

# Skowhegan Comprehensive Plan 2025 Update

Prepared by the Skowhegan Planning Board



**Skowhegan**  
*Maine*



KENNEBEC VALLEY  
COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS



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## **Skowhegan Vision Statement**

Skowhegan recognizes its role as the historic and contemporary hub of Somerset County, a service center and a small town. The town desires to enhance the economic vitality of its downtown, including promoting commercial growth, new employment and housing opportunities, while maintaining a strong connection with rural values, through the conservation of farms, forests and open space. Skowhegan seeks to grow its industrial base, promoting the wellbeing of its current businesses and encouraging the development of new businesses, not just in the town's industrial parks but also in the historic downtown and the town's many existing structures that have historically been used for commercial and industrial use. Skowhegan acknowledges the importance of its environmental assets, not just the quality of its rivers, lakes, streams, and groundwater but also its wildlife and other natural resources. Skowhegan seeks to develop and maintain its recreational facilities, including sports facilities, the Kennebec River Gorge, and access to local trails. The town appreciates the rights of residents to live and use their land in ways they see fit, so long as they respect the property values of their neighbors and the peace of the community.

# **The Comprehensive Plan and Skowhegan's Future**

## **Why create a Comprehensive Plan?**

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

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

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

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

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

## **The Importance of Community Involvement**

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

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

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

Strong public participation is a must to create “buy-in” to the plan. People will rarely embrace change unless they think there is a problem in the first place. Committees may be stymied in their efforts to address important local and state goals unless a strong case is made for why these goals are pertinent to the community – and important for the town to pursue. Public “buy-in” is necessary before the community can focus on remedying problems with a sense of common purpose.

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

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

## **History of the Comprehensive Plan**

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



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

Skowhegan has enjoyed the benefits of comprehensive planning for decades. This document is an update to the 2010 Comprehensive Plan. In 2020, Skowhegan began the lengthy process of a Comprehensive Plan update using the new State guidelines.

### **Skowhegan's Comprehensive Plan Update**

The town's Planning Board took on the task of updating the 2010 Comprehensive Plan. The Planning Board began the preliminary steps towards this update in November 2020. The following Skowhegan board members and staff members were instrumental in the development of this plan:

- Steve Conley, Planning Board Chairman
- Jeff McCabe, Planning Board Vice-Chairman
- Andrew Thorpe, Planning Board Secretary
- Harvey Austin, Planning Board Member
- Randall Franck, Planning Board Member
- Dan Luce, Planning Board Member
- Anjanette McFarlin, Planning Board Member
- Mitchell Kelso, Planning Board Alternate
- Travis Bickford, Planning Board Alternate
- Stephen Gould, Former Planning Board Member
- Brady Chapman, Former Planning Board Member
- Kris Laney, Former Planning Board Member
- Todd Smith, Former Planning Board Member
- Steve St. Pierre, Former Planning Board Member
- Matt Smith, Former Planning Board Member
- Derek Chretien, Former Planning Board Member
- Adrien Sincyr, Former Planning Board Member
- Tristen Hinkle, Conservation Commission Member
- Bryan Belliveau, Code Enforcement Officer
- Tonja Lary, Planning Office Administrator
- Cynthia Kirk, former Planning Office Administrator and current Solid Waste Supervisor
- Denise LeBlanc, Parks & Recreation Director
- Jason Finley, Road Commissioner
- Dena Rich, Highway Department Administrative Assistant
- Ron Rodriguez, Fire Chief
- David Bucknam, Police Chief

- Dawn DiBlasi, Town Manager
- Melanie Weston, Town Planner
- Joel Greenwood, Executive Director Kennebec Valley Council of Governments
- Kennebec Valley Council of Governments Staff

All town offices (including the police, fire, highway, solid waste, and recreation) departments were included in review of this plan as were other boards and committees. Local partners were also consulted for review including Somerset Woods Trustees, Maine Farmland Trust, Main Street Skowhegan, Skowhegan Farmers' Market, and others.

## **Community Involvement**

All Planning Board meetings were advertised, open to the public, and livestreamed. Videos of the meetings are available on the town website and Facebook page. When feasible, various stakeholders in the community were invited and involved in meeting discussions on relevant chapters. For example, the Skowhegan Conservation Commission weighed in heavily on the Natural Resources chapter.

An effort was made by committee members to engage with the public throughout the update process. The town distributed a survey, and residents were encouraged to participate and share their input.

The survey was open and available from the end of December 2024 until the end of February 2025. The survey was aimed at collecting residents' thoughts, opinions, and feelings about the town in areas from current and future land uses, transportation, housing, town government, local economy, municipal regulation, and more. There were also several open-ended survey questions where people could express feelings without being prompted by questions.

The survey was promoted on the town's website and Facebook page through an easy access QR code linked to an online version of the survey. The QR codes were distributed in common areas around town at various businesses and town offices, including the town hall and rec center. Central Maine News also advertised the survey in their weekly email newsletter "Skowhegan Now" on several occasions. The survey was also advertised on several popular community Facebook pages. In addition, the members of both the Planning Board and Select Board spread the word in the community about the importance of the survey and the Comprehensive Plan update.

During the time the survey was open, 121 responses were received, which is acceptable for a town Skowhegan's size. The survey and responses are attached in the Appendix of this plan.

The Skowhegan Planning Board also held a public outreach presentation on February 4, 2025 that was advertised to the public and livestreamed. This presentation explained the

comprehensive planning process, presented some of the topics and data from the plan, and some baseline results from the public participation survey.

Additionally, the Town of Skowhegan has previously participated in public participation and planning with Main Street Skowhegan on several other projects and reports including but not limited to the following:

- [Skowhegan Trade Area Consumer Survey conducted by Thomas College School of Business for Main Street Skowhegan, 2007](#)
- [Strategic Plan for Community Transformation prepared by Main Street Skowhegan, 2016](#)
- [Skowhegan Business Needs Assessment Report prepared by Main Street Skowhegan, 2021](#)
- [Skowhegan Housing Needs Assessment and Strategy Whitewater Park Case Study prepared by Levine Planning Strategies LLC for Main Street Skowhegan, 2021](#)
- [Industry Market Analysis – Outdoor Recreation & Local Food prepared by Camoin Associates for Main Street Skowhegan](#)
- [Skowhegan Downtown Master Plan Transportation Study: Accessibility, Safety, and Economic Development Improvement prepared by VHB for the Town of Skowhegan and MaineDOT, 2024](#)
- [Skowhegan Area Trails Concept Plan prepared by Outdoor Sport Institute for Main Street Skowhegan, 2024](#)

These previous planning initiatives have formed a solid basis for the comprehensive planning process and are referenced in the pages below.



# Chapter 1: Historic and Archaeological Resources

## A Brief History of Skowhegan

Like many Maine communities, Skowhegan's historic growth and development can be traced to its natural resources. The Kennebec River has played a formative role in each era of our past. That which attracted the first Native American travelers millennia ago has been, and will continue to be, the stimulus that attracts individuals, families, and businesses to our community for years to come. Understanding and preserving that resource is a crucial component of any Comprehensive Plan for our town. Skowhegan's past is the key to our future.

The history of Skowhegan begins before the recorded history of our European ancestors. Archeological evidence of Native American camps and villages continues to be discovered along the banks of the Kennebec River from Popham to Caratunk. This evidence seems to point to three migrations of Native American peoples. We have established that the Norridgewock band of the Abnaki Indian nation were the last native people to maintain fishing and hunting camps along the Kennebec River and its tributaries in what is now Skowhegan. These temporary or seasonal camp locations would later become the same areas where European settlers established the first known permanent residences.



Figure 1: Carrying the bateaux at Skowhegan Falls, drawn by Sydney Adamson; half-tone plate engraved by C.W. Chadwick 1903. Credit Library of Congress.

Early settlement and growth patterns of Skowhegan show clear connections to the demands of Colonial America and Europe. The Kennebec River provided the resources for our early development. The abundance of fish and fur, ship building timber and rich soil, block ice and moving water provided the first industrious settlers a steady and profitable base upon which to build. The earliest settlers found the flat waters below the



Figure 2: Skowhegan Falls before the dams, ca. 1860.  
Credit Skowhegan History House Museum & Research  
Center, Henry A. Wyman Collection.

Wesserunsett River amenable to set up year-round homesteads. In 1771 the first settlers, Peter Heywood and Joseph Weston, trekked up the river with their families and some cattle to establish the first permanent residences in the region. In the next decade many more settlers were granted land along the Kennebec River and soon villages were established.

In time, a small community developed in this area and came to be known as the Canaan Plantation. The Town of Canaan incorporated in 1788, along with its neighboring town to the west,

Norridgewock. These early settlements survived by hunting for and growing their own provisions as well as trading or selling animal furs, fish, and timber for goods they could not produce. Such commodities would eventually make their way to the larger centers of Boston, Newport, and eventually European ports. These trading post communities grow slowly because of harsh winters, unpredictable water navigation and the over-hunting or fishing of certain areas. However, by the late 18th century, a new growth pattern had emerged along the river.

The Kennebec provided another valuable resource to the development of Skowhegan. The late 18th century and early 19th century saw development attracted to the power potential along the fast-moving waters of the falls and the gorge. This natural waterway gave birth to the construction of mills and factories along the river and its tributaries. The mills utilized Skowhegan Falls, as well as Currier Brook and Whitten Brook, to turn their turbines, grinders, gears, and wheels. Hence the villages of Skowhegan (located at the juncture of Norridgewock and Canaan) and Bloomfield (located on the south side of the river) grew from necessity. Work forces were needed as the mills went into operation. French Canadian families migrated south into Skowhegan to work the mills. The villages of Bloomfield and Skowhegan blossomed into commercial centers to provide goods, services and housing to these new labor forces and micro-economies created by the mills.

Up through the early 1800's most of the commercial and industrial action took place on the island and the south side of the river (Bloomfield). Commercial activity on the north side of the river (Water Street) gradually increased from mid-century on. This growth period on the north side really blossomed in 1845 when the first bank moved onto Water Street. With the addition of the railroad in 1856 and the introduction of the telegraph in

1862, the Village of Skowhegan (incorporated as Milburn in 1814 and then, with its merger with Bloomfield, incorporated as Skowhegan in 1861) was soon the center of commerce for this area. By the last quarter of the 19th century Skowhegan's mills produced textiles, tanning, paper, ice and other products that were shipped around the world.

In 1872, Skowhegan was recognized as the seat of the county. The construction of a courthouse and jail added another aspect to the town's expansion.

Skowhegan's economy continued to surge, as did its reliance on the Kennebec River. The lumber industry was in full gear, providing building materials for the new nation. Raw materials were floated down the Kennebec to the mills where they were processed and shipped out by rail. New industries were added: steel products, veneers, and footwear. More growth meant greater wealth. Eminent housing was built along the major thoroughfares of Madison Avenue, Water Street, Elm & Pleasant Streets, and Main Street. By the turn of the 20th century, entire neighborhoods sprang up in the vicinity of Winter Street, Maple Street, and Dyer Street to the north; Mt. Pleasant Street, Millburn Street, and Alder Street to the south. Ethnic migrations of Italians and Irish brought with them the mason skills that built the newest commercial and public buildings in town. Skowhegan had grown into a robust, thriving community by the time the "War to End All Wars" started.



Figure 3: Log drive, Skowhegan Falls, 1865. Credit Skowhegan History House Museum & Research Center, Henry A. Wyman Collection.

By the second decade of the 20th century the world's attention had turned toward the war. The boom years for Skowhegan were over. The nation now relied on steel, metals, and concrete for its infrastructure, transportation, and war machine. Growth for the town remained slow but steady throughout most of the 20th century. Development was limited to walking distance of the established downtown commercial area. Additional neighborhoods to the north included Beech Street, Greenwood Avenue, and St. Mark Street, and to the south included Willow Street, Hathaway Street, and Pooler Avenue.

Though Skowhegan would generally follow the national economic tendencies in the 20th century, it never regained a substantial period of growth similar to its turn-of-the-century boom. From the 1940's to the 1980's many changes occurred in Skowhegan. The world was developing, and so would Skowhegan!



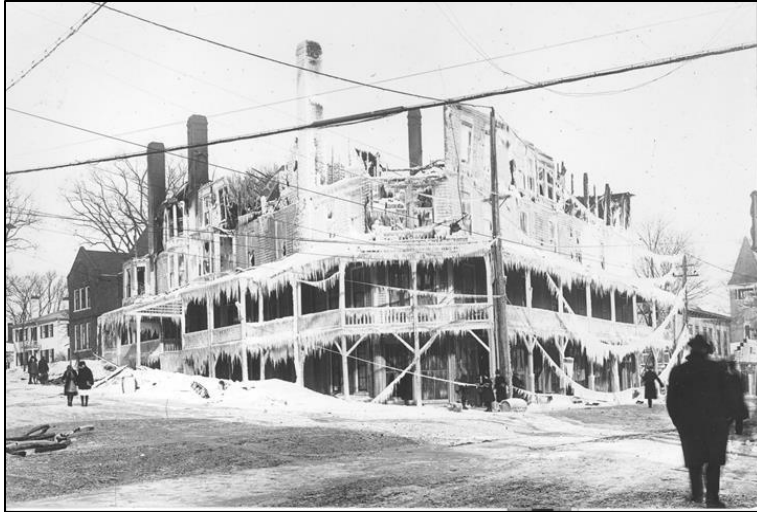


Figure 4: Hotel Coburn ruins after fire, Skowhegan, 1918.  
Credit Skowhegan History House Museum & Research  
Center, Henry A. Wyman Collection.

Modernization came to town, through new industries and new commercial growth. The use of the river changed from direct mechanical power to electricity! The industries that ran directly on waterpower were inefficient and costly. Hydroelectric dams would be installed to harness the river's energy. The electricity could be used anywhere and would bring great improvements to both residents and businesses. Gasoline and diesel engines would change transportation forever, improving mobility of people and materials. Powered vehicles would require many

changes to the town's roads and bridges. Powered vehicles would also result in expanded market potential and competition. Electricity and improved transportation would foster new businesses and jobs, but at the expense of older industries that were no longer competitive. Overseas labor markets and newly automated factories put many older mills out of service.

Also, during this period, people abused the nation's waterways. Sewage, waste, trash, and debris from industries, homes, businesses, and highways had been dumped into the waters. Waterways across the United States (and the globe) were polluted and unusable. In Skowhegan, they could no longer support the wildlife and fish that attracted centuries of settlers. Finally, in 1972, the federal Clean Water Act required many changes to people's behavior and the protection the waters of the United States of America from pollution sources. One result of this was an end to running logs down the Kennebec River. Skowhegan's identity as a river town was changed yet again.

The latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century saw building facades and interiors being altered to reflect the nation's changing style. From the historic preservation standpoint, Skowhegan suffered many significant losses due to fires, disrepair, and development. By the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Skowhegan, like many historic downtowns, was faced with the infusion of mass retailing nationwide. Big box stores, strip malls and mega-malls replaced the compact downtowns as the commercial centers across America. Towns turned instead to highways and mega shopping plazas. Skowhegan followed this with commercial growth along Madison Avenue and East Front Street (renamed Waterville Road). National chain brands like Walmart, McDonald's, and Burger King planted themselves amongst the beautiful homes of the century before. Commercial growth brought changes, with new plazas, box stores, and service stations replacing old, leaving empty plazas and vacant parking lots.

The second half of the twentieth century brought significant job growth to Skowhegan. New factories were erected to manufacture footwear. One of the world's largest and most modern pulp and paper mills was built. Other industries sprang up around town. These facilities brought large numbers of jobs to the area and resulted in the growth and development of many support businesses. These businesses resulted in a greatly expanded tax base and financial stability fostering the growth of the town's services.

For Skowhegan, the removal of log runs from the river also meant the rise of logging trucks to move the wood to the mills. Roads and intersections were widened. The historic characteristics of the town were modified to make room for modern transportation needs. Traffic was constant and noisy. The downtown struggled to compete with the larger department stores and was less appealing for people to shop, eat, and meet up with friends and neighbors. Increased mobility enabled people to live farther away from the town center and their jobs. More people could now dwell in the rural parts of town and enjoy having more space and land. These factors also reduced the use of downtown businesses and neighborhoods. The downtown had lost its appeal. A new growth pattern had emerged.

Skowhegan's growth moved further from downtown. New residential housing and subdivisions sprang up in the traditionally agricultural or undeveloped areas around town. Road improvements meant that workers could spread even further out, toward neighboring rural Cornville, Athens, Norridgewock, and Canaan. People were looking for that quiet country setting that Skowhegan's business district and streets no longer provided. It is important to recognize however that this migration stretched the town's ability to maintain roads, services, and emergency care. Taxes needed to provide betterments, and the existing infrastructure could support a clean, vigorous small-town setting, but not a sprawling one.

The millennium brings new hope and optimism to Skowhegan. In 2005, Skowhegan joined the national program of rebuilding historic communities with its recognition as a Main Street community. This recognition has helped revitalize the downtown with grant money and access to architectural assistance. The completion of a major infrastructural upgrade, the addition of an ambassador building, and installation of period lighting, trees, and sidewalks has brought a new glimmer to the historic commercial center. The Skowhegan Historic District is a cohesive grouping of thirty-eight (38) architecturally and historically significant buildings dating from circa 1880 to 1912. Restoration of the historic downtown facades and structures are rejuvenating the sense of a downtown center of commerce.

Ironically, one constant and truly individual feature of this town will determine how Skowhegan continues to grow and form into this new millennium. The Kennebec River is once again the key to Skowhegan's future. Current projects and ideas for the river – land preservation, walking trails and green spaces, parkways, and a kayak white water park – will once again invigorate this town. The Kennebec represents our heritage as a small New England mill town, a tourist destination, and as a great place to live. How we treat this valuable resource will ultimately determine what direction the town chooses to go.

It is with this in mind that the inhabitants of the Town of Skowhegan chose to protect our cultural and historical resources as a symbol and reminder of our community identity.

### **Inventory of Historical Resources:**

The cultural and historic resources of Skowhegan can be generally classified into four eras. Each era represents a period of time in the use of and/or the development of our town. It is important to understand that each period is general in nature and that overlaps, both developmental and chronological, may exist. The four major eras include the prehistoric (pre-contact) era, the colonial, revolutionary and frontier era, industrial growth era, and the early 20th century era.

#### *The Prehistoric Era:*

This is the most complex era by definition, classification, and preservation. Prehistoric archeological sites reveal information about the Native American inhabitants, who did not leave any written records. The following four types of sites are significant:

- Habitation/workshop sites are next to canoe -navigable waters.
- Lithic quarries are places where stone raw materials are gathered. They occur at localized quartz, rhyolite and chert resources.
- Cemeteries are found on well-drained sandy or gravelly sand soils usually near a river or lake.
- Rock art sites are found immediately next to canoe-navigable waters on bedrock outcrops.

Though there is ample evidence of local Native American activity, the ability to pinpoint such activity to preserve and educate is an arduous and cost prohibitive task. Skowhegan is fortunate to have so many residents that share a passion for the understanding of how native inhabitants survived in this region. Numerous historic and prehistoric artifacts, as well as investigations on privately owned properties has allowed archaeologists the opportunity to inspect land formations, soil types, waterways, and other topographical indicators to develop a general theory of the prehistoric activities that may have occurred in our town.

Archaeological surveys have identified multiple sites in Skowhegan. For example, the previous bridge and highway bypass proposal for Skowhegan has moved into the environmental impact study phase, requiring the identification of potentially prehistoric or historic sites along a possible route. Initial investigations are research based and non-destructive. If any areas along the route are identified as needing further investigation, then a second stage, including test pits, is initiated. In 2002, and then again in 2005, second stage investigations were performed along the proposed corridor. Test pits along the Cold Brook and the Wesserunsett River provided some evidence of prehistoric activity but were inconclusive in terms of what those activities may have been. However, several test pits along the Kennebec River showed early to mid-Ceramic and/or Susquehanna tradition prehistoric sites. These sites are considered eligible for National Registry.

These and other sites (there are twenty-one in total in town shown on the Historic Resources Map in the appendices) are generally not advertised, to reduce the possibility of looting or disturbance. The existing significant inventory for this era identifies by number only, and includes:

- Prehistoric Site 70.32 [Susquehanna tradition]
- Prehistoric Site 70.37 [Susquehanna tradition]
- Prehistoric Site 70.38 [Ceramic period]
- Prehistoric Site 70.30 [undetermined]
- Prehistoric Site 70.34 [undetermined]
- Prehistoric Site 70.35 [undetermined]

The process of surveying and preserving our past is a very arduous task. Financial resources will always be the first deterrent. Costs associated with exploration and evaluation can even deter development of prospective sites. While it is not believed that any individual or entity would purposely exclude this type of investigation, the financial resources required to complete the work could very well end the motivation to investigate in the first place.

The second consideration is defining the area of the research. Natural disturbances such as spring thaw, raging rivers, beaver dams, wind erosion, and biodegradation have detrimental effects on archaeological field work and recovery. Manmade disturbances such as field plowing, mill dams, road building, and general construction have a negative impact on archaeological resources. Determining the limit of work is a very scientific procedure. Field experience plays the biggest role in expertise. However, the availability of field experienced experts is limited.

The third consideration is the goal of the research itself. Native American traditions generally demand that their cultural heritage be left undisturbed. Beliefs are that the material beings and spirits are of the earth and therefore should remain of the earth. Our European heritage requires classification, documentation, and public acknowledgement of our past. The challenge occurs because in order to protect (or leave something alone), one must know where it is. In this case protecting a cultural site means being able to identify the location of the site and the scope of work of any ensuing project.

#### *The Colonial, Revolutionary and Frontier Era:*

Between the first contact (early 1600's) with Maine's Native Americans and the first industrial era (early 1800's), most of this period is dedicated to the early American explorers, hunters, and surveyors that traveled through our town. It is not until 1771 that settlers made permanent homesteads within our boundaries. The preservation of this period is limited to the few remaining cellar holes and other structures left intact. However, significant areas along the Kennebec River at the gorge, eddy, and Wesserunsett Stream inlet remain very much undisturbed from their appearance during this colonial and revolutionary period.

The connection between America's settlement and the establishment of Skowhegan has been demonstrated. The Kennebec River played a major role in the success of the Massachusetts Colony by supplying ample hunting grounds for the earliest settlers. Raw materials, foods, and goods from the Kennebec continued to supply the settlements to the south during the pre-revolutionary period. The lands on both sides of the Kennebec were included in a grant from the Plymouth Council to the Pilgrims in 1629 with the Wesserunsett River recognized as the northern boundary of the grant. The Wesserunsett was again set as the northern boundary of the William Bradford purchase in 1649.

Native American trade routes and lifestyle were impacted greatly by traveling hunters and woodsmen. Tensions between the Native inhabitants and the traders grew increasingly hostile. Territorial battles ensued requiring former trading posts be converted into forts and armories. The completion of Fort Western [Augusta] in 1754 paved the way for permanent settlers along the Kennebec. Just before the outbreak of war, Skowhegan would see its first full-time inhabitants.

Two significant milestones of that era include the Arnold Expedition in 1775 and the Canaan Plantation. Recorded history tells us that the Arnold Expedition stopped in on our first settlers on the way up to Quebec. Author Stephen Clark noted "This stretch [of river] is about the same as it was when the expedition passed. Note the swiftness of the current that the bateaux [rowing boat] men were obliged to navigate" in his book *Following Their Footsteps: A Travel Guide & History of the 1775 Secret Expedition to Capture Quebec*. History can make judgment on the success or failure of the Arnold Expedition but for the Kennebec and Skowhegan it was the first time these areas were properly surveyed and mapped for future growth. And that growth continued gradually for the next forty years in the settlement of the Canaan Plantation, Canaan, Bloomfield, and Milburn.

Significant elements of for this era include, but are not limited to;

- Dudley Corner Schoolhouse
- Arnold Expedition Trail
- Weston Mill
- Samuel Weston's 1797 plan of Canaan Gore and Mile-and-a-Half Strip lots
- Malbons Mills and dam

### *The Industrial Growth Era:*

From the period of time between the creation of the first mills (early 1800's) and World War I (1914), there was a period of great growth and prosperity for Skowhegan. That economic growth contributed the greatest amount of observable (tangible) historic resources to pass on from its generation. These resources are obvious in our architecture, town layout, road and park names, and family names. They are evident in our daily lives through photographs, furniture, dishware, etc.

History is all about a chain of events building on each other. A chronological timeline will have numerous overlaps and gaps. In this case, the distinction between the end of the previous era and the beginning of this era is not so much a distinct world-changing event but a very localized yet significant (though unknown at the time) event.



Figure 5: Madison Avenue, Skowhegan, ca. 1868. Credit Maine Memory Network. Credit Skowhegan History House Museum & Research Center, Henry A. Wyman Collection.

The Somerset Central Agricultural Society opened its gates for the first time in January, 1819. This cultural event would draw in farmers and families from around Somerset County. The real impact of this draw was that it crossed the barriers of ethnicity, religious beliefs, and economic differences. All were invited; anyone could compete, plain and simple. And everyone needed something to take their minds off winter. Hence the beginning of Skowhegan's [Canaan's actually] importance to the region began.

Skowhegan continued to grow throughout this period. In 1885, electricity would be introduced to the town. In 1887, the public water works would be added. The growth also provided greater wealth and that wealth, in turn, demanded finer goods and restaurants, more culture and arts. In 1888, the Boston Symphony Orchestra Club would entertain the masses. And in 1893, the New York Philharmonic Orchestra would delight audiences here. Next came the advancements. In 1901, the first motorcycle rolled into town. A year later the first horseless carriage would get stuck in Skowhegan's mud. It seemed that this prosperity and growth would last forever. From this era, Skowhegan would get its village, its county status, and its identity. We also take from this era hundreds of examples of architectural and community history.



Figure 6: Sketch of south dam, from 1892 bird's eye map of Skowhegan. Credit Library of Congress.

Significant elements of this era include not just structures but entire neighborhoods. While few contain or commemorate historically significant milestones, in context they describe the development of our community. They include, but are not limited to;

- Skowhegan Fair Grounds
- First Baptist Church of Skowhegan (re-located to 37 Main Street in 1822)
- Madison Avenue District
- Main Street District
- Water Street District
- Elm & Pleasant Streets District
- Fairview Avenue (Middle Road) District
- Island District
- Skowhegan Historic Downtown District
- Original structure for the county jail
- First addition to the county jail
- Original county courthouse
- Original Strand Theatre
- Skowhegan Grange

There is one identified historic archaeological site of Philbrick Pottery located on the Kennebec Riverbanks south of the Oak islands. It is dated c. 1831- c. 1875 and of interest as an industrial / pottery site.



### *The Early 20th Century Era:*

From World War I (1914) and the Korean War (1953), this period can be mostly defined by the impact of automobiles, the creation of larger mill complexes, and the impact of the wars on thriving mill towns. The inventory for this era includes, but is not limited to;

- Maine Spinning Mill Company mill
- New Balance Factory building
- Maine Women's Reformatory Maternity Hospital and Nursery



Figure 7: Water Street, Skowhegan, ca. 1923. Skowhegan History House Museum & research Center.

### *The Late 20th Century Era:*

This era represents the period of time after the Korean War (1953) to the present. This period can be mostly defined by the impact of the "new economy:" big box stores, chain retailing, and technology. But it is important to recognize that history does not stop at or after the Korean War. Names like Margaret Chase Smith, Scott Paper, Sappi, and Redington-Fairview are engraved in our town history forever. It should be recognized that the latter part of the 20th century represented a loss of traditional values, replaced by a sense of invention. Plastic, silicon, nylon, and concrete represented the future. History was being made while "historic."

In Skowhegan, however, efforts were made to stay connected with the past. Preservation efforts for this era include, but are not limited to:

- Margaret Chase Smith Library
- Establishment of the Skowhegan History House and Heritage Council

### **Analysis and Issues:**

Elements of Skowhegan's traditional settlement pattern are still strongly evident. Skowhegan grew up as a river-oriented mill town. While the waterpower is now converted to electric current, many of the original mills are still in place, not to mention the urban villages adjacent to the river. Although the current trend is to build out in the rural part of town, we still have a strong commercial core as well as healthy residential neighborhoods.

Perhaps Skowhegan's strongest link to its heritage is not an artifact; it is the Kennebec River. The historical connection of the river to the establishment and development of Skowhegan is an important reminder of our past. In conjunction with recreational (fishing, kayaking, etc.), commercial (guiding, rentals, fishing, etc.) and ancillary activities (overlooks, hiking, etc.), the educational piece of the river is an important part of passing our heritage on.

### *Listed Historic Districts, Buildings and Structures*

The recognized standard for what makes a historic or archaeological resource worthy of preservation is normally eligibility for – or listing on – the National Register of Historic Places. The National Register, administered by the National Park Service, United States Department of Interior, is a listing of those buildings, districts, structures, objects, and sites deemed worthy of preservation for their historic, cultural, or archaeological significance. The National Register is intended to accommodate buildings and sites of national, state, and local significance.

The recognized standard for historic or archaeological resources is listing on the National Register of Historic Places. One benefit of National Register listing is that certain buildings may qualify for a 20% investment tax credit. To qualify the building must be income producing, depreciable, and a "certified" historic structure. To obtain this certification, the historic or archeological resource must meet criteria mandated by The National Register Criteria for Evaluation, by the National Parks Service. Additionally, the National Parks Service developed criteria for the recognition of nationally significant properties, which are designated National Historic Landmarks and prehistoric and historic units of the National Park System. Both these sets of criteria were developed to be consistent with the Secretary of the Interior's *Standards and Guidelines for Archeology and Historic Preservation*, which are uniform, national standards for preservation activities. Being listed on the National Register also provides a limited amount of protection from alterations or demolition where federal funding is utilized.

Skowhegan has two listed historic districts. The Arnold Trail to Quebec follows along the Kennebec River, extending through Franklin, Kennebec, Sagadahoc, and Somerset counties to Quebec Canada. Downtown also has the Skowhegan Historic District, located on Madison Avenue and Water Streets, on the north bank of the Kennebec River. The buildings below are contributing structures to the Skowhegan Historic District:

- Dodge Block, 4 Madison Avenue
- Debe Block, 8 Madison Avenue
- 9 Madison Avenue
- Appleby Block, 10 Madison Avenue
- 11 Madison Avenue
- Fuller Block, 12 Madison Avenue
- Smith Block, 14 Madison Avenue
- Griffin Block, 20 Madison Avenue
- Butler Block, 29 Water Street
- First National Bank, 31 Water Street
- Depositors Block, 33 Water Street
- Sampson and Griffin Block, 40 Water Street
- J. Palmer Merrill Block, 48 Water Street
- Philbrick Block, 61 Water Street
- Goodwin Block, 65 Water Street
- Gray Block, 66 Water Street
- Barrett Block, 69 Water Street
- Dinsmore Block, 75 Water Street
- Augusta Trust Block, 87 Water Street
- Williams Block, 93-95 Water Street
- Ordway Block, 98 Water Street
- Griffin and Wentworth Block, 100 Water Street
- A. B. Borden Block, 102 Water Street
- Fogg Building, 105 Water Street
- D.C. Robinson Block, 108 Water Street
- Patten Block, 127 Water Street
- Robinson Block, 134 Water Street
- Brick Store Building, 141 Water Street
- Smith Whittier Block, 151 Water Street
- Fraternal Order of the Eagles Building, 164 Water Street
- Knights of Columbus Hall, 165 Water Street
- Odd Fellows Block, 168 Water Street
- Masonic Hall, 196 Water Street
- 206 Water Street
- Municipal Building/Opera House, 225 Water Street
- United States Post Office, 242 Water Street

The following buildings in Skowhegan are currently listed on the National Register of Historic Places outside of the Skowhegan Historic District:

- Governor Abner Coburn House, Main Street
- Samuel Weston Homestead, Route 201
- Bloomfield Academy, Main Street
- Gould House, 31 Elm Street
- Skowhegan Free Public Library, Elm Street
- Skowhegan Fire Station, Island Avenue
- History House, 40 Elm Street
- Somerset County Courthouse, Court Street
- Bigelow-Page House, 20 High Street
- (Former) First Baptist Church, Main Street
- Dudley's Corner School House, 5 Dudley Corner Road
- Maine Women's Reformatory Maternity Hospital and Nursery, Mary Street

There are a number of buildings in Skowhegan that have been determined eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. The Maine Historic Preservation Commission recommends a comprehensive survey of Skowhegan's above-ground historic resources to identify other properties that may be eligible for nomination to the register. The currently known eligible properties are listed below:

- Swinging Bridge, Alder Street (vicinity)
- 10 Cedar Street
- Fuller House, 2 Coburn Avenue
- Edwin S. Prescott House, 11 Coburn Avenue
- Strand Cinema, 19 Court Street
- 31 Court Street
- Major John W. Fogler House, 47 Elm Street
- Skowhegan Grange, 66 Elm Street
- 64 Fairview Ave
- Smith Farm, 31 Grassland Lane
- Weston Hydro Station, Island Avenue (vicinity)
- 459 Notch Road
- Edwin B. Hill House, 7 Norridgewock Avenue
- Roland T. Patten House, 25 Norridgewock Avenue
- Herbert Wentworth House, 31 Norridgewock Avenue
- Margaret Chase Smith House and Library, 56 Norridgewock Avenue
- Russell B. Shepard House/Reddington Memorial Home, 11 North Avenue
- 451 North Avenue
- Former Coburn carriage barn, 59 Pleasant Street
- 1 Waterville Road
- 40 Waterville Road
- Skowhegan Drive-In, 201 Waterville Road
- 14 West Front Street

### *Cemeteries:*

Cemeteries are another critical link with our heritage. The town has an obligation to protect and maintain some cemeteries, while others are private or family cemeteries. The following is a listing of known cemeteries in Skowhegan:

- Blunt Cemetery
- Calvary Cemetery
- Larone Cemetery
- Malbons Mill Cemetery
- North Cemetery
- Old River Road Cemetery
- Pooler Cemetery
- South Cemetery

### *Scenic Areas:*

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

Scenic resources are those natural or man-made features considered aesthetically appealing to the majority of people, and which make a community a pleasing place to live. Skowhegan's varying topography and land cover provide a multitude of opportunities for scenic views. The Kennebec River and numerous undeveloped road corridors permit the passive enjoyment of scenic views, characterized by large expanses of forest, open fields, farms, streams and other waterbodies.

Areas noted as having particular scenic value in Skowhegan include:

- Route 2/Kennebec River/Wesserunsett Stream below Great Eddy; outstanding gateway east of downtown, site of the Route 2 rest area and public boat launch; owned by Somerset Woods Trustees (SWT).
- Coburn Woods hillside, west of downtown, highly visible from major roads, shopping centers, and the fairgrounds. Owned by SWT.
- South side of Kennebec River by island; owned by SWT.
- Bigelow Hill Road and Back Rd.; hilltop scenic vistas.
- East side of Kennebec River, East River Rd., Eaton Mtn. Rd.; owned by SWT.
- Hastings Brook Farm and adjacent lands, Malbons Mills Rd., Wesserunsett Stream. Hastings Farm protected under easement with Maine Farmland Trust, but other lands could be developed.

### *Protecting Significant Historic and Archaeological Resources:*

Skowhegan's Heritage Council once oversaw many of the protective efforts of the town, acting as guardian and watchdog of our historic inventory. In 2023, the Council stopped meeting due to lack of membership, no quorum, and lack of funding. The Council required five (5) members. The Heritage Council at one time sought out historic resources that may have fallen into disrepair and developed plans to preserve them. The last was the Dudley Corner Schoolhouse, one of the first public buildings in town. This project has been completed and is now available for public and educational tours.



Figure 8: Site of former Solon Manufacture/Maine Spinning Mill Co. which is currently being redeveloped. Credit Kennebec Sun Journal.

The downtown blocks are contained within an historic district listed on the National Register, and this designation has been used several times to protect the district and fund its preservation. The next step may be to recognize major crossroads into the abovementioned district as important historic contributors to the aesthetics and culture of our town: the Water Street District, encompassing those properties along Water

Street from the intersection of North Avenue to the intersection of Hessleton Road; the Madison Avenue District, encompassing those properties along Madison from the intersection of Commercial Street to the intersection of York Street; the Elm & Pleasant Streets District, encompassing all eligible properties on Elm Street and Pleasant Street including the History House and the Gould House; the Island District encompassing all eligible properties on Skowhegan Island including the Maine Spinning Mill Company and the Federated Church; the Main Street District, encompassing all eligible properties along Main Street from the intersection with Waterville Road and Willow Street including the Gov. Coburn Estate and the First Baptist Church; and the Fairview Avenue encompassing all eligible properties from the junction with Main Street to the Redington-Fairview General Hospital.

Two previous large-scale construction projects that have benefited have been the remodeling and additions to the Strand Theatre and the remodeling and additions to the Redington Home. Currently, the Maine Spinning Mill Co. is also being redeveloped to mixed-use residential, hotel, and commercial facility. Though the project suffered \$4

million in damage during the 2023-2024 winter floods, it is expected to be completed in 2025 with the first floors opening for business in late 2024. Designing with foresight goes a long way in improving our downtown while creating an architecturally pleasing and cohesive structure.

### *Threats to Historic Resources:*

Historic resources in Skowhegan face a variety of threats that could compromise their preservation and long-term viability. One of the most significant challenges is private ownership of historic buildings. While many property owners take pride in maintaining these structures, others may lack the financial means or incentive to preserve architectural integrity. Without adequate oversight or incentives, historic buildings may be altered unsympathetically, neglected, or even demolished for new development. Additionally, as properties change hands, new owners may not prioritize historic preservation, leading to incremental loss of Skowhegan's architectural heritage.

A lack of funding also poses a major obstacle to historic preservation efforts. Both private owners and the town itself may struggle to secure grants or financial resources to maintain and restore aging structures. Many historic buildings require costly repairs to meet modern safety and accessibility standards, which can deter investment in preservation. Furthermore, changing land use patterns and economic pressures have led to shifts in how historic properties are utilized. As demand for commercial or residential space evolves, some historic structures are repurposed in ways that may compromise their original character or fall into disuse altogether.

At one point, Skowhegan had a Heritage Commission that acted as a watchdog over historic resources, helping to advocate for preservation and responsible stewardship. However, due to a lack of quorum, the commission was dissolved, leaving a gap in local preservation efforts. Without a concerted effort to balance development with preservation, Skowhegan risks losing key elements of its historic identity.

### *Existing Land Use Protections:*

Due to lack of traditional "Historic Districts," the existing regulatory protection for historic and archaeological resources is primarily provided through the state and town's subdivision and shoreland zoning statutes. Maine's subdivision statute and town's subdivision regulation require review of any impacts or adverse effects on "historic sites," which includes both National Register listed and eligible buildings and archaeological sites.

The town's Site Review Ordinance requires site assessments and design modifications to protect historic and archeological resources. The State and town's Shoreland Zoning statute includes, as one of its purposes, "to protect archaeological and historic resources."





house at 66 Elm Street. The organization operates the historic building as a museum, open to the public, to promote the history of Skowhegan. They also hold and maintain a collection of records, books, manuscripts, charts, maps, and other historic materials pertaining to Skowhegan.

Skowhegan's Heritage Council acted as a watch dog group for the town's historic buildings until it dissolved due to lack of quorum and monetary support.

Figure 9: History House at 66 Elm Street. Credit Skowhegan Main Street.

Main Street Skowhegan has helped bring several initiatives to the town, including the Façade Improvement Program which since 2008 has provided more than forty businesses with exterior improvements. Main Street worked with the Skowhegan Area Chamber of Commerce in 2014 to fundraise for restoration work to the Skowhegan Indian Sculpture. Main Street also received a Sewall Foundation grant to kickstart the rehabilitation of the McLellan Building.

Therefore, the town does not currently have any specific incentives or regulations for protecting historic areas and/or buildings, or potential historic or archaeological resources besides what is included in State and town land use statutes and ordinances.

### *Important Partners for Historic and Archaeological Preservation:*

The History House Association, Inc. operates out of the James H. K. Lord

Policies:	Strategies:	Implementing Party/Timeframe:
<p><b>HISTORIC RESOURCES:</b></p> <p>Skowhegan has an abundance of historic buildings and sites, many of which have been well maintained and preserved. Skowhegan's Planning Board, staff, and volunteers care about preserving the town's valued heritage. However, buildings that are privately owned present a challenge in preserving and restoring since they are outside the town's purview. Some historic buildings have inevitably fallen into disrepair over the years, but others have been reconstructed and cared for. The town currently has no requirement above the state requirements for site assessment for historic artifacts.</p> <p><b>State Goal: To preserve the State's historic and archeological resources.</b></p>		
Policies:	Strategies:	Implementing Party/Timeframe:
<p>1. Protect to the greatest extent practicable the significant historic and archaeological resources in the community.</p>	<p>1.1: For known historic archeological sites and areas sensitive to prehistoric archeology, through local land use ordinances require subdivision or non-residential developers to take appropriate measures to protect those resources, including but not limited to, modification of the proposed site design, construction timing, and/or extent of excavation.</p> <p>1.2: Adopt or amend land use ordinances to require the planning board (or other designated review authority) to incorporate maps and information provided by the Maine Historic Preservation Commission into their review process.</p> <p>1.3: Work with the local or county historical society and/or the Maine Historic Preservation Commission to assess the need for, and if necessary, plan for, a comprehensive community survey of the community's historic and archaeological resources.</p>	<p>Planning Board / Ongoing.</p> <p>Planning Board / Mid-term.</p> <p>Planning Board / Ongoing.</p>

## Chapter 2: Skowhegan Community Profile

This report contains a statistical profile of the town of Skowhegan and its people. It contains a great deal of numerical information about the community. Data like this will often confirm our own intuitions about what is happening within the community. More importantly, it can show early signs of new patterns and trends before we can see the impacts.

Skowhegan is growing and evolving. This will require us to respond with new ideas and strategies. The information provided here will be used throughout the plan and will help inform us about how the community has changed. Future changes are also discussed. Growth projections will help us in planning for the increased housing and public service demands that we expect over the next couple of decades.

### Historical Population Trends

Over the course of its existence, Skowhegan has experienced an overall continual rise in population, similar to its neighbors and the state. Economic and cultural factors have influenced population changes as displayed in the following table and graphed in the figure on the following page.

**Table 1: Population change: 1830 to 2010**

Year	Population		Year	Population
1830	1,006		1940	7,159
1840	1,584		1950	7,422
1850	1,756		1960	7,661
1860	2,266		1970	7,601
1870	3,893		1980	8,098
1880	3,860		1990	8,725
1890	5,068		2000	8,824
1900	5,180		2010	8,589
1910	5,341		2020	8,661
1920	5,981		2021	8,553
1930	6,433		2022	8603

Skowhegan has experienced slow and steady gains for over a century, except for a significant jump between 1860 to 1870 and a very slight plateau in the 60's. Since 2000, the population has begun reducing.

The population grew between 1970 and its peak in 2000, averaging about 40 new residents per year. Of course, this did not happen all at once, but we have only the census intervals as a guide. A good amount of growth was in the 70's but has begun a decline since 2000.

