the Town’s tax base), which greatly influences these ratios.

In addition to the Wind Farm, the Tax Base in Mars Hill contains a large proportion of farmland and open space encompassing over 21,000 acres. Additional commercial/industrial buildings include the Naturally Potatoes Processing Plant located in Mars Hill. Residential land and buildings account for the remainder of the taxable property.

Figure 732. Mars Hill Valuation Tax Base



Note: The Wind Farm is part of a 20-year TIF, resulting in a flat sum of \$500K per year. The TIF expires in 2026.
 Source: Mars Hill Town Manager, 2012

A number of tax exempt programs influence the taxable base located in Mars Hill. These programs include State Homestead Exemptions, land and property owned by the Town or State, charitable institutions, houses of worship, and properties participating in the current use open space and tree growth programs. The total value of these exempt properties and programs is \$4,436,560.

Residential property accounts for approximately ¼ of Mars Hill’s valuation while commercial uses excluding the Wind Farm make up 14% of the total.

Figure 7374. Mars Hill Mil Rate, 2000-2012

Year	Mil Rate
2000	\$25.00
2001	\$25.00
2002	\$25.00
2003	\$25.00
2004	\$25.00
2005	\$24.00
2006	\$24.00
2007	\$20.00
2008	\$20.00
2009	\$20.00
2010	\$20.00
2011	\$20.00
2012	\$21.04
2013	\$25.75

Source: Mars Hill Town Manager, 2012; Acting Town Manager, 2013

The Mars Hill mil rate decreased from a high of \$25.00 in 2000 to a low of \$20.00 in 2007, representing a 20% reduction during this time period. This change was primarily driven by an increase in tax revenue as a result of the Wind Farm which was brought on line in 2006. This project will provide the Town with a fixed revenue stream of \$500K per year for a 20 year term. From 2007 through 2011, the mil rate remained at \$20.00 then rose slightly in 2012. In 2013, the mil rate rose nearly 22.4%, largely due to increases in the school budget. The mil rate is expected to decrease in 2014 because of one-time costs reflected in the 2013 budget.

The inflow of tax dollars resulting from the TIF agreement for the Mars Hill Wind Farm has allowed the town to decrease the mil rate and hold it steady for four years.

B. Assessed Value to Sales Ratio

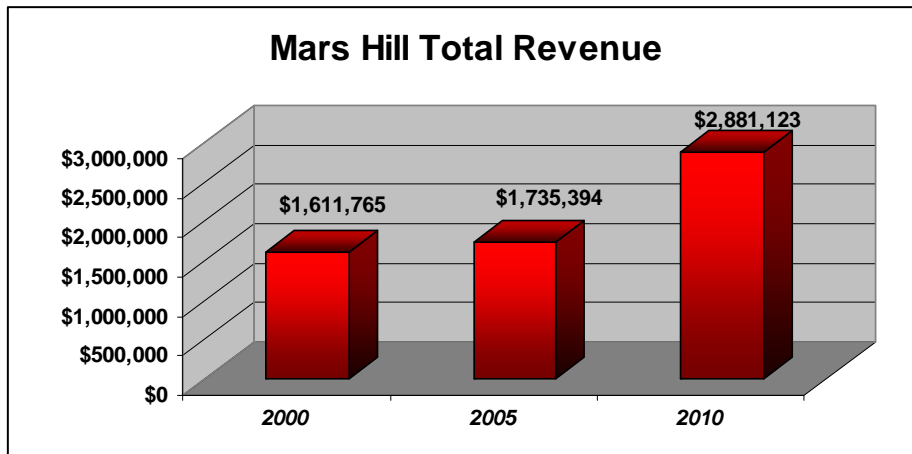
A review of 24 property transfers between 2009 and 2010 shows that Mars Hill tax assessments are generally lower than sales prices with the exception of 4 properties or 16.6% of the total. These transfers range from 41% of sales price to 83%. In 2012, the average ratio of assessed value to sales price was 74.8%, which is in the area of the minimum acceptable to state tax authorities. It may soon be necessary to undertake a revaluation of real estate at an estimated cost of \$90,000. There is a fairness issue when the tax to sales ratio falls. More expensive properties receive a much greater reduction than smaller properties. In the current economy it is recommended that we watch the tax ratio and sales data and perform a revaluation when needed.

Figure 7475. Mars Hill Assessed Value to Sales Ratio, 2000-2012	
Year	Assessed Value to Sales Ratio
2000	100%
2001	100%
2002	100%
2003	100%
2004	100%
2005	91.3%
2006	94.6%
2007	94.6%
2008	79.2%
2009	75.9%
2010	74.8%
2011	74.8%
2012	74.8%

Source: Mars Hill Town Manager, 2012; Acting Town Manager, 2013

C. Revenues

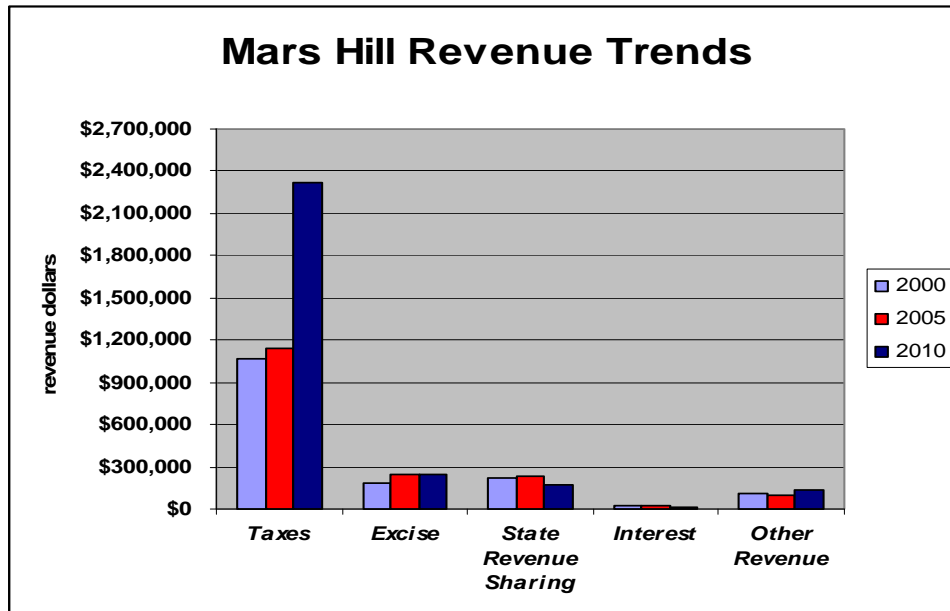
Figure 7576. Mars Hill Total Revenue



Source: Mars Hill Town Manager, 2012

From 2000 to 2010 revenues in Mars Hill have increased by 78.8%. The major driver of this increase is related to increases in Tax Revenue, primarily the Wind Farm and the end of the Naturally Potatoes TIF rebates. During this time period Other Revenue and Excise Taxes have shown moderate increases while State Revenue Sharing and Interest Income have decreased.

Figure 7677. Mars Hill Revenue Trends



Source: Mars Hill Town Manager, 2012

D. Expenditures

2000	2005	2010
\$ 1,497,593	\$ 1,776,546	\$ 2,768,382

Source: Mars Hill Town Manager, 2012

Over this 10 year period, without adjusting for inflation, Mars Hill Total Expenditures increased by 84.9%. Expenditures have risen in every account other than debt service obligations. The major contributors to this increase are the Education and TIF Expenditures incurred during this time period. While the Education growth rate is at 69.5%, in real dollars it has grown by over \$800K. The additional TIF expense is a net increase of over \$696K during this 10 year window.¹

	2000	2005	2010	10 year % Change
General Government	\$ 189,999	\$ 318,867	\$ 306,636	61.4%
Public Safety	\$ 181,748	\$ 208,995	\$ 231,087	27.1%
Health & Sanitation	\$ 103,229	\$ 128,777	\$ 104,568	1.3%
Social/Leisure	\$ 63,317	\$ 85,701	\$ 109,853	73.5%
Education	\$ 479,313	\$ 552,120	\$ 812,254	69.5%
County Tax	\$ 38,407	\$ 55,219	\$ 96,431	151.1%
Public Works	\$ 205,416	\$ 201,357	\$ 216,969	5.6%
Debt Service	\$ 211,089	\$ 174,293	\$ 143,024	-32.2%
TIF	\$ -	\$ 18,935	\$ 696,319	N/A
Other	\$ 25,075	\$ 32,282	\$ 51,241	104.4%
Totals	\$1,497,593	\$1,776,546	\$2,768,382	84.9%

Source: Mars Hill Town Manager, 2012

From 2000 through 2010 the following categories increased *as a percent of total expenditures*: General Government, Social/Leisure, Education, County Tax, and Other.

Note that these percentages have been normalized to account for the impact of the TIF Expenditures therefore giving a more true representation of their relationship to each other. Eliminating the inflated TIF dollars from the totals highlights the categories which have experienced the most significant growth during this 10 year period.

¹ TIF Increase reflects the impact of the Wind Farm, Freshway, and McCrum TIF Agreements. Although as an expenditure for financial reporting requirements, these dollars are captured through the collection of taxes and refunded to the TIF recipients to pay down their debt for the development (approximately \$600K in 2012).

Figure 7980. Mars Hill Expenditures, Normalized to Account for TIF		
	2000	2010
General Government	12.7%	14.8%
Public Safety	12.1%	11.2%
Health & Sanitation	6.9%	5.0%
Social/Leisure	4.2%	5.3%
Education	32.0%	39.2%
County Tax	2.6%	4.7%
Public Works	13.7%	10.5%
Debt Service	14.1%	6.9%
Other	1.7%	2.5%
Source: Mars Hill Town Manager, 2012		

E. Capital/Long Term Investments

The Town of Mars Hill maintains a limited number of Capital Reserve accounts designated for a specific purpose. The Town established some accounts within the last ten years to address budgeted capital projects and borrowed sparingly using bonds to fund two specific projects. Funds were used in conjunction with community development grant money to build a new Fire Station and additional capital was used to expand operational facilities associated with Freshway and an existing TIF agreement.

As of January 31, 2013 the Town carried the following Reserve balances:

Figure 8081. Mars Hill Capital Reserve Balances, January 2013	
Account	Amount
Fire Department Miscellaneous	\$4,334
Salt Shed Construction	\$33,991
Recreation Program	\$15
Revolving Loan Fund	\$109,285
Local Access Channel	\$7,048
Storm Drain Repair	\$212,205
Capital Reserve Undesignated	\$645,572
Totals	\$1,012,450
Source: Mars Hill Town Manager, 2013	

The long-term debt carried by the Town of Mars Hill as of 2012 includes:

- Bonds payable maturing in 2025 (Fire Station) at 3.05% to 9.0% payable in installments of \$17,500 plus interest totaling \$227,500

The Town is currently in the process of completing a Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) to address a five year view of its capital needs in conjunction with the Mars Hill Comprehensive Plan Update. The CIP seeks to address future needs such as Town

paving requirements, Main Street revitalization efforts, infrastructure upgrades, equipment purchases, and potentially a town wide revaluation of real property.