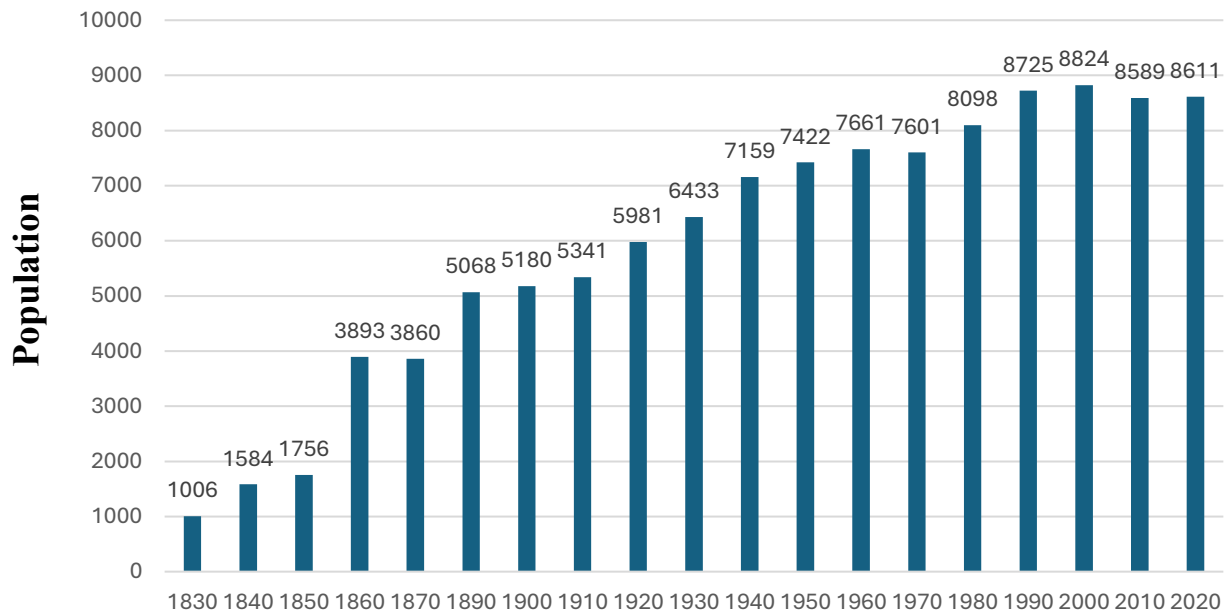


Figure 10: Population Change in Skowhegan

The census measures more than simply population. Other elements of the census are used in subsequent sections on housing and the local economy. Table 2 on the following page reports a breakdown of population characteristics over the past four census reports.

This table is more than just numbers. It has real meaning in terms of planning for our community. It illustrates that the average age of the residents is increasing and that, although the number of households are still just about increasing, the number of single person households is increasing faster. Except in college towns (like Waterville), single person households tend to be elderly households. Elderly households tend to require a whole different set of public services.

Just as important is the overall decrease in household size. In just 20 years, Skowhegan went from over two and a half persons per household to 2.25. In 2020, it was down to 2.16. This is a national trend, reflecting social changes like smaller families, lower birth rates, and elderly independent living. But it has a real impact in Skowhegan, because if we have fewer persons in each household, we need more houses just to sustain the current population. For every 1,000 homes in 1980, we had 2,738 occupants. In 2000,

1,000 homes only contain 2,374 occupants. In fact, we needed an extra 157 homes in 2000, just to accommodate the same number of residents we had in 1980.

These figures gain importance when we project the population and housing demand for the future. If the number of people in the houses continues to drop, the community will demand not only more houses, but smaller ones.

**Table 2: Population and Household Characteristics: 1980-2010**

<b>General Population Characteristics</b>	<b>1980</b>	<b>1990</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2022</b>
Total Population	8,098	8,725	8,824	8,589	8,603
Male Population	3,763	3,763	4,214	4,051	4,234
Female Population	4,335	4,604	4,610	4,538	4,369
Median Age	32	34	39	42	45.7
Total Households	2,957	3,454	3,716	3,765	3,768
Family Households	2,161	2,330	2,362	2,258	2,340
Married Couple Family Households	1,741	1,782	1,720	1,545	1,793
Nonfamily Households	796	1,124	1,354	1,507	1,428
Nonfamily Households Living Alone	630	923	1,099	1,212	1,168
Households with children (under 18)	1,139	1,174	1,104	1,074	1,370
Single-Person Household 65 years +	365	454	451	546	565
Average Household Size	2.68	2.53	2.31	2.25	2.23

*Source: 1980, 1990, 2000, 2010, 2022 Census*

## Components of Population Change

Between 1990 and 2022, the town's population has actually decreased by 122 persons. However, this is not solely a case of "emigration." Population change in a community is a result of both natural change and migration. Natural change is the difference between deaths and births in the community over a period of time. Migration accounts for people moving in and moving out. Net migration is population change not explained by births and deaths.

Between 1990 and 2010 the natural change in Skowhegan accounted for an actual increase of 136 persons, based on Town Clerk reports of vital statistics. That means that net migration ultimately accounted for 272 persons leaving town. Net migration is the *difference* between those who move in and those who move out, so it appears this ultimately was a good amount of people deciding to move away from Skowhegan over 20 years.

Will this ratio of natural change and net migration continue? Considering the aging of the population, a trend toward smaller families and increasing housing values, it seems that deaths soon will begin to outpace births, resulting in a decline in natural change. Skowhegan may already now be seeing this negative natural change. Availability of land and lack of affordable housing, role as a service community in the region, school systems, and other factors will continue to make Skowhegan a place that some choose to live, but more so that others are choosing to move away from, meaning that out-migration is growing. This has planning implications, too. We cannot impact the rate of natural change with town policy; we can, however, affect the rate of migration – by managing land use, economic development, and public service policies.

The median age of Skowhegan residents continues to increase substantially. How does that play out in real terms? The table below shows age trends – which age groups are gaining, which are losing. Since the overall population increased by 16 percent, any age group gaining more than 16 percent is on the increase; those gaining less are shrinking.

**Table 3: Age Trends 1990 to 2022**

	<b>1990</b> % of total	<b>2000</b> % of total	<b>2010</b> % of total	<b>2020</b> % of total	<b>2022</b> % of total	<b>22-year change</b>
Population	8,725	8,824	8,589	8,611	8,603	-122 (-1.4%)
Median Age	34.2	39.0	42.2	47.3	45.7	11.5 (33.6%)
Under 5 years old	638 (7.3%)	476 (5.4%)	500 (5.8%)	433 (5.02%)	477 (5.5%)	-161 (-25.2%)
5 - 17 years old	1,634 (18.7 %)	1,982 (22.5%)	1,809 (21.1%)	1,300 (15.09%)	1,165 (13.5%)	-469 (-28.7%)
18 years and older	6,453 (74.0%)	6,753 (76.5%)	6,691 (77.9%)	6,412 (74.4%)	6,961 (80.9%)	508 (7.9%)
18 - 24 years old	856 (9.8%)	773 (8.8%)	515 (6.0%)	633 (7.3%)	452 (5.3%)	-404 (-47.2%)
25 - 44 years old	2,598 (29.8%)	2,498 (28.3%)	2,059 (24.0%)	1,476 (17.1%)	2,085 (24.2%)	-513 (-19.7%)
45 - 54 years old	849 (9.7%)	1,242 (14.1%)	1,297 (15.1%)	1,126 (13.07%)	964 (11.2%)	115 (13.5%)
55 - 59 years old	453 (5.2%)	444 (5.0%)	592 (6.9%)	653 (7.5%)	574 (6.7%)	121 (26.7%)
60 - 64 years old	386 (4.4%)	404 (4.6%)	530 (6.2%)	642 (7.4%)	543 (6.3%)	157 (40.7%)
65 years and older	1,311 (15.0%)	1,445 (16.4)	1,513 (17.6%)	1,882 (21.8%)	2,343 (27.2%)	1,032 (78.7%)

*Source: 1990, 2000, 2010, 2020 & 2022 Census*

Some important population changes and trends:

- The median age increase is dramatic. This aging trend is statewide and Maine is one of the oldest states in the nation.
- The number of children (under 18 years old) has decreased. This has already led to lower school enrollments.
- The “family-age adults” age bracket (18 to 44) age category is decreasing significantly. Without those adults of child-bearing age, the population of children will continue to decline. These young families are also the primary market for the kind of suburban-style new housing that has been popular in Skowhegan.



- The “mature adult” age bracket (45 to 64) has grown a great deal over 20 years. This is a clear indication that the baby boom are no longer babies. The post-war glut of children are now entering their 60’s. As this group was the one that put enormous strain on the school system in the 60’s and 70’s, and on the housing market in the 80’s and 90’s, they are about to put the same strain on senior housing and health care services.
- The 65 and older age category was beginning to show the outliers in the baby boom in 2010. The real impact will begin in this coming decade. The senior population has grown 78% in the past 22 years. In the 2022 census, 2,343 residents were over the age of 65 and 546 were living alone. This will have short-term implications for housing, health care, transportation, recreation, and other services.

### **Seasonal Population:**

The seasonal fluctuation in Skowhegan has traditionally not been a major phenomenon; unlike many other central Maine communities that are more “lake towns” and host many camps. But as the town grows and evolves, the impact of the seasonal population will weaken.

The 2022 census counted 101 homes “for occasional use.” These are primarily around Oak Pond and Lake George, with a few along the river. If we assume that at the peak of the season, 90 percent of them are occupied, that adds about 90 more households to the town (not a significant increase over year-round households). Since vacation homes tend to be family retreats, we probably average more persons per household. If we assume three per household, we come up with a seasonal population bump of over 270 residents.

These figures result in no more than 300 added population at the peak season, giving Skowhegan less than 4% population boost over the off-season. While these numbers have little impact on the local economy and transportation system, with each new year of population reduction in the town, the seasonal bump might become more noticeable.

### **Regional Perspective**

Skowhegan’s development pattern is not at all unusual for rural Somerset County. Many of the towns in this area prospered as farm towns during the 1800’s, went into decline during westward expansion and the urbanization period of the late-19th-early 20th centuries, and began to grow again as suburbs and green spaces. Skowhegan, however, did see a boom as a regional center in the 1880-90s because of the logging industry. The region saw other large growth periods in the 1910-20s and 1970-80s but has slowed since. Skowhegan is the County seat and as a regional service center should be compared to similar communities in the region such as Waterville, Fairfield, Winslow and even Pittsfield.

Like Skowhegan, Pittsfield and Fairfield grew steadily up until the 1990’s which saw the beginning of a slow in growth and eventual levelling out or even slow loss of population.

By contrast Waterville grew much quicker until the 1960's and has then seen a steep decline in growth as people looked to more suburban living. Since 1980, no towns but Winslow have really accelerated. In forty years between 1980 and 2020, Skowhegan gained 6.3 percent (513 people). Smaller nearby towns experienced the most growth in the 90's, as sprawl is a reality even in Somerset County. Towns such as Canaan, Cornville and even Norridgewock, have been popular in the past because of cheap land prices offsetting any negatives about a commute.

Other comparable towns are also somewhat similar in the other two high-impact population trends: median age and household size. Since 1980, Skowhegan's median age has gone from 32 to 45, a bump of 11 years. Fairfield's median age has increased by twelve years. Pittsfield's from 32 to 40 (8 years), Winslow's from 31 to 42 (11 years), and Waterville's median age has always been lowered by the presence of colleges in town.

Since 1980, the average household size in Skowhegan has gone from 2.68 persons to 2.25, a 16 percent shrinkage. In the same period, Fairfield's household size has gone from 2.83 to 2.40 (a 15 percent shrinkage), Pittsfield's has gone from 2.93 to 2.45 (16 percent),

Winslow's from 2.96 to 2.34 (20 percent), and Waterville's from 2.5 to 2.13 (14.8 percent). Clearly this is a regional pattern not confined to one community in particular. Additionally, despite the drop, these numbers are still indicative of more rural, owner-occupied households.

## **Population Projections and Impacts**

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

The Office of the State Economist publishes a projection to the year 2040 (they prepared it in 2021). They estimate Skowhegan's population will be 9,041, an increase of about 430 or 4.9% from 2020. Projections are not perfect. The 2010 plan developed a "declining population scenario" based off the 2010 data which showed a decline in the population to 8,400 by 2025. In fact, in 2022 the population was 8,661. The 2010 plan stipulated that housing growth would slow to only 13 new homes per year, but that does not appear to be accurate anymore.

In the 2022 census, Skowhegan had a total of 4,111 housing units (3,768 occupied and 343 vacant). Skowhegan has a large portion of residents who live alone (31.2%) or with only one other person (40.1%). There is also a large percentage of people over the age of 65 living alone. With the overall age of residents increasing, more attention should be paid to creating smaller style housing opportunities and housing opportunities for the elderly. There is also a portion of the population (12.6%) that has no access to a motor vehicle. More effort should be made to create housing opportunities within walking distances to downtown services.

## Chapter 3: Skowhegan Critical Natural Resources

### **Description of Critical Natural Resources:**

Critical natural resources include wildlife and fisheries habitat, wetlands, shorelands, scenic vistas, and unique natural areas. Critical natural resources are thus a wide variety of environmental attributes providing the backbone of an ecological system. By implication, a loss of critical natural resources leads to air and water pollution, decreased wildlife diversity, and overall environmental degradation. As our human footprint on the land increases, we disturb these resources. For example, water quality is significantly affected by human development patterns. The more impervious surface on the land, such as roads, homes, and driveways, the more pollution enters our streams and lakes from overland runoff.

The quality of a critical natural resource is related to its size. The more fragmented a forest becomes, the less able it is to support many of its natural inhabitants. Development fragments habitat. Roads, utility corridors, buildings, parking lots, and any other human construct that breaks apart a natural habitat “fragments” that habitat. Fragmented habitats have increased proportions of edge area.

Many predators, such as raccoons, foxes, and crows concentrate hunting along forest edges. Exotic and pest plant species invade edge habitats more easily than interior woods. Climate is also affected, with edge-dominated patches having higher temperatures, more wind, and variable humidity. Eventually, biodiversity of an ecosystem is compromised, and it simply becomes a matter of time before the “natural” environment is as homogeneous as the ubiquitous suburban cul-de-sacs. Many native species populations decline over time when there are small and fragmented habitats.

### *Wildlife Habitats:*

Water bodies, watercourses, and wetlands are necessary habitats for the continued survival of many wildlife species. The many watercourses, wetlands, and unfragmented blocks of land in Skowhegan provide sanctuary for woodland birds, animals, and aquatic species including critical habitat for certain rare or endangered species.

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

The Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife (MDIF&W) administers a program called Beginning with Habitat (BwH) to identify significant wildlife habitat and critical natural areas under the National Resources Protection Act. Data for Skowhegan indicates that there are no designated Essential Habitats located within the town lines, according to Skowhegan's High Value Plants and Animals Mapping exercises.

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

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

Before conducting any activities in, on, or over significant wildlife habitats, a National Resources Protection Act (NRPA) permit must be obtained. Activities include construction, repair, or alteration of any permanent structure; dredging, bulldozing, removing or displacing soil, sand, or vegetation; and drainage or filling. The standard for protecting significant habitats highlights mitigation and compensation. Actions must be taken to A) avoid negative impacts on habitats, B) minimize the impacts if unavoidable, C) restore or rehabilitate impacted habitats, D) reduce an impact over time, or E) replace the affected habitat.

#### *Rare, Endangered, and Valuable Species and Habitats:*

Beginning with Habitat compiles data on rare, endangered, and valuable species and habitats into a map, which is replicated Skowhegan's Critical Natural Resources Map in the appendices. This map includes rare, threatened, or endangered wildlife, rare or exemplary plants and natural communities, essential wildlife habitats, and significant wildlife habitats.

#### *Animals:*

Other than bald eagles which have been federally delisted as endangered and will likely be removed from Maine's list, the other species appearing on the state endangered or threatened list are brook floaters (freshwater mussels), documented in the east end of town, great blue herons, centrally located, and one more threatened species was identified in the south end, who's its identity was masked for protection.

Brook floaters breeding habitats include streams and rivers of varying sizes, but ones that usually have low to moderate flow velocities and stable substrates. In fast water, they

often will be found clustered in protected areas such as behind boulders and near banks. Brook floaters are a vulnerable population because they require clean, free-flowing riverine habitats, making them especially vulnerable to impacts from pollution, sedimentation, dams, and surrounding land use practices that degrade or alter its aquatic habitat.

The great blue heron's breeding habitats include marshes, swamps, shores, tide flats. They are a very adaptable species. They forage in any kind of calm, fresh waters, or slow-moving rivers, and in shallow coastal bays as well. They can nest in trees or shrubs near water, sometimes on the ground in areas free of predators. Habitat destruction by humans is the greatest potential threat to this species. Many herons are also killed each year due to collisions with utility wires.

Bald eagle's typical breeding habitats include large trees, primarily old white pines, near water where food is abundant and human disturbance is minimal. Once prolific in Maine, they were nearly extirpated throughout their entire range due to widespread use of environmental contaminants. With bans on the use of these contaminants and habitat protection measures, bald eagles have made a recovery. In 2009 they were removed from the State's Endangered Species list, though they remain listed as Special Concern. Bald eagles and their nests are protected by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services under the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act.

#### *Plants:*

One site containing an Endangered Plant and seven sites containing Species of Special Concern was identified. The endangered plant species' identity as well as a more definite site location have been masked for its protection. The Species of Special Concern identified were broad beech ferns, wild garlic, wild coffee, Garber's sedge, long-leaved bluet, and the remaining two identified were masked for their own protection. The Species of Special Concern whose identities were not masked for protection were all located on the Northwest side of Skowhegan. Photos and a description of the above-mentioned plants can be found at [www.maine.gov/doc/nrimc/mnap/features/plantlist.htm](http://www.maine.gov/doc/nrimc/mnap/features/plantlist.htm).

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



➤ **Broad Beech Fern (*Phegopteris hexagonoptera*)** is a plant species classified as Special Concern. Its state ranking is S2 which is high risk for extirpation in Maine due to restricted range, few populations or occurrences, steep declines, severe threats, or other factors. This plant's global ranking is G5 which means it is globally secure and at a very low risk of extinction due to a very extensive range, abundant populations, or occurrences, and little to no concern from decline or threats.

- **Habitat:** Rich, often rocky, hardwood forest (upland).
- **Ecological Characteristics:** Generally found in sunny, more open spots in moist woods.
- **Range:** Quebec and Maine to Ontario and Minnesota, south to northern Florida and Texas.
- **Known Distribution in Maine:** This rare plant has been documented from a total of 29 towns in the following counties: Androscoggin, Aroostook, Cumberland, Franklin, Kennebec, Knox, Oxford, Somerset, York.

- **Phenology:** Fruits in August
- **Reasons for Rarity:** At northern limit of range.



➤ **Wild Garlic (*Allium canadense* L.)** is a plant species classified as Special Concern. Its state ranking is S2 which is high risk for extirpation in Maine due to restricted range, few populations or occurrences, steep declines, severe threats, or other factors. This plant's global ranking is G5 which means it is globally secure and at a very low risk of extinction due to a very extensive range, abundant populations, or occurrences, and little to no concern from decline or threats.

- **Habitat:** Alluvial woods, thickets, and meadows.
- **Ecological Characteristics:** Usually found in rich wooded bottomlands (hardwood floodplain forests) and in alluvial soils near streams.
- **Known Distribution in Maine:** This rare plant has been documented from a total of 17 towns in the following counties: Aroostook, Cumberland, Kennebec, Knox, Penobscot, Somerset, York.

- **Phenology:** Flowers in early summer.
- **Reasons for Rarity:** At northern limit of range.





**Wild Coffee (*Triosteum aurantiacum* Bickn.)** is a plant species classified as Special Concern. Its state ranking is S1 which is at very high risk of extirpation in the jurisdiction due to very restricted range, very few populations or occurrences, very steep declines, severe threats, or other factors. This plant's global ranking is G5 which means it is globally secure and at a very low risk of extinction due to a very extensive range, abundant populations, or occurrences, and little to no concern from decline or threats.

- **Habitat:** Alluvial woods, thickets, and meadows.
- **Ecological Characteristics:** Usually found in rich wooded bottomlands (hardwood floodplain forests) and in alluvial soils near streams.
- **Known Distribution in Maine:** This rare plant has been documented from a total of 17 towns in the following counties: Aroostook, Cumberland, Kennebec, Knox, Penobscot, Somerset, York.
- **Phenology:** Flowers in early summer.
- **Reasons for Rarity:** At northern limit of range.



➤ **Garber's Sedge (*Carex garberi* Fern.)** is a plant species classified as Special Concern. Its state ranking is S2 which is high risk for extirpation in Maine due to restricted range, few populations or occurrences, steep declines, severe threats, or other factors. This plant's global ranking is G5 which means it is globally secure and at a very low risk of extinction due to a very extensive range, abundant populations, or occurrences, and little to no concern from decline or threats.

- **Habitat:** Circumneutral shores and fens, in openings; non-tidal Rivershore.
- **Ecological Characteristics:** None noted.
- **Known Distribution in Maine:** This rare plant has been documented from a total of 27 towns in the following counties: Aroostook, Kennebec, Lincoln, Penobscot, Piscataquis, Somerset.
- **Phenology:** Fruits in summer.
- **Reasons for Rarity:** At southern limit of range.



➤ **Long-leaved Bluet (*Houstonia longifolia*.)** is a plant species classified as Special Concern. It's state ranking is S2S3 which is in between high risk for extirpation in Maine due to restricted range, few populations or occurrences, steep declines, severe threats, or other factors and moderate risk of extirpation in the jurisdiction due to a fairly restricted range, relatively few populations or occurrences, recent and widespread declines, threats, or other factors because there is a level of uncertainty as to which risk level it truly is. This plant's global ranking is G5TNR which means it is a global or subnational conservation status not yet assessed.

- **Ecological Characteristics:** Usually found growing in slight cracks or depressions on Rivershore ledges. Maine populations although apparently persistent are not large and the plants tend to be small.
- **Known Distribution in Maine:** This rare plant has been documented from a total of 24 towns in the following counties: Cumberland, Kennebec, Penobscot, Piscataquis, Sagadahoc, Somerset.
- **Phenology:** Herbaceous perennial, flowers July - September.
- **Reasons for Rarity:** Habitat naturally scarce, at the northern limit of range.

#### *Habitat:*



Also noted on the BwH High Value Plant & Animal Habitats Map is an exemplary natural community of **a hardwood seepage forest**. The species found in this forest include yellow birch, red maple, and/or green, black, or white ash trees. This exemplary natural forest habitat has a state ranking of S3, meaning it is at a moderate risk of extirpation in the jurisdiction due to a restricted range, relatively few populations or occurrences, recent and widespread declines, threats, or other factors.

These closed canopy to partial canopy forests support a mixture of mostly deciduous overstory trees. Hemlock or, less often, red spruce may create a mixed canopy (>25% conifer), with locally dense conifers. Sugar maple, beech, and red oak are occasional when it's not yellow birch, red maple, or ash trees. The understory is usually open, with few shrubs and patches of tree regeneration. The herb layer is typically patchy and reflects the underlying seepage gradients. Skunk cabbage, jewel weed, sensitive fern, and cinnamon fern occur in the wettest areas, and species less restricted by soil moisture occur elsewhere.



The other natural community that was noted on the BWH High Value Plant & Animal Habitats Map was a **Rivershore Outcrop**. This exemplary natural community has a state ranking of S2, meaning it is at a high risk of extirpation in the jurisdiction due to restricted range, few populations or occurrences, steep declines, severe threats, or other factors.

Typical herbs include three-toothed cinquefoil, common hairgrass, hairy goldenrod, silverrod, bluebell, balsam ragwort, and narrow false oats. Shrubs include dwarf bilberry, lowbush blueberry, shrubby cinquefoil, and shadbush; poison ivy may be locally abundant. Where soil allows the growth of taller shrubs (e.g., at the upland transition into adjacent shrub vegetation), red osier dogwood, round-leaved dogwood, and willows may occur. Sparse Rivershore vegetation is dominated by herbs with occasional low shrubs. Total cover rarely exceeds 25%.

#### *Wetlands:*

Wetlands are those patches of the world that are caught between land and water; too wet to walk on and too dry to swim. For centuries, they have been regarded as waste land. With a better understanding of ecosystems, however, we have come to realize how valuable they are. Wetlands are habitats at a critical stage of development for many species of wildlife, including essential elements of the food chain. They capture water, allowing it to seep into aquifers, they buffer the effects of floods, and they filter pollutants from surface waters.

Skowhegan has many wetlands, some of which are too small to provide much value, but others that are quite significant. The Shoreland Zoning Law and Skowhegan's Shoreland Zoning Ordinance require protection for areas of moderate to high value waterfowl and wading bird habitat, depicted on the Critical Natural and Water Resources Maps in the appendices. Skowhegan's Shoreland Zoning Ordinance, which is kept up to date and reflects the latest amendments by the state, also protects delineated wetlands. Skowhegan also uses State Statute for other areas that may be delineated during a project review.

Also of importance are seasonal wetlands known as vernal pools. Vernal pools emerge in the spring, just long enough to provide essential habitat for amphibians and other species. Because these areas are small and seasonal, they are difficult to depict on a map. Nevertheless, they are subject to protection under the Natural Resource Protection Act and need to be identified and acknowledged in local development plans. Three significant vernal pools have been identified in Skowhegan to date: on the outskirts of Canaan Bog, on Route 201 east of Southgate Industrial Park, and on the Coburn Woods, parcel owned by Somerset Woods Trustees. More are likely to be identified as we get better information.

### *Inland Waterfowl /Wading bird Habitat (IWWH):*

Five criteria are used to rate IWWHs as high, moderate, or low value: (1) wetland type composition, (2) number of different wetland types, (3) size, (4) interspersion, and (5) percent of open water. Wetlands with a rating of “High” or “Moderate” are the only ones required to be protected under Shoreland Zoning and other State Laws. These are depicted on the map in the appendices and listed below

<b>Table 4: Significant Waterfowl and Wading Bird Habitat</b>		
<b>Location</b>	<b>MDIF&amp;W#</b>	<b>Rating</b>
West of Oak Pond (Overlapping Great Blue Heron Habitat)	201101	High
Traversing the Ridge Road at the north end of town	070465	Moderate
South of the Notch Road at the north end of town	070464	Moderate
East of the Ridge Road at the north end of town	070466	Moderate
West of Rt 150 that goes over the town line to Cornville	070333	Moderate
Around Cold Brook, west of 201 at the Madison TL	070461	Moderate
NW end of Lake George	070485	Moderate
Surrounding Round Pond NW of Oak Pond	070487	Moderate
South of Rt 2 on Norridgewock TL	201141	Moderate
Around Currier Brook on Bigelow Hill Road	070471	Moderate
East of the Back Road SW of Town	070474	Moderate
West of Back Road SW of Town	201151	Moderate

*Source: Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife*

Just like the deer areas, there is no way to check the change in status or number of areas from lack of past data. It should be noted, however, that all wetlands regardless of size or type are regulated by the Maine Department of Environmental Protection (MDEP).

### *Deer Wintering Areas:*

Deer wintering areas or “deer yards” are critical to the survival of white-tailed deer. In Maine, causes of mortality of white tailed deer vary throughout the state. In more developed areas, deer are commonly struck by vehicles, harvested by hunters, and killed by predators. In less developed areas, human-related deaths are relatively few, and adult deer are more commonly taken by predators, particularly coyotes, lynx, and bobcats. Young fawns may also be preyed upon by black bear, fisher, and fox. Frequent severe winters in marginal winter habitat, may reduce a deer population to a small fraction of its summer potential. Deer wintering areas usually consist of softwoods. They provide deer with shelter from wind as well as improved mobility in the snow, thereby decreasing their energy demands. New development and other modifications to deer wintering areas reduce the overall ability of an area to support deer during periods of severe weather.



Table 5: Deer Wintering Areas		
Location	DIFW#	Rating
NW of Town	060043	Intermediate
Canaan Bog	060044	Intermediate
S of High School	060045	Intermediate
N of Canaan Bog	060046	Intermediate
SE of Oaks Pond	060047	Intermediate
N of Turner Brook	060084	Intermediate
NE of Cold Brook	060113	Intermediate

*Source: Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife*

Beginning with Habitat is a State-initiated habitat-based landscape approach to assessing wildlife and plant conservation needs and opportunities. The goal of the program is to maintain sufficient habitat to support all native plant and animal species currently breeding in Maine by providing each town with a collection of maps and information depicting and describing habitats of statewide and national significance found in the town. The maps and data are compiled through a cooperative effort of agencies and organizations. The Skowhegan Code Enforcement Officer has a copy of all Beginning with Habitat maps and data, both paper and electronic versions. These maps were used to compile data for the maps in this plan.

The Beginning with Habitat approach addresses both general natural resources and individual species locations. From Beginning with Habitat resources and local information, Critical Natural Resources worthy of special protection may be identified. At a base level, all endangered and threatened species are Critical Natural Resources.

A state endangered species is any species of fish or wildlife that has been determined by IFW to be in danger of extinction throughout all or a significant portion of its range. A state threatened species is any species of fish or wildlife that has been determined by IFW as likely to become an endangered species within the foreseeable future. Although an endangered species is more impaired than a threatened species, there are no state regulatory policy differences between the two categories. The only two species appearing on the state endangered or threatened list is Wild Coffee, that has been located on the East side of the Kennebec River that runs through town and an endangered animal that has been identified in the southern end of town, but its identity remains anonymous for its protection.

#### *Wild Brook Trout:*

Oak Pond and several streams in the south end of town are identified as brook trout habitats although it is thought that the water quality is too poor to accommodate them at present. The streams feeding onto Lake George are also identified as brook trout habitats.

Maine supports the most extensive distribution and abundance of wild brook trout (*Salvelinus fontinalis*) in their native range within the United States; more than 1,200 lakes and ponds are managed for brook trout, of which approximately 60% are sustained by natural reproduction. In addition, brook trout occur in an estimated 22,248 miles of stream habitat, the vast majority of which are wild. Although brook trout populations are declining across their historic range within the United States (Maine to Georgia), a 2006 range-wide assessment by the Eastern Brook Trout Joint Venture (EBTJV) concluded that:

*"Maine is the only state with extensive intact populations of wild, self-reproducing brook trout in lakes and ponds, including some lakes over 5,000 acres in size. Maine's lake and pond brook trout resources are the jewel of the eastern range: lake populations are intact in 185 sub watersheds (18% of the historical range), in comparison to only six intact sub watersheds among the 16 other states."*

Furthermore, Maine is the last true stronghold for stream dwelling populations of wild brook trout, supporting more than twice the number of intact sub watersheds as the other 16 states in the eastern range combined.

Maine's native and wild brook trout lakes, ponds, and flowing waters represent a unique and abundant resource not available elsewhere in the United States. Not surprisingly the MDIFW places a high priority on the management of this important resource, with a focus on protection, conservation, enhancement, and restoration of self-sustaining populations and the town of Skowhegan should work to protect this resource also.

#### *Undeveloped Habitat Blocks, Connectors, and Conserved Land:*

There is a distinct, direct relationship between the number and variety of wildlife, and the size of their habitat. Obviously, there is urban wildlife like skunks or mourning doves, which do not require much open land to thrive, but other types of animals are much less conspicuous, and require unbroken patches of forest to thrive. As roads, farms, and houses intrude on the habitat of these creatures, the large habitat blocks become fragmented and the wildlife that relies on them disappears.

Development in rural areas often fragments these blocks, reducing their value for wildlife habitat. Wildlife travel corridors linking individual habitat blocks together are critical to accommodate animal movement between areas. Ensuring wildlife travel corridors helps preserve the region's biodiversity and maintain the rural community character that defines Skowhegan. Limiting development at the edges of unfragmented habitat also helps maintain environmental integrity by giving forest-dwelling creatures a natural buffer.

The Critical Natural Resources Map (see appendices) illustrates the distribution of undeveloped blocks of land in Skowhegan. This map also illustrates the various ownerships and conservation types of these blocks of land. There are several large, undeveloped areas and areas of low-density development that are minimally fragmented by roadways illustrated in the BwH map. Two blocks stand out as the largest: an unbroken section in the northeastern part of town (approximately 5,5797 acres), and one in the

southeastern part of town (approximately 4,4549 acres). Both blocks include deer wintering yards, waterfowl and wading bird habitat, and wildlife wetlands. In the southeastern block, a considerable portion of the land is conserved either privately or through easement. In the block in the northeastern part of town, there does not appear to be any conserved land.

The best protection of critical natural resources is permanent protection through land purchase or conservation easement by a land trust or similar organization. Skowhegan has a good start with Somerset Woods Trustees (SWT), a land trust based in Skowhegan. Their local ownership includes sixteen parcels totaling almost 560 acres, and 12,000 feet of shoreline on the Kennebec River and Wesserunsett Stream. Most of these SWT properties have forest and/or wildlife resources as key components of their management plans. One example of such a property is Coburn Woods, a 300-acre parcel whose management plan was developed in collaboration with Maine Audubon as part of its Community Forestry Focus Species Program.

Skowhegan shares some critical natural resources with neighboring towns. Resource areas such as Lake George (shorelands and watershed), the Kennebec River (shorelands), Canaan Bog, wildlife habitat areas, scenic vistas, etc. are shared. Members of the Skowhegan Conservation Commission participate in interlocal efforts to protect Lake George. Interlocal cooperation needs to be extended to other natural resources that are commonly shared.

The kettle bog in Skowhegan, named Canaan Bog, is not common in Maine, nor is it very common anywhere in the country. It's a rare habitat that is 300-400 acres in size; very different than any other kind of wetland. Instead of having a firm soil, the bottom of the bog is made of this sort of floating moss layer, that's part of what makes it a unique ecosystem.

In 2012, land management and conservation group, Somerset Woods Trustees, acquired 192 acres of the ecologically sensitive Canaan Bog in East Skowhegan as part of a land swap with Central Maine Power Co. The land is to be protected from development as a permanent wilderness preserve. This land will not be developed or used for timber harvesting but will be open to the public with controls and restrictions necessary to protect the environment. Motor vehicle traffic will not be allowed on the land.

Lake George Regional Park is a lakeside park established in 1992, owned by the State of Maine, leased through local agreement by the towns of Skowhegan and Canaan, and managed for public use by Lake George Corporation. As the only waterfront park within a 30-mile radius, the park's volunteer board of directors is continually improving the educational programs, trails, amenities, and events. Each year a combination of roughly 20,000 community members and visitors use the lake and its surrounding 320 acres of land for swimming, fishing, picnicking, boating, hiking, skiing, playing fields, and group use facilities.



Skowhegan shares some critical natural resources with neighboring towns. Resource areas such as Lake George (shorelands and watershed), the Kennebec River (shorelands), Canaan Bog, wildlife habitat areas, scenic vistas, etc. are shared. Members of the Skowhegan Conservation Commission participate in interlocal efforts to protect Lake George. Interlocal cooperation needs to be extended to other natural resources commonly shared. The Park is in the midst of existing building renovation and construction of an addition to the Social Hall on the Skowhegan side of the Park. The goal is a new outdoor recreation and event center. The four-season facility with capacity of 200 people, catering prep area and bar back, covered porches, and indoor-outdoor fieldstone fireplaces with lake views and trailhead access will enhance the regional portfolio. Anticipated opening for these spaces in 2026 to 2027.

Cemeteries often encompass large habitat patches, which are characterized by low intensity land use and generally remain unaffected by most land use practices in the surrounding area. Cemeteries therefore are “islands” of natural vegetation in close proximity of urban areas, often harboring rare and endangered plant species. The key importance of cemeteries in nature conservation is therefore nowadays unquestionable.

#### Cemeteries:

- Northside Cemetery
- Calvary Cemetery
- Southside Cemetery
- Bloomfield Cemetery
- Herrin Cemetery
- Moody Cemetery
- East Skowhegan Cemetery
- Veterans Memorial
- Malbons Mills Cemetery

#### *Scenic Resources:*

Scenic resources are those natural or man-made features considered aesthetically appealing to most people, and which make a community a pleasing place to live. Skowhegan’s varying topography and land cover provide a multitude of opportunities for scenic views. The Kennebec River and numerous undeveloped road corridors permit the passive enjoyment of scenic views, characterized by large expanses of forest, open fields, farms, streams, and other waterbodies.

Areas noted as having scenic value in Skowhegan include:

- Route 2/Kennebec River/Wesserunsett Stream below Great Eddy; outstanding gateway east of downtown, site of the Route 2 rest area and public boat launch; owned by Somerset Woods Trustees (SWT).
- Coburn Woods hillside, west of downtown, highly visible from major roads, shopping centers, and the fairgrounds. Owned by SWT.
- South side of Kennebec River by island; owned by SWT.

- Bigelow Hill Road and Back Rd.; hilltop scenic vistas East side of Kennebec River, East River Rd. Eaton Mtn. Rd.; owned by SWT.
- Eaton Mountain; owned by Dave Beers.
- 

### *Geology and Soils:*

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

The advance and retreat of glaciers molded Skowhegan's landscape. As glaciers advanced, the ice mass scoured the ground. Retreating, they left a mixture of sand, silt, clay, and stones. Today, much of Skowhegan is covered by this glacial till, consisting of a heterogeneous mixture of sand, silt, clay, and stones. Till usually overlies bedrock but may underlie or include sand and gravel. Additionally, glacially formed hills may consist of till deposits over one hundred feet thick.

The State Plumbing also has its list of soils that are unsuitable for subsurface waste disposal. The plumbing code concentrates on those soils in which septic systems will not function, because water is too near the surface, or the slope is too steep. Soils with water too near the surface are:

- Biddeford silt loam
- Leicester stony loam
- Monarda silt loam
- Peat and muck
- Walpole fine and sandy loam
- Limerick silt loam

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

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

Skowhegan's Shoreland Zoning ordinance includes the state's minimal regulatory requirements to prevent soil erosion and manage stormwater during, before and after construction.

### *Topography:*

Skowhegan has often-challenging topography, as depicted on the Topographic Map (appendices). The landscape in the northeast corner of Skowhegan, bordering the east coast of Lake George, is elevated and steep with several hills exceeding five hundred feet in elevation, including Loomis Hill, Whittemore Hill, Currier Hill, and Eaton Mountain. The southwestern corner of town, bordering Fairfield and Norridgewock, is just as hilly, but with lesser elevation. To the west of Currier and Loomis Hills and to the North of the Kennebec River is the lower elevations of town where development has predominantly been focused since Skowhegan's inception along with relatively flatter areas along the Kennebec River (bordering US Router 201) towards Fairfield.

### **Threats to Skowhegan's Natural Resources:**

As Skowhegan evolves, there has been an increase in residential development in rural areas and previously unused agricultural fields. While the town currently has limited regulatory tools to guide this growth, there is value in encouraging development in designated growth areas to balance expansion with the preservation of open spaces and natural habitats. At the same time, it's important to recognize that many residents seek room to spread out, and development patterns should reflect both conservation priorities and the town's demonstrated preference for rural living over the past decade. Thoughtful land-use planning can help protect sensitive areas while still allowing for the diverse housing choices that residents desire.

In 2021, the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) opened an investigation into the presence of perfluoroalkyl and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) from the land application of sludge and/or septage in the Town of Skowhegan. This was part of a larger, statewide investigation the DEP undertook for the implementation of 2021 Public Law Chapter 478, An Act to Investigate Perfluoroalkyl and Polyfluoroalkyl Substance Contamination of land and Groundwater, which went into effect October 18, 2021.

Perfluoroalkyl and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) are a group of man-made chemicals that were once commonly used in many household and industrial products. There are thousands of types of PFAS, and they are found in numerous consumer goods due to their effectiveness at repelling oil, grease, water, and heat. For instance, PFAS are found in firefighting foams, non-stick cookware, stain-resistant carpets and furniture, water-resistant clothing, and much more.

These chemicals are persistent in the environment. They do not break down easily. This means PFAS may build up in the earth, plants, animals, and people. Health agencies like the U.S. Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) are actively assessing the health effects of low-level, long-term exposure to PFAS, but have suggested that health impacts from PFAS may include the following:

- Increased cholesterol levels
- Changes to liver enzymes
- Small decreases in infant birth weights
- Decreased vaccine response in children
- Increased risk of high blood pressure or pre-eclampsia in pregnant women
- Increased risk of kidney or testicular cancer

PFAS can enter the environment in multiple ways. Either through direct release from PFAS-containing products (i.e. firefighting foams or other consumer products) as well as from contaminated sites. In Maine, PFAS have been found at agricultural sites, in public and private drinking water supplies, in surface waters, in landfills, in wastewater effluent, at sludge and septage spreading sites, and at remediation and cleanup sites. Since the 1970s, the land application of sludge was commonly in the United States and was encouraged at a controlled rate to enhance agricultural sites and for reclaiming and revegetating areas distributed by mining, construction, and waste disposal activities. In Maine, the land application of sludge and/or septage required a license but took place for several decades.

As part of the statewide investigation, Skowhegan was identified as in the first Tier of prioritized sites to be investigated based on:

- The anticipated presence of high levels of PFAS substances in sludge or septage applied in Skowhegan;
- The volume of sludge or septage applied in Skowhegan; or
- The proximity to drinking water supplies.

This Statewide investigation is expected to be completed in 2025 but will provide PFAS soil and groundwater testing to private landowners where sludge and/or septage was spread at no cost. As of January 15, 2023, about 20% of sludge and septage land application sites had been investigated in the State of Maine. In Skowhegan, eighteen (18) wells were sampled. Sixteen (16) of those wells were found to be below 20 parts per trillion. Six (6) were found to be over 20 parts per trillion. 20 parts per trillion is the Maine standard for drinking water.

Also in 2021, the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife (MDIFW), in conjunction with the Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention (Maine CDC) detected high levels of PFAS in some deer and wild turkey harvested in the Fairfield area, including portions of Skowhegan. This led the MDIFW and Maine CDC to recommend that hunters do not consume deer and wild turkey harvested within a “Do Not Eat” advisory area. This “Do Not Eat” advisory area was originally much larger but was made smaller in 2023. It still includes a small portion of southwest Skowhegan, along the Kennebec River and Varney Road and Middle Road (Route 104).

#### Known Remediation Sites:

Table 6: Remediation Sites in Skowhegan				
Site Number	Site Name	Address	Status	Date Update
REM02306	H.P. Fairfield	9 Green Street	Closed	4/2/2014
REM02311	H.P. Warehouse	3 Mitchell Street	Closed	4/2/2014
REM01171	D.W. Small/Irving Oil	109 Waterville Rd. (Route 201)	Closed	3/18/1999
REM01892	Butlers Cleaners	19 Waterville Rd. (Route 201)	Closed	10/16/2012
REM01172	Dexter Show	Island Avenue	Closed	12/31/1949
REM03050	Chapter 11 Building	7 Island Avenue	Closed	9/10/2019
REM02662	Grondins Skowhegan	9 Court Street	Investigation Stage??	12/14/2017
REM02771	Dead River Company	124 Madison Avenue	Closed	10/1/2017
REM01173	Skowhegan Village Plaza	Lakewood Road	Closed	11/1/2000
REM00846	Northeast Doran	Skowhegan Northgate Ind. Park	Closed	12/31/1949
REM01502	Skowhegan Municipal Landfill	Steward Hill Road	Closed	7/30/1997

## **Regulatory Protection:**

The federal government and the State of Maine have an abundance of protections for environmental preservation and natural resources. Additionally, Skowhegan has added its own layer of protection in the form of various ordinances. The town has adopted the following ordinances that offer protection to natural and water resources:

- Land Use Ordinance
- Shoreland Zoning Ordinance
- Solar Energy Systems Ordinance
- Floodplain Management Ordinance
- Sludge Ordinance
- Sewerage Ordinance
- Solid Waste Management Ordinance
- Property Assessed Clean Energy (PACE) Ordinance
- Code Enforcement Ordinance
- Holding Tank Ordinance
- Site Plan Review Ordinance
- Subdivision Ordinance

Along with ordinances to aid in protection to natural and water resources, the town has adopted various districts as well. The districts:

- Resource Protection District
  - Includes areas in which development would adversely affect water quality, productive habitat, biological ecosystems, or scenic and natural values.
- Limited Residential District
  - Includes those areas suitable for residential and recreational development.
- Limited Commercial District
  - Includes areas of mixed, light commercial and residential uses, exclusive of the Stream Protection District and Wetlands Protection District, which should not be developed as intensively as the General Development District.
- General Development District
  - Areas of 2 or more contiguous acres devoted to commercial, industrial, or intensive recreational activities, or a mix.
- Wetland Protection District
  - Includes all areas withing two hundred and fifty (250') feet, horizontal distance, of the upland ledge of a freshwater wetland not rated "moderate" or "high" value by the Department of Environmental Protection as of December 31st, 2008.

➤ The Stream Protection District

- Includes all land areas within seventy-five (75') feet, horizontal distance, of the normal high-water line of a stream, exclusive of those areas within two hundred fifty (250') feet, horizontal distance, of the normal high water line of a great pond or river or within two hundred fifty (250') feet, horizontal distance, of the upland edge of a freshwater wetland.

## **Organizations and Partners:**

There are many local and regional groups that act as informal, non-regulatory protective measures for critical natural resources, in part. These include the Skowhegan Conservation Committee, Lake George Regional Park Committee, Recreation Department, Somerset Woods Trustees, Kennebec Land Trust, etc.

MaineWater owns a large parcel of land around Upper and Lower Ponds because they're a source of drinking water. They collaborate with the town by allowing certain recreational uses on trails on that parcel.

## **Analysis:**

Skowhegan has an abundance of natural resources that the town has proactively worked to protect. Shoreland Zoning standards protect riparian resources, including many areas identified as critical natural areas, by maintaining buffers and requiring development setbacks.

Several protected species of both animals and plants make their homes in the rich habitat Skowhegan provides. Protecting these species ultimately comes down to protecting their habitat. With its abundance of conserved, protected areas, and large, unfragmented blocks of land, Skowhegan has historically taken measures to do just that.

The Town should also consider how improved protection of natural resources will complement planning for outdoor recreation. Currently, several recreation trails utilize existing open space and conserved land. Better coordination may improve the experience of these trails, but we will have to be careful not to degrade the resource.

As the Critical Natural Resources Map reveals, there are many more critical natural resource areas that warrant the Town's attention. Creating an *open space plan* with these areas as priorities for protection would be a major step towards that goal. An open space plan identifies areas with critical natural resources as well as other open space priorities. An open space plan identifies areas most in need of protection and puts municipalities in a better position to partner with outside organizations for whatever protective measures are most appropriate.



Policies:	Strategies:	Implementing Party/Timeframe:
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>NATURAL RESOURCES:</b></p> <p>Skowhegan's natural resource assets provide a necessary buffer against environmental degradation and support for resource-based economic activity. They are also an essential part of Skowhegan's identity and provide numerous outdoor recreation options to both residents and visitors alike. Protection of these assets from over-development is an important function of this Plan.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>State Goal for Natural Resources: To protect the State's other critical natural resources, including without limitation, wetlands, wildlife and fisheries habitat, sand dunes, shorelands, scenic vistas, and unique natural areas.</b></p>		
Policies:	Strategies:	Implementing Party/Timeframe:
<p>1. To conserve critical natural resources in the community.</p>	<p>1.1: Ensure that land use ordinances are consistent with applicable state law regarding critical natural resources.</p> <p>1.2: Designate critical natural resources as Critical Resource Areas in the Future Land Use Plan.</p> <p>1.3: Through local land use ordinances, require subdivision or non-residential property developers to look for and identify critical natural resources that may be on site and to take appropriate measures to protect those resources, including but not limited to, modification of the proposed site design, construction timing, and/or extent of excavation.</p> <p>1.4: Through local land use ordinances, require the planning board (or other designated review authority) to include as part of the review process, consideration of pertinent BwH maps and information regarding critical natural resources.</p>	<p>Planning Board / Ongoing.</p> <p>Planning Board / Ongoing.</p> <p>Planning Board / Ongoing.</p> <p>Planning Board / Ongoing.</p>

<b>Policies:</b>	<b>Strategies:</b>	<b>Implementing Party/Timeframe:</b>
2. To coordinate with neighboring communities and regional and state resource agencies to protect shared critical natural resources.	2.1: Initiate and/or participate in interlocal and/or regional planning, management, and/or regulatory efforts around shared critical and important natural resources.	Planning Board / Ongoing.
	2.2: Pursue public/private partnerships to protect critical and important natural resources such as through purchase of land or easements from willing sellers.	Planning Board / Ongoing.
	2.3: Distribute or make available information to those living in or near critical or important natural resources about current use tax programs and applicable local, state, or federal regulations.	Planning Board / Municipal officials / Ongoing.
	2.4: Include Conservation Commission on communications from Planning Board, Site Plan Staff Review, and other important updates on development	Planning Board / Planning Office / Near-term, 2025.
	2.5: Increase education about invasive species by offering educational material on the town website or in the municipal building	Planning Board / Conservation Commission / Near-term.

## Chapter 4: Water Resources

### The Kennebec River and Skowhegan

The town of Skowhegan sits at what was once called Skowhegan Falls, a stretch of white water that drops 28 feet in just half a mile. Downtown Skowhegan was built around the Kennebec River; the river was literally the life blood of the town in the 1700s when first settled by Europeans.

The native Abenakis named this area Skowhegan, which means the Watching Place due to the abundance of fish at this stretch of the Kennebec River.

The Kennebec River still plays a vital role in Skowhegan, for both industry and recreation. It is much celebrated in the annual River Fest and other activities.

### *The Kennebec River and its Tributaries*

Skowhegan is located entirely within the Kennebec River basin. The total drainage area of the Kennebec River is 5,870 square miles; the river's drainage area to Skowhegan is 3,894 square miles. The Kennebec River is perhaps the Town's most significant natural resource and life-source for the town. It is imperative for the generation of hydroelectric power, it is a significant surface water source for the town, and it has fisheries, wildlife, aesthetic, historic, and recreational value to the community.

Central Maine Power generates hydroelectric power at the Weston Project located within the urban area on an island in the Kennebec River. The project consists of two concrete gravity dams totaling 921 feet in length and a powerhouse that is integrated with the south dam.

Recreationally, the river is used for canoeing, boating, fishing, and swimming. Public access to the Kennebec below the Weston Project dam is provided by the Department of Conservation and Somerset Woods Trustees' public boat ramp downstream of the Great Eddy as well as canoe portages at Debe Park. The river also serves as a scenic amenity to the community and provides important fisheries and wildlife habitat for several species. Historically, the river was important for transportation and as life support to Native Americans and as a part of the Arnold Trail.

The following are several sub-watersheds that are tributaries to the Kennebec River:

1. Wesserunsett Stream Watershed- includes Cold Brook and West Branch and constitutes most of the northern portion of the town.
2. Carrabassett Stream Watershed- including the West Branch of the Black Stream, Lake George, Lambert Brook, Round Pond, Oak Pond, Stafford Brook, Oak Stream, the Canaan Bog, and consists of a band of land along the eastern side of the town.
3. Snow Brook- Craigin Brook - Martin Stream Watershed- occupies the southeastern portion of the town.

4. Currier Brook Watershed- includes a portion of the urban and outlying areas just south of the Kennebec River.
5. Whitten Brook Watershed- includes West Branch of the brook found in a largely undeveloped, forested area which accounts for most of the watershed, while the North Branch of the brook and the main stem account for a smaller area and are in the downtown area.
6. Ledge Brook Watershed- a small area located along the town's boundary with Norridgewock.

The Kennebec River and its main tributaries including Wesserunsett Stream, Carrabassett Stream, Cold Brook, and West Cold Brook have been classified as Class B waterbodies by the Maine Department of Environmental Protection (Maine DEP). The Class B designation is the third highest classification achievable. The classification system should be viewed as a hierarchy of risk, more than for use or quality assessment, the risk being the possibility of a breakdown of the ecosystem and loss of use due to either natural or human-caused events. Ecosystems that are more natural in their structure and function can be expected to be more resilient to a new stress and to show more rapid recovery.

The criteria for a river to be classified as a Class B is:

- A. Class B waters must be of such quality that they are suitable for the designated uses of drinking water supply after treatment; fishing; agriculture; recreation in and on the water; industrial process and cooling water supply; hydroelectric power generation, except as prohibited; navigation; and as habitat for fish and other aquatic life. The habitat must be characterized as unimpaired.
- B. The dissolved oxygen content of Class B waters may not be less than 7 parts per million or 75% of saturation, whichever is higher, except that for the period from October 1st to May 14th, in order to ensure spawning and egg incubation of indigenous fish species, the 7-day mean dissolved oxygen concentration may not be less than 9.5 parts per million and the one-day minimum dissolved oxygen concentration may not be less than 8.0 parts per million in identified fish spawning areas. Between April 15th and October 31st, the number of *Escherichia coli* bacteria in these waters may not exceed a geometric mean of 64 CFU per 100 milliliters over a 90-day interval or 236 CFU per 100 milliliters in more than 10% of the samples in any 90-day interval.
- C. Discharges to Class B waters may not cause adverse impact to aquatic life in that the receiving waters must be of sufficient quality to support all aquatic species indigenous to the receiving water without detrimental changes in the resident biological community.

The Kennebec River is used as a significant source of drinking water for Skowhegan by Maine Water. The local watershed relative to the river intake includes the majority of downtown Skowhegan. The shorefront land located near the river intake is undeveloped and owned by Coburn Park and the Town of Skowhegan.

## *Urban Impaired Streams*

Maine DEP defines and classifies an urban impaired stream as follows: a stream is considered impaired if it fails to meet water quality standards because of stormwater runoff from developed land. Additional stormwater treatment controls are necessary in urban watershed areas to prevent impairment and degradation of water quality. Urban impaired streams are considered “degraded, sensitive or threatened regions or watersheds” as described in 38 M.R.S. §420-D(4).

In a 2018 publication by Maine DEP, Whitten Brook was included on the list of urban impaired streams because it does not meet the Class B standards above due to high bacteria, habitat, and macroinvertebrate assessments.

Even though the Kennebec River is classified as a Class B waterbody, it does not technically meet the standards to be classified as such due to legacy pollution from PCBs and dioxin, as well as point sources of bacteria from Combined Sewer Outfalls (CSOs). Cold Brook is a Class B waterbody that does not meet the water quality standards for macroinvertebrates. Currier Brook is a Class B waterbody that does not meet the specified criteria for bacteria counts. These rivers are, therefore, impaired. They are all on DEP’s Nonpoint Source Priority Watershed list, which means they are priorities for restoration and are eligible for grant funds through the Clean Water Act Section 319 program administered by DEP. The Conservation Commission is working with the DEP regarding ways to improve these waterbodies.

Whitten Brook is vital to the community as it contains wild, naturally spawning brook trout. This is one of the few remaining streams in the nation with a habitat that can support this rare, sensitive species of fish. In fact, their populations are in the decline across their historic range throughout the eastern United States, with Maine being the only state and the last true stronghold with intact populations of wild, reproducing brook trout. Maine supports more than twice the number of intact sub watersheds as the other 16 states in the eastern range of the brook trout combined, according to studies (MDIFW, 2021).

Whitten Brook has only one tributary which is unnamed. Whitten Brook flows from the northwest and passes under six roads before reaching the Kennebec River. The Whitten Brook watershed is relatively small, encompassing 304 acres in Skowhegan. This urban watershed has the unique characteristic of being a large, undeveloped forestland in its western branch, which is about 71% of the entire watershed; this portion of the watershed is managed by Somerset Woods Trustees for conservation and public recreation purposes. The negative impact on this stream comes from the 29% of watershed that is overlain by the more developed and urbanized part of town, including a large section along Madison Avenue, as well as Skowhegan Fair Grounds.

Whitten Brook was classified as an urban impaired stream in the 2010 Comprehensive Plan as well. For this reason, the Whitten Brook Watershed Restoration Project was created in 2011 by several local entities including Skowhegan's Conservation Commission and Maine DEP, with technical expertise from Eco Instruments (at the time known as FB Environmental Associates). The purpose for the plan was to restore watershed conditions in Whitten Brook so that the stream: 1) Attains state water quality classification standards, and 2) Supports a healthy native brook trout fishery.

The main cause of the impairment was identified to be increased stormwater runoff along the State Route 201 corridor as a result of increased impervious surfaces, resulting from development and urbanization, among other things. This urbanized area includes gas stations, petroleum storage facilities, manufacturing facilities, motor vehicles maintenance garages, and other commercial and industrial activities, all of which are in the Whitten Brook Watershed. The Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) study published in 2012 states that the target impervious cover (IC) in a watershed is 9% including 1%-point margin of safety. The Whitten Brook overall watershed was at 14% at time of publication.

In July 2014, the Whitten Brook Watershed Restoration Project Phase I report was released detailing the progress on the original plan. According to the report, Phase I was intended to 'jump-start' restoration efforts in the Whitten Brook watershed area by targeting two of the highest priority sites identified in the original plan and reduce pollutant loading and exportation of sediment, metals and nutrients into the brook. A secondary goal was to continue promoting community education on the effects of nonpoint source (NPS) pollutions and bolstering community engagement and education. Despite multiple challenges, Phase I was ultimately a success. A few of the completed tasks include the creation of Steering and Technical Advisory Committees, education and outreach projects, design and installation of stormwater Best Management Practices (BPMs) at Russell Road, multiple assessments and studies, installation of a pervious parking area, native plant revegetation in areas that were previously impervious, and pollutant control reports, just to name a few.

The Skowhegan Conservation Commission has implemented Phase II of the Plan which includes monitoring water chemistry, noting areas for improvement, and taking steps to update and renew the Watershed Restoration Plan in hopes of continued support and improvement in the quality of this important tributary to the Kennebec River.

Areas earmarked for improvements were the outfalls discharging untreated stormwater directly into Whitten Brook causing channel erosion, sedimentation, and habitat degradation. One of these outfalls is from Madison Avenue-North, a sub catchment surrounded by a high percentage of impervious cover. The original plan developed a stormwater treatment alternative to remediate this situation: redirect the Madison Avenue-North sub catchment outfall into a nearby, existing detention basin for stormwater treatment. Maine DOT facilitated a study on this detention basin, developed a conceptual design, and estimated the project cost.

In 2021, the Conservation Commission collaborated with a professional engineer from the Maine Department of Transportation's Environmental Office who evaluated the previous Maine DOT conceptual design and, after numerous studies and simulations, made recommendations for improvements upon the DOT design recommendation. It was determined that the Total Suspended Solids (TSS) in the stormwater (a good proxy for other particulate pollutants) would be greatly reduced by redirecting the Madison Avenue-North sub catchment stormwater to the detention basin. By redirecting this outfall to the detention basin, the annual load of TSS to Whitten Brook would be significantly lower than if the area had 40% less impervious cover. The engineer's evaluation shows that the original design created by the DOT can be revised to reduce the scope of work and cost, while maintaining the benefits of expanding the detention pond's volume.

The Conservation Commission was recently awarded a 604b planning grant through the State of Maine to update the 2011 restoration plan for Whitten Brook. The project will include conceptual engineering plans for a stormwater detention basin to treat runoff from upper Madison Ave. This basin will provide temporary detention of stormwater, helping slow down stormwater to minimize impacts to downstream habitat, and reducing the amount of sediment and other pollutants that flow downstream.

## **Lakes and Ponds**

There is one lake and four ponds of note, in Skowhegan. They are, in order of size: Lake George, Oak Pond, Round Pond, and Upper and Lower Ponds. Lake George and Oak Pond are designated by the State as Great Ponds because they are 10 acres or more in size. Great Ponds and their shorelands are subject to special regulation through Shoreland Zoning and Maine's Natural Resources Protection Act. Lakes and ponds are subject to their own water quality classification system that differs from the classification system used for rivers. Lakes and ponds have only one classification: GPA. The GPA classification is akin to Class A water quality in a river and are very stringent. Class GPA is the sole classification both of great ponds and of natural lakes and ponds less than 10 acres in size. The requirements to meet this classification are listed below:

- A. Class GPA waters must be of such quality that they are suitable for the designated uses of drinking water after disinfection, recreation in and on the water, fishing, agriculture, industrial process and cooling water supply, hydroelectric power generation, navigation and as habitat for fish and other aquatic life. The habitat must be characterized as natural.
- B. Class GPA waters must be described by their trophic state based on measures of the chlorophyll "a" content, Secchi disk transparency, total phosphorus content and other appropriate criteria. Class GPA waters must have a stable or decreasing trophic state, subject only to natural fluctuations, and must be free of culturally induced algal blooms that impair their use and enjoyment. The number of *Escherichia coli* bacteria in these waters may not exceed a geometric mean of 29 CFU per 100 milliliters over a 90-day interval or 194 CFU per 100 milliliters in more than 10% of the samples in any 90-day interval.



- C. There may be no new direct discharge of pollutants into Class GPA waters. Notwithstanding paragraph D, section 466-A or any other provision of law to the contrary, the following are exempt from this provision:
1. Chemical discharges for the purpose of restoring water quality approved by the department;
  2. Aquatic pesticide or chemical discharges approved by the department and conducted by the department, the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife or an agent of either agency for the purpose of restoring biological communities affected by an invasive species;
  3. Storm water discharges that are in compliance with state and local requirements;
  4. Discharges of aquatic pesticides approved by the department for the control of mosquito-borne diseases in the interest of public health and safety using materials and methods that provide for protection of nontarget species. When the department issues a license for the discharge of aquatic pesticides authorized under this subparagraph, the department shall notify the municipality in which the application is licensed to occur and post the notice on the department's publicly accessible website; and
  5. Discharges of pesticides approved by the department that are:
    - (a) Unintended and an incidental result of the spraying of pesticides;
    - (b) Applied in compliance with federal labeling restrictions; and
    - (c) Applied in compliance with statute, Board of Pesticides Control rules and best management practices.
  6. Discharges into these waters licensed prior to January 1, 1986, are allowed to continue only until practical alternatives exist. Materials may not be placed on or removed from the shores or banks of a Class GPA water body in such a manner that materials may fall or be washed into the water or that contaminated drainage may flow or leach into those waters, except as permitted pursuant to [section 480-C](#). A change of land use in the watershed of a Class GPA water body may not, by itself or in combination with other activities, cause water quality degradation that impairs the characteristics and designated uses of downstream GPA waters or causes an increase in the trophic state of those GPA waters.
- D. The following waters are subject to a sustenance fishing designated use pursuant to [section 466-A](#): Conroy Lake in Monticello; Grand Lake Matagamon in Trout Brook Township and T.6 R.8 W.E.L.S.; Mattamiscontis Lake in T.3 R.9 N.W.P. and T.2 R.9 N.W.P.; Grand Falls Flowage, Berry Brook Flowage, George Brook Flowage, Huntley Brook Flowage, Lewey Lake, The Basin, The Narrows, Long Lake and Big Lake, adjacent to Indian Township; and Sysladobsis Lake in T.5 N.D.

As with the water classification system for rivers, the classification in general should be viewed as hierarchy for risk, rather than for use or quality assessment, with the risk being the possibility of a breakdown of the ecosystem and loss of use due to either natural or human-caused events.

A portion of Lake George is in Skowhegan with the remaining portion of the lake in the town of Canaan. Lake George drains into Oak Pond, as does Round Pond. Upper and Lower Ponds together are approximately four acres in size and are located northeast of downtown Skowhegan.

The following is information collected by DEP. However, since there are so many water bodies in Maine, information has not been gathered on Round Pond nor for Upper and Lower Ponds. Maine Water Company supplied information for Upper and Lower Ponds in addition to information obtained from DEP, since these ponds are a significant source of water for the town.

<b>Lake George</b>	
<b>Direct Drainage Area:</b>	5.63 mi <sup>2</sup>
<b>Surface Area:</b>	318 acres
<b>Flushing Rate:</b>	0.77 flushes per year
<b>Maximum Depth:</b>	68'
<b>Mean Depth:</b>	24'
<b>Fisheries Management:</b>	Warm and Cold Water
<b>Invasive Species:</b>	None Known*
<i>While there are no noted aquatic invasive species in Lake George, that does not mean they are not present; it's possible they just have not been recorded.</i>	

According to the Lakes of Maine website, Lake George has a Secchi Transparency (m) value 6.2, combined with a chlorophyll level of 3.7ppb, means that overall algal blooms are not a high concern in Lake George. This is likely because of the relatively low phosphorous level (7ppb). An abundance of algae will turn the water green and reduce the amount of light reaching the aquatic vegetation leading to reduced levels of Dissolved Oxygen (DO). Reduction in DO creates an impaired aquatic habitat for all faunae.

The most recent DO data available on the Lakes of Maine website is from 2010. This data shows consistency from the previous data set included in the 2010 Comprehensive Plan. The level of DO in the water starts decreasing with increasing depth, which results in a reduction in cold water fish habitat but pose no immediate risk as this is not unusual circumstances because sunlight does not reach this zone, thus no plants grow at this level to introduce oxygen into the water.

Lake George supports habitat for several fish species, plant species, loons, muscles, and crayfish.

Fish species include:

AMERICAN EEL *ANGUILLA ROSTRATA*  
BROOKTROUT *SALVELINUS FONTINALIS*  
BROWN BULLHEAD *AMEIURUS NEBULOSUS*  
BURBOT (CUSK) *LOTA LOTA*  
CHAIN PICKEREL *ESOX NIGER*  
FALLFISH *SEMOTILUS CORPORALIS*  
GOLDEN SHINER *NOTEMIGONUS CRYSOLEUCAS*  
PUMPKINSEED *LEPOMIS GIBBOSUS*  
LARGEMOUTHBASS *MICROPTERUS SALMOIDES*  
RAINBOW SMELT *OSMERUS MORDAX*  
RAINBOW TROUT *ONCORHYNCHUS MYKISS*  
REDBREAST SUNFISH *LEPOMIS AURITUS*  
SEA-RUN ALEWIFE *ALOSA PSEUDOHARENGUS*  
WHITE PERCH *MORONE AMERICANA*  
SMALLMOUTH BASS *MICROPTERUS DOLOMIEU*  
YELLOW PERCH *PERCA FLAVESCENS*  
WHITE SUCKER *CATOSTOMUS COMMERSONI*

Plant species include:

bladderwort, humped *Utricularia gibba*  
bladderwort, large purple *Utricularia purpurea*  
horsetail, water *Equisetum fluviatile*  
muskgrass *Chara spp.*  
naiad, slender *Najas flexilis*  
pickerel weed *Pontedaria cordata*  
pipewort *Eriocaulon aquaticum*  
pondweed, fern *Potamogeton robbinsii*  
pondweed, floating-leaf *Potamogeton natans*  
pondweed, large-leaf *Potamogeton amplifolius*  
pondweed, spiral-fruited *Potamogeton spirillus*  
pondweed, variable *Potamogeton gramineus*  
rush, bayonet *Juncus militaris*  
spatterdock *Nuphar variegata*  
spearwort, creeping *Ranunculus flammula*  
spikerush, Robbin's *Eleocharis robbinsii*  
sponge, freshwater spp. *sponge, freshwater*  
water lily, fragrant *Nymphaea odorata*  
water lobelia *Lobelia dortmanna*  
water-milfoil, dwarf *Myriophyllum tenellum*  
watershield *Brasenia schreberi*  
waterweed, common *Elodea canadensis*

The Maine Audubon collaborates with several other organizations as well as the public to perform loon counts on lakes to assess the status and safeguard Maine's loon populations. Below is the data on Lake George's loon population:

**Table 7: Loon Count Data for Lake George**

Lake	Year	#Adults	#Chicks	Nests	Full Survey Coverage	Aerial Survey
	2004	3	2			
	2013	2	1			
	2014	2	0			
	2016	4	1			
	2019	4	0		Y	
	2021	5	2		Y	

Freshwater mussels and crayfish are important water quality indicators. They thrive in clean water and perform important roles in the aquatic ecosystem. The following is a list of crayfish and mussels found in Lake George:

#### Crayfish Species

Virile crayfish *Orconectes virilis*

#### Mussel Species:

Eastern elliptio *Elliptio complanate*

Eastern floater *Pyganodon cataracta*

Eastern lampmussel *Lampsilis radiata radiata*

<b>Oak Pond</b>	
<b>Direct Drainage Area:</b>	1.17 mi <sup>2</sup>
<b>Surface Area:</b>	86.5 acres
<b>Flushing Rate:</b>	4.55 flushes per year
<b>Maximum Depth:</b>	53'
<b>Mean Depth:</b>	25'
<b>Fisheries Management:</b>	Warm and Cold Water
<b>Invasive Species:</b>	None Known*
<i>While there are no noted aquatic invasive species in Oak Pond, that does not mean they are not present; it's possible they just have not been recorded.</i>	

The Lakes of Maine website shows Oak Pond as having a Secchi Transparency (m) value of 5.3, a chlorophyll level of 3.2ppb., and a phosphorous level of 8ppb, so this lake is currently not at a high risk of deadly algal blooms. Overall, the water quality, based on the data presented, appears to be average.

The Dissolved Oxygen (DO) levels in the upper waters are high and drop off after about 20 feet. Since it is unlikely that sunlight reaches to this level, there is no aquatic vegetation growing there to replenish the DO in the water. While these conditions result in a reduction of cold-water fish habitat, these circumstances are not unusual for a lake this deep.

Oak Pond also supports habitat for several fish species, plant species, loons, muscles, and crayfish.

Fish Species:

AMERICAN EEL *ANGUILLA ROSTRATA*  
 BLACK CRAPPIE *POMOXIS NIGROMACULATUS*  
 BROOK TROUT *SALVELINUS FONTINALIS*  
 BROWN BULLHEAD *AMEIURUS NEBULOSUS*  
 BURBOT (CUSK) *LOTA LOTA*  
 CHAIN PICKEREL *ESOX NIGER*  
 COMMON SHINER *LUXILUS CORNUTUS*  
 FALLFISH *SEMOTILUS CORPORALIS*  
 GOLDEN SHINER *NOTEMIGONUS CRYSOLEUCAS*  
 LARGEMOUTH BASS *MICROPTERUS SALMOIDES*  
 PUMPKINSEED *LEPOMIS GIBBOSUS*  
 RAINBOW SMELT *OSMERUS MORDAX*  
 RAINBOW TROUT *ONCORHYNCHUS MYKISS*  
 SMALLMOUTH BASS *MICROPTERUS DOLOMIEU*  
 WHITE PERCH *MORONE AMERICANA*  
 WHITE SUCKER *CATOSTOMUS COMMERSONI*  
 YELLOW PERCH *PERCA FLAVESCENS*

There is no information available on plant species, crayfish species, or mussel species found in or around Oak Pond.

**Table 8: Loon Count Data for Oak Pond:**

Lake	Year	#Adults	#Chicks	Nests	Full Survey Coverage	Aerial Survey
	2007	2	2			
	2008	2	1			
	2009	2	0			
	2010	2	1			
	2011	1	0			
	2012	2	0			
	2013	2	1			

According to Maine DEP's information from 2021, Lake George and Oak Pond share an impaired watershed. As such, they are both considered to be impaired. In a 2019 listing, they are on a "Nonpoint Source Priority Watershed List". For "Priority List Reasoning" for Oak Pond, it states agricultural threat. Both Lake George and Oak Pond are listed as "Lakes Most at Risk from New Development" as well. The criterion for this classification is as follows:

1. A public water supply, or
2. Identified by the department as being in violation of class GPA (GPA is the state's one classification for lakes and ponds) water quality standards or as particularly sensitive to eutrophication based on:
  - a. Current water quality,
  - b. Potential for internal recycling of phosphorous,
  - c. Potential as a cold-water fishery,
  - d. Volume and flushing rate, or,
  - e. Projected growth rate in the watershed.

Lake George and Oak Pond are both habitat to cold water fish, which is why they are classified as "Lakes Most at Risk from New Development."

Most of the Lake George and Oak Pond watershed consists of mature forest that should be protected to maintain the water quality of these two lakes. In a 2008 update to Skowhegan's land use regulations, site plan review projects must comply with DEP phosphorus standards in the Lake George and Oak Pond watershed. Steps should continue to be taken to preserve and improve the water quality of these lakes.

Lake George has very steep slopes (over 20 percent grade) on portions of its bank. This leaves it susceptible to erosion and runoff. These steep slopes should be monitored to ensure their integrity is not compromised through all seasons. Further, the nearby roads, Whittemore Hill Road and West Shore Road are also very steep and during rain events, the runoff from these roads is a nonpoint source of pollution into Lake George. The recent paving of steep driveways on West Shore Road has increased this issue and increased development on that side of Lake George. Precautions, such as timely removal of road sand and frequent cleaning of catch basins should be prioritized on these roads.

Oak Pond has seen an increased amount of development, which puts it at risk of impairment. Much of the development are residences; some are newly constructed camps, some are four-season homes, while others still are camps that have been converted into four seasons residences.

Oak Pond also has extensive marshy areas along its banks. Marshes are known for cleaning and purifying water, but they also facilitate the movement of water and the pollutants they carry into the main waterbody. Limited development and construction should be allowed in this area to prevent further introduction of pollutants and to preserve this sensitive area.

People have been drawn to the banks of Lake George since antiquity. According to the park's history, evidence of early Paleoindian settlements was discovered during archeological digs in 1992. The findings consist of early stone tools that date back to the Early and Middle archaic periods, between 8,000 to 11,000 years ago.

The State purchased the land for Lake George Regional Park (LGRP) in 1992 with funding from Land for Maine Futures Program. In 1993, LGRP opened its gates for the first time. As it exists today, the park encompasses 320 acres of land as well as the lake itself. The park is owned by the State of Maine, leased by the towns of Skowhegan and Canaan, and managed for public use by Lake George Corporation (LGC). The park's volunteer board of directors, five appointed from Skowhegan, five appointed from Canaan, are continually improving the year-round educational programs, trails, amenities, and events.

The park includes two swimming area, hiking trails, boat access, and picnicking areas. Except for the park and several cottages, there is minimal development on the shores or within the watershed of Lake George.

There are several camps and residences on the shores of Oak Pond and within its watershed. Round Pond and Lambert Brook also share the watershed with Oak Pond. Public access is not available to either Oak Pond or Round Pond.

Round Pond	
<b>Direct Drainage Area:</b>	2.88 mi <sup>2</sup>
<b>Surface Area:</b>	14 acres
<b>Flushing Rate:</b>	19.84 flushes per year
<b>Maximum Depth:</b>	Information Not Available
<b>Mean Depth:</b>	Information Not Available
<b>Fisheries Management:</b>	Information Not Available
<b>Invasive Species:</b>	None Known*
<i>While there are no noted aquatic invasive species in Round Pond, that does not mean they are not present; it's possible they just have not been recorded.</i>	

Round Pond's rapid flush rate is a contributing factor to its relatively good water quality.

#### Fish Species:

CHAIN PICKEREL *ESOX NIGER*  
 GOLDEN SHINER *NOTEMIGONUS CRYSOLEUCAS*  
 LARGEMOUTH BASS *MICROPTERUS SALMOIDES*  
 PUMPKINSEED *LEPOMIS GIBBOSUS*  
 WHITE PERCH *MORONE AMERICANA*  
 WHITE SUCKER *CATOSTOMUS COMMERSONI*  
 YELLOW PERCH *PERCA FLAVESCENS*

Unfortunately, there was no information on plant species, loon population counts, mussels, and crayfish species available.



### *Upper and Lower Ponds*

Upper Pond is approximately 6 feet higher in elevation than Lower Pond, hence their names. Together, Upper and Lower Ponds supply a significant portion of the drinking water for Skowhegan; as such, they are the critical surface water sources for the town. The local watershed relative to the intake of the ponds is mostly forested with limited residential development along roadways that border the watershed; however, the watershed is tucked into the broader Skowhegan downtown urban area. Maine Water owns 114 acres around the ponds which is most of the land surrounding Upper and Lower Ponds, but the area surrounding the watershed includes significant urban development. Recreational activities such as boating, fishing, and swimming are restricted at these ponds, as is shorefront development. Recreational vehicles on the land within the watershed cause soil erosion in some areas. Signage is posted by Maine Water to restrict ATVs.

Approximately two years ago, Maine Water replaced the existing dam overflow structure between the two ponds to better control the flow of water between them. Raw water pH, turbidity, as well as other water quality parameters including contaminants are monitored regularly by the Maine Water Company and the ponds show good water quality.

DEP includes these ponds on the list of “Lakes Most at Risk from New Development” because they are believed to be fed by groundwater seepage from the aquifer, which extends well past the surface watershed area for the ponds. For this reason, the quantity and quality of this water are sensitive and can be impacted by land uses which overlie the aquifer. Additionally, in a 2019 listing, they are on a “Nonpoint Source Priority Watershed List”. For “Priority List Reasoning”, it says public water system.

### **Other Waterbodies**

As with all Maine, there are many, smaller waterbodies throughout Skowhegan. Unfortunately, there is much less available information on some of these smaller waterbodies. Of note however, is Hight Pond. The Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife (IFW) stocked this small reservoir with 200 10” Brook Trout in April of 2024. This area provides a location where children can go fishing within town.

## *Wetlands*

Wetlands are imperative in the prevention of flooding. They act as a sponge, absorbing and slowly dispersing excess precipitation. Other important aspects of wetland include filtration and purification of water, they act as recharge areas for groundwater, and they provide important habitat for many sensitive species of flora and fauna that would not survive without them.

Skowhegan has several wetland areas, as shown on the Water Resources Map (see appendices); however, wetland resources, particularly forested wetlands are under-represented on the map. Canaan Bog is the largest wetlands within the Town of Skowhegan. It is in the southeastern corner and is nearly 3,000 acres in size.

Additional wetlands information is included in Chapter 3 Natural Resources.

## *Combined Sewer Outflows*

The Town of Skowhegan utilizes combined sewer outflows (CSOs). Combined Sewer Systems are old systems that were designed to collect both rainwater and domestic and industrial sewage. What is collected is conveyed to a sewage treatment plant whereupon it is treated then eventually discharged to a water body. However, these types of systems are not sufficient to accommodate the increased volume during heavy precipitation events. During such events, the wastewater volume in a combined sewer system was historically designed to overflow directly to nearby streams and the Kennebec River. The outfalls of these sewage plants are permitted by the State Department of Environmental Protection and are monitored to maintain the standards required by the Clean Water Act. Skowhegan performed a significant upgrade to their system in 2007 resulting in a reduction of CSO events from an average of 300 events a year to fewer than 100 events in 2008. With future control system changes, these events are expected to drop further to approximately 10 events in 2009, according to data from Skowhegan's Water Pollution Control Plant.

## *Groundwater*

Groundwater is literally water found in the ground in the form of aquifers, a distinction from surface water or water in the air. Aquifers are geological formations in the ground containing usable quantities of water. There are two types of groundwater aquifers: sand and gravel aquifers, and bedrock aquifers. Over half the homes in Maine rely on private bedrock groundwater wells.

The Maine Geological Survey (MGS) has mapped sand and gravel aquifers but not bedrock aquifers in Somerset County. The sand and gravel areas mapped represent principal groundwater recharge sites (recharge is the process of precipitation filtering through the soil to replenish groundwater).

The MGS mapped one significant sand and gravel aquifer and two lesser aquifers in Skowhegan. Significant sand and gravel aquifers are areas that have moderate to good potential groundwater yield, generally between 10 to 50 gallons per minute. The other category of aquifers includes those with yields of between 3 and 10 gallons per minute.

The significant aquifer mapped by MGS is in the area around the intersection of Route 150 and the Steward Hill Road, just north of the urbanized area. MGS has also mapped a less significant aquifer that is much larger, but with lesser yields; it surrounds the significant aquifer, extending eastward to Malbon's Mill Road, westward to the Russell Road, and includes much of the urban area north of the Kennebec River. The other sand and gravel aquifer is located along either side of the Kennebec River just northeast of the SAPPI paper mill.

The primary sources of groundwater contamination in Maine are malfunctioning septic systems, leaking underground fuel storage tanks, salt leachate from sand/salt stockpiles and leachate from landfills. Certain land uses such as automobile graveyards and junkyards, agricultural use of pesticides and herbicides, and certain industrial activities also have the potential for contaminating groundwater.

The Town's primary municipal water supply, Upper and Lower Ponds, are located near the significant aquifer. A solid waste facility was located north of this aquifer.

The 2003 CMWC report points out that the significant aquifer could be a supplemental water source to Upper and Lower Ponds. The report also asserts that no zoning to control future nearby urban development could negatively impact the water quality of Upper and Lower Ponds. The Department of Environmental Protection includes both ponds on its list of Lakes Most at Risk of Development. The CMWC report recommends establishing an Upper and Lower Pond watershed protection zone and a significant aquifer protection zone to protect actual and potential sources of Skowhegan's drinking water.

### *Public Water Systems by Skowhegan*

Maine Water puts out an annual report on the quality of their drinking water. For 2021, the report includes results from water samples that were tested at state laboratories for more than 120 potential contaminants and water quality parameters. Maine Water reports that these water quality tests met all state and federal drinking water standards. Maine Water Company updated its Skowhegan Division Master Plan in 2019 which highlights public water demands including potential growth. The Skowhegan Division has the capacity with the current sources to meet 20-year growth projections.

Currently, Maine Water Company does not anticipate any new Public Water Sources in the foreseeable future, but reliance on the Kennebec River may increase in order to meet water quality standards and demands.

**Table 9: Public Water Sources in Skowhegan**

<b>Public Water System Name</b>	<b>PWSID</b>	<b>Operating Ctgy</b>	<b>Water System Type</b>	<b>Source</b>	<b>Source Type</b>
<b>Riverside Terrace</b>	ME0003017	VSWS	C	73' GP Well (Local WL#1) 354' DR Well 5 12/2015@ 40 GPM 175' DR Well 1 (Local WL#2)	WL WL WL
<b>Pinewood Motel</b>	ME0003035	VSWS	NC	250' Drilled Well	WL
<b>Breezy Acres Motel</b>	ME0003041	VSWS	NC	100' Drilled Well	WL
<b>Howco Foods DBA Kens Restaurant</b>	ME00012956	VSWS	NC	100' Drilled Well	WL
<b>Two Rivers Campground</b>	ME0015582	VSWS	NC	80' Drilled Well	WL
<b>Maine Water Company Skowhegan Division</b>	ME0091450	3T2D	C	Kennebec River Upper & Lower Ponds	IN IN
<b>SMK Donuts Inc- Dunkin Donuts Skowhegan</b>	ME0092392	VSWS	NC	125' Drilled Well 6-1-1987 @ 20GPM	WL
<b>Lynns Way</b>	ME0092499	VSWS	C	Spring 1	SP
<b>Somerset Sports &amp; Fitness</b>	ME0094498	VSWS	NC	400' Drilled Well 7-1995	WL
<b>Lake George Regional Park #1</b>	ME0123468	VSWS	NC	135' Drilled Well No Screen	WL

System Type Codes: NC= Transient C= Community  
Source Type Codes: WL= Well (groundwater) IN= Intake (surface water) SP= Spring

**Community Public Water System:** A public water system which serves at least fifteen service connections used by year-round residents or regularly serves at least 25 year-round residents. (Year round is defined as permanent residence greater than six months.) Examples include water utilities, mobile home parks, apartment buildings, and nursing homes.

**Non-Transient:** A non-community public water system that serves at least 25 of the same persons for six months or more per year. Examples include schools, office buildings, and factories.

Maine Water tests regularly for turbidity, seen as suspended solid particles, microbiological contaminants such as coliform bacteria, inorganic and radionuclide compounds, disinfectants and disinfection byproducts, lead and copper, secondary drinking water contaminants, and unregulated drinking water contaminants. Primary drinking water contaminants are enforceable by EPA and the Maine Drinking Water Program. Secondary drinking water contaminants are non-enforceable guidelines regulating contaminants that may cause cosmetic effects such as tooth discoloration or aesthetic effects like taste and odor of drinking water. Unregulated water contaminants are contaminants that are suspected to be present in drinking water and do not have health-based standards set under the Safe Drinking Water Act.

In 2021, Skowhegan's drinking water passed all tests. In fact, in 2020 Skowhegan Division was granted a three-year "Synthetic Organics Waiver" from monitoring/reporting requirements for certain chemicals due to the absence of potential sources of these contaminants within a half-mile radius of the water source.

### *Shorelands/Floodplains*

Shorelands are environmentally sensitive areas that can serve to maintain the water quality of adjacent water bodies and provide important wildlife habitat. Shorelands with steep slopes and highly erodible soils are particularly fragile and can be easily eroded causing sedimentation of adjacent water bodies. Natural, vegetated areas on shorelands can serve as a buffer, holding the soil in place. As wildlife habitat, undisturbed shorelands usually have a greater diversity of species and often serve as important travel corridors. These buffer areas, consisting of undisturbed vegetation, also serve to filter out nitrogen, phosphorus and other contaminants in runoff from nearby land-use activities. Skowhegan's Shoreland Zoning Ordinance, updated in 2021, helps protect water resources. The Town's Site Plan Review ordinance, updated in 2008, also addresses non-point pollution with stormwater provisions requiring "that biological and chemical properties of receiving waters must not be degraded by stormwater runoff."

Floodplains are associated to varying degrees with most of the Town's water bodies. Flooding generally occurs in the spring during periods of heavy rainfall and melting snow. Flooding has its greatest impact on the Town along the banks of the Kennebec River. In fact, Skowhegan was one of the first Maine communities to install and monitor its own river gauge to track water levels. The U.S. Geological Survey maintains flow gauges on the Kennebec at the Town of Bingham (35 miles upstream) and the Town of Sidney (26 miles downstream). Major floods have occurred in 1936, 1973, 1984 and 1987. The April 1987 flood is the flood-of-record for the area; it produced flows approximating a 100-year event. There have been other, moderately significant floods since this time, but it seems that the flood of 1987 was a catalyst for proactivity to prevent disasters.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has mapped 100-year floodplains in Skowhegan. A 100-year flood is defined by FEMA as being a flood event having a 1% chance of being equaled or exceeded in any given year.

FEMA Maps are used for the administration of the National Flood Insurance Program. To participate in the program the Town is required to administer a Floodplain Management Ordinance that is designed to discourage additional development within the floodplain. Any development that does occur in a floodplain must adhere to specific standards set forth by FEMA. The Town of Skowhegan has an aggressive program of floodplain management. In addition to its certified ordinance, the town participates in the Community Rating System, and has an Emergency Management Plan, which designates the Town Manager as the Emergency Management Director. Additionally, the Town cooperates closely with Somerset County Emergency Management on flood monitoring and early warning, with the county agency now responsible for monitoring the river gauges.