F. County Taxes

During the 10 year period between 2000 and 2013, Mars Hill's portion of the Aroostook County Tax increased by 198.2%. In the year 2000, the Town's share of the County tax was \$38,407; by 2010 this amount had grown to \$114,543.

G. Issues and Implications

1. The Town has demonstrated a strong ability to self-fund capital improvements during the past ten years. During this time the Town allocated funds to designated projects while also providing funds for undesignated capital reserves. The ability to continue to do this may be threatened in the next five years as the capital needs of the Town increase to maintain current services and assets. The current CIP in conjunction with the Comprehensive Plan Update need to address these funding issues as the Town moves into the near future.
2. The Town's ability to meet its school funding requirements presents a challenge without a significant increase in the current mil rate. School expenditures have risen steadily over the last ten years and continue to climb each year, topping \$1M in 2012.
3. State revenue sharing is decreasing to the point that it is no longer a substantial contributor to the Town's revenue stream. While this trend affects many towns throughout the state, Mars Hill is saddled with the annual valuation of the Wind Farm in our total valuation which further decreases the Town's share of this revenue.
4. Mars Hill has not completed a townwide revaluation since 1989. The impending issue is that of equitable distribution of the property tax burden as state law intends. Should Mars Hill undertake a revaluation in the short term?
5. The personal property tax files are severely outdated and inaccurate. With State sponsored tax incentive programs like BETE and BETR, it is important to maintain current and accurate files. A complete review of these records needs to take place to insure that the Town is receiving the proper revenue for Personal Property Taxes.
6. Overall growth in Mars Hill has become stagnant. The Comprehensive Plan Update addresses the issue of population growth. During the last ten years the population of Mars Hill has in effect been unchanged. This is a major concern as growth in this area can have a significant impact on revenue and insure the viability of our school system.

7. The creation of a strategic financial plan with a 5-10 year window is necessary to insure growth and prosperity. This plan needs to address future capital needs, containment of operating expenses, and a process for a thorough review of our school spending.
8. The Town needs to continue to fund Capital Reserve accounts as current accounts may not be adequate to fund anticipated needs within the next five years.

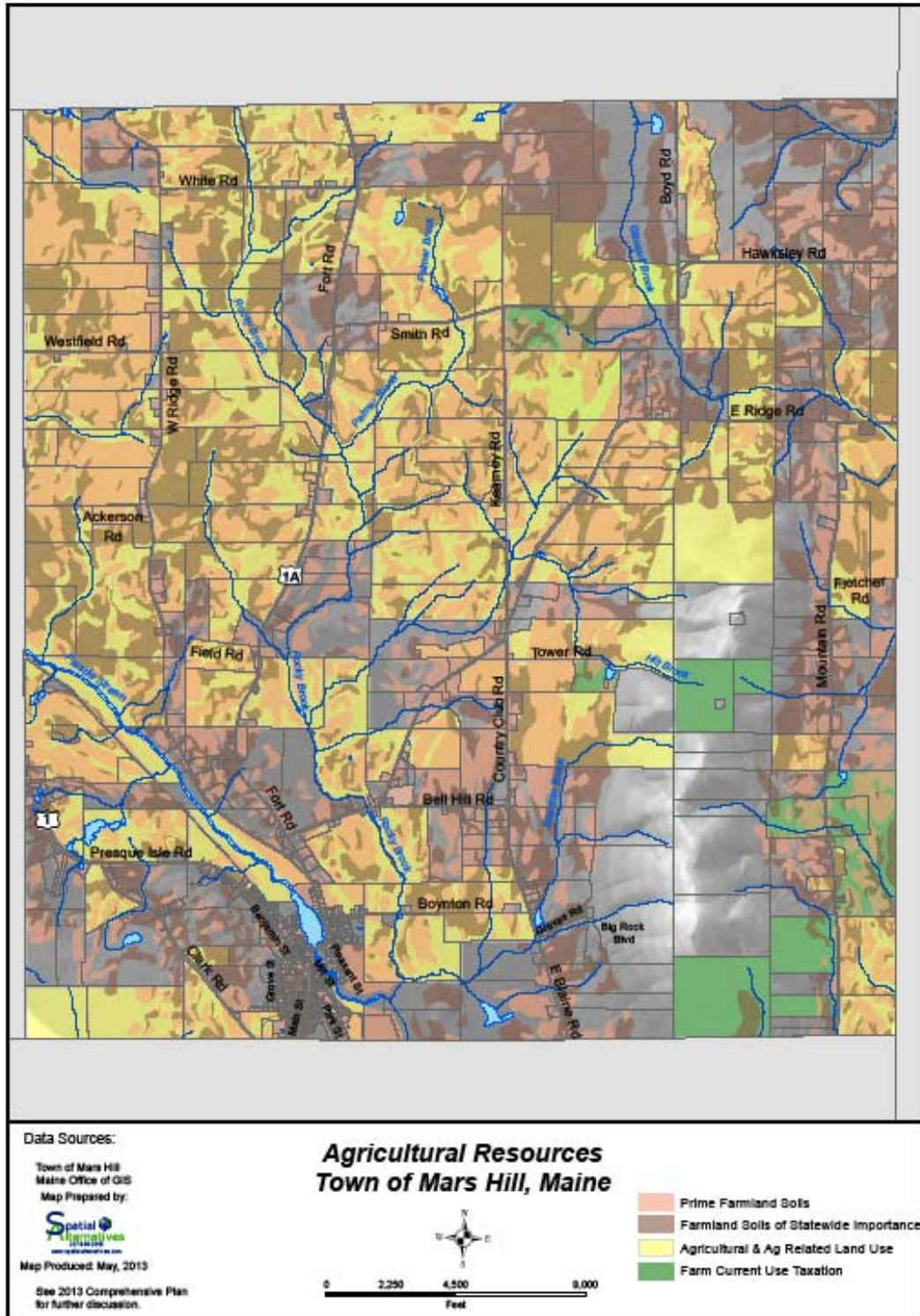


SECTION 8. AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY



A. Farms and Farmland

Figure 82. Mars Hill Agricultural Resources



Agriculture plays a major role in Mars Hill both in terms of the amount of land dedicated to agricultural use and in terms of the economic impact of agriculture within the community. Though trends in farming and land ownership patterns are changing, Mars Hill’s community identity has historically and continues to center on farming. In recent years, there are fewer, bigger family farms growing mostly potatoes and some broccoli. In addition to potatoes and broccoli, barley and other grains are rotated on land and some farmers grow a small amount of soybeans. Farmland in Mars Hill is highly valued and there has not been much conversion to other uses.

B. Aroostook County Agriculture

According to the 2007 Census of Agriculture, which provides data by county only, the agriculture cluster in Aroostook County employs 3,000 people on farms, in equipment and chemical supplies, wholesaling, transportation, and food processing. Potatoes remain the top crop with almost 64,000 acres planted in 2007 and 81,803 acres planted with forage, barley, and oats combined, together grossing \$146.4 million in 2007. The food processing industry has invested heavily in modern equipment and increased productivity, while farmers’ investments vary widely depending on the operation.

Also according to the 2007 Census of Agriculture, the number of farms in Aroostook County is growing, while the size of farms and number of farmers who rely on farming for their primary occupation are shrinking (Figure 82). Some of these numbers appear to counter what is occurring in Mars Hill and across the County, where it seems fewer farmers are consolidating acreage into fewer, larger individual farms. However, the numbers do reflect the national trend of a shrinking number of farmers who can rely solely on farming for income, and an increasing number of small farms with total sales of less than \$1,000, though the income levels overall are increasing (Figure 82). The 2012 Census of Agriculture should provide further definition of the trends in either direction. Because the Census of Agriculture uses confidential surveys, more specific information is not available.¹

Figure 83. Trends in Farming in Aroostook County					
Aroostook County	2007	% Change	2002	% Change	1992
Number of Farms:	1,246	+15	1,084	+23	884
Land in Farms (acres):	375,568	-4	391,675	+17	334,040
Average Size of Farm (acres):	301	-17	361	-4.5	378
Market Value of Production:	\$146,516,000	+21	\$121,158,000	-1	\$122,767,000
Number of Farmers as Primary Occupation	437	-9	481	-26	647

Source: USDA *Census of Agriculture, 2007*; NMDC, *Crest Regional Narrative, 2007*

¹ The National Agriculture Statistics Service uses the information only for statistical purposes and publishes data only in tabulated totals. The report cannot be used for purposes of taxation, investigation or regulation.

Figure 84. Number of Farms in Aroostook County by Value of Sales		
Value of Sales	2007	2002
Less than \$1,000	706	552 ²
\$1,000 to \$2,499	59	76
\$2,500 to \$4,999	52	46
\$5,000 to \$9,999	67	51
\$10,000 to \$19,999	79	52
\$20,000 to \$24,999	19	16
\$25,000 to \$39,999	36	27
\$40,000 to \$49,999	10	14
\$50,000 to \$99,999	29	33
\$100,000 to \$249,999	49	73
\$250,000 to \$499,999	57	71
\$500,000 or more	83	73
Total Farms:	1,246	1,084
Total farm production expenses (\$1,000)	110,936	96,884
Average per farm (\$)	89,034	90,885
Net cash farm income of operation (\$1,000)	43,089	28,447
Average per farm (\$)	34,582	26,686
Source: USDA, <i>Census of Agriculture</i> , 2007 and 2002		

There is a move in the region to develop a USDA certified slaughterhouse which could positively impact beef producers in the region. This infrastructure may add value to hay lands in the future as well as provide an opportunity for beef producers to sell local products.

C. Mars Hill Assessment Records

According to Maine Revenue Service records, in 2011 there were approximately 109 acres of cropland and 1,030 acres of woodland on 12 parcels enrolled in the current use taxation program for farmland³. The value of cropland in 2011 was \$33,050, with the woodland valued at \$130,935. This is down from 129 acres of cropland and 1,039 acres of woodland in 2006. The values in 2006 were \$38,925 for cropland and \$92,077 for woodland.

D. Agricultural Soils

Prime Farmland Soils and Farmland Soils of Statewide Importance are identified by the US Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) and data for Mars Hill are presented in Figures

² This number was estimated for the 2002 Census of Agriculture and might partially account for the apparent increase if it was estimated low.

³ Farmland current use taxation is a different program than Tree Growth. Woodlands associated with farms enrolled in the farmland program are not eligible for Tree Growth reimbursement.

84 and 85. Approximately 57% of the soils in Mars Hill are important for farming, or nearly 13,000 acres of land. As indicated on the map, these soils are distributed throughout town, with large concentrations in the northwestern and south central areas. Much of this land is cleared and utilized for agriculture, but there are forested areas of “banked” soils.