Mapped floodplains are located along the banks of the following water bodies in Skowhegan:

Kennebec River	West Branch Wesserunsett Stream
Cold Brook	Currier Brook
Wesserunsett Stream	Whitten Brook
West Branch Currier Brook	Carrabassett Stream
West Branch Black Stream	Lake George
Areas of the Canaan Bog	Round Pond
Lambert Brook	Oak Stream
Oak Pond	

## **Analysis and Issues**

The Kennebec River is the predominant water feature in Skowhegan. Throughout history, this river has created and shaped the town, from transporting settlers to transporting logs, from providing waterpower for industry, to carrying industrial waste. In present time, after decades of effort, the river is virtually free from introduction of new pollutants and the Town of Skowhegan takes great pains to keep it this way. And, as always, since the formation of the town, the river has been an invaluable asset, this time in the form of a recreational draw.

Skowhegan has made monumental efforts to reduce pollution entering the river in the form of point sources. The combined sewer overflows were addressed and continue to be improved upon, as has Skowhegan's sewage treatment plant. The water quality of the river has improved to the degree that it is now a vital public drinking water source, requiring only the same treatment as the pond sources.

### *Resource Protection:*

Maine Water and the Town of Skowhegan work collaboratively to protect the watershed around Upper and Lower Ponds that supply most of the town's drinking water, this has been identified as an area that needs additional protection due to the geographical location of the ponds. Maine Water owns a protective buffer of 114 acres of land surrounding the ponds and conducts regular water testing to ensure public safety; however, more proactive measures should be discussed to protect this critical resource in an environmentally sensitive area.

While the town has stringent site plan review procedures that consider the watershed for any application in that area, there has been recent encroachment by existing land uses onto Maine Water Company's property surrounding the ponds in the form of structures and clearing of vegetation.

Since these ponds are fed, in part, by the aquifer under a heavily developed area in town, it is imperative that protective measures are taken for both the aquifer and the watershed of Upper and Lower Ponds.

The most effective way to accomplish that protection would be the establishment of a Watershed Protection Regulation, giving the town the authority and purview to regulate land uses on properties that overlie the aquifer or are in the watershed. For example, the regulation could require a written statement from businesses describing what, if any, toxic substances are used. A Watershed Regulation could encourage Low Impact Development standards for new construction in this area. It could also prevent the establishment of new businesses that have potential to negatively impact the groundwater in this specific area.

The regulation does not have to be solely a negative reinforcement, either; it could be a tool that gives the town the opportunity to educate the public about the sources of their drinking water and how to protect it. One way this can be accomplished is by having an aquifer and watershed layer on the town's GIS. This would raise public awareness and clarify for residents and developers the exact location of this resource.

For a Watershed Protection Regulation to be as enforceable, comprehensive, and complete as possible, it would be ideal to have the Conservation Commission, Maine Water Company, and the Planning Board involved in the writing of this regulation to ensure the utmost knowledge and collaboration.

### *Maine Water Company:*

Maine Water supplies critical customers such as the hospital, nursing homes, schools and businesses. To ensure continuation of water service in emergency situations, an emergency response plan has been created. However, critical customers should have their own emergency response plans in place for disruption of service as well.

To prevent any supply disruptions or any other potential problems, there should be open and continual communication between the town and the Water Company regarding any activities that affect or could potentially impact the watershed and drinking water sources.

Maine Water is currently working with a third-party consultant to conduct a study of their existing water treatment facility, to prioritize a list of both short-term and long-term improvements, which could include significant upgrades or replacement of the existing facility.

### *Whitten Brook Watershed:*

In the 2010 Comprehensive Plan, Whitten Brook was designated as an urban impaired stream. In 2011 a joint effort was made to document, evaluate, and improve the water quality of this stream. The Conservation Commission and the town have taken several steps to prevent further impairment by watershed planning, site plan review ordinances, promoting low impact development, and educating the public on the importance of best management practices.

However, the Whitten Brook Watershed still needs improvement, as Whitten Brook is still considered an impaired stream. The suggestions in the 2011 Whitten Brook Watershed Restoration Plan are still relevant and should be brought into practice and upheld by the Town. The Conservation Commission has continued monitoring water chemistry in the brook and was awarded a 604b planning grant through to State of Maine to update the 2011 restoration plan and create conceptual engineering plans for a stormwater detention basin to treat runoff from up Madison Ave are in process.

The conceptual engineering drawings for this project are expected to be completed by the end of 2024. The Conservation Commission hopes to complete this project by 2026, trying to align the work with State of Maine DOT road work on Madison Ave.



### *Currier Brook Watershed:*

Currier Brook is a half-mile-long urban impaired stream that begins south of the Kennebec River, north of Rowe Road, west of Back Road, and east of Bigelow Hill Road and Hillside Drive. The watershed extends westward to West Front Street and eastward across Fairview Avenue. The stream flows through several developed areas, including rural neighborhoods, hayfields, and institutional properties like Gifford's Ice Cream and Redington-Fairview General Hospital, before emptying into the Kennebec River just below the Weston Dam.

At its outlet, Currier Brook passes through an 8-foot-wide, approximately 180-foot-long culvert beneath the parking lot at the corner of Main Street and Waterville Road. This culvert, and others along the stream, are undersized and are listed on the Maine Stream Habitat Viewer as complete or potential barriers to fish passage. These undersized crossings have contributed to severe flooding and erosion—particularly near the New Balance warehouse, Village Plaza mall, and downstream neighborhoods—causing sinkholes and compromising infrastructure.

Recent development within the watershed, particularly the increase in impervious surfaces, has significantly increased runoff into the brook. Floodplain sections—such as those on the McLaughlin property and behind Gifford's—have experienced more frequent and intense flooding over the past decade, with the past five years seeing particularly acute impacts.

In July 2024, the Skowhegan Conservation Commission highlighted the need for a comprehensive study of Currier Brook. This study should evaluate replacement or resizing options for existing culverts (especially those along Stevens Road and Bigelow Hill Road), assess opportunities for restoring riparian buffers to reduce erosion and runoff, and explore the stream's potential as Atlantic salmon habitat. Coordination with key stakeholders—New Balance, Gifford's, Redington-Fairview, private landowners, and state/federal agencies—is recommended before implementing any engineering or ecological interventions.

### *Stormwater Management:*

Another important aspect that the town should continue addressing is Best Management Practices for stormwater management. These should include a regular schedule for inspecting, cleaning, and maintaining culverts and catch basins. Road sand and salt should be removed as early as possible. The town should continue proactive measures for preventing runoff and pollutants from entering surrounding waterbodies and ultimately the Kennebec River.

An area of note is the Skowhegan Fairgrounds. The Fairgrounds are at the highest point of the Whitten Brook watershed. Any pollutants in that area will inevitably run downhill into the stream with any rain event or snowmelt. Traditionally, the Fairgrounds were used for

stockpiling snow, a practice that will unavoidably facilitate runoff of pollutants. In recent years, this practice has been discontinued.

#### *Lake George:*

Lake George is the most significant Great Pond in the Town of Skowhegan. Most of the watershed is inaccessible or controlled by Lake George Regional Park. The shoreland is minimally developed with no commercial uses though with the extension and paving of West Shore Road, development is increasing. Oak Pond shares a watershed with Lake George and is also a Great Pond, though slightly smaller and more developed. Both are within the Canaan Bog complex, which limits development potential.

The steep banks of Lake George should be monitored for erosion and an action plan should be created to ensure soil stability, including native plantings as ground cover where needed. It would be ideal for the town to partner with the Lake George Regional Park and Lake George Corporation to evaluate the banks and pinpoint areas of concern that may need attention.

Construction on the banks of Oak Pond should be limited and not allowed in areas that are considered marshy to prevent pollutant seepage into the pond and habitat loss. Oak Pond is more developed than Lake George and is less protected. The new construction consists of seasonal homes and conversion from seasonal to year-round homes. Close attention should be paid to these conversions, as their private septic systems may not have the capacity to accommodate year-round residents. This is often a source of pollution when seasonal residences are converted to year-round residences.

#### *Flooding:*

Historically, Skowhegan has been subject to flooding events. Most recently in December of 2023, severe historic flooding forced the Margaret Chase Smith bridges to close to nonemergency traffic for nearly two days and caused millions of dollars in property damage. To combat flooding, an aggressive floodplain management program has been set in place in Skowhegan. The Town's Floodplain Management Ordinance is up to date, there is a river monitoring system in place, and a close relationship with the Somerset Emergency Management Agency has been established. The Town's FEMA maps, however, have not been updated in many years. It would be helpful for the Town and its residents to have these maps updated and digitized.

#### *Weston Hydro Project:*

The Weston Hydro Project was CMP's flagship power generating facility, designed by prominent Maine architect, John Calvin Stevens, in 1920. Presently, the dam is operated by Brookfield Renewable. The dam is currently undergoing federal licensing amendments through the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) along with three other dams on the Kennebec River operated by Brookfield. In 2021, the State of Maine drafted a denial of the water quality certification for the dam, citing concerns about the passage of

endangered Atlantic salmon whose spawning grounds are on the Sandy River, above the four dams. Prior to dams, the Maine Department of Marine Resources estimates that between 100,000 and 200,000 salmon made annual spawning migrations up the Kennebec River. Today, that number is below 2,000. Currently, salmon are driven over the dams in trucks.

In 2022, Brookfield submitted an updated application only a few weeks prior to the State of Maine's deadline to act on the proposal. The Maine Department of Environmental Protection (Maine DEP) again denied the application, saying that the state did not have enough time to evaluate the significant changes to the application and required additional information from federal agencies. Brookfield argued that Maine, in its denial of their application, waived its right to participate in the federal relicensing process by not following certain requirements. The FERC rejected this argument and Brookfield filed a petition for an appeals court in Washington, D.C. to review the commission's order. On July 5, 2024, the court ruled against Brookfield. Brookfield now has to re-file its application for a state water quality certificate.

The FERC released a draft environmental impact statement (EIS) in 2024 which supported the relicensing of the four Kennebec dams (including the Weston Hydro Project in Skowhegan) with the improvement or addition of fish passages. In early 2025, the FERC reiterated these recommendations. These recommendations have drawn criticism from environmental groups, who argue that the proposed improvements do not go far enough to support the recovery of endangered Atlantic salmon and other migratory fish species. Conservationists have pushed for more significant changes, including potential dam removal, to restore the river's ecosystem. Despite these concerns, the federal recommendation suggests that the dams will likely receive relicensing, provided that Brookfield meets the required fish passage improvements. The final decision is still pending, as additional input from stakeholders and regulatory agencies will be considered before FERC issues its ruling.

One of the major industries that would be impacted by removal of the dams would be Sappi North America, whose facilities are in Skowhegan but whose water supply, used for processing, cooling and fire protection by the paper mill, is procured from an impoundment created by the Shawmut Dam located just south of Skowhegan in Benton and Fairfield. The Shawmut Dam is one of the four owned by Brookfield. Replacing the current water supply could cost Sappi \$50 million, if it was possible at all. Collectively, water from all four dams supports 40% of the state's remaining paper mill production according to the FERC.

#### *Southgate Industrial Park:*

Located on US Route 201 between Skowhegan and Fairfield, the Southgate Industrial Park provides water and sewer through private wells and septic. The Skowhegan Economic Development Corporation and the Town of Skowhegan have developed a proposal to expand the water available to businesses at the park. A large aquifer was discovered across from the industrial park, across Route 201. This aquifer is supplied by

the Kennebec River. An expansion would support more manufacturing and industrial activity at the park. It is estimated that this expansion would cost approximately \$900,000. A \$200,000 in match portion has already been set aside for the project.

However, the Town has not moved forward with this expansion. The aquifer depends on water from the river to recharge. If the water level of the river should change (for instance, due to dam removal) then the aquifer will not be able to support the industrial park. As there have been no businesses within the park requiring expansion of the water supply and no requests from potential businesses for an increased water supply, this expansion project is on hold.

### *Impervious Surfaces:*

Impervious (hard surfaces) such as driveways, rooftops, parking lots, patios, sidewalks, etc. decrease the ability of the shoreland to serve its natural function. Water can no longer soak into the ground and be naturally filtered, which increases stormwater runoff that carries pollutants to lakes, streams, and rivers. Run off from impervious surfaces washes pollutants such as sediments, nutrients, pesticides, bacteria, car fluids, and other chemicals into our water resources. This run off can then lead to erosion, reduction of groundwater recharge, fluctuating water levels (including flooding), increased water temperatures, pollution of the water supply, negative impacts to wildlife and their habitats, and a decrease in property values.

Residents can minimize the effects of impervious surfaces in many ways, first by minimizing the amount of hard surfaces on their property (sharing driveways with neighbors, minimizing building footprints, removing unneeded hard surfaces) and using pervious materials where possible. Residents can also capture and infiltrate run off, control erosion during and after development, minimizing fertilizer use, and maintaining or restoring shoreline plants to slow runoff.

The Town can consider the impact of impervious surfaces when reviewing ordinances, requiring additional surveys or studies regarding impervious surface impact on stormwater during projects, and reconsidering standards such as parking, driveways, etc.



<b>Policies:</b>	<b>Strategies:</b>	<b>Implementing Party/Timeframe:</b>
2. To protect significant surface water resources from pollution and improve water quality where needed.	<p>2.1: Consider amending local land use ordinances, as applicable, to incorporate low impact development standards.</p> <p>2.2: Where applicable, develop an urban impaired stream watershed management or mitigation plan that will promote continued development or redevelopment without further stream degradation.</p> <p>2.3: Continue Whitten Brook restoration work with installation of catch basin at upper Madison Ave upon completion of drawings from ECO Engineers; coordinate timing with Town of Skowhegan and Maine DOT</p> <p>2.4: Consider completing a study on Currier Brook watershed and current drainage into Kennebec River</p>	<p>Planning Board / Mid-term 2026-2027.</p> <p>Planning Board / Conservation Commission / Ongoing.</p> <p>Planning Board / Conservation Commission / Near-term 2025-2026.</p> <p>Planning Board / Conservation Commission / Near-term 2025-2026.</p>
3. To protect water resources in growth areas while promoting more intensive development in those areas.	<p>3.1: Maintain, enact or amend public wellhead and aquifer recharge area protection mechanisms, as necessary.</p> <p>3.2: Encourage landowners to protect water quality. Provide local contact information at the municipal office for water quality best management practices from resources such as the Natural Resource Conservation Service, University of Maine Cooperative Extension, Soil and Water Conservation District, Maine Forest Service, and/or Small Woodlot Association of Maine.</p>	<p>Planning Board / Mid-term 2026-2027.</p> <p>Planning Board and Conservation Commission / Ongoing.</p>

<b>Policies:</b>	<b>Strategies:</b>	<b>Implementing Party/Timeframe:</b>
4. To minimize pollution discharges through the upgrade of existing public sewer systems and wastewater treatment facilities.	4.1: Adopt water quality protection practices and standards for construction and maintenance of public and private roads and public properties and require their implementation by contractors, owners, and community officials and employees.	Planning Board / Mid-term 2026-2027.
5. To cooperate with neighboring communities and regional/local advocacy groups to protect water resources.	<p>5.1: Participate in local and regional efforts to monitor, protect and, where warranted, improve water quality.</p> <p>5.2: Provide educational materials at appropriate locations regarding aquatic invasive species.</p> <p>5.3: Include Conservation Commission, Waste Management, and Pollution Control on communications from Planning Board, Staff Review Site Plan, and other important updates on development</p> <p>5.4: Add town boards and committees to notification list for when abutters notifications are sent on projects</p> <p>5.6: Find ways to improve communication between Maine DOT on project timelines to better coordinate conservation efforts</p> <p>5.7: Increase education about invasive species by offering educational material on the town website and in the municipal building</p>	<p>Planning Board / Conservation Commission / Ongoing.</p> <p>Planning Board / Conservation Commission / Ongoing.</p> <p>Planning Board / Ongoing.</p> <p>Planning Board / Ongoing.</p> <p>Planning Board / Near-term 2025-2026.</p> <p>Planning Board / Conservation Commission / Near-term / 2025-2026.</p>

## Chapter 5: Agricultural and Forestry Resources

### Overview and Issues:

- Skowhegan's forests have been a mainstay of the town's economic and cultural character since the original settlement. Forests have provided income and jobs for generations of residents. Today, we have a mix of small woodlots and industrial holdings, managed tree farms and occasional cuttings. We also have large expanses of forest land held for conservation purposes. Roughly half of Skowhegan's land area is forested.
- Although a considerable number of timber harvesting operations are permitted each year, most are part of managed woodland. More forest is lost to development each year than clearing for agriculture. The amount of loss is relatively small, however. The number of acres in Tree Growth has remained virtually unchanged in 30 years (7,997 acres in 2021, 7,890 acres in 2007; 7,847 acres in 1987.)
- Project Canopy is a state initiative to promote street and park tree management. Skowhegan has completed a *Strategic Management Plan for Skowhegan's Community Forest (2007)*; the next stage of the process has been to implement a tree-planting plan.
- Increasing land values and a loss of commodity markets are contributing to a decline in traditional farms. In Skowhegan, much of the historically active farmland is in areas suitable for development, such as the northeast quadrant of town. Two traditional commodities – dairy and apples – are among the hardest hit.
- Despite a decline in commodities, the overall number of farms and their contribution to the economy is growing. This results from a shift to a new pattern of farming. The new pattern relies on more intensive use of the land, value-added production, and local markets more so than prime soils and commodity markets. For example, the development of a grist mill promises an alternative market for farm products. The new pattern relies more heavily on local policies and community support.
- Community support for agriculture is strong, as revealed in growing demand for local produce. There are 20 farmers in the Skowhegan Farmers' Market and a robust Guest Vendor program which includes an extra 1-4 vendors each week in the summer. The market operates year-round, and Maine Grains located on Court Street is working to build a permanent indoor space for winter market accommodations on their campus downtown. Some of the vendors have base operations in Skowhegan including a cheesemaker, flower grower, a mushroom farmer, a pasta maker, and a baker. There are also a growing number of farmstands and greenhouses.



- Skowhegan has become an agricultural food hub, and there is notable excitement about growth in small, artisanal producers, putting time and attention into producing a high quality, agricultural product. Skowhegan is at the center of a renaissance in artisanal bread production and has developed state-wide recognition as a leader in this endeavor, spurred by the creation of Maine Grains, the Annual Kneading Conference and the Maine Artisanal Bread Fair. Maine Grains also has an on-site flour, feed, and dry goods shop and a farm-to-table restaurant, The Miller's Table. In addition, two breweries have started since the last plan – Oak Pond Brewery and Bigelow Brewing Company. Skowhegan Main Street has been the sponsor of the Skowhegan Craft Brew Festival held annually in September.
- Maple syrup production is considered farming, even though it comes from trees. Somerset County is the number one maple producing county in the country, and Skowhegan is a major participant. Five sugarhouses are located in Skowhegan. Most sell retail and are well patronized. In 2019, Main Street Skowhegan participated in the State's Maine Maple Sunday event, with an extensive schedule of events held across the town.

Most people refer to Maine as rural. But what exactly do we mean by “rural?” Portland is not rural; neither is downtown Skowhegan. Yet, the bulk of Maine outside of Portland is rural, just as the balance of Skowhegan is rural, right?

According to Webster's Dictionary, “rural” means “of the country, or country life.” Of course, Webster also defines “countryside” as “a rural area or its inhabitants.” The thesaurus tells us that synonyms for the adjective “country” are “arcadian, bucolic, pastoral, provincial, rural, [and] rustic.” All emotionally-charged words, but again, what does it mean?

The W.K. Kellogg Foundation conducted a rigorous study in 2001, with in-depth interviews of hundreds of rural, suburban, and urban residents across the United States, to define perceptions of rural America. They found that, “Agriculture plays the predominant role in respondents' perceptions of rural America...the overwhelming majority of people in our study - both rural and non-rural – believe agriculture is the dominant industry of rural America.” Perceptions of rural America are dominated by agricultural images, but not just any agriculture small family farms: “The three most common images of rural America...were farms and crops (32 percent), pastures (21 percent), and animals (12 percent).” Skowhegan has all three.

Driving along two-lane roads particularly north of downtown and in eastern Skowhegan, seeing the farms and forests, definitely conjures up the thought “rural.” Despite creeping sprawl, viable agriculture and forest land covers the majority of Skowhegan.

## **Agriculture in Skowhegan:**

For two centuries, Somerset County has been an agricultural hub. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, this region of Maine was a major supplier of grain for Southern New England. While this area continues to produce sweet corn, maple syrup, apples, Christmas Trees, beef cattle, and horses, the farmland is primarily now devoted to silage corn and hay for dairy cattle and horses. Skowhegan has at least 2,949 acres used for farming including hayfields, cropland and pasture. The thirty-mile radius around Skowhegan contains a larger number of dairy farms of all sizes than perhaps any region of New England. In 2021, 2,309 acres of farmland are enrolled in the Farm and Open Space Tax Program. In 1995, there were 1,100 acres of farmland in the program. Since then, 1,209 acres have been added. This program allows property owners a reduction in their assessed property value. The land may be used for crops, pasture, or horticulture and can include woodland and wasteland. Additionally, the parcel must contribute at least \$2,000 gross income from farming activities, each year. Most of the farms in this program are small. Of the 89 parcels in the program, there are only three over 100 acres in size.

The state has many provisions available to farmers for their protection and to aid them in continuing operation of viable farms. One such provision is Maine's Agriculture Protection Act (commonly known as the Right to Farm Law) that protects farmers from complaints regarding odors, noise, and other aspects of farming operations. Another provision is Maine's Voluntary Municipal Farm Support Program. Through this program, towns are allowed to develop a system of "farm support arrangements" with eligible farmland owners. The farmland owners voluntarily apply and may then be formally accepted by the town's legislative body. If accepted, they may be granted a 20-year agricultural conservation easement to the town in exchange for full or partial reimbursement of property taxes on their farmland and farm buildings during that 20-year period.

The state also offers multiple tax programs aimed at improving and protecting the businesses of agriculture and forestry. There are three current-use tax programs that relate to forestry or agriculture in Skowhegan: Farmland Tax Law, Open Space Tax Law, and Tree Growth Tax Law (Tree Growth will be addressed later in this chapter). The Maine Legislature declared in the Farm and Open Space Tax Law (Title 36, MRSA, '1101 et. seq.), that "it is in the public interest to encourage the preservation of farmland and open space land in order to maintain a readily available source of food and farm products close to the metropolitan areas of the state." These programs are detailed below:

**Farmland Tax Law:** This tax law was adopted to encourage the preservation of farmland and open space land and to protect farmland and open space land from competing with higher-valued uses. The farmland program provides for the valuation of farmland based on its current use as farmland, rather than based on its fair market value for other potential uses. This reduced land value results in lower property tax bills for owners of farmland. Lower taxes are designed to act as an incentive to preserve Maine's farming communities. In addition to reducing the farmland owner's tax burden, the municipality avoids costs associated with development and state subsidies are positively impacted.

**Open Space Tax Law:** This law provides for the valuation of land based on its current use as open space, rather than its highest and best use. To qualify for open space classification, land must be preserved or restricted for uses providing a public benefit. This classification encourages landowners of open, undeveloped land to prevent or restrict its use from development by conserving scenic resources, enhancing public recreation, promoting game management or preserving wildlife, and/or wildlife habitat. This is mutually beneficial, as the landowner's proportionate tax burden is reduced, the municipality avoids costs associated with development, and state subsidies are positively impacted.

**Table 9: Parcels of Land in Skowhegan Enrolled in the Farmland Tax Law**

	2010	2021	% Change
<b>Number of Parcels</b>	85	89	4.7 %
<b>Acres First Classified</b>	0	10	0
<b>Farmland Acres</b>	595	711	19.5 %
<b>Farmland Valuation</b>	\$179,200	\$214,100	19.5 %
<b>Woodland Acres</b>	1,269	1,337	5.4 %
<b>Woodland Valuation</b>	\$150,729	\$189,161	25.5 %

*Source: 2010, 2021 Municipal Valuation Return Statistical Summary*

**Table 10: Parcels of Land in Skowhegan Enrolled in the Open Space Tax Law**

	2010	2021	% Change
<b>Number of Parcels</b>	4	4	0.0 %
<b>Acres First Classified</b>	0	0	0.0 %
<b>Total Acres</b>	261	261	0.0 %
<b>Total Valuation</b>	\$32,500	\$53,100	63.4 %

*Source: 2010, 2021 Municipal Valuation Return Statistical Summary*

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

The Farm and Open Space Program is not so much about tax breaks for farmers as about recognition of another role that farmland plays. Contrary to common perception, building the tax base is not the best way to keep taxes down. With a few exceptions (such as the SAPPI mill in Skowhegan), tax dollars from new development do not pay their share of local costs. Hundreds of case studies through the US have shown that towns provide about \$1.06 in services for every commercial tax dollar they receive, and \$1.27 in services for every residential tax dollar. But towns provide only \$0.16 of services for every tax dollar from farms and woodland. All "tax base" is subsidized by the taxes from open land; the more land that gets developed, the less there is to subsidize. Perhaps this is why taxes are always higher in the cities.

Farming itself remains a viable industry, despite dramatic changes to the industry. The old model – large, full-time farms producing crops, animals, or other products for sale in bulk to the food industry – has become harder to sustain in the face of even larger, well-funded competition from better growing areas of the world. This model is represented by large barns and grain silos. The new model in Maine produces small crops of high value produce for sale to local customers. It does not need large barns or prime farmland. It is represented more by the local farmers market, roadside stands, and premium value-added products.

The shifting trend is amply illustrated in agricultural statistics for Somerset County. (Ag statistics are only collected as low as the county level.) The number of farms in Somerset County in 2017 was 467 farms, a 19% decline since 2012. The total acreage in farms has varied over time: it was 124,000 acres in 1974, 111,000 acres in 2007, and 145,833 acres in 2017. As a result, the average farm size changed as well: from 259 acres in 1974 to 197 in 2007, and 312 acres in 2017. That is the statistical result of a few large farms shutting down and a lot of farms as small as five acres starting up. About 40 percent of farms are now in the 50–180-acre size class, with another 1/3 at 10-50 acres. Not coincidentally, while the value of traditional commodity crops like apples, dairy, and forage have flat lined, non-traditional crops such as strawberries, organic meats, and table vegetables have skyrocketed. And it is no secret that Somerset County has recently become one of the top maple syrup-producing areas of the world.

The trend is also affecting employment and income at farms. Smaller farms do not employ as much outside labor, and in fact, few farms are even full-time jobs for their owners. In 1974, 296 people listed farming as their primary occupation; in 2007, the number dropped to 238, in 2017 882 producers were identified. Significantly, the number of female “principal operators” went from 24 in 1978 to 45 in 1997, to 92 in 2007, to 371 in 2017. And of greatest importance, the average-per-farm income has gone from \$47,000 in 1992, to \$57,000 in 1997, to \$95,000 in 2007, to \$48,059 in 2017 (Net cash farm income). Like the ideal model of a successful business, *farm income has increased while productivity has improved and quantity of inputs (land) has been reduced.*

This new model of farming requires a different form of community support and planning for its success. Reliance on infrastructure, such as shipping facilities and prime farmland, is less important. Viewing farming as a vital form of local small business becomes more important.

In Skowhegan, community support for farming is evidenced by a thriving farmers' market, a pick-your-own orchard in Skowhegan and, of course, the continuing Skowhegan State Fair. The Skowhegan Farmer's Market has become an access point for nutrition incentive programs made possible through USDA and managed by the Maine Federation of Farmer's Markets. Maine Harvest Bucks, Bumper Crop, and the Senior Farm Share Program are all examples of coupon programs that extend the value of fruit and vegetable purchases at the farmers market helping to serve Skowhegan's residents that qualify for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). The Skowhegan State Fair, founded in 1818, is the oldest agricultural fair in continuous operation in America. There is a need and a desire in Skowhegan for CSA farms and local vegetable farms.

Skowhegan has had great success with a rising renaissance in heirloom grain production and artisan bread baking. The Maine Grain Alliance's Annual Kneading Conference, created in 2007 and the Maine Artisan Bread Fair. The annual Kneading Conference, hosted since 2007, attracts 250 participants from around the world to a two-day conference focused on baking education.

Main Street Skowhegan has conducted a feasibility study and plan for building an "incubator kitchen" in downtown Skowhegan at 185 Water Street to help support the next generation of food entrepreneurs and the expansion of agricultural production.

**Table 11: Local Farms in Skowhegan**

<b>Farm Name</b>	<b>Product/Specialty</b>	<b>Farm Name</b>	<b>Product/Specialty</b>
Cayford Orchards	Apples, Peaches, Pears, Plums, pick-your-own	Brick Farm	Beef, hay, maple syrup, wood products
Crooked Face Creamery	Cheese	Dostie Farm	Organic Dairy
Sweet Cap Farm	Mushrooms	Santy Dairy	Organic Dairy
Grasslands Farm	Organic Dairy and grain	Malbons Farm/Ridge Farms	Beef, Goat Milk products
Pine Acres Farm	Pick-your-own blueberries	Belanger Christmas Tree Farm	Christmas Trees
Fox Meadow Flower Farm	Flowers	Sunset Heights	Dairy
Strawberry Hill Farms	Maple syrup and retail store	Smith Brothers	Maple syrup
Tessiers Farm	Maple syrup, meat, eggs, soaps	Dostie Farm	Maple syrup

*Source: Skowhegan Farmer's Market & Maine Farmland Trust*

The Agricultural and Valuable Soil in Skowhegan Map (Appendix) shows active farmland and illustrates the abundance of farming in town.

A map of Agricultural and Valuable Soils is included in the appendices. The map was created by Maine Farmland Trust (MFT) and also shows locations of farmland conserved by MFT. As the map demonstrates, prime farmland soil lies north and east of downtown and west of East Ridge Road, near the Kennebec River, and between Canaan Road and Oak Pond Road. Unfortunately, some of this area is also where people have traditionally made their homes, and development occurs on top of good farm soils in some parts of town. Nonetheless, many areas with these important soils are not developed, and a new state mandate requires that significant farmland be identified during a subdivision review process.

One or more of the following voluntary programs managed by the USDA provides conservation assistance to eleven local farms: the Conservation Stewardship Program in which agricultural and forestry producers if under contract must treat two resource concerns; the Environmental Quality Incentives Program, which offers assistance to implement conservation practices that may include waste storage or treatment that will require a comprehensive nutrient management plan; and Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program that provides landowner assistance improving/restoring wildlife habitat.

PFAS (Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances) have been found throughout Maine including but not limited to at agricultural sites. Since the 1970s, the land application of sludge was commonly practiced in the United States and was encouraged under the US EPA's biosolids program. This is, in part, largely because the application of biosolids at a controlled rate was known to enhance nutrient value at agricultural sites. In Maine, licensing was required prior to land application to ensure that activity complied with the applicable statutory and regulatory provisions relative to protecting public health, safety and the environment, however while licenses typically established limits for the concentrations of metals and other organic compounds, PFAS were not historically included or regulated in sludge and septage land application licenses. Maine DEP has a number of resources to review where sludge applications were permitted, however, a permit does not always mean that materials were applied or the actual amounts that may have been spread.

Agricultural production can be impacted by PFAS in several ways, from contaminated drinking water to crops. Data shows that PFAS find their way into the food system by animals eating contaminated feed and water, resulting in meats, eggs, and milk with significant levels. PFAS can also accumulate in leafy greens, grasses, and legumes. It accumulates less in fruits and grains such as corn. The Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry periodically conduct retail sampling of fluid pasteurized milk in the state to determine the safety of the milk supply. The Department's action threshold for milk is 210 parts per trillion (ppt). Milk produced on farms that is over 210 ppt is considered adulterated and may not be sold.

In 2021, the legislature passed several laws pertaining to PFAS, including the Governor's budget to direct \$40 million to state agencies to help address PFAS related issues. State investigations and testing are ongoing. In May 2024, the Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association (MOFGA) announced its plan to sue the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for its failure to regulate the land application of sludge contaminated with PFAS under the clean water act.

### **Forest Management:**

Forestland is also a major contributor to Skowhegan's sense of "rural" character. The Tree Growth Tax Program has experienced steady growth, with 106 parcels comprising 7,997 acres in 2021, 99 parcels, 8,437 acres, enrolled in Skowhegan in 2010, up almost 1,000 acres from the 7,454 acres enrolled in 1996. Enrolled land makes up approximately 13 percent of Skowhegan's 62 square miles, with many more wooded parcels not enrolled. The Tree Growth program is similar to the Farm and Open Space program, in that a landowner with at least 10 acres of managed forestland can obtain a reduced property tax assessment.

Many wooded parcels are not enrolled in the program for various reasons. Some are conservation lands (not managed commercially). Some forestland has been protected by Somerset Woods Trustees, a land trust that owns/protects more than 600 acres in Skowhegan including Coburn Woods, a 300-acre parcel with a sustainable forest and wildlife management plan. Other forested conservation lands include Lake George Regional Park, Aqua Maine property, the Yankee Woodlot, and several small parks owned by the Town. Many woodlots are either too small to enroll in Tree Growth, or their owners do not want to be bound by a management plan. Eyeball estimates of total forest cover in Skowhegan run about 65 percent (25,000 acres).

Clearing trees for development is more of an issue than clear-cutting for forestry. Although the total acres under management have increased since 1996, overall forest cover has declined. The only significant corporate forest land in Skowhegan is owned by Plum Creek.

A significant portion of Skowhegan's economy is derived from the forest resource, tapped into the larger region. The SAPPI paper mill is the town's largest employer and taxpayer. Other forest-dependent businesses include smaller sawmill operations, equipment sellers and mechanics, and trucking companies.

Skowhegan has a long history of involvement in urban forestry as well. These are the small parks and roadsides in town that provide shade, exercise, and aesthetic appeal to residents. Using Project Canopy grant funds, the town completed a strategic management plan for its community forest resources in 2007. The project is focused on tree replacement for organizations in town that have lost trees or need them replaced. In 2024, they worked with the Somerset Woods Trustees to replace three trees at the rest area on Route 2. They also planted trees at the new Public Safety Building.

**Table 12: Forestry Harvest Information**

YEAR	Selection harvest, acres	Shelterwood harvest, acres	Clearcut harvest, acres	Total Harvest, acres	Change of land use, acres	Number of active Notifications
1991	1020	20	170	1210	5	38
1992	1183	35	91	1309	35	33
1993	716	6	201	923	20	30
1994	644	2	53	699	0	22
1995	415	120	41	576	11	27
1996	481	20	11	512	11	18
1997	719	76	9	804	0	19
1998	927	115	42	1084	0	27
1999	1131	157	0	1288	17	51
2000	1621	68	0	1689	2	57
2001	993	223	0	1216	7	42
2002	649	44	0	693	2	44
2003	618	35	20	663	11	41
2004	1048	240	17	1305	45	47
2005	1443	321	25	1789	11	41
2006	723	128	0	776	114	44
2007	510	77	0	572	36	36
2008	441	340	0	781	12	37
2009	466	211	0	677	0	31
2010	664	173	0	837	0	35
2011	819.5	383	51	1253.5	3	50
2012	1169	195	6	1370	31	52
2013	516	70	0	586	0	32
2014	562	288	73	923	31	44
2015	729.9	201.55	74	1005.45	13	36
2016	554	10	0	564	3.25	33
2017	662	68	31	761	14	38
2018	389	80	32	501	14	31
Total	21813	3707	947	26367	448	1036
Average	779	132	34	942	16	37

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



### *Tree Growth Tax Law Program:*

As of 2021, 106 parcels in Skowhegan were classified as Tree Growth properties under the State's Tree Growth Tax Law Program (Table below). This program, like the Farmland and Open Space Tax Law Programs, provides landowners an opportunity to have their land valued for its productivity rather than its market value. Over the course of the last decade, there has been a 7.1 percent increase in the number of parcels participating in this program, but a decrease of 2.7 percent of total acres enrolled in Skowhegan's Tree Growth Tax Law Program. The biggest increase, at 98 percent, is the total value of the land in this program. This is not surprising considering the increased value of land over the last decade.

**Table 13: Skowhegan Parcels Enrolled in the Tree Growth Tax Law Program**

	2010	2021	% Change
<b># Of Parcels</b>	99	106	7.07%
<b>Softwood Acres</b>	2,202	1,561	-29.1 %
<b>Mixed Wood Acres</b>	4,012	4,019	0.10 %
<b>Hardwood Acres</b>	2,010	2,417	20.2%
<b>Total Acres</b>	8,224	7,997	-2.7%
<b>Total Value</b>	\$976,506	\$1,079,453	10.5%

*Source: 2010 and 2021 Municipal Valuation Return Statistical Summary*

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

Skowhegan has a community garden, located at the Skowhegan Community Center. Skowhegan also has a Farmer's Market, held at the Maine Grains parking lot on Court Street during summer months (may-November). During the winter, the market moves to Boynton's Greenhouse on Madison Ave. The market is able to process transactions from SNAP/EBT and WIC. The market has approximately 14 vendors offering a wide range of products from local farms.

## **Analysis and Issues:**

Skowhegan contains approximately 39,680 taxable acres. In 1996, 22% of that land was registered under either the Farm and Open Space or Tree Growth Current Use Tax Program. Today, approximately 10,524 acres are in these programs, 27% of Skowhegan's taxable land. This is a comfortable increase, and a sizable proportion of Skowhegan's land area.

Increasing property values and demand for development have contributed to some loss of farmland. Farmers cannot find affordable agricultural land in Skowhegan and local farmers have indicated this should be considered a priority in decision making among local officials. But there are positive indicators for farming in Somerset County. The number of farms has increased and average sales per farm in the county almost doubled between 2002 and 2007. This data indicates that many farms are becoming more lucrative. Among the reasons cited for this profitability, are conversions to organic farming which fetches a premium price, more local retail outlets, where farmers receive a premium over commodity prices and easy access to local restaurants and stores where farmers enjoy a steady market at near-retail prices. Interestingly, local policies can influence all three of the reasons given.

The new model of local farming not only affords a farmer more revenue, but it also protects town resources. Best Management Practices, such as maintaining riparian buffers and diversifying cover crops, in conjunction with organic farming, minimizes pollution and sediment runoff in the community. The Town can encourage sustainable farming with informational brochures to local farmers and assistance with financial and regulatory issues. The Planning Board can support local farms by lessening the development review burden for farmers who wish to add a farm stand or value-added operation. The Skowhegan school system could purchase from local farms, providing a sustainable stream of income for farmers. Finally, municipal officials can support local farmers' markets, restaurants, and businesses aimed at adding value to local farm produce.

Currently, one of the hidden aspects of agriculture and forestry in Skowhegan is that it is being increasingly forced "out of view" – relegated to back lots with a tiny sliver of land providing access to the public road. Individual homes line rural roads, many on small lots. The visual image of half a dozen homes stretched back-to-back along the road clashes with the pastoral image of rural agriculture.

In addition to the image of rural life being disrupted, tracts of potential farmland are still being lost to development. There are two categories of agriculturally significant soils recognized by the USDA that have been mapped in Somerset County: Prime Farmland, and Farmland of Statewide Importance. Prime Farmland Soils, according to the USDA, have the soil properties needed to produce sustained high yields of grain crops. Farmlands of Statewide Importance have similar characteristics to Prime Farmlands, but not in great enough quantities to be labeled Prime Farmland. As the description of Prime Farmland above implies, less effort is required to produce high yields. The grist mill in the old jail in Skowhegan indicates the value of protecting these significant farmland soils for production of grains. In addition, a state law enacted in 2009 requires areas of agriculturally significant soils to be identified in subdivision review applications.

The Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association (MOFGA), formed in 1971, is the oldest and largest state organic organization in the country. MOFGA is a broad-based community that educates about and advocates for organic agriculture, illuminating its interdependence with a healthy environment, local food production, and thriving communities.

Maine Farmland Trust is a member-powered, statewide organization that protects farmland, supports farmers, and advances the future of farming. They strive to protect Maine farmland and to revitalize Maine's rural landscape by keeping agricultural lands working and helping farmers and communities thrive. They accomplish this by working with farm families, and collaborating with other partners such as statewide groups, local and regional land trusts and municipalities.

Maine Farmland Trust currently holds easements on 6 farms in Skowhegan, totaling 1,253 acres, plus other farms in surrounding towns:

Brick Farm, 130 acres; Hewett Farm, 329 acres (beef, hay, wood products, maple syrup); Dostie family, 210 acres (dairy); Oster Farm, 50 acres, (hay); Grassland Farms, 280 acre(xx); Santy Dairy, 208-acre organic dairy;

Land for Maine's Future (LMF) is the primary funding vehicle for conserving land for its natural and recreational value. Types of land conserved by this program include mountain summits; shorelines of rivers, lakes, and ponds; coastal islands; beaches; forests; grasslands; wildlife habitat; farmland; and wetlands. Land acquired is only from willing sellers. The LMF pursues a mission defined by the public, providing a tangible return to everyone who cherishes Maine's landscape (from hunters, to hikers, snowmobilers to bird watchers), and leverages both federal and private funding for state priority purchases. Currently, the Land for Maine's Future Program holds no farmland property in Somerset County. The program assisted with the purchase of Skowhegan Gorge, partnering with the Somerset Woods Trustees, and with Lake George (254 acres).

Agricultural Development Program of the Somerset Economic Development Corporation was organized in 2000 to provide education and serve as a catalyst for business and community improvement in Somerset County. They have hosted and co-hosted several community programs and have counseled entrepreneurs to help enhance Skowhegan's role as a food hub and improve the nutrition of the population that suffers from chronically poor health. Such efforts include developing infrastructure needed to create a full range of opportunities to grow, process and add value to crops including grain and other diversified food sources.

Somerset Woods Trustees is a nonprofit land trust serving the communities of Somerset County. Working in partnership with willing landowners, Somerset Woods is responsible for more than 3,000 acres forever conserved for wildlife and fisheries habitat, outdoor recreation and water access, and resiliency in a changing climate. Their properties in Skowhegan include Coburn Woods, Eaton Preserves, Wesserunsett Stream Preserve, and Canaan Bog Preserve.

Policies:	Strategies:	Implementation:
<p><b>AGRICULTURE AND FOREST RESOURCES:</b></p> <p>Agriculture and forestry were some of Skowhegan's first forms of economic development, and they are still important in town today, though farming practices have changed significantly.</p> <p>In many ways, Skowhegan is still a farming community. Supporting and encouraging farms of all sizes is in keeping to maintaining the town's rural character.</p> <p>Forest management is supported by markets for wood products that are beyond local control, but since forest gains value from one year to the next, it can generally withstand temporary fluctuations.</p> <p><b>State Goal: To safeguard the State's agricultural and forest resources from development which threatens those resources.</b></p>		
Policies:	Strategies:	Implementation:
<p>1. To safeguard lands identified as prime farmland or capable of supporting commercial forestry.</p>	<p>1.1: Consult with the Maine Forest Service district forester when developing any land use regulations pertaining to forest management practices as required by 12 M.R.S.A. §8869.</p> <p>1.2: Consult with Soil and Water Conservation District staff when developing any land use regulations pertaining to agricultural management practices.</p> <p>1.3: Amend land use ordinances to require commercial or subdivision developments in critical rural areas, if applicable, maintain areas with prime farmland soils as open space to the greatest extent practicable.</p> <p>1.4: Limit non-residential development in critical rural areas (if the town designates critical rural areas) to natural resource-based businesses and services, nature tourism/outdoor recreation</p>	<p>Planning Office and Planning Board. Ongoing.</p>

<b>Policies:</b>	<b>Strategies:</b>	<b>Implementation:</b>
	businesses, farmers' markets, and home occupations.	
2. To support farming and forestry and encourage their economic viability.	<p>2.1: Encourage owners of productive farm and forest land to enroll in the current use taxation programs.</p> <p>2.2: Permit land use activities that support productive agriculture and forestry operations, such as roadside stands, greenhouses, firewood operations, sawmills, log buying yards, and pick-your-own operations.</p> <p>2.3: Include agriculture, commercial forestry operations, and land conservation that supports them in local or regional economic development plans.</p>	Planning Office and Planning Board. Ongoing.

## **Chapter 6: Business and the Economy**

### **Highlights of the Economic Profile:**

- The town of Skowhegan is the major employment center for the area. Over a third of Skowhegan's workers work within the town itself while over 3,800 non-residents commute into town to work.
- In 2022, Skowhegan had a labor force of 3,812 workers, with essentially a 50/50 men to women ratio. It averages out to only 0.98 workers per household.
- Skowhegan's unemployment rate during most of the 2000's averaged around seven to five percent. The rate grew to a high of 10.2 percent from the national recession in 2011, but slowly dropped back to about 4.6 percent in 2019, effectively full employment. There were signs of this increasing due to the effects of the 2020 Pandemic, however it has fallen since 2020 and has stayed under 3% since.
- Skowhegan has a mix of commercial and industrial employers, with the Sappi Mill being the largest. Health care and education industries are by far the town's resident's largest employers. About 76 percent of workers are in the private sector, either self-employed (9 percent) or working for wages (67 percent). 15 percent work in the public sector.
- The town faces challenges familiar to many other areas of the state, of growing and maintaining an economic base for its residents and region and prevent decline in jobs and population.

### **Introduction:**

As with many central Maine communities in recent times, Skowhegan has had its share of challenges regarding economic development, in most industry sectors. The Historic Profile outlines the active role that community leaders and citizens in general have played in purposefully attracting employment and tax base to Skowhegan throughout its history. These efforts continue to this day, as the Town must try to keep up with shifts in economic activity that have moved from manufacturing and agriculture to a more service-oriented economy, as well as changes in retail consumption patterns.

This chapter seeks to describe current conditions, outline Skowhegan's leading role in the regional economy, identify the town's numerous economic development assets, examine visible trends and areas of need, incorporate public sentiment and lay out direction and strategy to guide the Town's economic development efforts for the foreseeable future.

## Skowhegan's Role as Regional Employment Center:

Skowhegan is a major source of labor for the region, with an estimated 3,812 townspeople working (employed) as of 2022. As one can see from the table below, over a third of Skowhegan workers hold jobs in town, with the next largest number of workers coming from Madison and Waterville. The 3,377 commuters that came in 2021 came from numerous assorted towns combined. In total there are an estimated 5,859 people working jobs within the town.

SKOWHEGAN'S ROLE AS A REGIONAL EMPLOYMENT CENTER				
Town of Residence	Employed Workers in 2021	Working in Skowhegan in 2021	Percent Employed in Skowhegan	2021 Unemployment Rate
Skowhegan	3,995	915	22.9%	1.9 %
Madison	2,130	187	8.7%	1.2%
Norridgewock	1,585	82	5.1%	3.2%
Waterville	7,245	146	2%	2.5%
Winslow	3,652	53	1.4%	1.9%
<i>SOURCE: 2021 Civilian Labor Force Estimates,"; (Maine Department of Labor), 2021 U.S. Census ACS</i>				

Where the vast majority of Skowhegan residents go to work, according to statistics from the Maine Department of Labor and the US Census, is illustrated below. The largest destination for work is actually within Skowhegan itself, which is unsurprising as it is the largest service center community in the region, with the other larger cities/towns picking up the majority of the rest. This supports the idea of Skowhegan as the regional employment center as opposed to smaller "bedroom communities".

Town of Employment	Coming from Skowhegan in 2021	% of total workers commuting outside town
Skowhegan	828	20.7%
Waterville	284	7.1%
Augusta	176	4.4%
Bangor	106	2.6%
Portland	90	2.2%
Employing 50-100: Norridgewock, Oakland, Lewiston, Auburn, Pittsfield		
<i>SOURCE: 2021 Civilian Labor Force Estimates,"; (Maine Department of Labor), 2021 U.S. Census</i>		



The average commute took 18.6 minutes in 2010 but has increased a good amount to 24.8 minutes in 2019, suggesting that a few less percentage of residents may work in Skowhegan now, or that commuting distances have steadily increased as more employment opportunities are created outside of the region.

Skowhegan is the center of the Skowhegan Labor Market Area (LMA), which is how most Department of Labor (DOL) statistics are organized. The Skowhegan Micropolitan LMA currently encompasses 25 towns / Plantations / Unorganized Territories, including the following though boundaries can change every ten years:

Anson	Highland plantation	Pleasant Ridge Plantation
Athens	Jackman	Seboomook Lake UT
Bingham	Madison	<b>Skowhegan</b>
Brighton Plantation	Mercer	Smithfield
Canaan	Moose River	Solon
Caratunk	Moscow	Starks
Cornville	Norridgewock	The Forks Plantation
Dennis Plantation	NE/NW Somerset UT	West Forks Plantation
Embden		

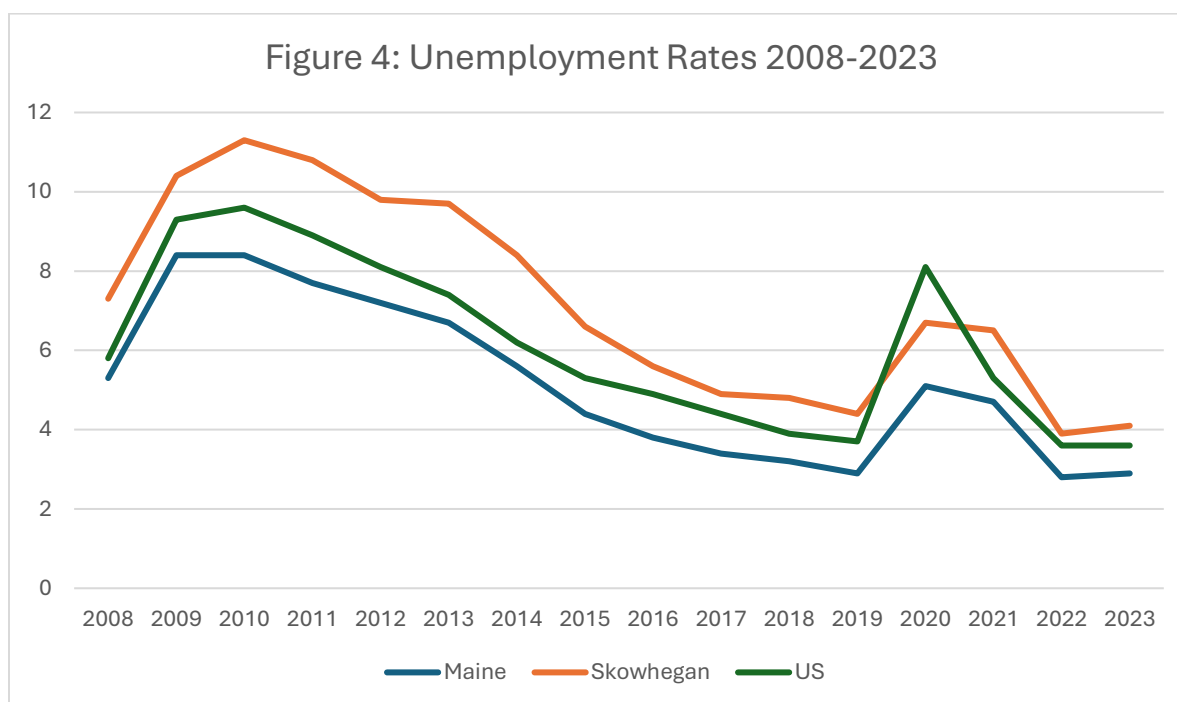
The total labor force in the LMA, as of 2019, was 13,704, with Skowhegan comprising about a quarter of the workers and also about 40% of the employment. With Skowhegan providing way more than its fair share of employment in the LMA, it is maybe a little surprising that the unemployment rate for the town and LMA are about the same at 4.5%.

Skowhegan is also closely linked economically with neighboring towns south including Fairfield, Sydney, and Oakland, though this may not be reflected in data from the state or they may not be included in any labor market designations.

## Local Labor Force and Employment

In 2022, Skowhegan had a labor force of 3,812, according to the census. Census numbers are based on a statistical estimate; Department of Labor numbers are considered more accurate and its estimate for September 2024 was 3,560. The total working age population is 6,668. The census provided that those in the labor force contains an estimated 2,007 males and 1,805 females. That is only 53.8 percent of all working-age males and females. (The census defines “working age” as everyone over 16 years of age, regardless of whether they are retired.) That is an average of 0.98 workers for every household. In 71.8 percent of households with young children, both parents worked.

The recent history of the unemployment rate in Skowhegan and in Somerset County is illustrated in the graph below. Aside from 2020, Skowhegan tends to be above State and National unemployment rates. Skowhegan's unemployment rates have been above that of Somerset County through the recent past. The recession beginning in 2008 interrupted what was a reasonable positive trend. The unemployment rate climbed to 11.3% in 2010 but has steadily declined. It jumped again to 6.7% in 2020 but is again declining.



The census categorizes workers by the type of industry they work in (table below) and their occupation (table overleaf). “Industry” refers to the type of business they are employed in and is a good measure of the strength of various industrial sectors. “Occupation” refers to the type of job a worker does, and may indicate trends in education, salary levels, and opportunities for future growth.

TABLE 6: OCCUPATION OF SKOWHEGAN WORKERS IN 2022		
OCCUPATION	Number of Workers	Percent of Workforce
Managerial and Professional	1,193	32.6%
Sales and Administrative	804	22%
Production, Transportation	719	19.6%
Service Occupations	469	12.8%
Natural Resources or Construction	469	12.8%
Source: American Community Survey (2022)		

A diversity of employment opportunities available to area residents is reasonable for the community. In 2022, employment in the education and health care industries led the way by a large margin; three other sectors – manufacturing, retail, and professional – were the next largest groups.

<b>TABLE 5: INDUSTRIAL CLASSIFICATION OF SKOWHEGAN WORKERS IN 2022</b>		
Industrial Sector	Number of Workers	Percent of Workforce
Agriculture, forestry and fisheries	56	1.5%
Construction	423	11.5%
Manufacturing	460	12.5%
Transportation, Warehousing & Utilities	237	6.4%
Wholesale trade	53	1.4%
Retail trade	512	14.1%
Information Services	29	0.7%
Insurance, Real Estate, Finance	163	4.4%
Professional, Scientific, Management	336	9.1%
Education and Health care	924	25.2%
Entertainment and recreation services	144	3.9%
Other services	204	5.6%
Public Administration	113	3.1%
<i>Source: American Community Survey (2022)</i>		

This is quite consistent with national trends, where any form of service-based economy is on the rise. With local schools and hospitals in the area, an increasing number of jobs in education and health-related occupations are likely to remain available.

Over a quarter of Skowhegan's workers are in an Education or Healthcare occupation assuming they work in the local school system or hospitals and health systems. There is a significant amount employed in management and professional positions which are usually the higher salaried jobs. It would be useful to determine which of these occupational categories is changing over time, but the census bureau shuffles them every few years to account for new occupations arising.

Among Skowhegan workers, 76 percent are employed in the private sector as wage or salary workers, and another 9 percent are self-employed. A notable 15 percent work in the public sector.

## **Local Opportunities:**

Opportunities for more significant growth may include broadening of retail and hospitality, agriculture, wood products, precision machining, and other similar industries. It is also expected that more people will continue to work from home, taking advantage of high-speed internet connections and new technology. As demographic trends suggest, the number of jobs in the education sector may subside or remain stable, but those in the healthcare sector are expected to increase significantly as the baby boomer generation continues to age.

## **Regional Economic Trends:**

Skowhegan is the county seat and service center for Somerset County. It is also the transportation hub and “gateway” to the county. As such, it is the key structure of the regional economy. Most of the large retail, service, medical, and transportation facilities are located here. It is at the center of regional development efforts. It is one of the few towns in the region still with the capacity for substantial growth. Economic development in Skowhegan may not draw much from outside of the labor market area but will lift many of the other communities in the county.

### *Traditional Manufacturing*

The Skowhegan Labor Market Area has experienced the closing of traditional manufacturing facilities over the past twenty years. The Madison Paper Mill is an example of the decline of this sector but with New Balance and SAPPI remaining it is not as bad as some other areas of the State. The demands of a global economy will continue to place pressure upon existing manufacturing operations. The potential removal of existing dams that provide water to SAPPI could also disrupt manufacturing.

Skowhegan continues to maintain a strong manufacturing base, anchored by its two largest employers. New Balance has successfully completed its expansion of the Skowhegan manufacturing facility, adding a 120,000-square-foot addition and renovating the existing mill building. This \$65 million investment has doubled the facility’s output and created 250 additional jobs. Additionally, in 2024, New Balance closed its Norridgewock factory and transferred 230 jobs from that facility to Skowhegan.

SAPPI has also completed its expansion at the Somerset Mill in Skowhegan. The \$418 million investment has enhanced the facility’s ability to meet North American demand for packaging, specialty papers, and other biomaterials. With approximately 780 employees now at SAPPI, the expansion project also generated 1,000 construction jobs during its development. The project was successfully completed in early 2025.

### *The Big Box Retail Trend*

The construction of Walmart’s, Home Depots, and other large retail stores in the region and the state have historically signaled a major shift in our retail economy. The big box

stores, so named for their size and exterior design, are often called category killers because they put similar retail operations out of business. Typically, only small convenience stores or specialty shops seem able to maintain a presence in the face of this level of competition.

We host Walmart, Hannaford and a few other franchise stores, but also many owner-run shops ranging from antiques to musical instruments. While there has been concern over the “big box” driving small stores out of business, previous economic impact studies conducted pursuant to the Walmart expansion concluded that the expansion would attract more customers to town and therefore to the other retailers. High occupancy of downtown storefronts and continuing investment in rehabbing retail space points to continued demand for small retail establishments.

### *Full Employment*

Overall, the state and the Skowhegan region are experiencing a high unemployment rate (although recent trends are finally seeing it decrease again after the 2020 pandemic). Despite manufacturing plant closings and slow job growth, unemployment rates have varied from a low of 3 percent to a high of 7 percent in past years. Companies may not move to the area because there are a lot of people waiting for work; they are more likely to move here because they know they can outcompete existing employers on wages and lure new workers with relatively cheap housing.

The economic profile overall is one of a “mature” economy.” While we are developing a good diversity of small businesses, we are still vulnerable to a major hit in the manufacturing sector. There is great potential for growth in the communications and tourism industries, that are beginning to see growth with the Run of the River development and downtown conversion of the Grist Mill and Mill building on the Island. With Skowhegan’s aging population and service center standing, the growth industries are likely to be health services, as well as legal and financial services. What must be done to support these?

The town has many and diverse development challenges. The downtown area is undergoing some revitalization and redevelopment but will require continued new investment. Our TIF program and continued pursuit of grants address these needs. There are undeveloped or underdeveloped parcels within the service reach of public water and sewer, which are turning over slowly. The Town’s ED Office works with regional partners in marketing and profiling these properties. The most attractive places for new development – Route 201 south and the Southgate Industrial Park – lack water and sewer service. A water system plan for the industrial park is on hold, and the Sewer System Master Plan identifies expansion along the highway.

Tourism has great potential, and the Town is working with the scenic byway and pursuing its own initiatives, such as the Skowhegan River Park project.

These activities demonstrate that the Town has been attempting to diversify its economic base, as well as attract more high-paying jobs. Each challenge requires a unique response, new partners, and continued investment.

### **Economic Development Infrastructure:**

Economic development infrastructure can be categorized as physical infrastructure, such as roads and sewers, and social infrastructure, such as economic development planning, business training and marketing. Both of these are essential in supporting economic growth.

Skowhegan's transportation infrastructure, though in pretty good condition, is limited. Our signature highways – Routes 2 and 201 – though carrying heavy freight traffic, are two-lane, unlimited access roads. The nearest limited-access interchange is about 15 miles to the south (I-95 in Fairfield). The only rail access in Skowhegan is at the SAPPI mill. The Central Maine Airport in Norridgewock serves primarily general aviation.

A major issue of immediate impact is the plan for a new bridge and corresponding change in traffic patterns through the downtown. If implemented, this could have significant and conflicting impacts on economic development. For the downtown, it would greatly reduce congestion but also tourist and traveler activity.

Skowhegan's utility infrastructure is of good quality and capacity. The infrastructure for power, water, and sewer was built for a larger industrial base than the town now has, so will provide capacity for some time to come. The only limitation is its geographic scope. Public sewer extends along Route 201 only to the top of the hill south of the downtown. Since there is quite a bit of development already beyond that point, with additional development pressures and the possibility of the new bridge access road connecting below this point, this would be the logical target for an extension. Such an extension, along with other logical growth areas, is contemplated in the town's 2012 Sewer System Master Plan.

The Southgate Business Park has plans to provide a standalone public water system, but it is on hold. Both Southgate and Northgate Parks are managed by the Skowhegan Economic Development Corp. The SEDC also has a small business loan program.

The town can bring a good deal of social infrastructure to bear in support of economic development. The town's Economic and Community Development Director coordinates and facilitates business location and development and administers three business loan funds. The Skowhegan Area Chamber of Commerce provides business support and promotion activities, as well as promoting Skowhegan as a business and tourist destination. The town has access to strong educational and training programs, through RSU 54 Adult Education, with career counseling and training, as well as the Skowhegan Regional Vocational Center, which provides training and certificates in at least ten separate programs.

Skowhegan also boasts an impressive Main Street Program that focuses on the ongoing revitalization of Skowhegan, Maine. It was founded in 2005 by a group of engaged citizens and is now driven by six full-time staff members, a strong board of directors, eight AmeriCorps members, and more than 200 hundred volunteers working to make Skowhegan and downtown in particular a resilient vibrant community.

Skowhegan has a Commercial Site Review Ordinance that provides a process for local permitting of commercial development. Although the ordinance does not direct or dictate the location of development in any way, it does provide substantial development standards to protect road and public service capacities, natural resources, and residential neighborhoods.

Skowhegan can also tap into several regional organizations and plans. Perhaps chief among these is the Somerset Economic Development Corporation. The SomEDC does business support throughout the county but is centered in Skowhegan. It operates under a strategic plan for development. Kennebec Valley Council of Governments (KVCOG) does economic and community development planning, grant-writing, business loans and small business counseling. KVCOG maintains a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy. Skowhegan cooperates in both planning efforts and coordinates its own activities with them. The Old Canada Road Scenic Byway is currently being updated as of 2024. Main Street Skowhegan and Kennebec Valley Tourism Council are leading the efforts for promotion of the Byway for tourism and marketing power. Although not technically in the corridor, Skowhegan should be keyed into this effort, seeing that tourism development within the corridor would have a great impact on the town.

Local economic development planning efforts include the Skowhegan Chamber of Commerce, Main Street Skowhegan, and the SEDC.

### **Possible economic weaknesses of the community:**

- Lack of a large pool of well-educated workforce.
- The town does not designate certain areas for new commercial growth. Most of the town allows both residential and commercial uses. This raises the possibility of public opposition to specific business development proposals.
- Physical Access to Interstate and other market areas.
- The Route 201 corridor has been designated as a mobility arterial and is subject to stricter traffic access requirements.

### *Route 201 and Route 2 Corridor*

The Route 201 and 2 Corridors are the existing focus of Skowhegan's commercial activity. It is dominated by many different size businesses that provide a wide range of local goods and services. The corridors hold the potential for further growth due to the following:

- High traffic counts along the corridor
- Land is available for development
- Some commercial clusters already exist on the corridor.
- The roads are State maintained.
- The routes are major tourist corridors.
- Continued new residential construction in Skowhegan and the region.
- The roadways provide excellent commercial visibility.
- The new bridge project in Skowhegan is bringing increased efficiency and access to the corridor.

### **Important features of the Route 201 / 2 Corridor include the following:**

- The corridors have plenty of residential and undeveloped land. Some land is unsuitable for development due to wetland, ledge, and poor road access points.
- Traffic along the corridor is increasing at the rate of roughly 3 percent per year.
- The northern portion of the 201 corridor has the most defined commercial cluster. A lot fewer commercial uses are spread along route 2. The dominant character of the south and eastern portions of the corridors are rural.
- The corridors are considered mobility corridors and play an important role in moving traffic between the majority of the state. The arterials provide access to tourist, commercial, and commuter traffic traveling to work and services across a large amount of the state.

The designation of Routes 201 and 2 as mobility corridors presents what may be the greatest constraint on future commercial development. Access management rules associated with mobility corridors can pose serious drawbacks for growth. Local access is discouraged for an arterial designed to move traffic quickly and safely over long distances.



Existing uses are not affected by the rules, but new construction will need to be planned and designed to meet the standards. The most limiting factor for development along the corridors is the requirement that any new entrance be a minimum distance from an existing driveway. The corridors have many existing access points, impeding new development unless creative solutions are explored.

Some techniques that could be used to site new development consistent with the rules include:

- Share access points for multiple users
- Purchase existing properties to eliminate conflicting access points.
- Planning and developing a service road which would access multiple properties. Or, property owners could cooperatively design their frontage for the future placement of an access road.
- Redesign multiple access ways for abutting properties into a single entrance point.
- Create access onto the site from an adjoining local road.

Policies:	Strategies:	Implementing Party/Timeframe:
<p><b>LOCAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT:</b></p> <p>Skowhegan's local economy is an important contributor to the health and vitality of not only the town, but also of the region. As a regional hub and service center, surrounding towns look to Skowhegan to provide goods, service, amenities, and employment.</p> <p>The town must balance economic growth and its rural character to ensure the charm of the town is not lost to over development. Skowhegan has done well preserving its natural resource assets, such as farms, forest, open space, waterbodies and recreational opportunities, all of which lead to a good quality of life.</p> <p>The town should continue to promote its numerous assets, cooperate with private businesses and regional economic players, and maintain a focus on suitable economic development to succeed in building a more robust economy.</p> <p><b>State Goal: To promote an economic climate which increases job opportunities and overall economic well-being.</b></p>		
Policies:	Strategies:	Implementing Party/Timeframe:
<p>1. To support the type of economic development activity the community desires, reflecting the community's role in the region as the service, employment, and trade center for the Somerset County trade area</p>	<p>1.1: If appropriate, assign responsibility and provide financial support for economic development activities to the proper entity (e.g., a local economic development committee, a local representative to a regional economic development organization, the community's economic development director, a regional economic development initiative, or other).</p>	<p>Economic and Community Development Office / Ongoing.</p>
	<p>1.2: Continue to improve infrastructure and capacity of the industrial parks to make them an attractive place for businesses. Complete the road and water system in Southgate Industrial Park.</p>	<p>Economic and Community Development Office / Long-term.</p>
	<p>1.3: Utilize the Economic Development Director and Restructuring Committee to</p>	

<b>Policies:</b>	<b>Strategies:</b>	<b>Implementing Party/Timeframe:</b>
	<p>identify and define clusters of related businesses that could bid jointly on state or federal projects.</p> <p>1.4: Ensure that the Site Review Ordinance continues to promote good quality commercial development in locations with good access to public services. Limit the size and impact of commercial development in rural areas in order to reduce municipal costs and environmental impacts.</p> <p>1.5: Plan for expansion of commercial development areas consistent with the Sewer System Master Plan for sewer extensions.</p>	<p>Economic and Community Development Office / Ongoing.</p> <p>Planning Board / Ongoing.</p> <p>Economic and Community Development Office and Planning Office / Ongoing.</p>
<p>2. To make a financial commitment, if necessary, to support desired economic development, including needed public improvements and continuing to support investments in public infrastructure to generate economic development, including job training and business assistance.</p>	<p>2.1: Enact or amend local ordinances to reflect the desired scale, design, intensity, and location of future economic development.</p> <p>2.2: If public investments are foreseen to support economic development, identify the mechanisms to be considered to finance them (local tax dollars, creating a tax increment financing district, a Community Development Block Grant or other grants, bonding, impact fees, etc.)</p> <p>2.3: Explore options for adaptive reuse of underutilized or vacant buildings/lots to develop a strategy for their rehabilitation and reuse.</p>	<p>Planning Board / Mid-term 2027-2028.</p> <p>Economic and Community Development Office / Ongoing.</p> <p>Planning Office and Economic and Community</p>

<b>Policies:</b>	<b>Strategies:</b>	<b>Implementing Party/Timeframe:</b>
	<p>2.4: If public investments are foreseen as required, identify the mechanism to be considered to finance them (local tax dollars, creating a tax increment financing district [TIF], a Community Development Block Grant or other grants, bonding, impact fees, etc.)</p> <p>2.5: Improve local access to post-secondary education and job skills, including entrepreneurial training and small business counseling. Work with local schools (RSU 54), UMaine ITV providers and KVCC to improve course offerings in the area.</p>	<p>Development Office / Near-term 2026-2027.</p> <p>Economic and Community Development Office / Ongoing.</p>
3. To coordinate with regional development corporations and surrounding towns as necessary to support desired economic development.	<p>3.1: Participate in any regional economic development planning efforts.</p> <p>3.2: Continue to participate in any regional economic development efforts.</p> <p>3.3: Continue to participate in regional collaboration with Waterville to promote the greater Skowhegan/Waterville region and promote a regional tourism master plan and brand strategy initiative.</p>	<p>Economic and Community Development Office / Ongoing.</p> <p>Economic and Community Development Office / Ongoing.</p> <p>Economic and Community Development Office / Ongoing.</p>
4. Improve the viability and attractiveness of the downtown area, through infrastructure development, business support,	4.1: Continue active downtown revitalization efforts, coordinating with the Chamber of Commerce and Main Street Skowhegan. Immediate objectives should	Economic and Community Development Office / Ongoing.

<b>Policies:</b>	<b>Strategies:</b>	<b>Implementing Party/Timeframe:</b>
marketing, beautification, and other strategies.	<p>include filling upper story vacancies through improving handicapped access, attracting historic rehabilitation, improving the mix of downtown businesses, and building on the range of events and attractions to the downtown.</p> <p>4.2: Improve the municipal parking lot to make it more useful and attractive.</p> <p>4.3: Work with Main Street Skowhegan to develop a downtown marketing plan, including a theme, promotional materials, and signage.</p>	
5. Build economic development strategies around our inherent assets, such as our heritage, our river, and our other natural attractions, and our crossroads location, for future economic growth.	5.1: Pursue initiatives for heritage- and eco-tourism, and other “green” businesses, including Maine Maple Museum, Heritage Center, and the Run of the River project.	Economic and Community Development Office / Ongoing.

## Chapter 7: Housing

### Housing Profile:

#### Skowhegan's Housing: Supply and Demand

The purpose of housing is to provide residence for the population. The characteristics of the population drive the demand for housing, and vice versa. An aging population or a number of single-person households signals a demand for smaller housing units, while a surplus of large homes will naturally attract larger households. A community which does not respond to changes in housing demand is one that is likely to lose its population or change its character.

“Average household size” is the number which connects the population with the demand for housing. As the chart above shows, the average number of people in a household in Skowhegan has been shrinking steadily. This is a national trend. Almost all social and economic factors favor smaller households – more independent living among youth and elderly, smaller families, and more single-parent families. While there are early indications that this trend may be reversing in some parts of the country, it has not yet done so in Skowhegan.

What does this mean for housing demand? In short, fewer people per household means more housing is needed for the same population. When the average household in Skowhegan contained 3.05 people in 1970, the town had only 2,435 occupied housing units. With the town gaining 1,003 residents in the past 52 years, it now has 3,768 households as of the 2022 census. Over a 52-year period, that averaged about 30 new homes per year. This is a household increase rate far exceeding the increase in individuals as with a household size of 2.23, 439 new housing units would have covered the population increase. Overall, this indicates a notable decline in household size and possible increase in housing vacancies.

Of the 3,768 households in 2022, almost two thirds of them (2,340) were families. The average family size was 2.78. A little less than half (47.4%) were families with traditional married couples. A little over 376 (about 10%) are single-mother families. Another 1,174 households (about a third) were single-person households. In 658 of these, the single occupant was over 65 years old. For comparison, in 2000, 451 households were single and elderly.

The table below illustrates changes in Skowhegan's housing supply over the past thirty years. Overall, the supply of housing has grown by a little over 35 percent. Any individual component growing below that rate is lagging; components growing above that rate are becoming more prominent. The stock of traditional, site-built homes has grown slower than the average. The numbers show major reduction in smaller multi-family units. There has also been a huge increase in larger multi-family units and a greater increase in mobile homes. Mobile homes only became a popular affordable option in the late 70's-early 80's,

accounting for the big bump at that time, but this trend has continued to grow in Skowhegan as it may be a popular affordable option.

	<b>TRENDS IN HOUSING STOCK AND TENANCY, 1980 - 2020</b>					
Type of Unit	1980	1990	2000	2010	2020	Change 1980-2020
	#, %	#, %	#, %	#, %	#, %	#, %
All Housing Units	<b>3301</b>	<b>3895</b>	<b>4165</b>	<b>4467</b>	<b>4,149</b>	848 25.6%
1-unit site-built	197 59.7%	2055 52.8%	2444 58.7%	2604 58.3%	2,573 62%	
2-4 units	2 20.4%	767 19.7%	581 13.9%	806 18.0%	625 15%	
5 or more units	674 4.1%	393 10.1%	308 7.4%	506 11.3%	333 8%	
Mobile home	315 9.5%	597 15.3%	258 6.2%	551 12.3%	540 13%	
Year-Round Housing Units	3221 97.6%	3797 97.5%	4026 96.7%	4085 96.5%	4,050 97.6%	829 25.7%
Seasonal Units	80 2.4%	98 2.5%	139 3.3%	149 3.5%	99 2.3%	19 23.7%
Vacant Units	264 8.0%	343 8.8%	449 10.8%	469 11.1%	498 12.0%	234 88.65
Owner-Occupied Units	1981 60.0%	2271 58.3%	2449 58.8%	2309 54.5%	2,330 63.8%	349 17.6
Renter-Occupied Units	976 29.6%	1183 30.1%	1267 30.4%	1456 34.4%	1,321 36.2%	345 35.3%
	<i>SOURCE: U.S. Census</i>					

The table above highlights the trends between 1980 through 2020. In that time, Skowhegan's total housing stock increased by nearly 26 percent.

The table below highlights the housing trends between 2020 and 2023. After the pandemic in 2020, there was a major shift in many facets of housing, particularly availability and price.

Trends in Housing 2020-2023			
Type of Unit	2020	2023	Change 2020-2023
	#, %		#, %
All Housing Units	<b>4,149</b>	<b>4,154</b>	5 0.12%
1-unit	2,573 62%	2,601 63%	
2-4 units	625 15%	480 12%	
5 or more units	333 8%	419 10%	
Mobile home	540 13%	631 15%	
Year-Round Housing Units	4,050 97.6%	4,046 97%	-4 -0.1%
Seasonal Units	99 2.3%	108 2.6%	9 9%
Vacant Units	498 12.0%	278 7%	-220 -44%
Owner-Occupied Units	2,330 63.8%	2,511 65%	181 7.8%
Renter-Occupied Units	1,321 36.2%	1,365 35%	44 3%

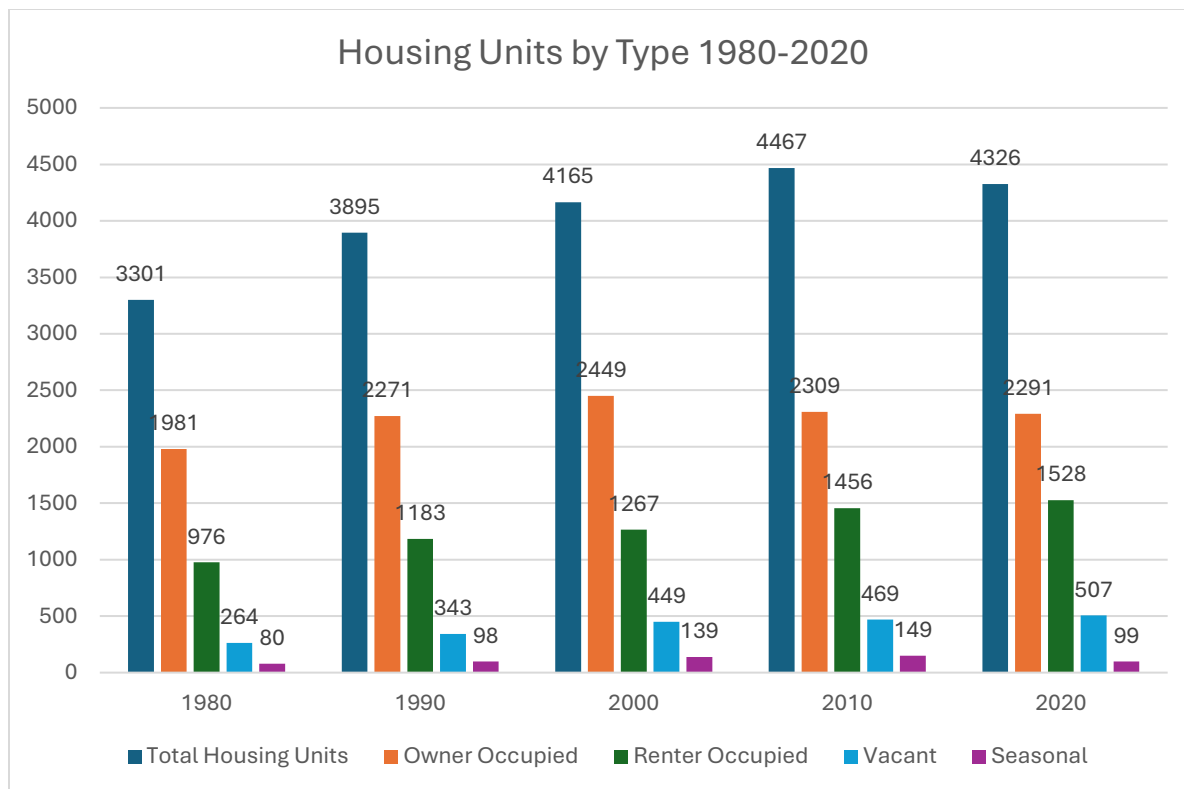
Source: 2020 Census & 2023 ACS

Between 2020 and 2023, Skowhegan's total housing stock only increased by five houses, according to 2023 ACS data. Interestingly, the vacancy rate also decreased, which is likely due to the lack of availability of housing.

Skowhegan has a relatively low percentage of seasonal units compared to many nearby towns due to the small size of Oak Pond and less availability of lake frontage suitable for camps etc. This means the seasonal population fluctuation will not really be an issue in Skowhegan.

As of the 2023 ACS, there were no rental vacancies and the homeowner vacancy rate was around 1%. There does not seem to be a trend of seasonal homes being converted to year-round use or vice-versa.





It looks as if the proportion of rental units has grown over time. However, there was only modest growth up to 2000, then it has grown more quickly in the last 10 years of statistics. The trend seems to be the maintenance of the long-established shift from owner occupied to rental properties.

The census estimates that 469 of occupied housing units have three or fewer rooms – 11.3 percent of all units. A single-person household is most suited to three or fewer rooms. Skowhegan has 1,350 of these, so there are almost three times the number of small households as there are appropriate-sized units. That is even assuming that all the 3 room units are already devoted to single-person households. The census does, however, estimate that there are 30 houses in Skowhegan that contain more than one occupant per room, which is considered overcrowding by the census.

### Housing Location Trends

Skowhegan's community character is defined to some extent by its downtown core and rural environment. This does not seem to be under threat from any substantial development or maintenance of existing homes in the rural areas. The census designates Skowhegan as having an urban cluster and a rural area. Of the 2010 population, 2,445 are said to live in the urban area, with 1,789 being in the rural area. This obviously shows a much greater density of housing within the urbanized area needed to contain more than half the total town population.

Statewide, the trend for development of new housing has been characterized by the term “suburban sprawl.” We have seen small suburban towns explode in population and cities shrink. Skowhegan is somewhat touched by this. The town has a more active urban core, but plentiful rural land is available for development if ownership patterns and municipal strategies encouraged it.

Skowhegan’s housing displays a certain character from block to block, which cannot be described by census figures. In the past, neighborhoods used to develop all at once, and so many of the homes on adjoining streets were of similar design and vintage, often attracting similar types of people, and exhibiting similar problems as they age.

The oldest neighborhoods in town are those immediately surrounding the downtown area, as development naturally radiated out from the commercial center. These neighborhoods display a variety of architecture but are typified by the well-preserved Skowhegan History House. Many of the original homes, however, have been removed for expanded commercial development, and others have been renovated for commercial purposes. Contemporary with this village-style development are the many older farmhouses that occupy the older roads east and south of the village.

As the mills were established, a lot of housing was established to support the mill workers. These tended to be multi-story homes on small lots, south of the river. These homes are now in the over 100-year old category, and have a widely varying level of upkeep and quality. Many are now rental units, and some have been replaced altogether.

At roughly the same time, many of the downtown commercial blocks were established. Some of these contained upper story housing. Since then, some upper stories have become commercial space, but there is still a smattering of apartments in the immediate downtown.

In the 1940’s and 50’s, another spurt of growth occurred to the north of the downtown. Outer North Avenue and “Little Italy” were built during these times. These homes tended to be very economical and have developed a reputation over the years of being not very well-built (not just in Skowhegan). The Town of Skowhegan has even targeted CDBG housing grants to these neighborhoods, aimed at solving a number of construction and age-related problems.

Since the 60’s, better roads and more cars meant less reason for housing development to be tied to the downtown. A lot of new homes have been built beyond the bounds of the built-up area. The urbanized area is still expanding, however. The most popular area in recent years has been the Palmer Road.

Town Records show permits issued since 2012. There appears to have been a slowdown in the construction of new residential buildings after the 2008 recession, but it has been steadily picking up, with the busiest years for new buildings being between 2015-16. The installation of new mobile homes has also become more prevalent, but the relocation of existing mobile homes to and within Skowhegan is a larger, more steady trend.

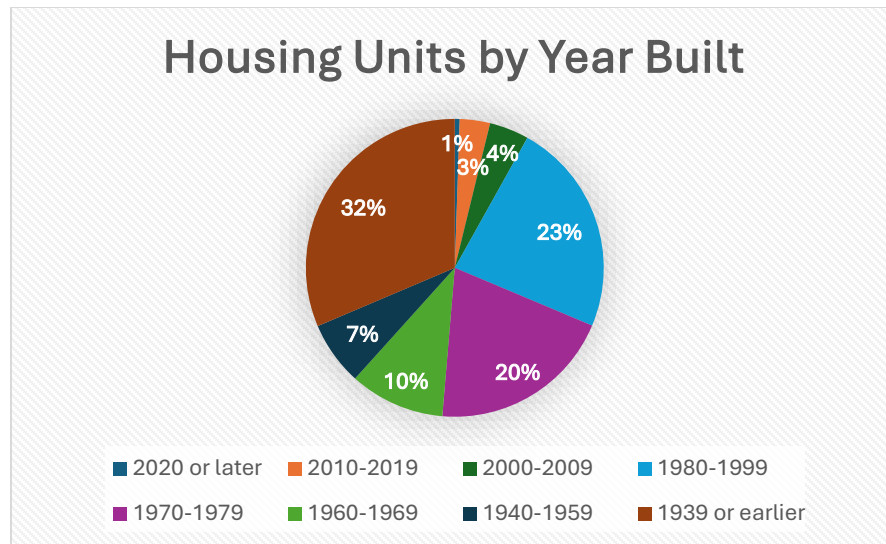
<b>Year</b>	<b>New Residential</b>	<b>Residential Renovation</b>	<b>Relocated Mobile</b>	<b>New Mobile</b>	<b>Plumbing</b>
2021	19	26	13	6	89
2020	14	35	6	4	78
2019	12	20	12	6	62
2018	14	20	12	2	67
2017	14	31	12	2	76
2016	23	28	12	1	65
2015	23	26	12	0	64
2014	20	12	7	3	41
2013	7	19	13	1	57
2012	9	12	18	6	16
<b>Skowhegan Building Permits 2012-2021</b>					

## **Housing Conditions**

The 2022 Census found that 83 housing units lacked complete plumbing. This number may be accounted for by more rustic camps, however Skowhegan and other neighboring communities are also struggling with citizens using campers and other non-permanent structures and permanent housing.

Skowhegan has a substantial amount of vacant residential properties that are not maintained. This was part of the reasoning behind adopting the Property Maintenance Ordinance in 2022, but it has been difficult to enforce.

The age of structures is sometimes an indicator of condition as well. Some very old homes are structurally very sound but may have inadequate wiring or plumbing. Homes built in the 60's and 70's tended to have inadequate insulation, whereas homes built more recently have mostly conformed to modern building code requirements. The table below summarizes the age of homes in Skowhegan, by year built.



*Source: 2022 ACS Census*

Skowhegan has an older leaning housing profile. Well over half of Skowhegan's homes have been built since 1970. The 80's were the boom times for housing (reflected in overall population growth). The town has a large amount of significantly older homes. In comparison to Skowhegan's 44 percent of homes over 70 years old, Waterville only has 20 percent and really shows how many older houses there are in town.

The relatively lower percentage of newer homes infers that the physical condition of the older homes is fairly good.

There are no municipal owned housing projects, nor does Skowhegan currently take part in a regional affordable/workforce housing coalition.

Comparing home ages to Somerset County, where almost 30 percent are "pre-war" homes and also another 30 percent have been built since 1990 in Somerset County.