Figure 85. Prime Farmland Soils in Mars Hill, Maine			
Symbol	Soil Name	Acres (rounded)	% of Mars Hill
CgA	Caribou gravelly loam, 0 to 2 percent slopes	38	0.17
CgB	Caribou gravelly loam, 2 to 8 percent slopes	4,712	20.94
MaA	Machias gravelly loam, 0 to 2 percent slopes	5	0.02
MaB	Machias gravelly loam, 2 to 8 percent slopes	65	0.29
MhB	Mapleton shaly silt loam, 0 to 8 percent slopes	1,190	5.29
SgA	Stetson gravelly loam, 0 to 2 percent slopes	56	0.25
SgB	Stetson gravelly loam, 2 to 8 percent slopes	531	2.36
Wn	Winooski silt loam	2	0.01
Total Prime Farm Soils:		6,599	29.33
Source: USDA NRCS Web Soil Survey and Maine Farmland Trust			

Figure 86. Farm Soils of Statewide Importance in Mars Hill, Maine			
Symbol	Soil Name	Acres (rounded)	% of Mars Hill
BeB	Benson silt loam, 0 to 8 percent slopes	33	0.15
CgC	Caribou gravelly loam, 8 to 15 percent slopes	2,336	10.38
CoA	Conant silt loam, 0 to 2 percent slopes	73	0.32
CoB	Conant silt loam, 2 to 8 percent slopes	2,095	9.31
CoC	Conant silt loam, 8 to 15 percent slopes	61	0.27
MhC	Mapleton shaly silt loam, 8 to 15 percent slopes	1,388	6.17
SgC	Stetson gravelly loam, 8 to 15 percent slopes	165	0.73
ThB	Thorndike shaly silt loam, 0 to 8 percent slopes	10	0.04
ThC	Thorndike shaly silt loam, 8 to 15 percent slopes	29	0.13
Total Farm Soils of Statewide Importance:		6,190	27.50
Source: USDA NRCS Web Soil Survey and Maine Farmland Trust			

E. Local Farming Issues

In terms of local issues related to farming, the availability of land for residential development has become more of an issue in recent years. Farmers have been proactive about acquiring land from retiring farmers, leaving little land available on the open real estate market. There are some people who believe that more land for residential development is needed, along with a wider range of housing stock. Naturally Potatoes and SuperSpuds employ approximately 120 Mars Hill residents and are two of the top employers in the community. If additional food processors or other industries or businesses want to locate in Mars Hill, having an adequate supply of a range of housing options will be critical. If new areas for higher density residential

development are identified, it might be wise to locate such development closer to the town center and services and avoid the loss of important farmland.

Advances in machination and technology have led to reductions in the number of workers needed to successfully operate large farms and farm product processing facilities of all types.



Where seasonal workers are needed, migrant workers are increasingly more common due to the shrinking availability of local youth who traditionally filled this need. There is an active Future Farmers of America chapter at the High School, but additional opportunities for engaging local youth in farming are needed.

Farmers are represented on the Town Council and local committees, and have not rallied around any particular municipal issues or policies in recent years. There have been few nuisance complaints related to agriculture and informal recreational access to farmland for hunting is abundant, though several farmers have restricted access in recent years. Unauthorized ATV use is an issue in some locations.

Many residents have private vegetable gardens and locally grown produce is available at farm stands throughout the region. The high school has initiated an agricultural program including an on-site farm. The Town might investigate the workings of the Presque Isle School District for lessons learned as a model for an agricultural program that is tied to the school food system and a farm market. Mars Hill's program could use additional support from the community, local farmers, and local institutions like the supermarket and nursing home. At some point, a local Farmer's Market may make sense.

One ongoing issue facing Mars Hill farmers relates to water quality in the Prestile Stream watershed, where uncovered farm fields from the late potato harvest to spring planting and inadequate stream buffers contribute to a reduction in stream water quality. Christina Reservoir and 15.8 miles of Prestile Stream, which originates at the outlet of the Reservoir and terminates at the Mars Hill Dam, have both been listed as "impaired" by the Maine Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) because of nonpoint source pollution carried in stormwater runoff. The Prestile Stream is also identified as one of the 27 highest priority watersheds among the 55 streams listed on DEP's Nonpoint Source Priority River & Stream Watersheds. Approximately 10% (4,345 acres) of the Upper Prestile Stream's watershed (a total of 68 square miles – 43,434 acres) is in Mars Hill.

In 2002, the Central Aroostook Soil and Water Conservation District (CA-SWCD) brought together a 40-member Steering Committee to write a watershed management plan. This plan

was completed in 2005. Its primary recommendations were funding and outreach, assessment and monitoring, and nonpoint source action.

In 2008, the Maine Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) contracted with FB Environmental Associates of Portland to conduct a *Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) Report of Prestile Stream (& Christina Reservoir)*. The Prestile Stream TMDL study was based on sampling data collected between 1999 and 2006. The Report found that elevated nutrient loading and sediment accumulation contributes to the excess algae growth in the stream. Excess soil runoff provides sediment that contains a mixture of inorganic and organic material that stimulates algal growth and contributes to the hyper-abundant populations of macroinvertebrates.



Agricultural land encompasses the largest land area in the watershed, making it potentially the greatest contributor of silt and nutrient enrichment to the Stream. Sources of nutrients include bare agricultural land, removal of riparian vegetation, poorly designed and/or maintained roads and culverts including gravel/farm roads, paved roads, and logging roads, use of fertilizers, and animal/pet waste. Expansion of agriculture and development activities has the potential to increase runoff and associated pollutants.

According to the TMDL study, “Cropland [which covers 6% or 20,028 acres of the watershed] is by far the largest estimated source of sediment and nutrients to Prestile Stream and its tributaries, accounting for a predicted 96% of the total sediment load within the Prestile Stream watershed...Cropland is also estimated to be the dominant source of phosphorus...while nitrogen loading is attributed to both groundwater and cropland.” The Report recommends a comprehensive subwatershed approach to manage “all potential nutrient and sediment sources with a major emphasis on implementing Best Management Practices [BMPs] on agricultural land.” Of particular concern is harvesting crops such as potatoes in the late fall, with no winter crop covering the bare ground until spring planting, leaving fields vulnerable to soil erosion from thunderstorms and heavy rain which carries nutrients and sediment to the Stream.

The 2008 study resulted in the *Upper Prestile Stream Watershed-Based Management Plan*, which was completed in 2009 and calls for many actions to be undertaken over the next decade. Reducing runoff and nutrient impacts to Prestile Stream will require the support of local farmers to use best management practices to improve the riparian buffers and reduce nutrient run off. The Central Aroostook Soil and Water Conservation District can provide technical assistance as it continues to help implement the Management Plan, and the town could partner with CASWCD to work with local farmers. Additional funding for specific implementation strategies is needed.

The Town may want to consider potential impacts of land coming out of the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) on water quality in the Prestile Stream, although conversations with local farmers suggest that as more acreage is acquired, cultivation is shifted from marginal lands to areas with fewer environmental constraints.

F. Forestry

Figure 87. Mars Hill Forestry Resources



The forest products industry in Aroostook County employs about 3,500 people in timber harvesting, lumber and paper mills, biomass plants, trucking and railroad transport, equipment and chemical supplies. The industry is at a down point in its economic cycle because of weak overall demand and international competition (largely from Canada). The bright spots are hardwood veneer production, panel products, and cedar wood products. The potential for biomass production from wood pellets is also evolving. In the short term, this cluster would be helped by cost relief and in the longer term, by strengthening the rail system and diversifying new products and markets.

In 2007, there were 168 primary processing mills, 77 portable sawmills, 46 loggers and brokers, 23 concentration yards, and 11 mills that burned some form of wood for energy.

In Mars Hill, the forest industry is mostly small woodlot harvesting partly because so much land is agricultural. There is a pallet factory on Fort Road that has been in business since around 1994. G.R. Timber Holding, LLC is currently harvesting approximately 86 acres it owns on Clark Road. This area is close to downtown and might be suitable for residential development.

G. Local Forestry

Figure 88. Summary of Timber Harvest Information, Mars Hill (acres)*						
YEAR	Selection harvest	Shelterwood harvest	Clear cut harvest	Total Harvest	Change of land use	Active Notifications (#)
1991	146	20	0	166	0	4
1992	130	0	5	135	5	6
1993	130	0	0	130	0	2
1994	298	4	6	308	0	7
1995	148	20	0	168	0	7
1996	100	128	1	229	0	7
1997	155	0	4	159	4	7
1998	413	0	0	413	3	12
1999	325	0	0	325	0	20
2000	397	20	0	417	0	22
2001	237	0	0	237	0	13
2002	57	0	0	57	0	6
2003	170	70	0	240	0	9
2004	225	33	0	258	6	13
2005	291	4	0	295	0	21
2006	722	14	0	736	103	26
2007	306	0	0	306	0	24
2008	79	30	0	109	34	13
2009	138	0	0	138	20	8
Total	4,467	343	16	4,826	175	227
<i>*Data compiled from Confidential Year End Landowner Reports to Maine Forest Service.</i>						
Source: Dept. of Conservation – Maine Forest Service						

Figure 89. Tree Growth Current Use Tax Program, Mars Hill		
	2011	2006
Parcels (#)	17	16
Softwood (acres)	139	207
Mixed wood (acres)	316	201
Hardwood (acres)	651	692
Total (acres)	1,106	1,100
Value (dollars)	\$99,818	\$97,869
Source: Maine Revenue Service; Town of Mars Hill		

H. Issues and Implications

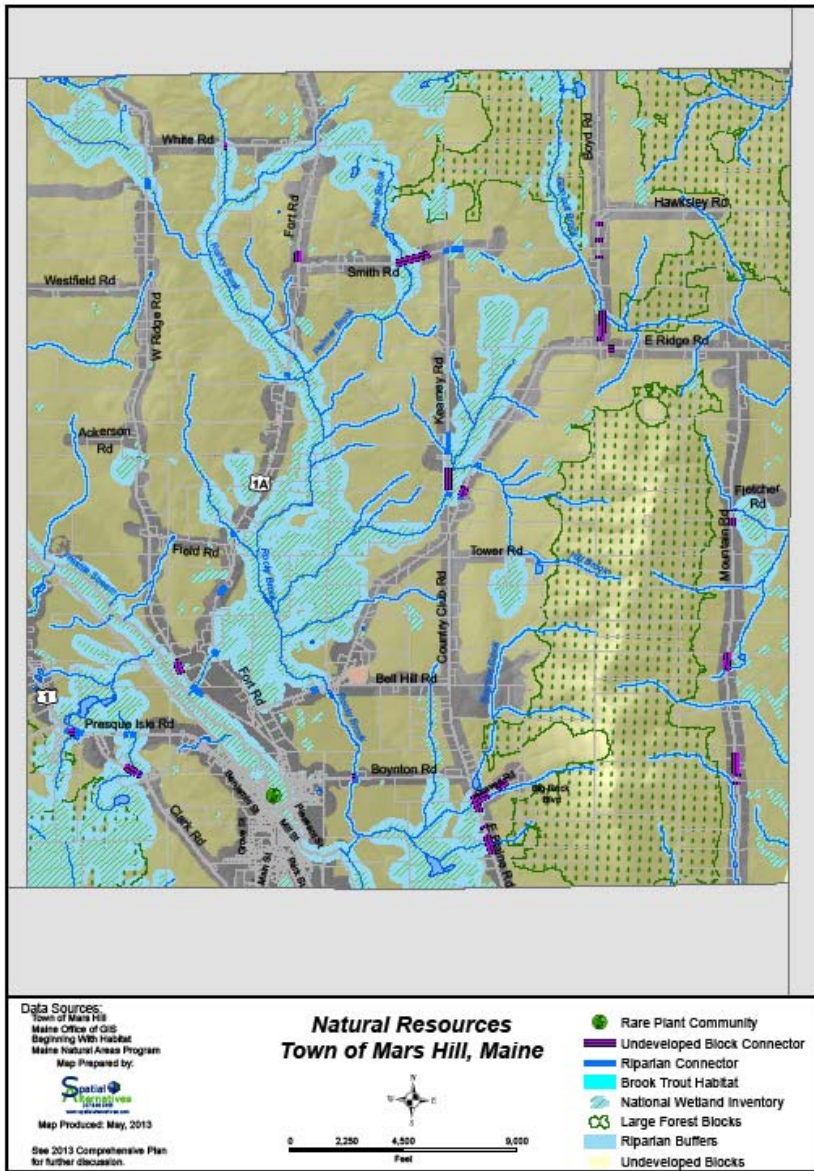
1. Is there a need for more regional cooperation in transporting and marketing local products? Are local or regional products available at the grocery store and served in the schools?
2. How can the community better support the agriculture program at the high school?
3. How can Mars Hill balance the need for land for agriculture with the need for land for residential development? How active does the Town want to be in tackling this problem? Is the community willing to focus energy and funds for such efforts? Should the Town pursue USDA Rural Development grant funds for infrastructure, (such as to bring sewer and water to a particular site or develop sidewalks) to help spur residential development?
4. Should the town inform new residents that farming is important to the town and that there will be noise, dust, equipment traffic and the like so they understand this coming in?
5. Farming has changed dramatically in the past 20 years and even in the past 10 years. Who would think that planters and harvesters would be guided by GPS and that some would spray by helicopter? It is certain that the industry will continue to change. How will it change and how can we prepare and take advantage of this?
6. Farm operations and inadequate stream buffers along the Prestile Stream have created water quality issues and there places where the riparian area needs to be expanded or enhanced. What can farmers do to reduce phosphorus, nitrogen, and sediment in stormwater runoff? How actively should Town work with farmers to address issue? Should it actively partner with CASWCD to seek funding to support such initiatives and implement the 2009 Management Plan?

SECTION 9. NATURAL RESOURCES



A. Mars Hill Natural Resources

Figure 90. Mars Hill Natural Resources



B. Wetlands and Vernal Pools

The National Wetlands Inventory (NWI) is the inventory typically used to identify wetlands in the absence of a more detailed local wetland survey. NWI uses aerial photographs from the mid-1980's to identify approximate wetland locations based on visible signs of wetland vegetation, hydrology, and geography. The NWI data and maps are not based on field wetland delineations and given the limits of aerial photo interpretation, is not a comprehensive mapping of wetland resources and typically under represents the presences of wetlands on the landscape. The presence of wetlands needs to be determined in the field prior to conducting activities that could result in wetland disturbance. According to the NWI, there are 2,580 acres of wetlands in Mars Hill, primarily located in the western 2/3 of the community.

Wetlands serve a variety of functions, sometimes multiple functions – runoff/floodflow alteration and/or erosion control/sediment retention, finfish habitat and/or shellfish habitat, plant/animal habitat, and other functions. Wetlands with each of these functions exist in Mars Hill.

Riparian habitat is depicted using common regulatory zones including a 250-foot wide strip around Great Ponds (ponds \geq 10 acres), rivers, coastline, and wetlands \geq 10 acres and a 75-foot strip around streams.

Runoff/floodflow wetlands provide natural stormwater control capabilities. As natural basins in the landscape, wetlands are able to receive, detain, and slowly release stormwater runoff. Wetland shelves along stream banks naturally regulate flood waters by providing an area for swollen stream flows to expand and slow, thereby, protecting downstream properties. The NWI assigns this function to wetlands that are contained in a known flood zone, are associated with surface water, and have a slope less than 3%.

Erosion control/sediment retention wetlands act as natural sponges that can hold water, allowing suspended particles such as sediment to settle out. The dense vegetation in most wetlands helps to stabilize soil and slow water flows, thereby reducing scouring and bank erosion. The NWI assigns wetlands with a slope less than 3%, emergent vegetation, and close proximity to a river, stream, or lake to this function.

Finfish Habitat wetlands have documented finfish populations, including wetlands adjacent to a river, stream, or lake.

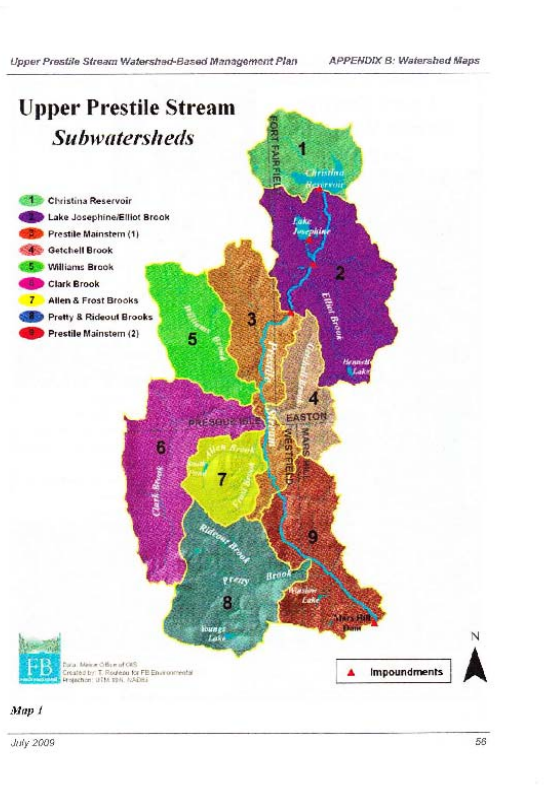
Plant/Animal Habitat wetlands provide habitat during some part of wildlife species life cycle. These wetlands contain open water or emergent vegetation, 3 or more wetland vegetation classes, and area within ¼ mile of a mapped significant or essential habitat, rare or endangered plant or animal occurrence, mapped significant or essential habitat, or rare or exemplary natural community.

Cultural/Educational wetlands are within ¼ mile of a boat ramp or school because they are likely candidates for use as outdoor classrooms, or similar social benefit. Wetlands rated for other functions may also demonstrate cultural/educational values.

D. Prestile Stream Watershed

Christina Reservoir and 15.8 miles of Prestile Stream, which originates at the outlet of the Reservoir and terminates at the Mars Hill Dam, have both been listed as “impaired” by the Maine Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) because of nonpoint source (NPS) pollution carried in stormwater runoff as a result of historic and present day pollution. These water bodies have been placed on DEP’s 2008 303(d) list of impaired waterbodies because of failure to meet their statutory Class A water quality designations. Prestile Stream violates Maine’s standards for aquatic life and dissolved oxygen. Causes of impairment are a direct result of industrial waste discharge and water withdrawals in the 1950’s and 1960’s and inputs of the insecticide DDT through 1972. Several impoundments, including Christina Reservoir and Lake Josephine, were created to store and treat industrial wastes and provide water for processing plants. The Prestile Stream is also identified as one of the 27 highest priority watersheds among the 55 streams listed on DEP’s Nonpoint Source (NPS) Priority River & Stream Watersheds.

Figure 92. Prestile Stream Subwatersheds



Approximately 10% (4,345 acres) of the Upper Prestile Stream's watershed (a total of 68 square miles – 43,434 acres) is in Mars Hill, containing portions of the Prestile Main Stem 1, Getchell Brook, and Prestile Main Stem 2 subwatersheds. The Upper Prestile Stream watershed terminates at the Mars Hill Dam, which is an important barrier in restricting the movement of smallmouth bass (not native to the drainage) farther upstream, which could negatively affect the native trout population.

In 2002, the Central Aroostook Soil and Water Conservation District (CA-SWCD) brought together a 40-member Steering Committee to write a watershed management plan. This plan was completed in 2005. Its primary recommendations were funding and outreach, assessment and monitoring, and nonpoint source action.

In 2008, the Maine Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) contracted with FB Environmental Associates of Portland to conduct a *Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) Report of Prestile Stream (& Christina Reservoir)*. The Prestile Stream TMDL study was based on sampling data collected between 1999 and 2006. The Report found that elevated nutrient loading and sediment accumulation contributes to the excess algae growth in the stream, which consumes oxygen during respiration and depresses DO levels. Excess soil runoff provides sediment that contains a mixture of nutrients, inorganic and organic material that stimulates algal growth and contributes to the hyper-abundant populations of macroinvertebrates. Dissolved oxygen (DO) increase and temperature measurements decrease from north to south. Phosphorus, nitrogen, and sediment levels were elevated and macroinvertebrate populations do not meet state requirements for a Class A stream, indicating nutrient enrichment, sedimentation, and algal growth.

Agricultural land encompasses the largest land area in the watershed, making it potentially the greatest contributor of silt and nutrient enrichment to the Stream. Nutrients have also accumulated over time in bottom sediments of the slow flowing and ponded stream segments and may be periodically released into the water column. Other sources of NPS include bare agricultural land; removal of riparian vegetation; poorly designed and/or maintained roads and culverts including gravel/farm roads, paved roads, and logging roads; logging debris left in streams; use of fertilizers; and animal/pet waste.

Figure 93. Sediment, Nitrogen, and Phosphorus Loading Estimates and Recommended Reductions for Subwatersheds of Prestile Stream							
Subwatershed	Name	Sediment (t/ha/yr)	Total N (kg/ha/yr)	Total P (kg/ha/yr)	Sediment % Reduction	Total N % Reduction	Total P % Reduction
	Reference Waterbodies ^a	0.02	4.80	0.21			
1	Christina Reservoir	0.04	11.70	0.49	50%	59%	57%
2	Lake Josephine	0.06	11.30	0.49	67%	58%	57%
3	Prestile Main Stem 1	0.10	13.44	0.54	80%	64%	61%
4	Getchell Brook	0.12	14.38	0.67	83%	67%	69%
5	Williams Brook	0.08	17.81	0.63	75%	68%	67%
6	Clark Brook	0.04	6.76	0.26	50%	29%	21%
7	Allen/Frost Brooks	0.09	12.45	0.62	78%	61%	66%
8	Pretty/Rideout Brooks	0.05	6.80	0.26	60%	29%	19%
9	Prestile Main Stem 2	0.10	11.27	0.50	80%	57%	58%
	Total	0.06	9.8	0.42	69%	51%	51%

^a Average of unit area loads for B Stream and Moose Brook. 1t/ha/year = 809.37 lbs/acre/year and 1kg/ha year = 0.892 lbs/acre/year. Prestile Main Stem 1, Getchell Brook, and Prestile Main Stem 2 are those subwatersheds that are portions of Mars Hill.
Source: F.B. Environmental Associates, *Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) Report: Prestile Stream (& Christina Reservoir)*, Aroostook County, ME, 2008

The highest nitrogen loading among the watershed is in the Getchell and Williams Brook subwatersheds. The highest phosphorus loading is in the Getchell, Williams, and Allen/Frost Brook subwatersheds. Expansion of agriculture and development activities has the potential to increase runoff and associated pollutants.