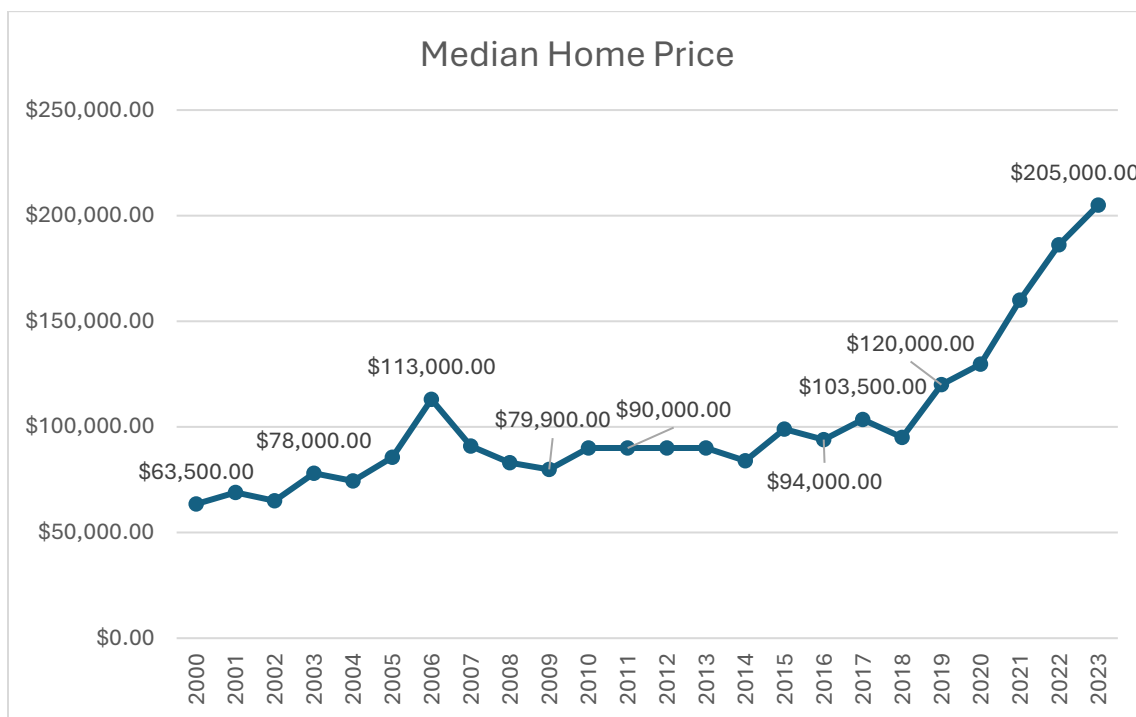
### **Price and Affordability**

The growth management goal for affordable housing states that ten percent of new housing should be affordable to households making less than 80 percent of the median household income. The goal leaves it up to towns to determine whether that ten percent should be as stick-built homes, or mobile homes or rentals or elderly apartments.

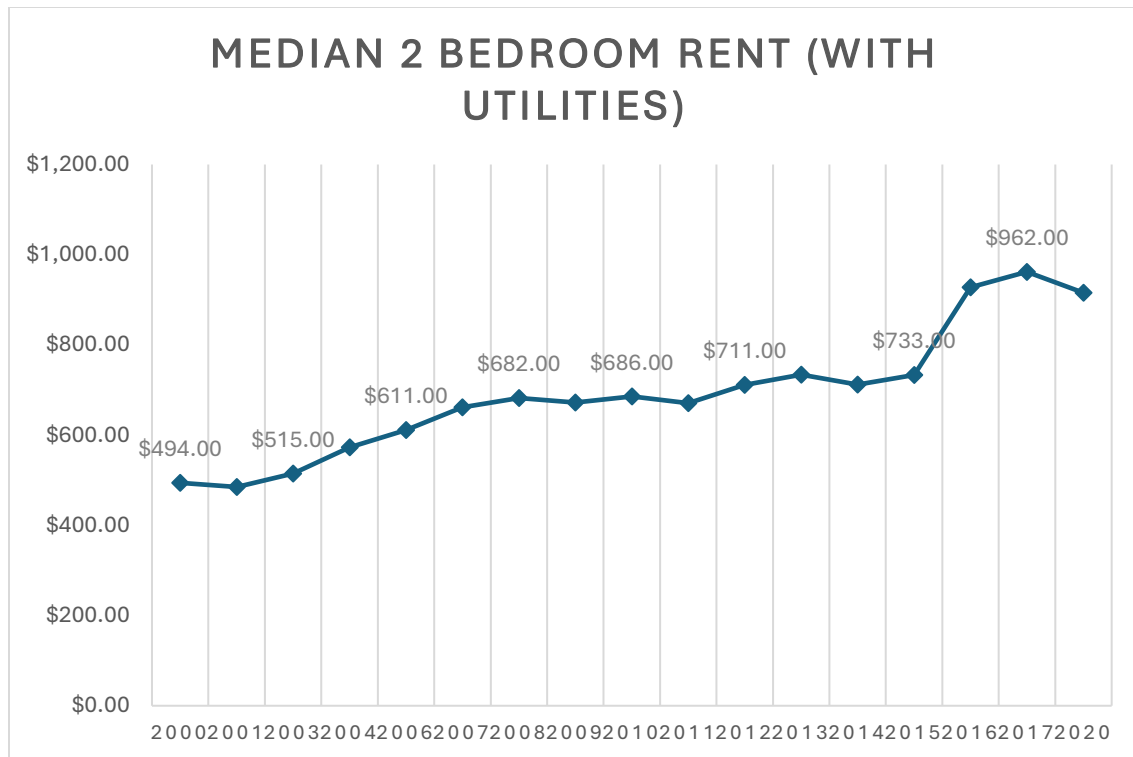
The determination of whether housing is affordable begins with a discussion of cost. The census provides very good (though sample-sized) data regarding price of housing in Skowhegan (see table below). This price is arrived at by owners' estimates of value, meaning it does not necessarily match up with actual recorded sales prices. According to the census, the median value of owner-occupied housing in 2010 was \$118,800. The rise in property values since 2000 was almost 60 percent, a substantial increase even considering the 28 percent inflation rate and the recent dip in home prices. What is noticeable is the great increase in higher priced properties (over \$150k) over the last 10

years, presumably due to more growth and higher valuations of the types of new homes being built. Maine State Housing Authority's data reflects the census data, depicted below.

Maine State Housing Authority (MSHA) tracks actual sales data, though it is sometimes out of date by the time it is published. According to MSHA, the median price (actual sales) of a home in 2023 was \$205,000. This represents a robust recovery from the slump in house prices after the 2008 recession.

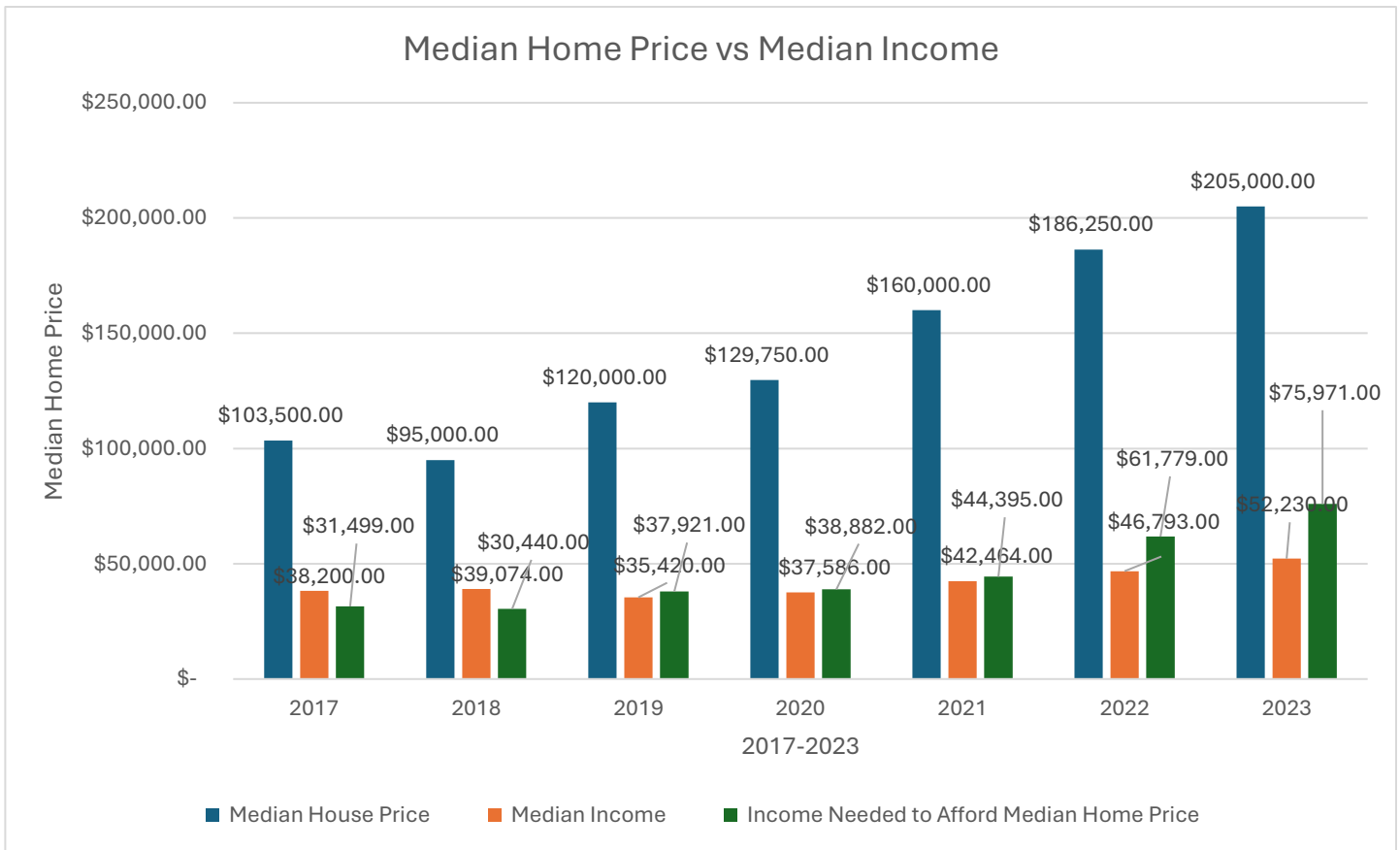


Source: Maine Housing Authority



*Source: Maine Housing Authority*

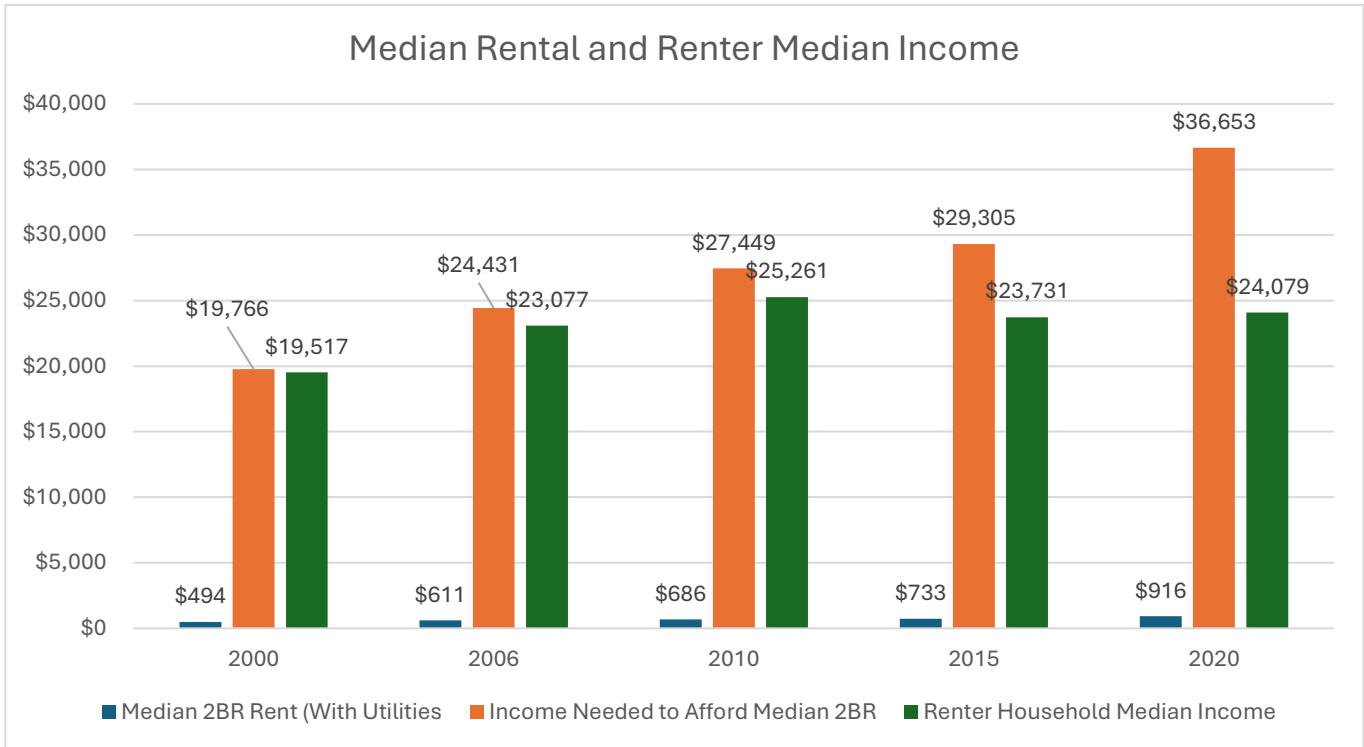
The median household income reported by the MSHA in 2023 was \$52,230, making the threshold of 80 percent of median \$41,784. MSHA calculates an affordable home at various income levels, factoring in interest rates and other variables, and using the rule of thumb that a household should pay no more than 30 percent of its monthly income in housing costs. According to MSHA figures, an income that is at the median level should be able to afford a home priced at \$141,180. Also, the income needed to afford a median priced home is \$75,971. That means, in rough terms, anyone making the median income will not easily be able to afford to buy a home in town.



*Source: Maine Housing Authority*

## Rentals

The table overleaf shows changes over time in the cost and affordability of rental housing in Skowhegan. The median rent charged increased by over 50 percent, a rate over twice than inflation but below the growth in home values. The most notable increase is in the rental properties available in the \$750 to \$1000 range. More important are the figures on affordability. Affordable rental housing has declined, as well as the number of renters paying more than 30 percent of their income for rent which doesn't bode well for increasing incomes keeping pace with rental prices.



MSHA also tracks rental data. According to MSHA statistics, in 2020, the average two-bedroom rental in Skowhegan was \$920, much higher than census figures. The income needed to afford that rent was \$36,812. By their calculations the renter's household median income is \$23,896 and able to afford only \$597 a month rent. That means that the average two-bedroom unit in Skowhegan qualifies as "unaffordable," and generally lines up with the story of the census data.

However, MSHA estimates that some 67.6% of renter households are unable to afford the average 2 bedroom rent in Skowhegan. Finally, according to MSHA, the average rent between 2010 and 2020 has grown by 34 percent, while the median income of renters actually decreased by 5.4 percent. Therefore, it could be concluded that on the whole, renting is becoming much harder in recent years.

Compared with surrounding communities and Somerset County as a whole, Skowhegan's housing prices appear to be significantly lower. In 2023, median home values in neighboring communities ranged from \$238,000 in Norridgewock to \$299,999 in Canaan. All other neighboring towns have higher prices. The median value of homes in Somerset County was \$290,000. The median rental cost in Somerset County in 2020 was \$850 per month, putting Skowhegan's above the average.

Provision of affordable housing options is assisted by MSHA programs. MSHA provides some state and federal options for buyers and renters.



## Projections

*Skowhegan's new 2023 Census Population: 8639*

Referring to the population projections in the Community Profile and Housing chapter, it is difficult to anticipate a high demand for housing. However, that does not consider the decline in average household size. Between 1970 and 2010, the simple fact of the shrinking household drove demand for around 16 new homes per year. Between 1990 and 2010, while Skowhegan was beginning to lose population, it added about 570 – (Census) housing units to the tax rolls, actually overachieving this demand. (Local records show adding approximately 186 new units over the last 9 years, including 31 new mobile homes. This does not include the 117 existing mobile homes that were relocated to or in Skowhegan between 2012-2021.)

The State Economist's Office predicts a population of 9,041 people by 2040- an increase of 402 people (4.7 percent increase).

While average household size cannot shrink indefinitely, continued decline should be taken into consideration when projecting the anticipated need for housing. As of the 2023 ACS, Skowhegan's average household size is 2.18. If a five percent decrease in average household size is assumed over the next 15-year period, the average household size would be 2.07 persons per household.

**Highlighted in Green:** With Skowhegan's current population of 8,639 people and current average household size of 2.18, the existing, year-round housing stock of 4,046 units is adequate for accommodating this population. In fact, according to 2023 ACS data, the current population only occupies 3,876 houses, leaving 170 vacant.

**Highlighted in Gold:** Based on the State Economist's population project of an increased population to 9,041 people, combined with the current average household size of 2.18, Skowhegan's current housing stock would be insufficient to accommodate this increase. This population increase would require approximately 4,147 housing units, 101 more than currently exist in Skowhegan.

**Highlighted in Orange:** Based on the State Economist's population project of an increased population to 9,041 people, combined with a (hypothetical) decreased average household size of 2.07 people per household, Skowhegan's current housing stock would be short 322 houses. This projected population and smaller average household size would require approximately 4,368 housing units and the existing housing stock of 4,046 housing units would not be sufficient.

## POPULATION PROJECTIONS AND HOUSING NEEDS, BASED ON HOUSEHOLD SIZE

	Population	Total Current Housing Units (Minus Seasonal)	Average Household Size	Amount of Housing Needed	Deficit?
Current	8,639	4,046	2.18	3,876*	N/A
State Economist's Population Projection	9,041	4,046	2.18	4,147	Yes, 101 houses
State Economist's Population Projection (with 5% decrease in average household size)	9,041	4,046	2.07	4,368	Yes, 322 houses

*Source: 2023 ACS*

\*Currently occupied

Based on the table above, Skowhegan will need roughly 100 additional housing units by 2040 to accommodate its residents if the population projection by the State Economist is attained with the current average household size. This situation is exacerbated if the average household size continues to decline.

If the State Economist's population projection is met, and the hypothetical, decreased average household size of 2.07 people per household is also attained, then the town will be at a deficit of 322 houses by 2040.

**It is essential to bear in mind that these population projections are based on past trends, not current circumstances.** Skowhegan's observed current trends since 2000 are of a rebounding population, while the State Economist's population projection is a more dramatic increase. The most likely scenario is slow, incremental growth.

It is also essential to understand that the components of the population will most assuredly change. The aging population and the trend towards decreased average household size will undoubtedly impact the need for certain housing types. Eventually, the decline in household size will plateau if it has not already, but the median age will likely continue to increase for some time, based on the Baby Boom generation.

The aging population is a necessary consideration. This demographic has a specific set of requirements, such as handicapped accessible homes so residents can age in place, the construction of more one-story homes, appropriately sized homes, and elderly housing facilities. Additionally, with the increase in residents, both younger and seniors living alone, the demand for smaller homes will increase. In short, the population may not change drastically in number, but the changes in the demographics of the population will result in the need for more homes or different types of homes.

Development of the rural area is a worst-case scenario typical of sprawl. Skowhegan would undoubtedly experience a good percentage of new development within its existing residential zones. Placement of 75 percent of new housing units in the town's designated growth area is consistent with the comprehensive planning guidelines.

### *Current Housing Regulations*

Skowhegan has multiple ordinances for regulating local development; however, taken together, they place few restrictions on new home construction.

Skowhegan's land use-related ordinances are as follows:

- Building Safety Ordinance- adopted 1997, amended through 2018
- Floodplain Management Ordinance, amended through 2024
- Property Maintenance Ordinance, adopted 2022
- Shoreland Zoning Ordinance, amended through 2021
- Site Plan Review Ordinance, adopted 1995, amended through 2022
- Subdivision Review Ordinance, adopted 1989, amended through 2012
- Utility Scale Solar Energy Facility Ordinance, adopted 2021

Two ordinances are mandated: the Shoreland Zoning Ordinance (detailed further below), which restricts development within 250' of rivers and ponds, and within 75' of primary streams; and the Floodplain Management Ordinance, which restricts development on the 100-year floodplain. These are the only ordinances which constitute "zoning," affecting only certain property owners. All other ordinances apply equally throughout the jurisdiction.

Skowhegan's ordinances that would affect housing development more than the others would be Shoreland Zoning and the Building Safety Ordinance, both detailed more thoroughly in the Existing Land Use chapter and Future Land Use Plan.

- Building Safety Ordinance-
  - Serves to protect the health and safety of Skowhegan residents based on state building statutes.
  - Regulates minimum lot size based on if the lot is in the Shoreland Zone and if it has access to public sewer.
  - Establishes setback requirements.
- Shoreland Zoning Ordinance-
  - Intended to protect and maintain healthful conditions, prevent and control water pollution, and to protect areas determined to be within the Shoreland Zone.
  - Established 6 different Shoreland districts within Skowhegan, each with its own intended purpose.

Over all, the town has very little regarding regulation of residential development. There is no formal zoning or regulation of minimum lot size by district, for example. There are also no restrictions or incentives on things like accessory apartments and the town just follows the mandated safety and fire Building Codes. Subdivisions and development in the Shoreland Zone are the only time there is municipal review of housing.

Policies:	Strategies:	Implementing Party/Timeframe:
<p><b>HOUSING:</b></p> <p>Skowhegan has a growing housing stock, mostly of a rural nature, despite designated growth areas in more developed parts of town, such as the downtown. Considering the changing demographic structure of the town, the town can anticipate the need for more rental housing and senior housing. Affordability is definitely an issue for both owner-occupied homes, as well as for rentals, partly because of the tight market for them.</p> <p><b>State Goal: To encourage and promote affordable, decent housing opportunities for all Maine citizens.</b></p>		
Policies:	Strategies:	Implementing Party/Timeframe:
<p>1. Encourage and promote adequate affordable and workforce housing to support the community's and region's economic development.</p>	<p>1.1: Maintain, enact or amend growth area land use regulations to increase density, decrease lot size, setbacks and road widths, or provide incentives such as density bonuses, to encourage the development of affordable/workforce housing.</p>	<p>Planning Board / Ongoing.</p>
	<p>1.2: Maintain, enact or amend ordinances to allow the addition of at least one accessory apartment per dwelling unit in growth areas, subject to site suitability.</p>	<p>Planning Board / Ongoing.</p>
	<p>1.3: Create or continue to support a community affordable/workforce housing committee and/or regional affordable housing coalition.</p>	<p>Planning Board / Ongoing.</p>
	<p>1.4: Designate a location(s) in growth areas where mobile home parks are allowed pursuant to 30-A M.R.S.A. §4358(3)(M) and where manufactured housing is allowed pursuant to 30-A M.R.S.A. §4358(2).</p>	<p>Planning Board / Ongoing.</p>

<b>Policies:</b>	<b>Strategies:</b>	<b>Implementing Party/Timeframe:</b>
	<p>1.5: Explore options for Tax Increment Finance district, where feasible.</p> <p>1.6: Make financial and technical assistance available to residents for improvement of housing stock.</p> <p>1.7: Seek out CDBG and other grant opportunities for improvements to housing stock, including vacant homes and rental units.</p>	<p>Economic and Community Development Office / Ongoing.</p> <p>Economic and Community Development Office / Ongoing.</p> <p>Economic and Community Development Office / Mid-term 2026-2027.</p>
2. To ensure that land use controls encourage the development of quality affordable housing, including rental housing.	<p>2.1: Support the efforts of local and regional housing coalitions in addressing affordable and workforce housing needs.</p> <p>2.2: Provide training for the Code Enforcement Officer, Planning Board and Zoning Board of Appeals, aimed at providing town staff and volunteers with relevant knowledge in their subject areas to ensure they are equipped to make decisions and implement policy.</p>	<p>Economic and Community Development Office / Ongoing.</p> <p>Town Manager / Ongoing.</p>
3. To encourage and support the efforts of the regional housing coalitions in addressing affordable and workforce housing needs.	<p>3.1: Seek to achieve a level of at least 10% of new residential development built or placed during the next decade be affordable.</p> <p>3.2: Identify unutilized or underutilized buildings throughout town that could be redeveloped to provide a variety of housing options, styles, and locations.</p>	<p>Planning Board / Longterm.</p> <p>Planning Office / Near-term 2026-2027.</p>
4. Promote the development of additional senior housing to	4.1: Form a Senior Housing Task Force (SHTF). The SHTF will have as its objective to promote or develop a	Planning Board / Mid-term 2027-2028.

<b>Policies:</b>	<b>Strategies:</b>	<b>Implementing Party/Timeframe:</b>
satisfy an anticipated boom in senior households	<p>range of additional senior housing opportunities.</p> <p>4.2: Work with local hospitals/senior organizations to develop a plan for senior/assisted housing within the community or region.</p> <p>4.3: Identify Maine State Housing Authority (MSHA) programs that may be of use to current or prospective residents and make information available through the town office.</p> <p>4.4: Investigate methods of promoting and encouraging the creation of and development of senior housing throughout town.</p>	<p>Economic and Community Development Office / Mid-term 2027-2028.</p> <p>Town Manager / Near-term 2025-2026.</p> <p>Economic and Community Development Office / Near-term 2025-2026.</p>
5. Make sure Skowhegan's municipal ordinances regulating, related to, or impacting housing are reviewed regularly, kept up to date, and do not create unnecessary barriers in housing development.	<p>5.1: Ensure all ordinances are up to date and comply with related, current Maine Statutes.</p> <p>5.2: Explore options where the development of multi-family housing would be appropriate and in keeping with the town's character.</p> <p>5.3: Review and amend Skowhegan's Subdivision Ordinance and other ordinances to favor well-planned new development and/or redevelopment.</p> <p>5.4: Review and amend Skowhegan's parking requirements to allow for more housing opportunities</p>	<p>Planning Board / Ongoing.</p> <p>Planning Board / Planning Office / Near-term 2025-2026.</p> <p>Planning Board / Ongoing.</p>

<b>Policies:</b>	<b>Strategies:</b>	<b>Implementing Party/Timeframe:</b>
	5.5: Schedule bi-annual reviews and updates of all ordinances to keep them in sync with current legislation.	Planning Board / Near-term 2025- 2026.  Planning Board / Ongoing.



## **Chapter 8: Recreation**

Recreation is an invaluable element of community life, particularly in an evolving town such as Skowhegan, which offers so many diverse recreational opportunities. Skowhegan has a large, developed infrastructure, expanses of undeveloped open space, multiple opportunities for water-based recreation, and some very good cooperating recreation providers.

Most forms of recreation can generally be classified into one of two categories: organized, or “active,” recreation –examples include activities usually supported by developed facilities and programs. The other category is unorganized, or “passive,” recreation, which includes activities that may have supporting facilities, but are more often solitary or family pursuits; not necessarily activities that have structured programs.

### **Organized or “Active” Recreation**

Skowhegan has a full Parks and Recreation Department which is overseen by a Director, a Program Assistant, a custodian, a Recreation/Maintenance Assistant, and two staff assistants, for a total of six town employees, all designated to provide and manage recreational opportunities for Skowhegan. The mission of the Parks and Recreation Department is to provide quality programs, parks, facilities, and a variety of enrichment opportunities with a professional standard of excellence that enhances the quality of life for all citizens and visitors in Skowhegan.

The Parks and Recreation Department is directly supported by the Parks and Recreation Department Advisory Committee, which consists of volunteer citizens with a fundamental belief, understanding, and interest in recreation as a vital force in the community. The Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee serves as an advisory committee and will act in a purely advisory capacity to the Parks and Recreation Department Directory on issues related to parks and recreation.

The Committee has no authority to establish, create, pass or enforce any of the park’s rules or activities without consent. The Committee assumes a major role in assisting with the department mission while developing a sense of community and enhancing the resident’s quality of life by assisting with recreational and social programs for preschool age children, youth, teen, adult, and senior populations.

The Committee is composed of residents and non-residents from a broad cross section of parks and recreation whom have been involved in the department have a strong sense of community and interest in enhancing the quality of life for all ages in the community. Function of the Committee include:

- Serve as a liaison between the Parks and Recreation Director and the Town of Skowhegan
- Consult with and advise the Parks and Recreation Director in matters affecting parks and recreation programs, facilities, policies, finances, and the acquisition of lands and its long-range projected plan for parks and recreation
- Inform and educate the general public of the importance of and need for parks and recreation programs, facilities and services
- Assist the Parks and Recreation Department in recruiting voluntary leadership to work with the parks and recreation programs and activities
- Assist in developing a plan to meet the present and future needs for programs, services, equipment, parks, facilities, open spaces, and trails and to advise in developing priorities for each of these
- Review and assist evaluations of programs, facilities, policies, and procedures
- Recommend approval of rules and procedures pertaining to recreation programs and use of public parks and facilities, including suggested fees and charges, upon request
- Carry out any other assigned studies and/or activities as determined appropriate by the Parks and Recreation Director
- Identify and assist with funding opportunities through federal, state, and local grants, sports and recreation foundations, community contributions, charitable foundations and endowment funding opportunities to implement facility and program improvements
- Members will represent the Skowhegan Parks and Recreation Department and the Town of Skowhegan in a positive and professional manner
- Perform other duties as assigned by the Director of Parks and Recreation

The Parks and Recreation Department manages and maintains outside facilities including an outdoor skate park, outdoor basketball courts, ball fields, playgrounds, hiking trails, canoe portages, and seasonal ice rink, as well as adjacent lawn areas around these facilities. Table 1 below lists the numerous facilities run by the Parks and Recreation Department.

**Table 1: Facilities Managed by Skowhegan Parks and Recreation Department**

<b>Offering</b>	<b>Location(s)</b>
<b>3 Canoe Portages</b>	Island Avenue, Mill Street, Debe Park Portage
<b>2 Playgrounds</b>	Amanda Berry Playground, Community Center Playground
<b>6 Ballfields</b>	Community Center Fields (2), Carl Wright Baseball Complex (3), Bucky Quinn Field (1)
<b>2 Outdoor Basketball Courts</b>	Community Center
<b>Ice Rink</b>	Community Center – (Portable; open dependent on weather)
<b>Skate Park</b>	Community Center
<b>Bike Park</b>	Rivers Edge Bike Path
<b>2 Trails</b>	Philbrick Nature Trail, Skowhegan River Trail
<b>Green Spaces</b>	Whitten Brook Park Area, Skowhegan Indian, Madison Ave/E. Madison Road Triangle, Main Street Park, Island Avenue Common, Gorge River View Area, North Avenue/Jewett Street Triangle, Water Street/High Street Triangle, Arnold Expedition Park, Route2/West Front Street Triangle, Dudley Corner School House

*Source: Town of Skowhegan*

These facilities are in a variety of conditions: the Community Center is in the middle of a multi-year expansion, ballfields are well used but maintained, playgrounds likewise. A master trail plan which is discussed at greater length later gives in depth description of all trail conditions, but they vary, and maintenance is difficult. Overuse and incompatible use types is an issue in most green spaces across Skowhegan. ADA access is possible at the Community Center and many parks but could be updated and included more in long term planning, especially with the growing age of Skowhegan's population.

These amenities do not include parks and trails managed by the Parks and Recreation Department. Table 2 outlines those, below.

**Table 2: Green Spaces and Trails Managed by the Skowhegan Parks and Recreation Department**

<b>Green Spaces</b>	<b>Trails</b>
<b>Arnold Expedition Park</b>	Philbrick Trail
<b>Dudley Corner School House</b>	Skowhegan River Trail/Debe Bike Path
<b>Skowhegan Indian Area</b>	Heselton Street Nature Trail
<b>Island Avenue Commons</b>	
<b>Route 2/West Front Street Triangle</b>	
<b>Water Street Triangle</b>	
<b>North Avenue Triangle</b>	
<b>Gorge River View Area</b>	
<b>VFW Main Street Park</b>	
<b>Norridgewock Avenue Triangle</b>	

*Source: Town of Skowhegan*

The center of recreational activity is the Skowhegan Community Center, located off Route 2 just west of downtown. The Community Center houses a large gymnasium with bleachers, locker room facilities, a game room, an exercise room, and two large function rooms with commercial kitchen facilities.

Trails across the community are not adequately maintained on a regular basis. There is not enough capacity to maintain or upgrade existing trails and trailheads for improved sustainability and safety. Somerset Woods Trustees added a second full-time position in 2024 focused on trail stewardship, but the capacity gap remains. There are also conflicts between the types of use on trails, primarily between the use of motorized vehicles and non-motorized vehicles. This is a common regional issue as ATV trails become more connected. Based on trail demand, we likely need more trails designed for motorized use and for horseback riding.

Parks and Recreation Department is very active in pursuing and obtaining grants and donations for recreation activities.

A major expansion of outdoor recreation facilities began October 2024. The expansion will include a regulation size sod baseball field that also fits a regulation size soccer field, an access road, parking lot, sewer, and water lines. The expansion is located on the parcel between the Community Center and the High School, permitting additional utilization and parking. The anticipated cost is in the neighborhood of \$7 million.

In addition to the wide assortment of organized recreation opportunities provided directly by the Skowhegan Parks and Recreation Department, they also coordinate and collaborate activities with other towns and local recreation groups and businesses to ensure the needs and desires of residents are met.

### *Skowhegan Community Center:*

The Skowhegan Community Center, located at 39 Poulin Drive is managed by the Parks and Recreation Department and is the location where of many of the Department's numerous offerings take place. The Community Center is handicapped accessible and provides a gymnasium, exercise room, locker rooms, baseball fields, basketball courts, conference rooms, picnic tables, a playground, a multiuse grass field, tables and a community garden. The gymnasium and exercise room are open to residents year-round, Monday through Friday during spring through fall and seven days a week in the winter.

### *Programs Provided/Organized by the Parks and Recreation Department:*

The Parks and Recreation Department organizes diverse programs in several locations, although predominantly at the Community Center. Other locations for programs include satellite facilities and private organizations or businesses. Recreational offerings range from family ice skating to youth outdoor exploration and include the usual basketball and soccer leagues. The programs are often collaborative with other local facilities, such as the T&B's Celebration Center, Main Street Skowhegan, and Lake George Regional Park. A special effort is made to incorporate family and adult programs. Non-residents are permitted into the facilities and programs on a fee-for-use basis.

The department also assists with a number of annual events for the community. These range from the Festival of Trees and Thanksgiving Community Dinner to senior citizen lunches and yoga classes.

In addition to the Parks and Recreation Department, the town also has several other boards, committees, and nongovernment entities involved in providing recreational activities, detailed below.

### *Private Entities that Provide Recreational Opportunities:*

In addition to those programs provided by local government, several other private entities offer organized recreation opportunities, as well. There is a gymnastics studio and karate dojo in town as well as a bowling alley. The Skowhegan Fairgrounds also provides space for events. Additional facilities are located in the region, including dance studios, and a swimming pool.

One such private organization is the Skowhegan Outdoors AmeriCorps Program, founded by the 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, Main Street Skowhegan. Main Street Skowhegan is focused on the ongoing revitalization of Skowhegan. The founding of the Skowhegan Outdoors AmeriCorps Program in 2019 was intended to ensure outdoor opportunities including free, guided outdoor recreation activities and gear for those who wish to experience the natural world on their own. In 2023, Skowhegan Outdoors coordinated 202 programs that reached 1,810 participants. They offered free summer camps, equipment rentals, safety courses, and much more to Skowhegan and Somerset County residents. Skowhegan Outdoors operates a year-round, walk-in, gear-lending library in

downtown Skowhegan for Somerset County residents to borrow summer and winter recreational gear including skis, snowshoes, canoes, bikes, tents, and more. They are actively working to expand Skowhegan's trail network, and with the Village Partnership Initiative through Maine DOT, develop a transportation master plan for Skowhegan that focuses on safety and bike/pedestrian infrastructure.

The Somerset Woods Trustees is another private organization working in Skowhegan. A nonprofit land trust, Somerset Woods Trustees holds over 800 acres of land in Skowhegan and the surrounding area. Somerset Woods Trustees not only manage many acres of woodlands and trails, but also ballfields and boat launches, including Kennebec Banks and Cleaver Landing.

Somerset Public Health with funding from New Balance Foundation has partnered with a program called Move More Kids. One of the projects under Move More Kids is the Somerset Outings Club. This program provides free trips to outdoor destinations for Somerset County residents. Each trip includes free transportation, a free bagged lunch, and any gear or other associated costs. They are able to offer free transportation for up to 80 individuals each trip.

### **Unorganized or “Passive” Recreation**

Unorganized recreation typically refers to outdoor facilities that are open for public use but generally do not have structured hours or specific programs. This type of recreation ranges from community beaches and parks to solitary pursuits like hunting, fishing, and hiking.

#### *Water Access and Activities:*

Skowhegan has access to water-based activities, but the limiting factor tends to be in the available access points. The Kennebec River and Lake George are the two waterbodies most accessible for public recreation, though there is a fee at the gate to access Lake George.

The Kennebec River access / boat launch is located east of town. It is on land owned by Somerset Woods Trustees that also includes the Route 2 Highway Rest Area. The access consists of a boat ramp and parking. The State of Maine operates the facility on land owned by Somerset Woods Trustees. Local discussions have been held to improve the facility with a dock, as it is the only true river access for several miles in either direction, although there are rudimentary portage points located above and below the dams, for canoeists and kayakers. Somerset Woods and Lake Wesserunsett Association have encouraged the state to establish a courtesy boat inspection program at the launch, citing 2 species of aquatic invasive plants in the Kennebec below Cleaver Landing. Transport of plant fragments on boats and trailers threatens the water quality and recreational values of nearby water bodies.

The town of Skowhegan in partnership with Main Street Skowhegan is leading the effort to develop a riverfront promenade along the Kennebec River gorge in the downtown area and a whitewater park on the Kennebec River. Permitting is anticipated to be received in 2025 and they are in the final stages of planning and design and fundraising. The project, Skowhegan River Park, is envisioned as a destination-quality recreation facility, as well as an economic development tool, to be located immediately adjacent to Skowhegan's downtown area. The whitewater portion of the project would be within the Kennebec gorge. It would be the Northeast's first adjustable wave for paddling and river surfing, with river access and a south bank viewing area. This is intended to be phase 1 of the project. Phase 2 is a riverfront promenade and river access via a set of stairs from the north side of the gorge. The final phase would include construction of two additional non-adjustable wave features, as well as expansion and enhancement of Skowhegan's trail network. The overall goals of the project are to create a welcoming riverfront and improve river access.

According to a 2016 economic impact study on the creation of the River Park, it is anticipated that the creation of the park will:

- Create 40 jobs and retain 136 jobs locally
- Increase spending \$4.6 million statewide in the first year of operation
- \$1 million in labor income in the base year in Somerset County
- Increase spending \$19 million by year 10 of operation

In addition to boating, canoeing and kayaking, the Kennebec River also offers historically good fishing from its banks, particularly just below the dams.

Lake George Regional Park is a day-use lakeside park established in 1992, owned by the State of Maine, leased through an inter-local agreement by the towns of Skowhegan and Canaan, and managed for public use by Lake George Corporation, composed of residents from the two towns.

The park does not receive funding from the state yet serves to fill a major geographic gap in the state-managed park system since there are no state parks in this area of Maine. With the leadership of a full-time Park Director, the park's year-round activities include educational programs, trails, amenities, and events.

The park's lake, public boat launch and surrounding 320 acres of land make it a popular destination for swimming, fishing, picnicking, boating, hiking, skiing, playing fields, and group use facilities for many community members and visitors alike. Every summer over 200 area children grades 1-6 participate in a four-week nature-based day camp at the park called Camp Podooc. The park is a growing destination and vital community hub to the Skowhegan and Canaan communities.

### *Land-based Activities:*

Land-based passive recreation activities consist of hunting, hiking, birdwatching, snowmobiling, cross-country skiing, cycling, and more. While they take place throughout town, they depend in large part upon public access to tracts of undeveloped land. This access can be in the form of publicly owned or managed tracts of land but is more often in easements or landowner agreements permitting public use of private lands. Continued access to these opportunities is contingent upon the continuing goodwill of landowners. Eaton Mountain was opened as a skiing and snowtubing mountain in the winter of 1961-62. It was popular not only with Skowhegan residents, but those from neighboring areas as well. However, it closed in 2020 and has not reopened creating a lack in skiing and snowboarding in the immediate area of Skowhegan.

The Skowhegan Sportsman's Club, located on East River Road, is a non-profit, civic organization that offers outdoor safety education classes, such as Hunter Safety, Archery Safety, Cross Bow Safety, ATV Safety, and Project Appleseed Marksmanship Program, which is a project dedicated to preserving the American tradition of rifle marksmanship. The proceeds of the events and activities sponsored by the club go to benefit other non-profit charities which include but are not limited to the annual Wardens Appreciation Dinner, the Scott Burgess Scholarship, which supports education in automotive at Somerset Career and Technical Center, and the Skowhegan Sportsman's Scholarship, which benefits a student in the Outdoor Recreation Program.

The club's vision statement is to continue providing instruction and outdoor education and opportunities to the community and share conservation and recreation opportunities that are supported by Maine Fish and Wildlife.

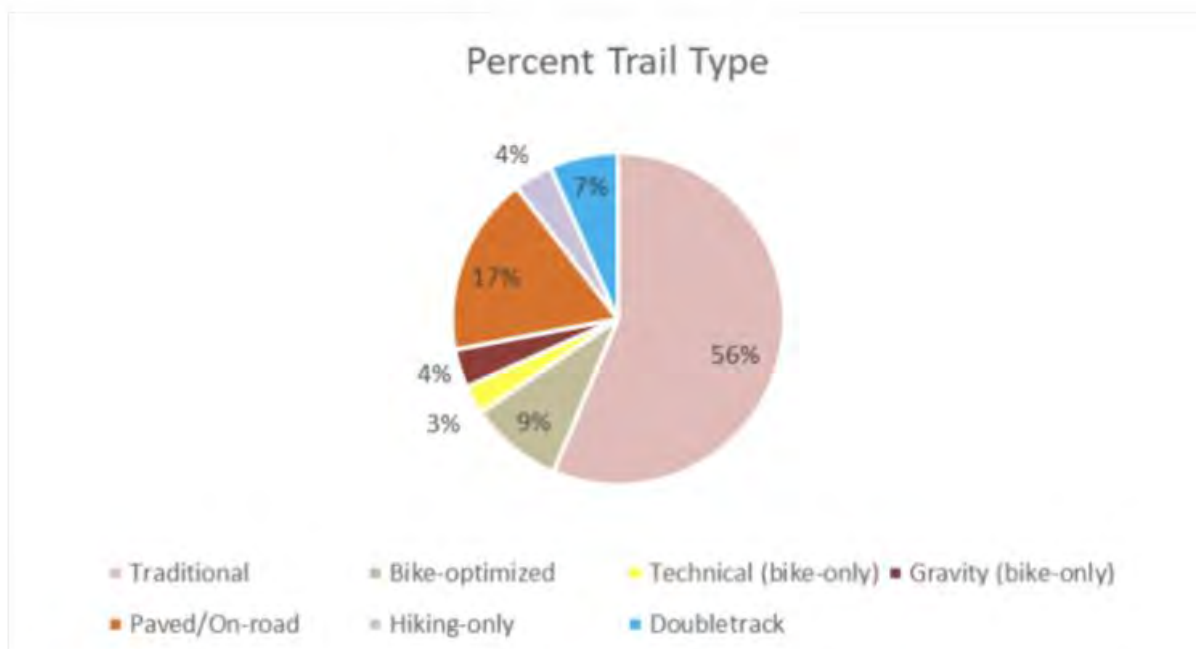
The Skowhegan Sportsman's Clubhouse and property offer a heated clubhouse with a full kitchen, a pistol range, and a rifle range, although they are for use by their 31 members only, although there are events and programs offered to the public, as well.

Snowmobiling is considered a passive form of recreation. Skowhegan is crisscrossed by snowmobile trails on both private and public lands and linked to an interstate network through the Interconnected Trail System (ITS) trail #87 running along the northwestern corner of town. The proximity of the trail to US Route 201 and the downtown area makes Skowhegan a hub of snowmobile activity.