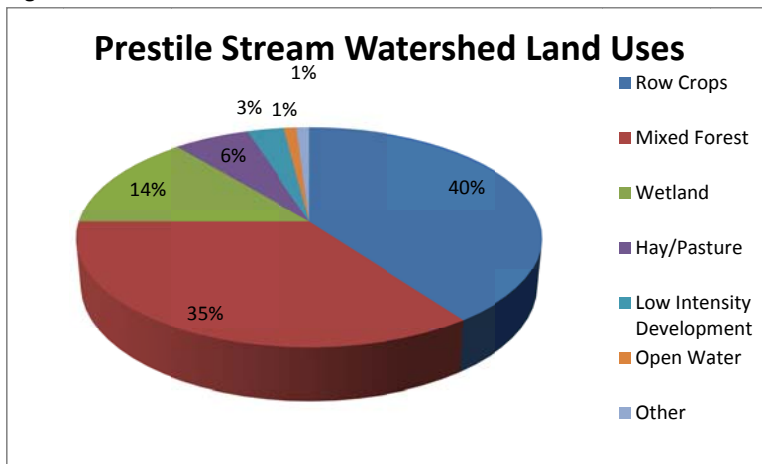
Figure 94. Load Allocations and Waste Load Allocations for Pollutants in the TMDL			
TMDL = LA + WLA	Nutrients		Sediment
	Phosphorus Load (kg/ha/year)	Nitrogen Load (kg/ha/year)	Sediment Load (tons/ha/year)
Load Allocations (LA)	0.21	4.80	1.12
Waste Load Allocations (WLA)	0	0	0
Loading Capacity (TMDL)	.021	4.80	0.02

Source: F.B. Environmental Associates, *Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) Report: Prestile Stream (& Christina Reservoir)*, Aroostook County, ME, 2008

Load allocations, representing nonpoint sources from activities including roadways and agricultural inputs were calculated in the Report and are provided in Figure 93. The Report

recommends that additional assessments should include stream monitoring to develop standards for pre and post application comparisons, to gauge effectiveness of any BMPs or engineered design solutions. Load reductions provide a guide for restoration plans and engineered solutions that will lower the content of nutrients and sediment in the runoff reaching the Stream.

Figure 95.



Source: F.B. Environmental Associates. Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) Report: Prestile Stream (& Christina Reservoir), Aroostook County, ME. 2008.

According to the Report, “Cropland [which covers 6% or 20,028 acres of the watershed] is by far the largest estimated source of sediment and nutrients to Prestile Stream and its tributaries, accounting for a predicted 96% of the total sediment load within the Prestile Stream watershed...Cropland is also estimated to be the dominant source of phosphorus...while nitrogen loading is attributed to both groundwater and cropland.” The Report recommends a comprehensive subwatershed approach to manage “all potential nutrient and sediment sources with a major emphasis on implementing Best Management Practices [BMPs] on agricultural land.” Of particular concern is harvesting crops such as potatoes in the late fall, with no winter crop covering the bare ground until spring planting, leaving fields vulnerable to soil erosion from thunderstorms and heavy rain which carries nutrients and sediment to the Stream.

Other potential inputs stem from recreational activities such as ATV trails, poorly maintained septic systems, waterfowl, and the highly eutrophic Christina Reservoir “which has acted as a nutrient sink for decades.” In addition, there is concern that the former spraying of nutrient rich irrigation water from the Reservoir has saturated watershed soils, which eventually make their way into Prestile Stream. Approximately 6,088 acres (14%) and 610 acres (1%) of the watershed

is wetlands and open water, respectively. These wetlands provide habitat for a number of unique plants and animals, and are considered one of the most productive waterfowl areas in the State – macroinvertebrates providing an important protein source for thousands of ducks and geese.

Based on DEP's 2004 land cover data, larger areas of mixed forest are located in the southern portions of the watershed near Pretty and Clark Brooks and Young Lake. The rest of the Prestile Stream watershed is low intensity development (mix small buildings such as single family homes, farm out-buildings, large sheds, and streets and roads).

Following the 2008 TMDL Report, DEP was required to prepare a Watershed BMP for the impaired stream segment. The *Upper Prestile Stream Watershed-Based Management Plan* (WBMP) was published in 2009. The WBMP is different from a traditional watershed plan in that it requires 9 specific elements to achieve load reductions called for in the TMDL over a 5-15 year timeframe in order to restore the impaired waterbody. The WBMP also contains strategies for monitoring progress and financing implementation. The WBMP calls for:

- targeting subwatersheds with the greatest nonpoint source (NPS) loading,
- focusing NPS implementation efforts on agricultural land,
- improving the type and timing of water quality monitoring, and
- developing a sustainable funding and outreach plan.

The WBMP includes management objectives for outreach, funding, assessment, monitoring, and NPS action. The greatest NPS reductions are needed in the Getchell Brook (for phosphorus, nitrogen, and sediment), Prestile Main Stem 1 (sediment), Prestile Main Stem 2 (sediment), and Williams Brook (for phosphorus and nitrogen).

Detailed watershed surveys, similar to one conducted in the Allen/Frost Brook sub watershed are needed in the other subwatersheds to identify specific needed improvements. Cooperation among landowners, local conservation groups, and state and federal agencies is what has been found to be needed to make remediation projects successful. Remediation efforts might include revegetating bare soil, planting shrubs along the stream, installing sediment detention basins to capture and filter sediments; managing erosion on agricultural land and roads; addressing inadequate ditches, poorly functioning culverts, among other improvements.

Figure 96. Estimated BMP Efficiencies in the Prestile Stream By Pollutant Type			
BMP Type	Typical Pollutant Removal (percent)		
	Nitrogen	Phosphorus	Sediment
Vegetated Buffer Strips^a	54	52	58
Crop Rotations	7	40	55
Cover Crops	43	32	15
Terraces and Diversions	44	42	71
Pasture Land Management	43	34	13
Streambank Protection	65	78	76
Nutrient Management^b	19	28	*
Livestock AWMS^b	75	75	*
Grassed Waterways^c	30	30	48
Sediment Basin^c	65	65	65

^aAlso called Filter Strips. ^bIncludes Waste Storage Facilities. ^cSource: US EPA 1993 (median values).
Source: F.B. Environmental Associates, *Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) Report: Prestile Stream (& Christina Reservoir)*, Aroostook County, ME, 2008

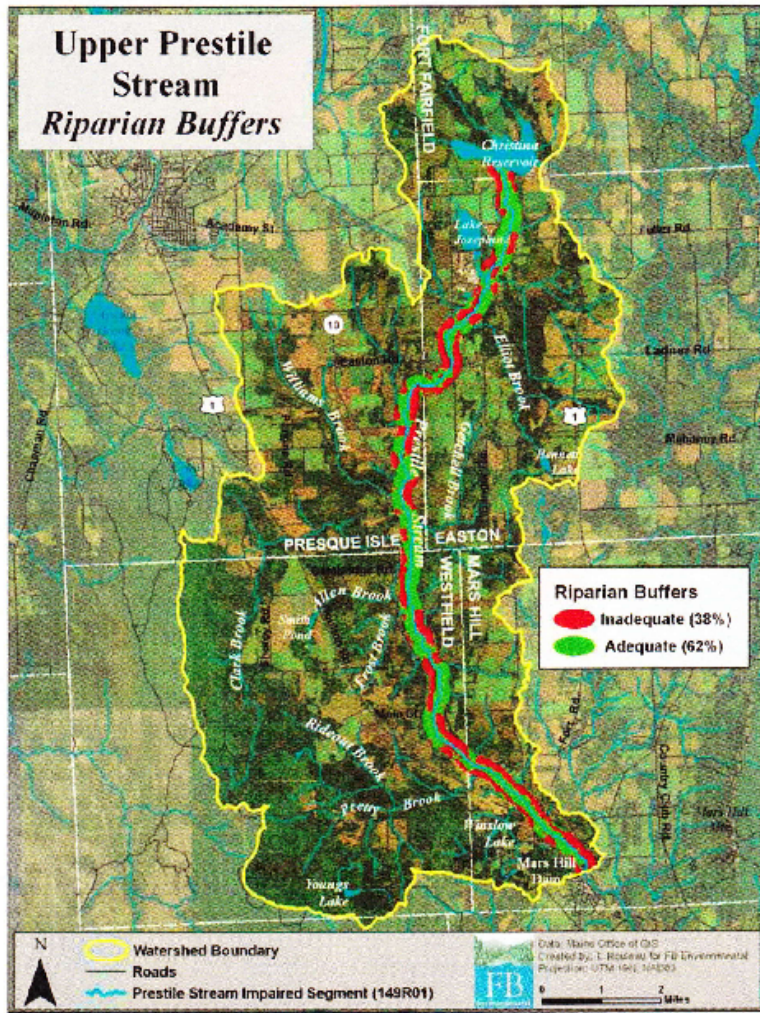
According to the Report, the BMP efficiencies noted above are primarily based on information found in Evans et al² with additional estimated efficiencies for grassed waterways and sediment basins from US EPA³.

While some have suggested that the Prestile Stream was misclassified as A in 1996 and is more appropriately classified B, according to FB Environmental Associates, “downgrading the classification of a waterbody is more difficult than upgrading and a re-class on the Prestile would require a Use Attainability Analysis, as defined under the Clean Water Act. This is a fairly arduous undertaking and EPA would probably require DEP to demonstrate that a TMDL has been fully implemented before any re-class would be seriously considered. The TMDL could therefore be viewed as a necessary step in any path towards the re-classification of the Prestile.”

²Evans, B.M., David W. Lehning and Kenneth J. Corradini. 2008. AVGWLF Version 7.1 User’s Guide. Penn State Institutes of Energy and the Environment, Pennsylvania State University, University Park, PA. March 2008.

³US Environmental Protection Agency. 1999. Regional Guidance on Submittal Requirements for Lake and Reservoir Nutrient TMDLs. US-EPA Office of Ecosystem Protection, New England Region, Boston, MA>

Figure 97.