The Skowhegan Sno Hawks, formed in 1974, are the largest snowmobile club in Skowhegan. They maintain 36 miles of trails in Skowhegan, through acquisition of permissions by more than 125 landowners for trails use. They also maintain 16 bridges to enable winter water crossings. The club has a clubhouse for members, and an equipment shed to store the two groomers used to maintain trails. The town receives and turns over \$18-20,000 annually from the state for trail maintenance. New solar projects cut off access and land sales threaten snowmobile access.



The new ATV trail system through Norridgewock, connecting Oakland to Embden and eventually Greenville, opens more opportunities. However, there are currently no ATV trails or trailheads in Skowhegan. There has been an increasing call to allow ATVs on roadways with restrictions and to explore the economic benefits of ATV or multi use trails. Skowhegan is in a unique position, not just as a historic economic hub of the county, but as being a regional crossroads in an area that is recreationally rich (rafting, snow sports, etc.). Neighboring towns are taking advantage of that position to use trails for economic revitalization and so could Skowhegan.



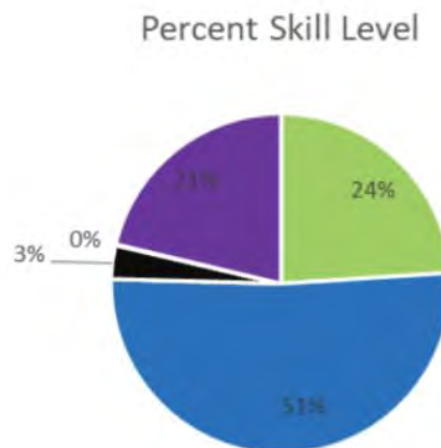
*From Skowhegan Trails Plan facilitated by the Outdoor Sport Institute and Main Street Skowhegan*

Outdoor recreation and trail use offer numerous health benefits, including improved physical fitness and mental well-being. Activities like hiking, trail running, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, and mountain biking provide aerobic and strength training advantages. Access to walking and biking infrastructure is crucial, as it directly influences how often people engage in outdoor activities, making them more likely to exercise when facilities are nearby.

With rising community health issues such as obesity and heart disease, finding enjoyable ways to encourage physical activity is essential. Movement is vital for healthy aging, and outdoor sports provide holistic workouts that enhance balance, coordination, and flexibility. Connection to nature is crucial for environmental health and ensuring the outdoors remains relevant and accessible. Trails cater to a diverse population, encouraging unity and stewardship. They can also revitalize neglected areas, transforming sites like landfills into bike parks or trailheads.

A well-designed trail system can drive economic growth by creating local opportunities and attracting visitors, thereby boosting retail sales, services, and hospitality. This can lead to job creation, provide sustainable options for rural communities, and generate tax revenue.

There are several hiking/walking trails and trail networks throughout Skowhegan, consisting of almost 100 miles of trail area. Many of these trail systems are isolated from the rest of town. Main Street Skowhegan, in collaboration with landowners and land trusts, in collaboration with the Resiliency Committee and Public Works Department, are working on a Trail Master Plan to connect these trail networks and the existing downtown sidewalk systems, as well as improvements to the sidewalks themselves. When implemented, downtown residents will be able to have pedestrian access to many natural areas on the fringes of the built-up area. Several of the trail networks are also used for cross-country skiing in winter, and Lake George Park has a groomed trail network dedicated to cross-country skiers. Included in this plan is to establish a series of bicycle routes and facilities throughout town, so that residents from neighborhoods can travel safely to schools, parks, and the Community Center without reliance on a car.



*From Skowhegan Trails Plan facilitated by the Outdoor Sport Institute and Main Street Skowhegan*

In addition, a concept plan has been developed for a bike and pedestrian network of trails. The Skowhegan Bike and Pedestrian Network Concept aims to enhance non-motorized mobility by creating a safe, accessible, and well-connected system of bike paths and pedestrian-friendly routes. This initiative prioritizes recreation, sustainable transportation, and economic development while improving access to key destinations such as downtown, schools, parks, and commercial areas. Key features include dedicated bike lanes, a proposed Linear Garden, and potential reconfigurations of streets to reduce auto dominance and enhance connectivity. Public engagement is a central focus, with Main Street Skowhegan leading efforts to gather community input. While this

chapter highlights the recreational benefits of the network, additional details on infrastructure, funding, and implementation are included in the Transportation Chapter.

#### *Conserved Lands:*

There are many public and private tracts of land in Skowhegan, used for multiple purposes, including conservation and/or public recreation. Conservation partners include the Somerset Woods Trustee, the State of Maine, the Humane Society, and others.

Founded in 1927, Somerset Woods Trustees is a nonprofit land trust serving the communities of Somerset County. Working in partnership with willing landowners, Somerset Woods is responsible for more than 3,000 acres of land conserved and managed for wildlife and fisheries habitat, outdoor recreation, water access, and resiliency to climate change.

Somerset Woods has two full-time, year-round staff plus seasonal stewardship staff that help maintain recreational trails and properties. The organization's office is located at its conserved Parkman Hill Farm in Solon, with conserved land in communities throughout Somerset County.

Skowhegan Conservation Commission and the town work collaboratively with Somerset Woods Trustees in securing permanent conservation status on numerous acres throughout Skowhegan that are open to the public. Skowhegan properties with trails under the management of Somerset Woods Trustees are below in Table 3.

**Table 3: Properties in Skowhegan Managed by Somerset Woods Trustees**

<b>Property</b>	<b>Road Location</b>	<b>Acreage</b>
<b>Coburn Woods and Taylor Field</b>	Russel Road and Norridgewock Ave.	337 acres
<b>Parsons Family Preserve</b>	Malbons Mills Road	27 acres
<b>Gorge Overlook and Debe Riverwalk</b>	Joyce Street	5.8 acres, with 800 feet of river frontage
<b>Philbrick Trails</b>	Joyce Street	34 acres, with 1,200 feet of river frontage
<b>Canaan Bog</b>	East River Road	192 acres with winter-only trail access
<b>Eaton Ridge</b>	Eaton Mountain Road and East River Road	75 acres
<b>Wesserunsett Stream Preserve</b>	Evergreen Drive	47 acres
<b>Malbons Woods</b>	Malbons Mills Road	55 acres, future home of the Maine Appalachian Trail Center

*Source: Somerset Woods Trustees*

The properties preserved by the Somerset Woods Trustees count towards the total amount of acreage conserved in one form or another in Skowhegan and does not include properties enrolled in the Open Space, Farmland, Forest Farmland, or Tree Growth Tax Law Programs, detailed in the Agriculture and Forestry chapter of this plan.

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

Skowhegan does not currently have an open space fund for the acquisition of property, although they partner extensively with the SWT to preserve open space and secure access to preserved/conserved properties.

### *Community Partners:*

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

- Local Sporting Organizations
  - Skowhegan Sno Hawks
  - Skowhegan Sportsman's Club
  - Sports Boosters
  - ATV Club
- Youth Organizations
  - Boy Scout Pack 485
  - Move More Kids / Somerset Public Health
  - R.E.A.C.H.
- Regional Non-Profits
  - Somerset Woods Trustees
  - Main Street Skowhegan
  - Elks
  - Lions Clubs
  - American Legions
  - KVCAP
  - Skowhegan Outdoors AmeriCorps
  - Special Olympics
- Town Committees
  - Conservation Committee
  - Lake George Regional Committee
  - Park Commission
  - Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee
  - Skowhegan Library
  - Police Department
  - Fire Department
  - Public Works

- Highway Department
- Educational Entities
  - UMaine
  - Thomas College
  - SAD #54
- Businesses
  - Skowhegan Area Chamber of Commerce
  - New Balance
  - Yogi Bear Campground

### **Analysis and Key Issues:**

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

An aging population means more demand for different forms of recreation. In the past, the kind of recreation demand generated by this dynamic has been met by a senior center or program, but the current generation of retiring seniors is much more likely to enjoy the “active retirement” type of activities. They tend to show a preference for outdoor activities, such as boating, cycling, and hiking. Skowhegan may have a supply of these opportunities now, but it may not be adequate, and demand is likely to rise.

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

<b>Policies:</b>	<b>Strategies:</b>	<b>Implementing Party/Timeframe:</b>
<p><b>RECREATION:</b></p> <p>Skowhegan provides an abundance of opportunities for active and passive recreation through either organized programs or individual endeavors. Skowhegan has many acres of preserved land coordinated across many different types of ownership and preservation.</p> <p><b>State Goal: To promote and protect the availability of outdoor recreation opportunities for all Maine citizens, including access to surface waters.</b></p>		
<b>Policies:</b>	<b>Strategies:</b>	<b>Implementing Party/Timeframe:</b>
<p>1. To maintain/upgrade existing recreational facilities and public water resources as necessary to meet current and future needs.</p>	<p>1.1: Create a list of recreation needs or develop a recreation plan to meet current and future needs. Assign a committee or community official to explore ways of addressing the identified needs and/or implementing the policies and strategies outlined in the plan.</p>	<p>Rec                      Advisory Committee / Ongoing</p>
	<p>1.2: Improve the availability and accessibility of outdoor ice skating facilities.</p>	<p>Rec                      Advisory Committee / Ongoing</p>
	<p>1.3: Involve public in evaluating demand for additional expansions to recreation offering</p>	<p>Rec                      Advisory Committee / Ongoing</p>
	<p>1.4: Establish priorities for renovations which will address the most deficient areas of the Town and provide the most benefit for the largest number of people</p>	<p>Rec                      Advisory Committee / Ongoing</p>

<b>Policies:</b>	<b>Strategies:</b>	<b>Implementing Party/Timeframe:</b>
	<p>1.5: Evaluate programs for the elderly population by seeking input from representatives to address deficiencies and/or lack of participation.</p> <p>1.6: Identify underserved segments of the population regarding their recreation needs, and provide suitable activities which meet these needs. In particular, identify reasons for youth non-participation in programs (e.g. fees, distance, lack of self esteem etc.) and develop ways to overcome these obstacles. Reach out to individuals, neighborhood groups, special interest groups, volunteer organizations, corporations, and larger institutions and involve them in the process where feasible.</p> <p>1.7: Improve connections between recreation facilities and neighborhood population centers, utilizing public transit and pedestrian and bicycle routes. Bike/ped projects should be prioritized according to the Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan. Establish trails that interconnect with open space tracts, abutting towns, and to the larger natural systems in the area.</p> <p>1.8: Aggressively seek funding from state and federal sources, including matching grant programs such as Urban Trails, Land and Water, and trails development programs to acquire and develop</p>	<p>Rec                      Advisory Committee / Ongoing</p> <p>Rec                      Advisory Committee / Ongoing</p> <p>Rec                      Advisory Committee / Ongoing</p> <p>Rec                      Advisory Committee / Economic and                      Community Development Office / Ongoing</p>

<b>Policies:</b>	<b>Strategies:</b>	<b>Implementing Party/Timeframe:</b>
	recreational facilities. Monitor and take advantage of state bond issues for recreation development. Encourage local businesses, charitable foundations, and private institutions to fund specific recreation activities or improvements and give appropriate public recognition to all donations.	
2. To preserve open space for recreational use as appropriate.	<p>2.1: Work with public and private partners to extend and maintain a network of trails for motorized and non-motorized uses. Connect with regional trail systems where possible.</p> <p>2.2: Work with an existing local land trust or other conservation organizations to pursue opportunities to protect important open space or recreational land.</p> <p>2.3: Integrate outdoor recreation needs into open space plan. Target suitable land for future acquisition for parks and passive recreation. Include analysis of tax-acquired Town properties and/or sale of some property to fund purchase of other quality recreation space. The plan will incorporate a landowner outreach program to encourage greater public access to privately-owned open space</p> <p>2.4: Maintain communications with owners of private recreation resources and work cooperatively to address issues of public use.</p>	<p>Rec                      Advisory Committee / Economic and                      Community Development Office / Ongoing</p> <p>Rec                      Advisory Committee / Economic and                      Community Development Office / Ongoing</p> <p>Rec                      Advisory Committee / Economic and                      Community Development Office / Ongoing</p> <p>Rec                      Advisory Committee / Economic and                      Community Development Office / Ongoing</p>



<b>Policies:</b>	<b>Strategies:</b>	<b>Implementing Party/Timeframe:</b>
	2.5: Provide educational materials regarding the benefits and protections for landowners allowing public recreational access on their property. At a minimum this will include information on Maine's landowner liability law regarding recreational or harvesting use, Title 14, M.R.S.A. §159-A.	Rec Advisory Committee / Economic and Community Development Office / Ongoing
3. To seek to achieve or continue to maintain at least one major point of public access to major water bodies for boating, fishing, and swimming, and work with nearby property owners to address concerns.	<p>3.1: Continue to develop the River Park Project in the Kennebec River Gorge area, by raising and allocating funds for the next phase in completing the project.</p> <p>3.2: Work closely with Lake George Regional Park management and other regional recreation providers to enhance access to facilities.</p> <p>3.3: Maintain the boat launch on the Kennebec River (Great Eddy) and improve facilities in collaboration with Somerset Woods Trustees or future owners.</p> <p>3.4: Secure additional public access to local water bodies through purchase or long-term easements, to expand fishing opportunities.</p>	<p>Economic and Community Development Office, Main Street Skowhegan / Ongoing</p> <p>Rec Advisory Committee / Lake George / Ongoing</p> <p>Rec Advisory Committee / Economic and Community Development Office / Ongoing</p> <p>Rec Advisory Committee / Economic and Community Development Office / Ongoing</p>

## **Chapter 9: Transportation**

### **Overview of the Transportation System**

Residents of Skowhegan are primarily dependent upon the automobile for access to work, shopping and recreation. The vast majority of Skowhegan residents work and shop in Skowhegan itself or Waterville, while the transportation system also brings people and goods into Skowhegan.

Skowhegan is a crossroads. With the historic arterial highway, US 201 connecting most of the country with Quebec to the north, and US 2 linking northern New England and Montreal to the west with Bangor and the Maritimes to the east, Skowhegan is virtually the hub of Maine. As both a crossroads and a service center, Skowhegan sees high traffic volumes generated by local trips, tourists, commuters, and freight haulers from local to international. The majority of vehicles on these corridors carry people passing through Skowhegan to or from the interstate, or coming into Skowhegan for work, school, or shopping.

Most of our traffic utilizes the major east-west and north-south thoroughfares leading through town, leading to several questions: What is the impact of continuing development along existing arteries? Will natural growth lead to congestion and reduced traffic capacity? What are future alternatives to the current road system?

The transportation system is critical to Skowhegan's growth, yet transportation and growth complement and conflict with each other. To the extent that commerce requires access to customers, or to move freight, transportation capacity is essential. Any form of development, even single-family homes, will generate new traffic, eventually overwhelming the capacity of existing roads. These roads are shown on Transportation Map 1 (see appendices).

The remainder of roads in Skowhegan are either town ways, maintained entirely by the Town, or private roads, on which the Town is prohibited from spending taxpayer dollars. Many of the roads that access lakefront property fall into the latter category.

### **Skowhegan's Roads**

Skowhegan's road system consists of 141.22 miles of roads and highways, encompassing 21.74 miles of state highway, 11.93 miles of state aid roads, 72.1 miles of town ways, and 36.8 miles of private roads (subdivision or camp roads etc.). Maintaining the road system is the responsibility of both state and town governments. The Maine Department of Transportation (MDOT) has varying responsibilities for state roads, depending on whether they are within the Urban Compact Area, the pre-designated boundary between urban and rural development densities (see map in appendices). The MDOT is responsible for all maintenance on the non-compact portions of US 201 and US 2, and all but snow plowing on non-compact portions of major collectors -- other numbered

highways, Norridgewock Ave., and some urban streets. The Town is responsible for maintenance on the remainder which totals 91.5 miles in total.

There is an increasing amount of privately-owned and managed roads in Skowhegan. These are primarily providing access to properties off the main highways or town owned roads, or serving small subdivisions, and there is little likelihood of them ever becoming public roads.

Road condition ratings are generally based on the design and drivability of the roadway. US 201 is considered to be in fair condition throughout its length. US 2 is in good condition at both sides of town being recently repaved with a new more durable 5/8" paving.

State Routes 104 and 150 are considered rural collectors and held to a lower standard than arterials. Route 150 (North Ave.) is considered to be in good condition. Route 104 (Middle Road) is in fair condition, with width and alignment issues.

The 70 or so miles of local roads include almost the entire in-town grid, and several rural and subdivision roads. The town uses a road surface management system (RSMS) to gauge the condition and maintenance needs of these roads. According to RSMS, between 80% percent of the road system is in good condition from year to year. The town's paving plan targets between five and seven miles of road per year for re-paving.

The Town does not track private roads, because it has no jurisdiction or authority for maintenance on them. The major spans include Notch Road, Whittemore Hill and a majority section of Lambert Road all on the east side of town. A subdivision road that is built to ordinance standards for a minor street is traditionally accepted as a town road.

The town as of 2024 expends about \$1,000,000 a year on summer road maintenance. We receive about \$170,000 a year in LRAP (Local Road Assistance Program) funds from the state, earmarked for capital improvements. The town expends about \$600,000 a year on winter maintenance. This includes plowing of 91.8 miles of roads (town ways plus state roads inside the urban compact).

A table included in the appendices, details the roads that the town is responsible for maintaining, including their surface condition.

### *Skowhegan's Public Roads*

Routine and preventative maintenance are carried out on a rolling basis as budgets allow in order to prevent any future costly full repairs. When a road is listed as "Reconstruct" it is recommended to be specifically added to the next year's budget.

### *Discontinued Roads*

There are some discontinued roads within town such as Stewart Hill Road, Swain Hill Road and Larone Road.

## *Bridges*

Bridges are an essential part of the road system. Bridges have different design and structural features and must be maintained on a different schedule than ordinary roads. A number of years ago, the DOT assumed responsibility for the majority of bridges in the state, including some on town roads. The location and responsibility of Skowhegan bridges is shown on Transportation Map 1 (see appendices).

The following five bridges are located in Skowhegan and are town owned and maintained, their status is detailed, as determined by inspections by DOT in 2019 and 2020:

- A bridge over the Lambert Brook on Lambert Road. This bridge is a steel culvert bridge 12 feet long, built in 1990. The bridge is in fine condition, though the culvert and river channel are showing some signs of damage;
- The Cold Brook bridge over Cold Brook on the Stewart Hill Road. This is also a steel culvert, 17 feet long, showing its age from being installed in 1978. The bridge is in poor condition, with the culvert and channel underneath showing serious signs of damage;
- The Hathaway Street Bridge over Currier Brook. It was built in 1995, and is yet another steel culvert spanning 16 feet. The bridge is in fine condition, though the culvert and river channel are showing some signs of damage;
- The Hilton Bridge over the Carrabassett Stream on the town line with Canaan (Red Bridge Road). It is a steel truss type bridge, 61 feet long and constructed in 1936. This bridge is the poorest condition of any in town, with both the substructure and superstructure listed in “poor and serious” deteriorated condition. There is a 15-ton weight limit posted for this bridge and it soon either be removed or replaced.
- Finally, there is the Malbon Mills Bridge over the Wesserunsett Stream on the Notch Road. This is a 78-foot-long steel stringer / girder type built in 1972. It is shown to be in reasonable physical condition, with some deterioration in the deck and substructure. There is a \$100,000 reserve fund established to re-deck this bridge.

The town has a separate budget line item to deal with the maintenance of the bridges it is responsible for in town.

There are many more DOT owned and maintained Bridges that are listed here:

Road	Bridge Name	Year Built	Length (ft)	Deficiencies	Federal Sufficiency Rating
US 2/201	Margaret Chase Smith	1976	127	none	64
US 2	Lambert Brook	1939	11	Channel	47
Oak Pond	School House		10	approach	92
US 2	Sucy	1955	17	Channel	61
US 2	Wesserunsett	1942	90	none	47
US 201	Woolen Mill	1953	18	Channel	58
US 201	Cold Brook	1958	19	none	47
Malbons Mills	West Ridge	1969	80	Channel	95
Maine 104	Currier Brook	1966	10	None	88
Maine 150	Smith Pond	1966	113	Deck, channel	70
Maine 150	Perkins	1955	14	Channel	88

Other bridge information must include the Mill Street bridge that is due to be removed and rebuilt as a pedestrian bridge only to give a portage access to the Kennebec River. Also, the Old Smith Pond Bridge on the Hilton Hill Road was removed after it became too dangerous.

### *Skowhegan Bridge Feasibility Study*

No discussion of transportation in Skowhegan can ignore the significant issue of the possible second bridge to cross the Kennebec.

The Town's Board of Selectmen met with MaineDOT Commissioner David Bernhardt in October 2018 to discuss the need for a second bridge over the Kennebec River. Although part of the discussion included a desire to remove heavy vehicles from downtown Skowhegan, it was made very clear that the purpose of this study is to improve the resiliency and sustainability of the state transportation system in the Skowhegan area, and that alternatives involving a second bridge across the Kennebec River in the Town of Skowhegan must be examined. Alternatives that involve bypassing the urban area of Skowhegan are not under consideration.

This study was premised on the agreement that a collaborative Town/MDOT approach be undertaken with efforts led by the Town. A study group was formed with representatives of Skowhegan, MDOT and Environmental and transportation consultants.

The Study that was completed in November of 2021 held several public input and informational sessions. It was tasked with considering the following four aspects of the project:

***Transportation Measures***

- Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT)
- Vehicle Hours Traveled (VHT)
- Improved Level of Service and Delay at Key intersections
- Potential for Improving Bicycle and Pedestrian Conditions
- Potential for Improving Safety
- Potential for Improving Downtown Mobility
- Potential for reducing Truck Traffic in downtown
- Potential to improve Emergency Service access during roadway closures

***Land Use Measures***

- Number of Homes/Buildings with Direct Impact
- Number of Private Lots Impacted
- Compatibility with Local Plans
- Right-of-Way Acquisition
- Farmland Impacts
- Impacts to use of the waterway

***Environmental Resource Measures***

- Potential for Impacts to Archeological and Historic Resources
- Potential for Wetland Impacts
- Potential for Conservation Land and 4(f) Land Impacts
- Potential for Impacts to Rare, Threatened, Endangered, and Special Concern Plant Species and Habitats

***Cost and Funding Measures***

- Construction Cost
- Ease/Practicality of Construction
- Construction Funding Viability
- Benefit/Cost

The final study provided short-term improvements that could be implemented in 2-5 years without the construction of a new bridge to alleviate some of the issues affecting Skowhegan. These recommendations included the conversion of yields to stop signs or signal control intersections; installation of Rectangular Rapid Flash Beacons (RRFB) at specific crosswalk locations, improving lane utilization on Madison Avenue, and more.

After studying the potential locations for a second bridge, the study recommended two possible locations:

- **Downtown Bridge Crossing:** this bridge would cross downstream of the existing Route 201 Bridges. This would have potential impacts on the Veteran's Park, proposed River Park, and Historic Districts. Preliminary cost estimates for a bridge in this location are estimated at \$55,300,000.

- **Upstream Bridge Crossing:** this bridge would be located downstream of the Eddy. Potential impacts would be to state conserved land, Route 2 rest areas and boat launches. Preliminary costs for a bridge in this location are estimated at \$30,500,000.

The next step is for Maine DOT to complete a more costly environmental study under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). This study will likely take years and will consider other locations. The commencement of an environmental impact study is subject to available resources.

## **Usage of the Highway System**

The purpose of a road system is to carry traffic. Technically, traffic is the product of people moving from one destination to another. Residential destinations in Skowhegan are somewhat dispersed, and well-served by the grid-style road system in the urban area. Most of the commercial and institutional destinations are located on major traffic routes.

Major traffic nodes include the SAPPI and New Balance Mills on Route 201, Northgate Industrial Park, Fairgrounds Marketplace and other stores along Madison Avenue, the high school/junior high complex and community center on Route 2, the hospital on Fairview Ave., and the downtown area. Employers, such as the mills, and schools tend to concentrate their traffic demand at certain times of the day (peak hours), while retail and service operations tend to spread out.

The Maine DOT is responsible for monitoring usage of its roads through a system of traffic counts. Traffic counting is reported in units of Average Annual Daily Traffic – the total number of vehicles going past a given point on an average day. Traffic counts are measured annually only at one point on Route 201; elsewhere, they are recorded every 2 to 5 years.

Thankfully a recent study by Tylin International to look into the possibility of a new bridge across the river (mentioned above) did a detailed study of traffic movement in the urban core of the town and gave a host of invaluable information detailed from here on:

For the study intersection turning movement counts were conducted at key intersections in the study area in June 2019 with the Court Street/High Street intersection updated in July 2019. The figure below presents the Weekday AM and PM peak hour traffic volumes. Traffic volumes in 2019 were adjusted to reflect Design Hour or summertime conditions. In addition to intersection turning movements counts, hourly traffic counts were conducted throughout the study area using tube counts in June 2019.

### *Annual Average Daily Traffic Volumes*

Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT) is the average of the vehicular traffic for all days summed and divided by 365. The table below shows Skowhegan's data from the Maine Dot 2023 Traffic Volume Annual Report. The highest AADT is 23,330 vehicles over the Margaret Chase Smith Bridges.

Location	2018	2019	2021	2022	2023
BEECH ST E/O RUSSEL RD	-	-	-	-	430
BEECH ST W/O US 201 (MADISON AVE)	-	610	-	-	-
BENNETT AVE N/O COMMERCIAL ST	-	-	-	-	730
COURT ST N/O COMMERCIAL ST	-	630	-	-	-
COURT ST N/O HIGH ST	-	720	-	-	-
COURT ST S/O HIGH ST	-	720	-	-	-
CROSS ST SW/O SR 150 (NORTH AVE)	-	220	-	-	-
DR MANN RD E/O SR 150 (NORTH AVE)	-	-	-	-	2,530
DUDLEY CORNER RD N/O NOTCH RD	-	-	-	-	230
E MADISON RD N/O US 201 (MADISON AVE)	-	-	-	-	1,630
E RIVER RD S/O OAK POND RD	-	-	-	-	1,520
EAST RIDGE RD N/O US 2	-	-	-	-	970
EATON MTN RD S/O US 2	-	-	-	-	710
ELM ST W/O US 201 (MADISON AVE)	-	1,161	-	-	-
HESELTON ST E/O SR 150 (NORTH AVE)	-	-	-	-	980
HESELTON ST W/O MALBONS MILL RD	-	-	-	-	640
HIGH ST CUT (OW) W/O US 2 (WATER ST)	-	2,070	-	-	-
HIGH ST E/O SR 150 (NORTH AVE)	-	3,480	-	-	-
HIGH ST E/O US 201 (MADISON AVE)	-	5,280	-	-	-
HIGH ST W/O COURT ST	-	4,520	-	-	-
HIGH ST W/O SR 150 (NORTH AVE)	-	3,590	-	-	-
IR 399 (E RIVER RD) SE/O US 2	-	-	-	-	1,350
JEWETT ST E/O US 201 (MADISON AVE)	-	4,240	-	-	-
JEWETT ST W/O CUT TO SR 150 (NORTH AVE)	-	4,400	-	-	-
LAMBERT RD SE/O US 2 (CANAAN RD)@BR#1082	-	-	-	-	40
MALBONS MILL RD N/O US 2 (WATER ST)	-	-	-	-	1,610



Location	2018	2019	2021	2022	2023
MALBONS MILL RD SW/O PRESCOTT LN (PW)	-	-	-	-	1,920
MANN RD W/O MALBONS MILL RD	-	-	-	-	1,930
NORRIDGWOCK AVE SW/O ELM ST	-	-	-	-	3,190
NOTCH RD E/O DUDLEY CORNER RD	-	-	-	-	760
NOTCH RD W/O DUDLEY CORNER RD @ BR#6215	-	-	-	-	930
RUSSELL RD 0.5 MI NW/O BEECH ST	-	-	-	-	1,360
SR 104 (MAIN ST) S/O US 201 (E FRONT ST)	-	7,160	-	-	-
SR 150 (NORTH AVE) N/O CROSS ST	-	4,300	-	-	-
SR 150 (NORTH AVE) N/O CUT TO JEWETT ST	-	8,070	-	8,050	-
SR 150 (NORTH AVE) N/O HESELTON ST	-	-	-	7,870	-
SR 150 (NORTH AVE) N/O HIGH ST	-	-	-	7,510	-
SR 150 (NORTH AVE) NE/O MOLUNKUS RD	-	-	-	2,910	-
SR 150 (NORTH AVE) S/O JEWETT ST	-	6,380	-	-	-
US 2 (WATER ST) E/O MALBONS MILL RD	-	-	-	-	6,550
US 2 (WATER ST) NE/O COMMERCIAL ST	-	9,340	-	-	-
US 2 (WATER ST) NE/O KENNEBEC ST	-	8,330	-	-	-
US 2 (WATER ST) NE/O SR150 (NORTH AVE)	-	5,050	-	-	-
US 2 (WATER)(OW) E/O US 201 (MADISON AVE)	-	11,770	-	-	-
US 2 E/O EAST RIDGE RD	-	-	-	-	4,590
US 2 W/O EATON MTN RD	-	-	-	-	4,780
US 2/201 (ISLAND AVE) NW/O MILL ST (PW)	-	21,350	-	-	-
US 2/201 (ISLAND AVE) SW/O US 2/201 (WATER)	-	23,330	-	-	-
US 2/201 (COMMERCIAL) E/O US 201 (MADISON)	-	8,850	-	-	-
US 2/201A (W FRONT ST) W/O SR 104 (MAIN)	-	8,820	-	-	-
US 2/201 (E FRONT ST) E/O SR 104 (MAIN ST)	-	11,240	-	-	-
US 201 (MADISON AVE) N/O ELM ST	-	14,610	-	-	-
US 201 (MADISON AVE) N/O PARK ST	-	19,350	-	-	-

Location	2018	2019	2021	2022	2023
US 201 (MADISON AVE) N/O US 2 (WATER ST)	-	13,230	-	-	-
US 201 (MADISON AVE) NW/O E MADISON RD	-	-	-	-	10,760
US 201 (MADISON AVE) S/O BEECH ST	-	17,130	-	-	-
US 201 (MADISON AVE) S/O E MADISON RD	-	-	-	-	12,570
US 201 SE/O IR 2177 (CEMETERY RD)	5,611	5,307	5,000	5,050	-
W RIDGE RD N/O NOTCH RD @ BR#3773	-	-	-	-	550

### *Safety*

The other common measure of usage of the highway system is tracking crashes. Crashes happen for all sorts of reasons, not just traffic, but they are generally attributable to some features of the road system. Most common are crashes at intersections, but many crashes can happen on open road segments, from deer hits to weather-related crashes.

Crash data was obtained from MaineDOT for the most recent three-year period (2020-2023). MaineDOT has established criteria for establishing High Crash Locations (HCL) where an intersection or road segment has 8 or more crashes and a Critical Rate Factor (CRF) greater than or equal to 1.0 over a three-year period. The CRF is a comparison of the study locations with other comparable locations in the State.

A summary of each location is presented as follows:

#### *Commercial Street/Water Street/ Court Street*

In 2023, there were 8 crashes at this intersection with a CRF of 1.44 during the most recent three-year period. Most of the accidents involved rear endings or side swipes.

#### *Island Avenue/West Front Street/Waterville Road/Main Street*

In 2023, there were 38 crashes at this intersection with a CRF of 1.27 during the most recent three-year period. Most were rear-end collisions. Speed and drivers following too closely contributed to the crashes as drivers start and stop in the heavy traffic at this intersection. There were 14 accidents resulting in injuries. Despite the installation of a right turn lane from the Waterville Road, the number of crashes has increased from 28 in 2020.

### *Madison Avenue/Commercial Street/Elm Street*

There were 15 crashes at this intersection as of 2023 and it has a CRF of 1.94 at this intersection during the most recent three-year period. This intersection has steadily seen a decrease in traffic accidents since 2020 when it had 21 accidents, though Madison Avenue in general remains one of the higher crash roads in the town.

In 2022, the selectboard asked Maine DOT to undertake a detailed partnership study under Maine DOT's Village Partnership Initiative (VPI) program to evaluate alternatives to improve transportation safety and accessibility in downtown Skowhegan that could complement existing and planned economic development. The final study that came from the program included a Road Safety Audit, a parking study, and considered over 30 alternatives with a variety of options for one-way or two-way traffic flow, area bicycle and pedestrian improvements, and a recommendation for a second bridge crossing. The recommendations focused on the following areas:

- Construction of a downtown second bridge crossing to bolster traffic flow and improve mobility within the town
  - The study found that a second bridge could significantly bolster traffic flow and overall mobility within town
  - The improved connectivity is likely to attract new businesses, tourists, and investors resulting in economic development
- Improvements to roadway network
  - Make Madison Ave between Water Street and Commercial Street 2-Way
  - Make Water Street between Madison Ave and Commercial Street single lane
- Pedestrian / Bicycle Improvements
  - Improve access to commercial areas to support local economy
  - Coordinate with already existing plans such as the Trail Master Plan
- Madison Avenue Road Diet
  - A road diet involves reallocating roadway space for other uses, such as pedestrian or bicycle
  - Road diets result in reduced crashes, more consistent and reduced vehicle speeds, increased mobility for non-motorized road users, and better connections to surrounding land uses
- Downtown Parking
  - The study found that the downtown area has an excess supply of parking that is underutilized with high turnover of off and on street parking
  - Vast majority of public parking lots are located within a 5-minute walking distance of downtown Skowhegan
- Gateway Improvements
  - Intersection of Main Street and Fairview Avenue act as gateway to Skowhegan for vehicles approaching from south with only single pedestrian crossing
  - Improve location through park expansion to enhance aesthetics and increase safety

The final VPI report was accepted by the Select Board in February 2025. Studies for the possibility of a second bridge are continuing.

### *Parking:*

The Town maintains seven municipal parking lots. Most of these lots are located in the downtown area. The primary and largest lot is the Municipal Lot, accessible from Commercial Street and High Street. This provides parking for the Flatiron Block, movie theater, courthouse, and other downtown facilities, such as the new Grist Mill / Farmers market operations. It was relatively recently redesigned and improved to be a much more pleasant and inviting center of town.

The Riverview Lot, located behind the Water Street block, provides added store and restaurant parking, plus parking for river access. The Island Lot is located on Skowhegan Island and is used primarily for the church and Tewksbury Hall. Lots located adjacent to the town office and community center are primarily dedicated to those uses. The Veteran's Lot, located east of the town office, contains about 29 spaces. It serves the town office and some commercial uses but is also designated as a park-and-ride. Park and ride usage continues to be light.

Downtown parking will always be the most pressing issue, especially as the downtown continues to change, grow, and attract more people to the town. The town is in a relatively good position to address any possible issues in that parking is a strongly regulated aspect of commercial site plan review but it does not mean that the increased provision of municipal parking options should be considered.

Parking Lot / On-Street Segment	Number of Spaces
Riverside Lot	40
Park and Ride Lot	35
Municipal Lot	40
Lot 2	55
Lot 3	75
Downtown Water Street	26
Commercial Street	10
Madison Avenue	12
Elm Street	10
North Avenue	14
Court Street	12
Water Street	20
<b>Approximate Total</b>	<b>349</b>

*Parking inventory conducted by Village Partnership Initiative*

## **The Highway System and Development**

Traffic counts and problem locations are symptoms of a much deeper issue: the relationship between highways and development. Obviously, highways are designed to serve the properties within their corridors, but there comes a point at which development exceeds the capacity of a highway to serve it. This may result from development within the corridor or development in the immediate proximity of the road. Awareness of the link between transportation and land use is growing rapidly, especially among transportation system managers responsible for finding the millions of dollars it costs to expand capacity, and who would much prefer the relatively small cost of managing development instead.

The Maine DOT has established a set of regulations for new development impacting state highways. Traffic Movement Permits are required for major developments, such as shopping centers or large subdivisions. For all other development on state highways, driveway access permits are required. Permitting rules contain different standards based on road classification. Route 201 has the tightest access rules; the remaining roads have relatively moderate rules. All of the rules have some standards for sight distance, driveway width, spacing, safety, and drainage.

There are a number of other ways in which the town can influence the impact of development on transportation. They include:

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

## **Financial Stability**

The transportation system is very costly to maintain. The system is in a constant state of deterioration, and deferring maintenance accelerates the pace and costs of repair. Even without improvements, the roads in Skowhegan require close to two million dollars a year in upkeep.

The roads and bridges for which the state is responsible are generally in good condition; however, state and federal funding for transportation is in decline in proportion to needs. Improvement projects are being postponed and maintenance deferred. Locally, the Town has a good system for identifying maintenance needs (RSMS) which was recently upgraded. The paving program is funded annually through the town's CIP. We need to preserve funding adequately to keep the system at the same quality level as it currently operates. The road commissioner does an excellent job of planning at least 5 years ahead with all major road and sidewalk projects and identifying financial needs.

Similarly, walking and biking trails can often get overlooked in funding for maintenance and, especially, expansion. While the town's sidewalks are generally in good condition and we have an enviable system of walking trails, we also have an ambitious plan to connect and enhance the pedestrian system, as well as establish a safe bicycle circulation network around town. The town should begin setting aside funds for implementation, to be used as matching funds for grant-seeking efforts.

## **Development and Traffic Growth**

Traffic continues to increase overall, driven in part by new residential and commercial development. Since new development is happening mostly on the rural roads outside of the urban center, it is not surprising that the traffic growth and high crash locations are concentrated in the core where all traffic must pass to get through town in any direction. A new bridge, if located inside of the core area, would change how traffic flows and could change development patterns.

Major traffic generators continue to include Madison Avenue and the Fairgrounds Market Place, the Sappi and New Balance mills, the schools, and the hospital. Continued development of rural areas and commercial growth along the Waterville Road, will accelerate traffic growth on rural highways as well as Route 201.

Growth in traffic, and particularly commercial traffic, accelerates the deterioration of the highway system. Little can be done about this in the short term. In the long term, new development can be directed into existing well-served areas, and away from narrow or less well constructed rural roads.

Development also increases the number of driveways and intersections, contributing to traffic conflicts and safety concerns. The town has standards for the location of those driveways, though this only provides for a case-by-case approach. The town should consider encouraging more interconnection between developments.

The grid pattern of streets in older sections of town produces quiet streets even in dense neighborhoods, because it gives people options. Subdivisions on dead-end roads funnel traffic onto main roads, creating more congestion. The Town should seek out opportunities to imitate the old grid system with interconnections between existing and proposed roads. This principle can be applied to commercial developments as well, requiring connections between parking lots, so cars need not travel on public roads for trips of just a few hundred feet. Though the town's ordinances contain these provisions, few developments implement them.

Upcoming developments that are known that will no doubt impact local traffic include the new school development by Heselton / East Street. Additionally, the plans to redesign the intersections of Madison Avenue at both Jewett Street and Commercial Street, as well as the major junction on the southside of the bridge will hopefully help with traffic flow in the downtown area.

## **Regional and Statewide Trends**

More than any other public service, the transportation system is heavily connected to trends and events outside the town's boundaries. Commercial growth in Madison and new residential growth in Cornville put traffic on Skowhegan's road system, as does the interstate a dozen miles away. Sensitivity to these influences – and what others are doing about them – will help in preparing Skowhegan for the future.

Skowhegan's transportation problems will not disappear with the construction of another bridge. It might allow commercial traffic to move more effectively through the downtown, but is almost certain to encourage sprawl, and the spreading out of traffic. Skowhegan will be even more of a crossroads, but that crossroads will become larger.

The Old Canada Road National Scenic Byway consists of the upper stretches of Route 201. Even though the byway designation ends at the Madison-Solon town line, the impacts of the byway are likely to be felt in Skowhegan. As the byway becomes more well-known and a potential tourist attraction, tourist traffic will pick up in Skowhegan. This may increase traffic congestion but will also provide another cog in our economic development engine. The Corridor Management Plan for this Byway is currently being updated and it will be suggested that both Madison and Skowhegan become de facto part of the Byway.

## ***Scenic and Environmental Impacts***

We tend to overlook the fact that roads and other forms of transportation can have an effect on our natural environment as well as our built one, ranging from interfering with wildlife movements to providing improved access to riverfront for bikers and walkers. The more people that use the system, the greater these impacts are. In this respect, a development design or location that minimizes demand for the transportation system can also reduce environmental impacts and pollution.

The existing road system has not resulted in any significant negative effects on wildlife or water quality. The Town is sensitive to potential erosion or runoff problems and follows best management practices provided by the MDOT for all ditching, culvert, and earth-moving activities. There is one drainage system that has been a constant source of erosion, but it drains Route 201 south of the urban compact, and is the MDOT responsibility.

Roads have in fact created many opportunities for access to historic and environmental resources and scenic vistas. Route 2 parallels the Kennebec River through much of Skowhegan and provides a very pleasant travelling experience. Of note is the rest area and boat access at the great eddy, (Kennebec Pines) is maintained in partnership with the state and Somerset Woods Trustees. Route 201 also provides glimpses of the river. Bigelow Hill Road provides outstanding mountain vistas to the north.

## **Non-Highway Transportation Resources**

The principal mode of transportation is the automobile and its local and state road system. Nevertheless, other modes of transportation play a role in our lives. The following is a discussion of some of the more significant transportation modes that serve Skowhegan.

### *Air Travel:*

The Augusta and Waterville airports offer a limited number of commercial flights (passenger service from Augusta only) and provide access for private and corporate planes and small jets. Both airports are a 20 – 40 minute drive. The Portland Jetport and the Bangor Airport offer commercial passenger service to a number of different hubs. The Manchester Airport in New Hampshire offers a popular alternative to Boston's Logan Airport.

### *Railroad:*

The only functional rail line into Skowhegan is an industrial spur into the Sappi Paper mill. The spur is in good condition and is used on a regular basis but is exclusive to the mill. Some old rail beds are still in existence elsewhere in town, but there is little chance of them ever being re-established.

The nearest active rail line (Guilford – Springfield Terminal) is located in Waterville, but without loading access is virtually useless to local commerce. The Auburn Intermodal Freight Facility over an hour away allows tractor trailers to be loaded directly onto freight cars for long-distance shipment.

Passenger rail service has recently been re-established between Brunswick and North Station in Boston and reports are that it is flourishing. Plans call for eventually expanding passenger access along the coast and into central Maine via Waterville and Bangor, but this is a decade or more in the future.