Map 4

A habitat study of the Prestile Stream in 1989⁴ and a 2008 analysis of riparian buffers using 2004 land cover data and information and minimum setbacks in the State's Shoreland Zoning statute (which limit development within 250 feet of the upland edge of freshwater wetlands and 75 feet of the high water line of streams) indicated that the majority (62%) of riparian buffers are good, leaving 38% of the buffers in need of improvement. See Figure 96.

Unfortunately the majority of Mars Hill stream corridor is described as having inadequate riparian buffers. The WBMP recommends placing a strong emphasis on improving shoreland vegetated buffers to meet or exceed existing state guidelines "requiring that development is limited to the removal of no more than 40% of existing woody vegetation in the 250 foot wide shoreland zone of great ponds, rivers, and non-forested wetlands greater than 10 acres, and development, and within 75 feet of freshwater streams.

The formal designations of impairment and completion of the TMDL make the Upper Prestile Stream eligible for federal 319 funding. Other potential sources of funding include the DEP, Maine Department of Transportation, USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service – Farm Bill, Maine Department of Conservation, US Fish and Wildlife Service, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, and New England Grassroots Environmental Fund.

E. Aquifers

There are approximately 1.25 square miles of significant sand and gravel aquifers in the Upper Prestile Stream watershed. The largest section runs from the Presque Isle/Westfield town line, south to approximately 0.5 miles into Mars Hill.

F. Potential Water Quality Threat

There are five active underground storage tanks in Mars Hill. According to DEP's database, seven underground tanks have been removed. There have been ten petroleum spills in Town, most in the vicinity of the Downtown and Prestile Stream.

The sites of the current and former landfills are indicated on Figure 90, also in close proximity to the Prestile Stream. There are two wastewater treatment facilities – one in Mars Hill north of the Downtown near the Prestile and one just over the border in Blaine. There are also two

⁴Basley, D.J. and J.S. Lucas (1989), *Prestile Stream Strategic Plan for Fisheries Management*, Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, April, 1989

wastewater treatment outfalls – one to a tributary of the Prestile near the Westfield border and one on the boundary with Blaine.

G. Critical Natural Resources

The DEP identifies two endangered species in Mars Hill – Fries' Pondweed (*Potamogeton filiformis*) and Slender Pondweed (*Potamogeton friesii* Rupr.), which are found in calcareous or brackish waters. While secure globally, these plants are listed as endangered in Maine because of scarcity of habitat.

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There are several locations in Mars Hill that have been identified as significant wildlife habitat under the Maine Natural Resources Protection Act for inland waterfowl/wading birds, including areas near Rocky Brook, Brown Lake, the pond near Palmer Brook, an unnamed pond in the southwest part of town, and the area near the impoundment of Prestile Stream upstream of the Dam. These freshwater areas provide habitat for breeding, migration/staging, and wintering habitats for inland waterfowl or breeding, feeding, loafing, migration, or roosting habitat for inland wading birds. These areas, in combination with Christina Reservoir and Lake Josephine are among the most productive waterfowl areas in the State. Certain activities in these areas may require a permit from the Maine Department of Environmental Protection.

There are also numerous locations of high value habitat for the Gulf of Maine priority trust species. These feature categories of wildlife identified as the highest value habitat predicted by the US Fish and Wildlife Service Gulf of Maine Program's Habitat Suitability Model. The analysis evaluated existing field data and scientific literature for 91 species of fish, wildlife, and plants important to the Gulf of Maine watershed and ranked the landscape based on potential habitat for each species. Important habitats in Mars Hill include grasslands/shrub/bare ground and forested areas.

The priority list of trust species in Mars Hill denotes high value habitat with the potential to support the American bittern, American black duck, American woodcock, Bald eagle, Baltimore oriole, Bay-breasted warbler, Blackburnian warbler, Blackpoll warbler, Black-throated blue warbler, Buff-breasted sandpiper, Canada warbler, Cape May warbler, Chestnut-sided warbler, Common snipe, Eastern meadowlark, Killdeer, Northern flicker, Northern goshawk, Northern harrier, Olive-sided flycatcher, Osprey, Peregrine falcon, Pied-billed grebe, Red-shouldered

hawk, Scaup (greater and lesser), Solitary sandpiper, Upland sandpiper, Veery, Whimbrel, Wood duck, Wood thrush, American eel, and Atlantic salmon.

The Prestile Stream and its tributaries through the watershed and several streams within Mars Hill support a self-sustaining, wild brook trout sport fishery. Public access to these resources is available formally through the Park and informally across private lands throughout large portions of the community. The Maine departments of Conservation, Transportation, and IFW provide programs to help municipalities secure and develop public access opportunities. Mars Hill's trout population may be negatively impacted by water quality degradation, discussed above, as well as degradation of physical habitat (i.e., number and depth of holding pools).

H. Large, Unfragmented Blocks of Undeveloped Land

The State's Beginning with Habitat Program identifies 12 large blocks of undeveloped land that are not broken up by roads and extensive development. Together they include approximately 17, 874 acres, some spilling over into Westfield and Blaine. Figure 89 notes potential locations that could connect undeveloped blocks of land and likely riparian crossing locations for wetland dependent species moving between waterways and wetlands divided by roads.

Undeveloped habitat blocks are areas with relatively little development that provide opportunity for meaningful habitat conservation. These areas remain are likely to include habitat conditions of a quality that could be expected to support most terrestrial species known to occur in the area.

Unplanned growth is one of the most significant threats to large, unfragmented blocks of undeveloped land.

Data depicting high value plant and wildlife habitats and critical natural resources is available to all Maine towns through the Beginning with Habitat program. Data is regularly updated and the Town should work closely with the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries & Wildlife and the Beginning with Habitat Program to develop and implement approaches that protect the Town's natural resources, visit the Beginning with Habitat Online Toolbox (http://www.beginningwithhabitat.com/toolbox/about_toolbox.html), and periodically request updated information in the future to ensure that land use decisions are based on the best available information.

I. Issues and Implications

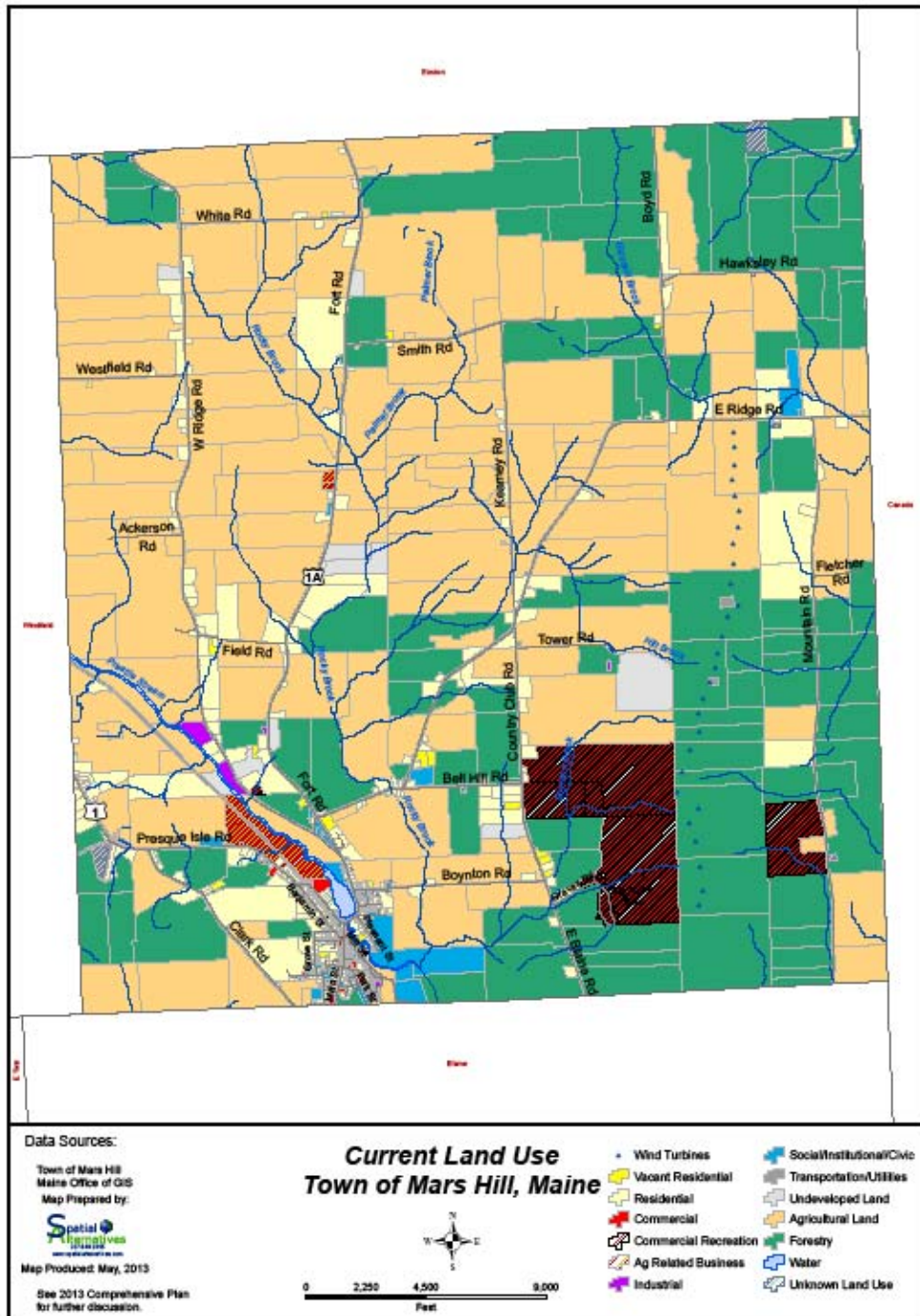
1. Should the Town work with local farmers to try to devise a solution to sediment loss from uncovered fields between the fall harvest and spring planting?
2. Should the Town prepare a strategy to improve and expand riparian buffers along Prestile Stream?
3. Should the Town undertake a watershed survey to identify priority areas for efforts to improve water quality of the Prestile?
4. Should the Town seek state, federal, and private funds to support efforts to improve water quality of the Prestile?

SECTION 10. LAND USE



A. Land Use

Figure 98. Mars Hill Current Land Use

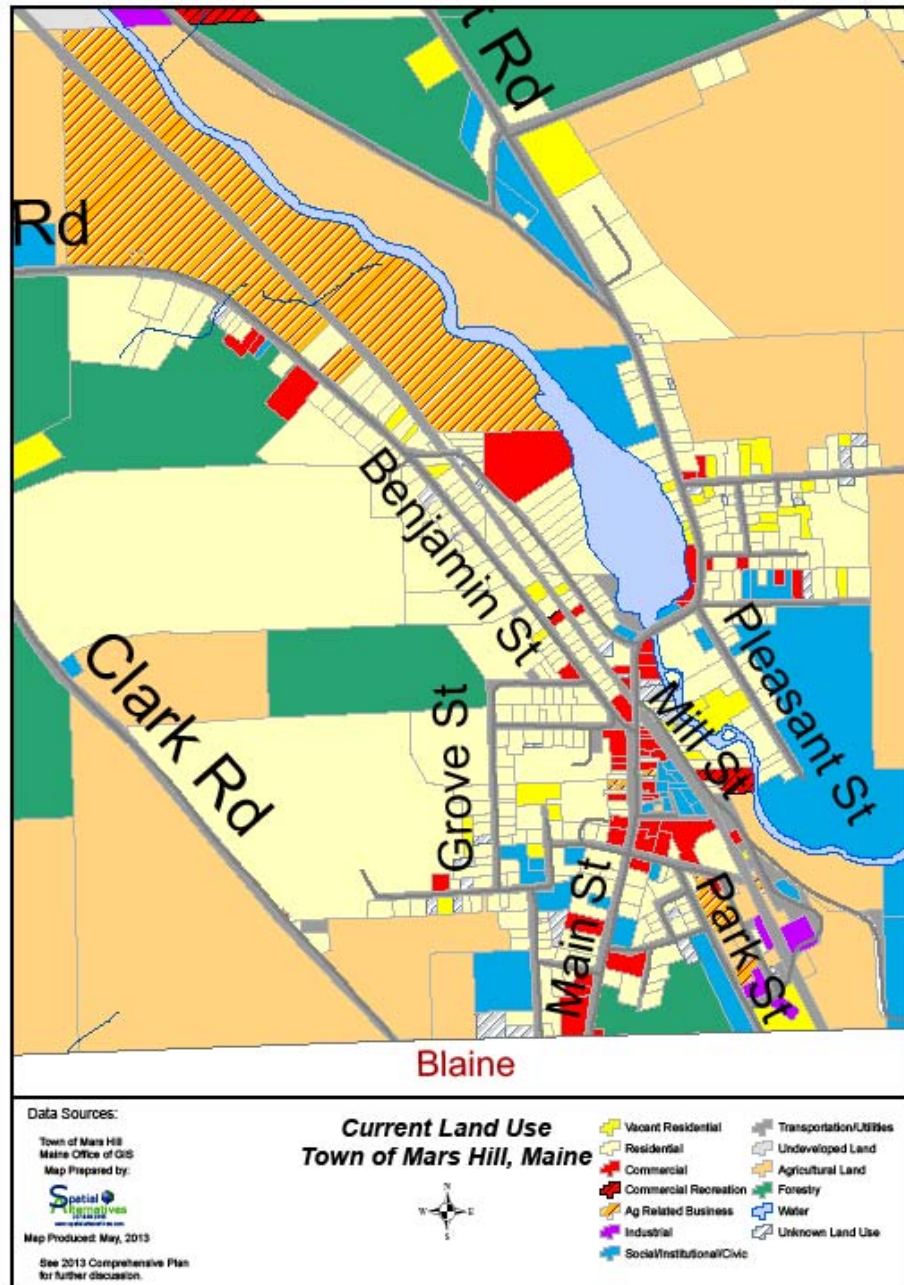


In 2012, Mars Hill remains predominantly agricultural, retaining its traditional village area and expanding recreational and other development of Mars Hill Mountain. Route 1 remains the

major corridor crossing the Town, along with the Prestile Stream. The Bangor and Aroostook Railroad line has been abandoned and plans were made for an industrial area on the company's property. The industrial area has seen only limited development.

B. Village Area

Figure 99. Village Area Current Land Use



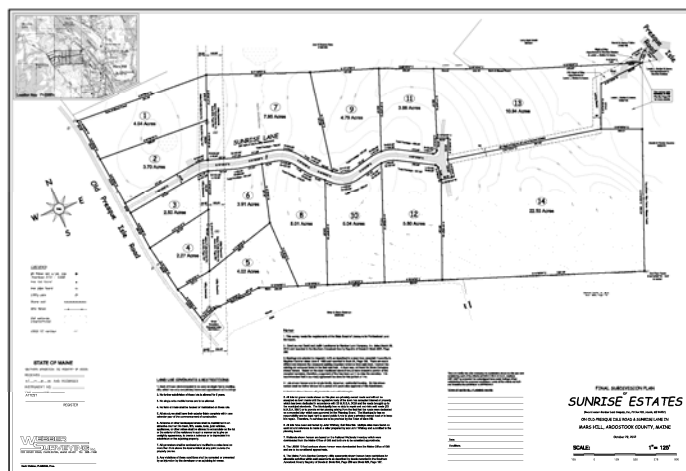
Commercial retail and service businesses and most homes in Mars Hill are still primarily located in the village area.

Since 1990, the Town and Utility District have systematically reconstructed utilities and improved pavement on a number of village streets, including Grove, Institute, Silver, Mill, Highland, Park, Benjamin, Sylvester, School, Hansen, Maple, and ACI.

Shortly after adoption of the previous comprehensive plan, the Town completed Project Beautification (1990-1991). The project included improving Main Street and concluded with placing flowers in barrels and planting trees on Main Street and siting a picnic table, benches, and trash receptacles at Prestile Park. In addition, the Town and American Legion Post 118 worked together to install a veteran's monument installed at the Park. Unfortunately, the project was discontinued for lack of interest in ongoing maintenance.¹

The Town has permitted very few residential subdivisions since 1992. In the mid-1990's, the Town approved 9 residential lots off the Bell Hill/Country Club roads. In the first decade of the 2000's, the Town approved 3-4 residential lots north of the Bell Hill Road intersection with Country Club Road. In 2012, the Town approved a 14-lot subdivision off Clark Road. Lot sizes range from 2.27 acres (one of 5 lots that front directly on Clark Road) to 4-8 acres for the lots in the interior of the subdivision and 22.5 acres for the lots that face the Presque Isle Road. The smaller lots are being marketed in the \$10,000 range, the mid-sized interior lots are going for \$10-12,000 and the two larger parcels fronting on Presque Isle Road are being sold for \$20-25,000. A right-of-way extending from the new subdivision road to the Presque Isle Road was approved as part of the subdivision.

Figure 100. Clark Road Subdivision



¹ Plant barrels used in Project Beautification are stored at the Prestile Dam Park.

C. Land Use Analysis

Figure 101. Mars Hill Land Use, 2012						
Use Types	# Parcels	Acres	% Total Acreage	Largest Parcel	Smallest Parcel	Average Parcel
Residential	489	1,425	6.3%	92.0	0.02	2.9
Multifamily	8	19	0.1%	5.7	0.08	2.3
Commercial	54	25	0.1%	4.8	0.02	0.5
Commercial-Recreation ^a	10	820	3.6%	320.0	0.20	82.0
Agriculture-Related	10	110	0.5%	100.0	0.02	100.0
Agriculture	139	12,078	53.3%	413.0	0.05	86.9
Forestry	101	7,149	31.5%	226.0	0.66	70.8
Industrial	8	34	0.2%	19.0	0.47	4.2
Social-Institutional-Civic ^b	42	248	1.1%	104.0	0.02	5.9
Utilities	7	8	0.0%	5.0	0.04	1.2
Undeveloped Land	9	232	1.0%	90.0	10.00	25.8
Vacant Residential	50	59	0.3%	5.5	0.02	1.2
Unknown ^c	41	46	0.2%	20.2	0.01	1.1
Water	2	47	0.2%			
Road & RR ROWs	4	366	1.6%			
total number of parcels	974	22,665				
^a no link to assessing data for 1 lot, coded by communication with Town						
^b no link to assessing data for 3 lots identified as cemeteries						
^c no assessing data						
Source: Mars Hill Assessing Data, 2012						

1. Residential Land Use

There are over 500 residential parcels, both occupied and vacant, making up 1,484 acres or 6.6% of the Town's total acreage. The largest parcel is 92 acres; the smallest is approximately



1/5th of an acre (8,712 sq ft); and the average is approximately 2.75 acres. While residential land use is concentrated in the village area, there is still a fair amount of residential development in the rural areas of the community, including both farmsteads and scattered residential properties with limited

connection to natural resource-based industries. Note the number of small lots fronting West Ridge and Country Club roads and emerging along Fort, Kearny, White, and Smith roads. If this pattern of residential development continues, the frontage of the Town's roads will eventually be developed, potentially negatively impacting road capacity and the rural character of the community.

There are 8 multifamily residential parcels making up 19 acres with an average size of 2.3 acres and making up 0.1% of Mars Hill's total acreage.

On April 21, 2013 Bruce Hussey and Steve Hitchcock drove the areas in Mars Hill which could help provide house lots in support of the target of increasing population by 500. They looked at land currently zoned Residential 1 (R1), Residential 2 (R2), and Rural Farm (RF) areas that are contiguous to the residential zones. They provided the following information to assist the Comprehensive Plan Committee in its discussions about potential house lots.

Figure 102. Land Available for Development of New Homes				
Location	Acreage	Current/Potential Zone	Development Considerations	Potential New Housing Units
Blaine Line/Clark Road	10 acres	R1 (8,712 sf lot for sewerred areas)	some limitations	20 lots
Clark Road New Development				14 lots recently approved
Presque Isle Road (Rt 1) to Clark Road south of Route 1	approximately 68 acres	RF (1 acre)	some steep hills	34 house lots, considerably more if rezoned to R1
Fort Road (1A) to West Ridge	30 acres	R1 (8,712 sf, but assumed 2 du/acre)	sewer can be extended from intersection; hilly, but ½ is buildable	30 lots
Existing R2 Zone on Fort Road and East Ridge Road	40 acres rezoned	R2 (18,750 sf for sewerred lots; 22,500 unsewerred); eastern half could be rezoned to RF and remainder to R1 (8,712 sf for sewerred lots; 22,500 unsewerred)	some limitations	40 lots at 1 du/acre, considerably more if developed at minimum lot size
Boynton Street Backland	60 acres	R1	some limitations	30 lots
Infill				20 lots
Total				188 lots

Source: Bruce Hussey and Steve Hitchcock, 2013 windshield survey.

The total for potential house lots was estimated at 168, with approximately another 20 house lots in and among existing house lots in the built up area, for a grand total of 188 house lots. Assuming 4 people per new house Mars Hill would need 125 lots to achieve the targeted population increase of 500 citizens. Assuming 3 people per new house Mars Hill would need 166 lots to achieve the target. With one zone change from R2 to R1 on the East Ridge/Fort Street parcel, the targeted growth can be.

2. Commercial Land Use

There are 54 commercial parcels in Mars Hill, ranging in size from under 0.02 to 4.8 acres, the average size is a half acre.

In 1993, the Mars Hill IGA had opened and the Rideout's IGA and Graves Shop & Save closed. Further changes came to Main Street in 1996 when Katahdin Trust renovated the Masonic Hall, the Good News Bookstore was torn down, and Sargent Truck Brokers purchased and improved the former Graves Supermarket property and the Mars Hill Pharmacy purchased the former Fenderson Hardware property. More changes came in 1997, when the Mars Hill Motor Company buildings were demolished to make way for a new drugstore and Papa's Discount opened its doors. 2006 was designated as the "year of the building boom" in the Town Report with a variety of construction projects in the community, including construction of the Dollar Store, the first new retail store in Mars Hill for many years; Sargent Trucking added significant new office space; and renovation of the Motel was started. Less new development has taken place in the village since 2006, although the new Maine Savings Bank branch office, Mars Hill Savings Bank of Maine, a photographic shop, and a several other new and relocated businesses opened on Main Street. The Northern Lighthouse, a residential in-home entity that deals with troubled children, which was opened in the 1980's/1990's, has expanded over the years to accommodate additional residents and clients.



When commercial-recreational acreage is added to totals for commercial properties, the acreage increases to 845 or approximately 3.7% of the Town's total acreage. As might be anticipated, commercial-recreational parcels are far bigger with the smallest parcel approximately 2/10th and the largest 320 acres.

In 1993, the Big Rock Ski Area was revitalized with a new chair lift and snowmaking equipment was installed in 1994. In 2000, Maine Winter Sports Group purchased Big Rock from Wendell Pierce and pledged to spend approximately more than \$1 million to upgrade the facility, keep downhill skiing affordable for local skiers, and lowered the price on season tickets and day passes. In 2001, the Mars Hill Country Club opened nine new holes at the golf course. In addition, the Town opened a new cross country ski trail that extends from the High School across private land to Big Rock and the Central Aroostook Ski Club was formed. In the late 1990's/early 2000's, the Libra Foundation acquired Maine Winter Sports. In 2004, Big Rock underwent major expansion with a new lift, new trails, a beginners area, additional snow making capacity, and creation of a snowboard park. In 2006, a tube park was added to the

occupied by operating potato storage/handling/shipping facilities plus several businesses such as waste management and site work/trucking. They determined that that the remaining area could be used for industrial development. They also recommended that an analysis of this property should be performed to more fully determine the potential for additional development.

4. *First Wind Facility*

In 2003, Evergreen Wind Power, a subsidiary of First Wind , proposed to locate a 28- turbine, 50 megawatt wind farm on Mars Hill Mountain, after public hearing town council voted to support project, to create the first utility scale wind project in New England. In 2004, First Wind secured



a site location of development permit from the State, but the Audubon Society of Maine appealed the decision based on insufficient bird studies. The appeal was denied, but the project was delayed. In 2005, the Town Council approved a tax increment financing² (TIF) district agreement to help finance the facility³. In 2006, First Wind completed a \$50 million plus wind farm on Mars Hill Mountain.

² Tax increment financing, or TIF, is a financing mechanism available to Maine municipalities and the Unorganized Territory to capture and leverage new property taxes within a district and invest part of all of those taxes into locally-approved activities and projects to provide new employment opportunities, improve and broaden the tax based, and improve the general economy of the State. Each district and related development program requires approval of the local legislative body and may include a credit enhancement agreement (CEA) between the eligible entity and a company or developer. Following approval by council, town meeting, or commissioners, the state Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD) reviews the proposed district and development program for statutory compliance. After approval by DECD, management of the district and program is the sole responsibility of the eligible entities.

³ The term of the TIF was 20 years, expiring in 2025. As part of the TIF, the Town bills First Wind annually and keeps \$500,000 of the revenue paid by First Wind, which is used to “enhance” the tax rate. The Town then cuts First Wind a check for the remainder, which is used to pay down the debt service for the project.

Nearby residents expressed concerns about noise being generated by the wind farm and eventually an agreement was negotiated between affected land owners and First Wind.

5. *Pine Tree Development Zone*

Three linear and interconnected Pine Tree Development Zones are designated in Mars Hill – from the Town Center north, then westerly to Mars Hill Mountain, along the ridge line of the Mountain, and along a spur that extends east and north for a short distance.

The state created the Pine Tree Development Zone (PTDZ) program to offer eligible businesses reduced state taxes for up to ten years if they create new jobs in certain business sectors or move existing jobs in those sectors to Maine. According to the Maine Department of Economic and Community Development, over 300 Maine businesses participated in the program in 2011, with reimbursements from thousands to hundreds of thousands of dollars for taxes paid on new employees. Because Mars Hill is among the Tier 1 Municipalities, eligible businesses that locate within the Pine Tree Development Zone benefit for corporate tax credits, sales and use tax exemptions for both personal and real property, withholding tax reimbursements of 80%, and reduced electricity rates for up to ten years.

6. *Agriculture and Forestry*

There are 139 agricultural parcels, making up more than half of the land in Mars Hill (53%). The smallest parcel is 0.05 of an acre, the largest is 413 acres, and the average is about 87 acres.

When agriculture-related businesses are added to this category, there are 149 parcels, making up about the same percentage of land (53%). The largest parcel remains the same, though the smallest is about 0.02 acre.



In 1995, the Town made a \$30,000 loan to developers from its revolving loan fund as seed money for a new potato processing facility – hoping for construction in 1996. In 1996, the Town created a \$1.4 million TIF district agreement with Freshway to help finance a waste treatment system for the facility. Freshway obtained a \$400,000 Economic Development Grant from the State Department of Economic and Community Development. The Freshway plant was up and running in 1997.

In 2000, a large \$1 million potato washing plant and state of the art potato storage facility in the industrial area, capable of putting out 40-50 trailer loads of potatoes per day was designed to meet the needs of the Frito Lay's Potato Chip plant. The Town provided a TIF to support financing of the project.

In 2004, Fresh Way expanded its plant to add more cooling capacity to its mash line and additional new dry and refrigerated storage to accommodate a larger volume of manufactured product. It also requested and the Town Council approved a revenue enhancement TIF to support the proposed expansion.

In 2005, Fresh Way changed ownership. The new company is Naturally Potatoes a Basic American Foods Division, LLC (largest manufacturer of dehydrated potatoes in US).

In 2006, Basic American Foods started a \$500,000 addition to their offices and a new laboratory. Also that year, McCrum Farms built a large atmosphere controlled new potato storage facility.

There are 101 forestry parcels, making up nearly a third of the land in Mars Hill (31.5%). The smallest parcel is 0.66 acre, the largest is 226 acres, and the average is about 71 acres.

7. Undeveloped Land

There are 9 undeveloped parcels scattered throughout Mars Hill, making up 232 acres or 1% of total land area. The largest undeveloped parcel is 90 acres; the smallest is 10; and the average is nearly 26 acres.

8. Land Use Ordinances

Mars Hill adopted its Comprehensive Plan in 1992 shortly after the State Planning Office (SPO) found it consistent with the Planning and Land Use Regulation Act (also known as the Growth Management Act). In 1995, the Town adopted revisions to its zoning, subdivision, and floodplain management ordinances and worked on revisions to its road opening ordinance.

In 1996, the SPO found Mars Hill's zoning ordinance consistent with its Comprehensive Plan. Then in 1998, SPO notified the Town that it had received one of the few Certificates of Consistency awarded as part of the Growth Management Program.

In 2000, the Town updated its zoning ordinance, land use permit table and definitions, revised some technical review standards and added others. In 2005, the Planning Board put forward and the Town Council approved adult entertainment ordinance. In 2009, Mars Hill updated zoning ordinance for clarification, added setback requirements for new buildings constructed with a metal roof, amended requirements for lot surveys when construction is proposed on the

setback line, rezoning of lots 90 and 91 on map 13 from R-1 to Commercial. The Planning Board and Code Enforcement Office report that they have no concerns about current ordinances.

Figure 104. Current Mars Hill Zoning



D. Building Permits

Figure 105. Building Permits		
Year	Building Permits	Comments
2000		Gameroom and Recycling Center, Potato Wash and Treatment Plant, shed to store snow groomer, new construction at Big Rock Ski Facility
2001	25	
2002	23	
2003	45	Record number of permits, First Wind
2004	34	some for large projects, completed permit process for First Wind , permits issued for Hiram Adelman Memorial Fire Station, 72 X 100' building on land donated by Milton Adelman and Vince Bernier, 2 expansions of Freshway, Big Rock Ski expansion Phase I (children's adaptive center, maintenance building, new trails, two new lifts, snow making equipment)
2005	33	reissued permit for First Wind
2006	50	the Dollar Store, McCrum constructed a large atmosphere controlled potato storage facility, Basic American Foods added an office and laboratory facility, First Wind completed a \$50M plus wind farm on Mars Hill Mountain – first of its type in the State
2007	24	Marsh Hill Savings Bank of Maine added to DT
2008	36	many for storage sheds and home additions and improvements, several new homes
2009	33	4 new homes and new businesses opened on Main Street, a few older homes that were in disrepair were demolished
2010	33	construction, renovations, new business openings and existing business relocations
2011	26	

Source: Mars Hill Town Reports, 2000-2011

E. Issues and Implications

1. One of the reasons Mars Hill has been able to keep a handle on municipal expenditures is because of its compact development form which allows for shorter trips to travel to deliver services. At the same time, the Town has identified the need for new subdivision lots to supply the need for newly constructed homes as a draw for new residents to the community. Often when folks come from away, they bring their “baggage” about more urban areas and overlook living or building a home within a village area such as is found in Mars Hill. They tend to buy oversized lots, though they do not work the land, on major roads like West Ridge and Country Club. Over time, this incremental development strips out town roads, eating up their capacity and forever changing the rural character of the community. Furthermore, this dispersed development undermines the expressed goal of branding Mars Hill as the “most walkable town in Aroostook County.” To be walkable, a community needs compactness and proximity of homes to businesses and community institutions.

Furthermore, Mars Hill just approved its first residential subdivision in many years. While sited within walking distance of the developed village area, the parcels range from moderate (2 plus acres) to very large (22 plus acres).

Should Mars Hill encourage new compact development that reflects the existing pattern of the village area? Should Mars Hill encourage more large lot subdivisions like the Clark Road Subdivision? Should the Town let the market dictate new development patterns? Should the Town require large lot subdivisions to be designed such that they can be further subdivided and provide additional roads to create a more fine grained, compact pattern of development similar to what currently exists in the village?

2. Some of the residential development in the rural parts of Town is a result of farming parents carving off lots for their children. The current ordinance requires a minimum lot size of 1 acre in the Rural Farm District. Historic development patterns in rural areas tend to cluster buildings closer together. Should the Town consider modifying its regulations to maintain the overall allowed density, but reduce the minimum lot size for individual parcels? This would allow farmers to carve off smaller lots for their children, thus reducing the amount of land diverted from cultivation to residential development and better preserving the rural character of the community.
3. What should the Town do to work with Maine Winter Sports/the Libra Foundation to manage Big Rock in the Town's interests?
4. What does the Town need to do to promote development at the industrial area? Is there a need for further investment? What areas are occupied by what groups? What areas are not occupied? What areas are developable? Are there any areas, concerns, impacts from existing development in the area that might conflict with siting a new business like a call center in the same area? Should and how can the Town work with regional economic development organizations to draw appropriate development to the park?
5. Does the Town have any agreements with First Wind that are coming up for renewal, whereby the Town might be able to negotiate a better situation/increased revenues?