### *Public Transit:*

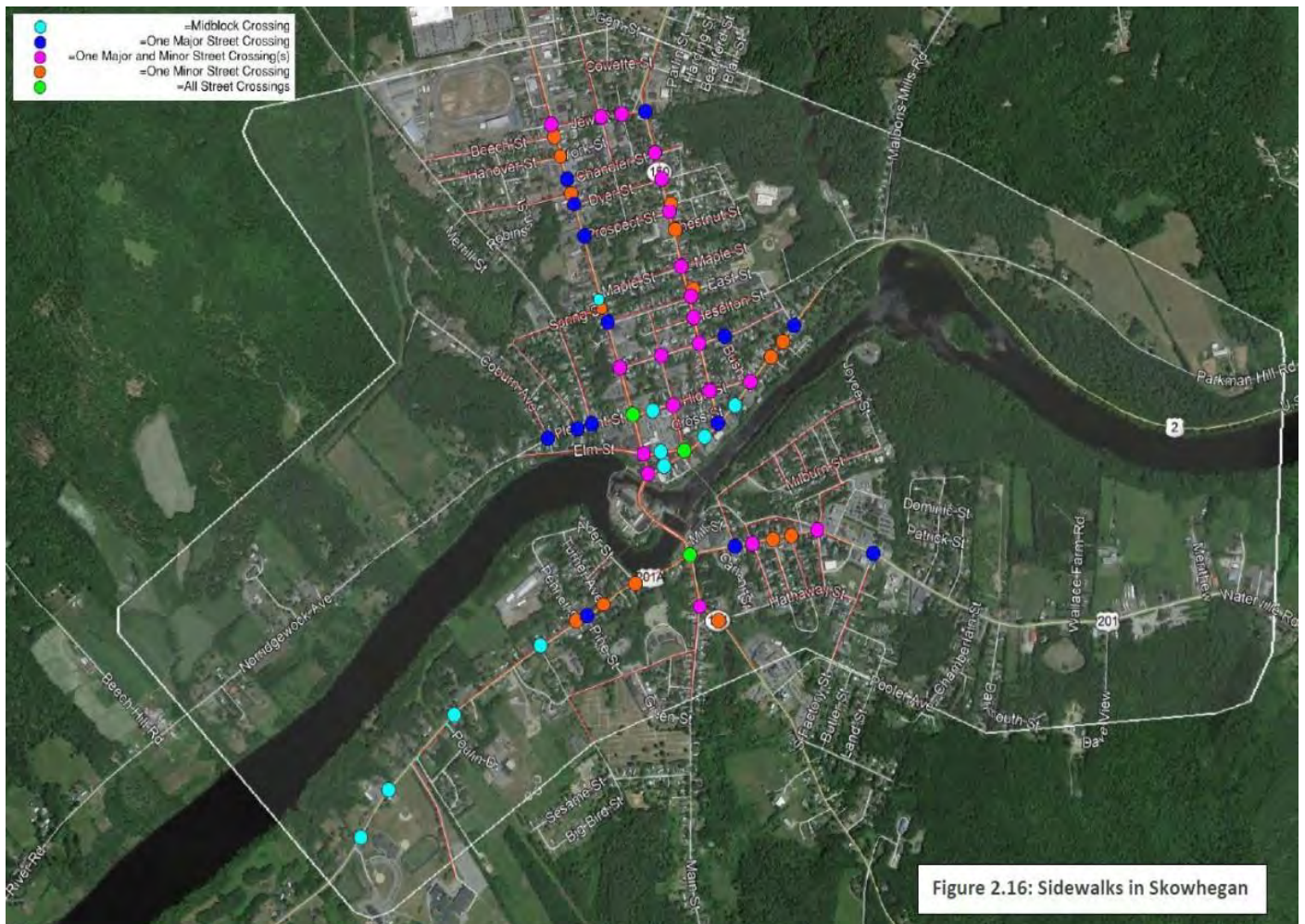
Interstate bus service is not available in Skowhegan, but may be accessed both in Augusta and Waterville. Local public bus service is not available for the general population.

The Kennebec Valley Community Action Program provides rides to elderly and other persons through a volunteer driver program and demand-response bus for disabled clients. Other social service agencies also provide transportation for their clients. It is expected that, with the aging population, the demand for public transportation of this type will increase dramatically over the next twenty years.

### *Pedestrian Modes:*



The compact urban area boasts sidewalks on at least one side of the road for most of the heavily populated streets. There are sidewalks on both sides of Island Avenue, Water Street from Madison Avenue to North Avenue, Commercial Street, Madison Avenue from Water Street to High Street, Court Street from Commercial Street to High Street, and various points on North Avenue.



The Road Commissioner has a separate budget of around \$100,000 for sidewalks and has a list of candidates for new construction (developed in conjunction with the Sidewalk Committee). There is a 5-year plan in place for rolling maintenance and additions. The details of the 20 miles of sidewalks are listed on the next pages:

**Table #: Sidewalks in Skowhegan, condition, length, priority, and year repaired or to be repaired**

<b>Street</b>	<b>Condition (1-5)</b>	<b>Length</b>	<b>Priority (1-5)</b>	<b>Year</b>
Jones Street	1	963	3	2021
Bridge Street	1	400	3	2021
East Dyer Street	1	400	1	2021
Main Street	3	2,900	4	2021
South Factory Street (2)	1	970	4	2022
Water Street (2)	2	2,310	5	2022
Spring Street	5	660	2	2022
French Street	1	730	1	2023
Jewett Street	2	1,350	5	2023
Madison Avenue	3	13,230	5	2023
Mechanic Street	3	800	2	2023
Fairview Avenue	2	3,130	5	2024
High Street (2)	3	1,100	5	2024
South Street	2	740	3	2025
Poulin Avenue	2	875	4	2026
Beech Street	2	1,820	3	2026
Hathaway Street	2	980	3	2027
Free Street	2	800	3	2027
Railroad Street	2	435	2	2028
Oak Street	2	400	1	2028
Prospect Street	3	1,200	2	2029
Heselton Street	4	840	5	2029
South Factory Street	4	1,476	5	2030
Pine Street	2	400	1	2031
Cedar Street	3	660	4	2031
North Avenue	3	3,630	5	2032
Chestnut Street	2	900	1	
High Street	3	570	5	
Island Avenue	3	2,600	5	
Water Street	3	2,435	5	
Court Street	3	3,060	4	
Leavitt Street	3	1,100	4	
Avore Street	3	435	3	
Dr. Mann Road	3	4,050	3	
Dyer Street	3	1,220	3	
Maple Street	3	1,150	3	

**Table #: Sidewalks in Skowhegan, condition, length, priority, and year repaired or to be repaired**

<b>Street</b>	<b>Condition (1-5)</b>	<b>Length</b>	<b>Priority (1-5)</b>	<b>Year</b>
Pleasant Avenue	3	1,215	3	
Poplar Street	3	720	3	
Lawton Street	3	550	3	
Chandler Street	3	1,220	3	
Coburn Avenue	3	1,130	2	
Hanover Street	3	1,750	2	
Milburn Street	3	1,370	2	
Silver Street	3	1,500	2	
Center Street	3	470	1	
East Chandler Street	3	325	1	
French Street (2)	3	640	1	
Meadowview	3	500	1	
Timberview Drive	3	2,600	1	
Dane Avenue	4	605	5	
Water Street	4	1,550	5	
Winter Street	4	1,140		
Mt Pleasant Avenue	4	2,400		
Bennett Avenue	4	1,350		
Bloomfield Street	4	1,075		
East Leavitt Street	4	1,240		
Turner Avenue	4	940		
East Maple Street	5	970		
East Street	5	550		
West Front Street	5	4,760		
Fairview Avenue (1)	5	4,310		
Rec Center	5	450		
Cleveland Street	5	650		
Cowett Street	5	850		
Gem Street	5	1,160		
Greenwood Avenue	5	1,685		
Willow Street	5	1,870		
Bush Street	5	625		
Elm Street	5	1,420		
McClellan Street	5	1,250		
Total Sidewalk (feet)		105,559		

*Source: Skowhegan Highway Department*

The following is the list of sidewalks that were constructed in 2024:

- Norridgewock Avenue – 1,848' in length
- Coburn Avenue – 1,060' in length
- Court Street – 2,000' in length
- Poulin Drive – 1,200' in length
- Jewett Street – 1,350' in length

#### *Trails:*

The town also has a series of independent walking trails. These trails are mostly in the form of nature or exercise loops through public and private properties. These trails are as follows:

- The Conservation Trail, located behind the extension service building on Norridgewock Ave.,
- Coburn Trail, located in Coburn Park,
- Heselton Trail, located east of Margaret Chase Smith School,
- Philbrook and Portage Trails, (Somerset Woods Trustees)
- The High School Trail, located behind the high school, and
- The Marti Stevens Trail, located north of Route 2 near the high school.
- Coburn Woods and Taylor Field (Somerset Woods Trustees) Off Russell Road
- Gorge Overlook and Debe Trails (Somerset Woods Trustees)

No discussion of pedestrian routes would be complete without mentioning the pedestrian bridges across the Kennebec River. The Swinging Bridge connects the island with West Front Street. This is an historic bridge. The Walking Bridge connects the downtown area with neighborhoods south of the river. This is a rebuilt railroad bridge. It was re-decked not long ago.

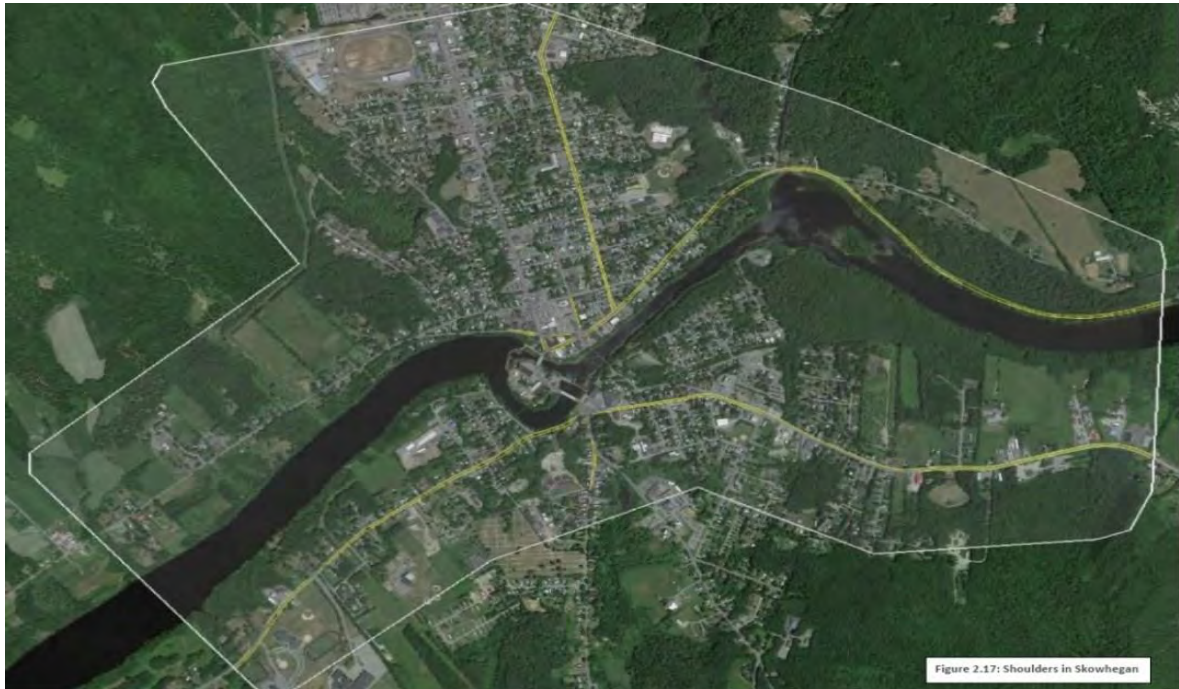
The Town currently allocates approximately \$100,000 a year to sidewalk maintenance and reconstruction. This is adequate to maintain sidewalks in their current condition, but not many expansions can be made. New sidewalks are required on a case-by-case basis in both the Subdivision and Site Plan Ordinances, and the Town has a history of pursuing grant money to expand or improve sidewalks and other pedestrian facilities.

#### *Bicycle amenities:*

There are no formal marked bicycle lanes in the downtown area. Shoulders wider than 5 feet can provide space for bicyclists and refuge for pedestrians when sidewalks are not present. West Front Street has mostly continuous shoulders except where turning lanes are provided at the Skowhegan School District campus. Waterville Road has continuous shoulders except on the eastbound side where the additional climbing lane is present. Water Street has continuous shoulders outside of a brief segment where a turning lane



onto Malbons Mills Road cuts out the shoulder. Madison Avenue has no useable shoulder, but North Avenue offers bicyclists a much safer alternative.



Key deficiencies for bicyclists and pedestrians in the study area are:

- Many sidewalks have telephone poles protruding from the middle
- The unsignalized crosswalks on Madison Avenue currently cross a 4-lane road with high speeds with no control, refuge, or visual enhancements.
- No bicycle facilities on Madison Avenue

The DOT has published a guidebook entitled *Explore Maine by Bike*. The guidebook has a series of 33 loop tours throughout the state with recommended travel routes. Tour #19 begins and ends in Skowhegan. It originates in the Municipal parking lot, goes out of town via Malbons Mills Road. From there, there are three options going further out north in Somerset County. All of these options come back into town on the Russell Road.

There is a small off-road amenity located at the River Park area for off-road biking but more could be planned for in town as an attraction. However, a group of stakeholders has come together to create a concept plan for a larger bike and pedestrian network. Members of the group includes representatives from Main Street, Somerset Woods Trustees, and others. The Skowhegan Bike and Pedestrian Network Concept is a transformative plan aimed at creating a safe, accessible, and well-connected non-motorized mobility system throughout the town. This initiative prioritizes enhanced recreation, sustainable transportation, and economic development while fostering a stronger sense of community. The network envisions a series of dedicated bike paths, shared-use trails, and pedestrian-friendly corridors that seamlessly integrate Skowhegan's key destinations, including downtown, schools, parks, and commercial centers.

A critical component of the plan is its emphasis on reducing auto dominance in the downtown core, particularly along Water Street. The proposed network hub—located at the high-traffic intersection of Route 201 and Route 2—would require strategic modifications, including potential adjustments to downtown parking and the consideration of Commercial Street as an alternate route. Additionally, a one-way reconfiguration of Court Street is being explored to enhance connectivity between the historic Strand Theater, Maine Grains mill complex, and the future mill plaza. This shift, combined with the proposed Linear Garden—a greenway featuring native plantings, public art, and pedestrian spaces—would create a more vibrant and walkable downtown experience.

Public engagement is a cornerstone of the project, ensuring that residents have a voice in shaping the network. Main Street Skowhegan, which has successfully led community engagement efforts for projects like the waterfront promenade, is positioned to guide this process. The plan also accounts for seasonal challenges, considering phased pilot programs to gauge demand and determine the feasibility of year-round maintenance, particularly for Safe Routes to School corridors.

The implementation strategy includes finalizing the concept plan with professional input, securing grant funding for design and construction, and aligning with key stakeholders such as Somerset Woods Trustees, the Town of Skowhegan, and local schools. Additionally, the plan will incorporate economic development research to highlight potential tourism benefits and real estate value impacts. Long-term success will require continued stakeholder collaboration and town budget support for maintenance.

This initiative represents a significant step toward reimagining Skowhegan's transportation landscape, making it safer, more sustainable, and more inviting for residents and visitors alike. A map of the Bike and Pedestrian Network Concept is included in the appendices.

## Transportation Policies and Strategies

Policies:	Strategies:	Implementing Party/Timeframe:
<p><b>TRANSPORTATION:</b></p> <p>Transportation is an essential element to the local economy and community. At its simplest, it provides access to jobs, services, and supplies. Without transportation and road access, a community could not exist.</p> <p>Skowhegan's transportation system provides access both within the town and to larger areas outside of town. Skowhegan is unique in that it has a network of trails throughout town, intended for alternative options, such as biking and walking.</p> <p><b>State Goal: To plan for, finance and develop an efficient system of public facilities and services to accommodate anticipated growth and economic development.</b></p>		
Policies:	Strategies:	Implementing Party/Timeframe:
<p>1. To prioritize community and regional needs associated with safe, efficient, and optimal use of transportation systems..</p>	<p>1.1: Develop or continue to update prioritized improvement, maintenance, and repair plan for the community's transportation network.</p> <p>1.2: Participate in regional and state efforts to improve the transportation system, and link improvements to needs for economic development and overall growth.</p> <p>1.3: Work closely with DOT and regional transportation groups and initiatives to prioritize needs and integrate future DOT plans and programs with local planning.</p>	<p>Highway Department / Ongoing.</p> <p>Highway Department / Ongoing.</p> <p>Highway Department / Ongoing.</p>
<p>2. To safely and efficiently preserve or improve the transportation system.</p>	<p>2.1: Initiate or actively participate in regional and state transportation efforts.</p> <p>2.2: Utilize road analysis software to assist in prioritizing for the town</p>	<p>Highway Department / Economic and Community Development Office / Ongoing.</p> <p>Highway Department / Ongoing.</p>

<b>Policies:</b>	<b>Strategies:</b>	<b>Implementing Party/Timeframe:</b>
	<p>roads component of the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP).</p> <p>2.3: Continue to work with the DOT on the study to address deficiencies in downtown traffic movement and river crossing options. Revise and implement land use strategies for the intersections and neighborhoods affected by the outcomes of the study.</p> <p>2.4: Utilize best management practices for ditch and culvert maintenance work, through highway department training and procedures.</p>	<p>Highway Department / Economic and Community Development Office / Ongoing.</p> <p>Highway Department / Ongoing.</p>
<p>3. To promote public health, protect natural and cultural resources, and enhance livability by managing land use in ways that maximize the efficiency of the transportation system and minimize increases in vehicle miles traveled.</p>	<p>3.1: Incorporate the recommendations of the sidewalk committee and Bike and Pedestrian Trail Plan into the CIP.</p> <p>3.2: Cooperate with Somerset Woods Trustees (owners) to ensure the continuation of the rest area on Route 2 east of town.</p> <p>3.3: When feasible, institute a public bus or trolley, serving the downtown, Madison Ave., and the most heavily developed residential neighborhoods.</p>	<p>Planning Board / Longterm.</p> <p>Highway Department / Ongoing.</p> <p>Highway Department / Longterm.</p>
<p>4. To meet the diverse transportation needs of residents (including children, the elderly and disabled) and through travelers by providing a safe, efficient, and adequate transportation network for all types of users (motor vehicles, pedestrians, bicyclists).</p>	<p>4.1: Maintain, enact or amend local ordinances as appropriate to address or avoid conflicts with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Policy objectives of the Sensible Transportation Policy Act (23 M.R.S.A. §73);</li> <li>b. State access management regulations</li> </ul>	<p>Planning Board / Ongoing.</p>



<b>Policies:</b>	<b>Strategies:</b>	<b>Implementing Party/Timeframe:</b>
	<p>pursuant to 23 M.R.S.A. §704; and</p> <p>State traffic permitting regulations for large developments pursuant to 23 M.R.S.A. §704-A.</p>	
<p>5. To promote fiscal prudence by maximizing the efficiency of the state or state-aid highway network.</p>	<p>5.1: Maintain, enact or amend ordinance standards for subdivisions and for public and private roads as appropriate to foster transportation-efficient growth patterns and provide for future street and transit connections.</p>	<p>Planning Board / Ongoing.</p>

## **Chapter 10: Public Services and Facilities**

The growth of a community is based on the provision of public services, programs, and facilities. The healthy community can rely on a broad range of public services, efficiently provided. Public services range from public works and utilities to recreation programs to dog licenses. Primarily, these services are provided by the municipality and paid for by taxes, but there are many variations and options for service providers. In recent years, more services are being provided by regional groups, as a means to provide more “bang for the buck.”

Skowhegan can be proud of the many services that it provides to its citizens for the cost. As this chapter will show, the Town provides excellent educational, recreational, public safety, public works, and other services, does long-range financial planning, and cooperates with neighbors when possible to make the most efficient use of tax dollars.

### **General Government**

Skowhegan’s municipal government is based on a Town Manager Form of government, where the town manager is the chief executive official, governed by five selectmen and a legislative town meeting.

Town staff under the direction of the town manager include town clerk and treasurer (elected), tax collector, and various department heads. The town manager is assisted by a town office staff who engages in the everyday administration of the town and its services. The offices of the town are located in the Skowhegan Town Office at 225 Water Street in a historic building in the downtown area, which also houses the Skowhegan Opera House. Though the town office has a meeting room for boards and committees, larger assemblies and the annual town meetings are held in the Opera House upstairs.

The range of public services offered by the Town is such that no small group of officials could manage them all. In addition to the Board of Selectmen, Budget Committee, Planning Board, and Board of Appeals, Skowhegan citizens can participate on the Recreation Advisory Committee, Economic Development Corporation, Heritage Council, Conservation Commission, Sidewalk Committee, and several others.

### **Public Safety Services**

Skowhegan provides comprehensive public safety and health services, including local police, fire protection, and emergency services. The Town also engages in regional planning for emergency dispatch (Somerset County), hazard mitigation and disaster response.

### *Police Protection:*

The Skowhegan Police Department is a dedicated and diverse group of professionals who are committed to working with the community to make the Town of Skowhegan a safe place to live, work and visit. Their mission is to partner with the community to solve problems and improve public safety in a manner that is fair, impartial, transparent, and consistent. They work in partnership with our community to improve the quality of life by reducing fear, maintaining order and enforcing the laws of Maine.

It is the vision and goal of the Skowhegan Police Department to continue to grow and adapt to our ever-changing community, and to provide the highest level of service and protection to our citizens. This is accomplished by providing our officers with the tools and knowledge to meet and exceed all present and future needs within the scope of police services. The police department will work in cooperation with our community to proactively address identified areas of needed improvement and to continually provide the level of service and safety so deserved by the Skowhegan community.

The Skowhegan Police Department consists of 20 full-time and 10 part-time law enforcement positions. The police department is extremely proud to support our military veterans and offer differential pay for both military and college graduates. The Police Department consists of a Patrol Division, Criminal Investigation Division, School Resource Officers, Hospital Resource Officers, and Drug Detection K9 Unit. Officers are cross trained in different disciplines within the Department to include but not limited to: Intoxilyzer Instructors, Taser Instructors, Active Shooter Instructors, Police Vehicle Driving Instructors, Firearms Instructors, and Mechanics of Arrest, Restrain and Control (MARC) to name a few.

In March of 2024, the new Skowhegan Public Safety Building was completed and, proud to say, came in under budget. The Police Department and Fire Department share the building as well as expenses which save the taxpayers considerable amounts of money for operating costs. Skowhegan Police Officers are humbled by the citizens eagerness to provide a cutting edge, technological and comfortable facility for its police officers to work. This only enhances the services provided to the citizens and professional growth inside the Department.

### *Fire Protection:*

The Skowhegan Fire Department is made up of 12 full-time firefighters, a Deputy Chief and a Fire Chief. This provides 24-hour protection, with two full-time firefighters on duty at all times. The department puts countless hours into training, planning, fire prevention, and public fire safety education. No two emergency calls are alike, so they must be prepared to handle a variety of emergencies response situations. A number of firefighters within the department have taken the initiative to be cross-trained in specialized emergency response fields. These training initiatives include Medical First Response at the EMT-B level, Hazardous Materials, Technical Rescue, Extrication, and Water Rescue.

The Department had operated out of a four-bay station located on the island just outside of the downtown from 1904 until February 2024. The facility was somewhat undersized for modern vehicles and technology that is the standard today. Although the fire house was located adjacent to the largest concentration of homes and businesses, the increasing congestion and difficulty in getting around was a consideration in relocating to the new public safety building with the police department in early 2024.

In 2023 and 2024, members of the fire department took the lead in running the fire regional National Fire Protection Association (N.F.P.A) Firefighter I & II academy. Both years graduated twenty-one and twenty individuals, respectively, qualifying several Skowhegan residents and others from neighboring communities, helping to alleviate the shortage of qualified responders in our region. Additionally, members participated in providing instruction to the Somerset County Technical Center (SCTC) EMT program and the SCTC Fire Program, which, if successful, students would graduate with the pre-requisite credentials to become employed in a full-time firefighting profession.

The requests for emergency services continues to increase. The department responded to over 1,300 calls for service in 2024 which included technical rescue, vehicle extraction, confined space rescue, hazardous material emergencies, swift water rescue, search, and EMS emergencies.

The Department's vehicle and equipment needs are met through the Town's Capital Improvements Program, though we have been the beneficiary of several grants recently to upgrade equipment and gear. The availability of water in the areas served by the public water system is generally not an issue. All pumpers carry on-board tanks with initial attack capacity for rural areas. Although the rural areas are not thoroughly covered with water sources, the town has requirements to provide adequate fire protection for any new subdivision or commercial development.

The largest single hazard in town is probably the SAPPI mill. SAPPI has its own people and equipment that supplement emergency services provided to the mill by the Skowhegan Fire Department. The town also participates in mutual aid agreements with neighboring towns, and a HAZMAT agreement with SAPPI and Kennebec County.

### *Emergency Management:*

All emergency dispatching is handled through the E-911 dispatch center at the Somerset County Sheriff. This arrangement seems to be working out well. E-911 street addressing has been completed.

The Town is required to develop a hazard mitigation plan, consistent with federal, state, and county guidelines. One of the top hazards is the susceptibility of the downtown area to flooding along the Kennebec. In the most recent flooding events in 2023 that closed bridges over the Kennebec River, limiting access, the Skowhegan Police and Fire Departments staged emergency response equipment and personnel on both sides of the river to prepare. The town works closely with Somerset County Emergency Management on these and other issues.

### **Health Care Facilities:**

Redington-Fairview General Hospital (RFGH) is a 25-bed critical access facility located at 46 Fairview Avenue that provides health care for more than 30,000 residents across Somerset County, from Skowhegan up to the Canadian border. The hospital provides 24-hour, seven days a week emergency medical services as well as offering inpatient and outpatient services in many specialties. RFGH also has a network of community-based primary care and pediatric physicians. In 2009, a new 60,000+ square foot medical office building connected to the hospital at the ground and first floor levels was completed. This three story buildings houses many of the hospital's outpatient primary and specialty services including primary care, pediatrics, neurology, general surgery, OB/GYN, and orthopedic surgery. RFGH is currently in the planning process of constructing an additional office building and expanding its parking to meet increasing health care needs of residents.

Located on Cedar Ridge Drive, Cedar Ridge Center is a 74-bed skilled nursing facility offering post-hospital, short-term rehabilitation as well as long-term and respite care services. Likewise, Woodlawn Rehabilitation offers both private and semi-private rooms for up to 46 residents. Redington Memorial Home is a 31-bed retirement facility located on Water Street offering assisted living arrangements to residents over 65. With an aging population, the need for more affordable, long-term senior housing is going to increase.

### **Highway Department:**

The Highway Department is responsible for maintenance of more than 90 miles of local roads, the stormwater facilities, and other services, as well as issuance of driveway permits inside the urban compact area. The Department is centered in the highway garage, located on Cleveland Street just east of Madison Ave. This garage has adequate capacity and is expected to be sufficient for the foreseeable future. The Highway Department consists of eleven full-time crew and twelve pieces of equipment. New equipment for the Highway Department, as well as a prioritized list of street, sidewalk, and sewer repairs, is part of the Capital Improvements Planning process.

Additional information on the Highway Department's functions can be found in the chapter on transportation.

### **Solid Waste:**

Skowhegan operates a comprehensive solid waste management facility, located off Route 150 north of the downtown. The facility incorporates a transfer station and areas for bulky waste and composting, as well as a recycling building.

The town has made significant efforts to reduce the amount of waste disposal and has been moderately successful. Table 5, below, illustrates the trends from 2019 to 2021. MSW (undifferentiated waste) showed a decline in the 2010s, getting down to 5563 in 2011, but has been rising since. The town's solid waste management ordinance makes recycling mandatory for those who use the transfer station, and transfer station staff carry out an active education program, both at the facility and local schools and other venues. The town also hosts the regional Household Hazardous Waste Collection day, held annually in October. Several neighboring towns participate. In addition to hazardous waste, the collection includes prescription drugs and e-waste.

Waste Type	2019	2020	2021
MSW	6235.62	6224.33	6282.4
DEMO	813.97	797.6	763.75
Wood Chips	496.98	422.5	1043.99
Metal	150.5	210.7	162.11
Tin	23.13		14.42
OCC	409.56	420.83	557.91
ONP	38.94	31	26.07
MP	58.46	63.83	57.04
#2 Color	0.31		5.94
#2 Nat	14	9.06	4.18
#1 PET	0.51		3.82
Screened Compost	661CY	696CY	870CY
Composted Food Scraps	4CY	3.7CY	4CY

*Source: Town of Skowhegan*

The recycling program is not as successful as it should be. This is because recycling is only mandatory for those who use the transfer station. Residents and businesses that hire a commercial hauler do not recycle or recycle at the rate the Town expects. The Town is working on increasing recycling efforts by working with local business. The Solid Waste director currently collects recyclables from a small number of businesses. There is a plan to install designated drop-off areas for recycling around town for businesses to drop off their recycling and for solid waste staff to pick up the recycling at designated times.

Current improvements needed for the transfer station include:

- A pre-crusher: this equipment will allow for more demolition debris to be compacted into dumpster. This will greatly reduce the number of trips to and from the facility by Waste Management which will lower tipping fees.
- A new cardboard baler.
- Storage for recyclable materials: storage for these materials will allow the facility to better take advantage of a variable market. It will allow the facility to sell when prices are high and store when they are low. This may mean a new building as the existing building needs a good deal of work.

### **Utilities:**

A large portion of the urbanized area of Skowhegan is served by public water and sewer systems. The systems overlap extensively, and where available, serve as an incentive and locus for new development. A map of the extent of the systems is included with this report (see appendices).

#### *Public Water System:*

Public water service in Skowhegan is provided by AquaMaine, a public utility that manages fifteen water systems in Maine. The Skowhegan system covers nine square miles, serving approximately 2,400 residential customers and 50 commercial accounts in the town.

Water is supplied to the system from two small ponds located just east of the downtown area. A pump system allows the company to pump water directly from the river to refill the ponds, but that is rarely used. The ponds are spring-fed, with no known issues concerning pollution or groundwater contamination. Surrounding the ponds, the water company owns or controls 114 acres, to protect the quality of the source.

The distribution system is in very good condition. Overall, the system is well below its capacity to supply needs, primarily because it was designed to serve industrial uses which no longer exist. The system's capacity is 1.4 million gallons per day, and current usage is about 600,000. According to the plant superintendent, there are no areas within the current service area to which he would have to deny service to new development.

Planning has been completed for a public water system to serve the Southgate Industrial Park on Route 201 near the SAPPI plant. Installation of the system has partial funding, however, the installation of a public water system for the park would rely on an aquifer which is supplied by the Kennebec River. Potential dam removal on the Kennebec River could impact the water supply to the aquifer so the project is on hold.

There are also a considerable number of state-licensed public water supplies in Skowhegan. These are not generally available to new development, but serve the public, in locations like mobile home parks, campgrounds, or restaurants that are not located on the central system.

#### *Public Sewer:*

A public sewer system owned and operated by the Town of Skowhegan serves the urbanized area of the town, roughly 2,000 residential and 350 commercial/industrial customers. Wastewater drains to the Water Pollution Control Facility, located on the Kennebec River. The facility is designed to treat an average daily flow of 1.65 million gallons per day (mgd), and a peak flow through the primary treatment area of 7.5 mgd.

Ordinary flows of 1.26 mgd put the plant at about 75 percent capacity. Neither the plant nor any of the collection lines or pump stations are at capacity. The only issues with the system at the moment are the age of some of the collection lines and plant equipment.

A Sewer System Master Plan was commissioned and prepared for the town in January, 2007 and updated in 2019, by Wright-Pierce Engineering. The Master Plan states the following:

*Skowhegan's municipal sewerage system was designed to convey and treat sanitary wastewater from residential, commercial, and institutional sewer users. However excess flows from groundwater infiltration, stormwater inflow and inflow induced infiltration periodically allow high flows to enter the system and overwhelm its hydraulic capacity. As a result, when the wastewater treatment plant was constructed in 1973, ten combined sewer overflow (CSO) relief points were added to the system to allow excess flows to be discharged untreated to the Kennebec River. Evolving environmental regulations over the last five decades require communities with CSO discharges to implement a Master Plan for CSO abatement as a condition of their wastewater discharge licenses. The Master Plan must present a pathway moving forward for the eventual elimination of all CSO activity up to a reasonable threshold storm. CSO Master Plans must be updated every five years.*

At the time of writing, the Town of Skowhegan was out to bid for more CSO remediation projects. The most recent maps of the Town's sewer system and CSO abatement are included in the appendix.



## Education:

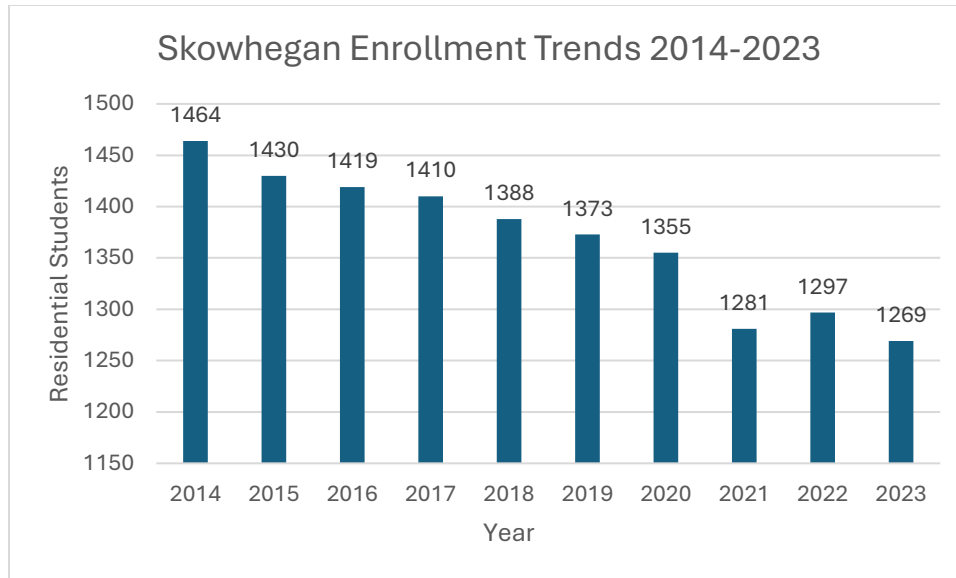
Skowhegan is served by a K-12 public school system that includes five other towns in MSAD 54. It is not within the scope of this plan to do educational facilities planning. The school district has done an adequate job of identifying needs for buildings and programs. The only reason for looking at the educational system is to identify the relationships between school facilities and the town's growth.

The district consists of several elementary schools, including two in Skowhegan, plus the Skowhegan Area Middle School, Skowhegan Area High School, and Skowhegan Regional Vocational Center. Overall, the quality of the facilities and the instruction is high. Skowhegan schools have been recognized through various state measures of educational quality. Locally, respondents to the public opinion survey were well-satisfied with the educational system.

Per Pupil Costs 2007-2008 and 2022-2023			
District	2007-2008	2022-2023	% Change
MSAD 54	\$9,787.00	\$16,367.43	67.23%
MSAD 13	\$11,993.00	\$21,727.60	81.16%
MSAD 49	\$8,209.00	\$12,661.63	54.24%
MSAD 53	\$8,500.00	\$15,144.55	78.17%
MSAD 59	\$8,790.00	\$16,834.57	91.51%
Waterville	\$8,734.00	\$ 16,801.00	92.36%

The quality of schools is a function of the quality of staff and facilities, and stability of finance and administration. Per-pupil costs in MSAD 54 amount to \$9,787 (2007-8) and \$16,367.43 (2022-23), a change of 67% according to the Maine Department of Education. This is relatively high in comparison to neighboring districts, though on par with Waterville and Madison (MSAD 59). Bingham (SAD 13) is higher, but a much more rural district. Per-pupil costs are also rising at a faster rate than most other districts in the region. SAD 54's costs in 1997-8 were lower than MSAD 13, 53 (Pittsfield), 59 (Madison), and Waterville. For the state, 07-08 per-pupil costs averaged \$9,370, an increase of about 82 percent since 1997-8.

As demonstrated in the figure, below, student enrollment declined rather dramatically until 2021, but may be recovering somewhat. This is partly due to the lack of overall growth in population. Maintaining the same (or improved) facilities over time with a declining enrollment is a factor in rising per-pupil costs. However, declining enrollment means that the school system has the capacity for additional growth projected by this plan.



Source: Maine Dept. of Education

The school system functions as an integral part of the community. School facilities are used regularly for community meetings and adult ed. classes, and school grounds are used for recreation. The West Front school complex is located very close to the Skowhegan Community Center. Expansion of the recreation fields between the two will include pedestrian and bicycle connections, which will result in a major education/recreation complex. Sidewalks now extend to the area, and soon a bike path will link the entire urban area.

### **Other Community Services**

The Town of Skowhegan and its partners offer many services that are not considered essential, but which enhance the quality of our town. Among these are recreation and cultural facilities.

#### *Recreation Programs and Facilities:*

The Town of Skowhegan, State of Maine, and private organizations combine to provide land and facilities for public recreation. Many of these facilities are oriented towards Skowhegan's ample outdoor opportunities and are discussed separately in a chapter on outdoor recreation. This section focuses on the operation and facilities of the town's recreation department.

Skowhegan has full-time parks and recreation staff, with offices located at the Skowhegan Community Center on Poulin Drive off of West Front Street. The community center provides the primary recreation facility in town. It consists of a large gym, several meeting/function rooms, several outdoor ballfields, and a large playground area. The town has recently received approval and construction has begun for a major expansion to the ballfield complex.

In addition to the Skowhegan Community Center, the town manages and maintains outside facilities including an outdoor skate park, outdoor basketball courts, ball fields, playgrounds, hiking trails, canoe portages, and seasonal ice rink, as well as adjacent lawn areas around these facilities. Throughout the year the Skowhegan Parks & Recreation Department offers hundreds of programs for all ages, both indoor and outdoor.

While recreation programs and facilities are in good shape for the present, the Town is considering how future demographic changes could affect demand for recreation. Population growth over the next couple of decades will probably increase demand for adult recreation, specifically senior citizens, including walking paths. Because the youth population is holding steady or declining, there may be no increased demand for youth programs, but there will be a lot of demand for passive recreation and senior programs as baby boomers begin to retire. Skowhegan currently has a shortage of senior recreation opportunities.

#### *Cultural Facilities:*

The Skowhegan Opera House at the town hall is a cultural gem. Long used as the locale for town meetings and local talent shows and recitals, the first theatrical production was held in 1909. It has, in recent years, become part of a circuit for big name performing artists. The opera house underwent major renovations in 1977 and the space more recently has had a sprinkler system installed. The Skowhegan Opera House is currently in a lease agreement with non-profit Lights Up Productions with plans to renovate the space in 2026.

The town has a movie theater, the Strand, which has been preserved and enhanced as an example of the art deco style of interior design.

For more active forms of culture, the town hosts the fairgrounds for the Skowhegan State Fair. The weeklong event has been held annually since 1819. The fairgrounds are also used year-round for agricultural and other events. The fair is a major draw and support of the economy of Skowhegan.

The town is served by two libraries. The Skowhegan Free Public Library was constructed in 1889 on a site overlooking the Kennebec River, and has remained almost unchanged in (exterior) appearance ever since. It has kept up to date with several renovations, including major improvements for energy efficiency in 2008. The library is staffed by several full-time employees, and volunteers have totaled more than 6,000 hours of time per year. The library is still managed by the Bloomfield Academy Trustees, but receives a contribution of close to \$90,000 a year from the town.

The Northwood University Margaret Chase Smith Library commemorates one of Skowhegan's most famous citizens. Located in Senator Smith's former home, the library houses her personal records and hosts many public affairs events and collections. While it is not a lending library, it does contribute to the cultural education of the town and the region.

The Skowhegan History House is the heritage museum for the town. It is located in a blacksmith's home dating from 1829 adjacent to the Kennebec River. It houses collections of artifacts and is open to the public regular hours.

### **Analysis and Issues:**

Skowhegan provides the full range and quality of public services and facilities expected of a small, service center community. Public safety and utilities services are sized to accommodate a large commercial base as well as the residential population. The town participates actively in planning processes (e.g. 2007 Sewer master Plan, DOT Second Bridge Study) to anticipate growth and development.

No public facilities are at or over capacity for current needs. Within the 10-year planning period, priority items are the creation of the river park and expansion of trails (addressed in the outdoor recreation chapter), and traffic congestion in the downtown area (addressed in the transportation chapter).

The Town's sewer system has made major investment in addressing CSO and plant capacity issues. The work is ongoing. If development is going to continue in Skowhegan, there will be need for systematic expansion of the service area, including extensions into growing commercial areas along Route 201.

While highway maintenance is an issue in the face of increasing materials and fuel costs, the town has a good planning structure to identify and prioritize roads and bridges that need improvement and its equipment and infrastructure needs are integrated with the town's capital improvements plan.

Public safety, emergency response, and disaster planning services are generally considered to be excellent. In addition to local police, Somerset County Sheriff and state police both have bases in town, and the PSAP and emergency management offices are also located in town. Changes to the dynamics of town and equipment needs will require an examination of the fire station, but that should be ten years or more into the future.

Skowhegan has a history of leadership with neighboring towns on community services. Regional cooperation will become even more of an issue as everyone gets squeezed. The Town can take an active role in organizing and participating in opportunities to provide more cost-effective services regionally.

Skowhegan has a comprehensive capital improvements plan, seeking a mix of reserves and bonding for its projects, with a good awareness of grant opportunities. Additional items suggested in this plan to support growth should be integrated into the CIP.

Policies:	Strategies:	Implementing Party/Timeframe:
<p><b>PUBLIC FACILITIES AND SERVICES:</b></p> <p>Skowhegan provides public services to its residents and to surrounding towns through mutual aid agreements. The town is responsible mainly for police, fire, and emergency services, public works, public utilities, solid waste, and cooperates with the school district on education.</p> <p>To continue to provide adequate public services without additional cost to residents, Skowhegan needs to continue to manage its budget well, as a top priority.</p> <p><b>State Goal: To plan for, finance and develop an efficient system of public facilities and services to accommodate anticipated growth and economic development.</b></p>		
Policies:	Strategies:	Implementing Party/Timeframe:
1. To efficiently meet identified public facility and service needs.	1.1: Identify any capital improvements needed to maintain or upgrade public services to accommodate the community's anticipated growth and changing demographics.	Select Board, Town Manager, Public Works, Police and Fire officials, Planning Board. Ongoing.
	1.2: Locate new public facilities comprising at least 75% of new municipal growth-related capital investments in designated growth areas.	Select Board, Town Manager, Planning Board, CEO. Ongoing.
	1.3: Continue to work toward making all public buildings and properties ADA compliant and accessible.	Select Board, Town Manager, Planning Board, Public Works. Ongoing.
	1.4: Maintain the current level of spending on maintenance and paving of town roads.	Select Board, Town Manager, Road Commissioner. Ongoing.
	1.5: Expand the town's pedestrian and bicycle trail network.	Select Board, Town Manager, Planning Board, Highway Dept. Ongoing.

<b>Policies:</b>	<b>Strategies:</b>	<b>Implementing Party/Timeframe:</b>
	1.6: Initiate conversations or studies with other Somerset County towns on any public service or facility strategy which has possibilities for cost savings or more efficient provision of services.	Select Board, Town Manager, Public Works. Mid-term.
2. To provide public facilities and services in a manner that promotes and supports growth and development in identified growth areas.	2.1: Encourage local sewer and water districts to coordinate planned service extensions with the Future Land Use Plan.	Select Board, Town Manager, Planning Board, Public Works, Road Commissioner. Long term.
	2.2: If public water supply expansion is anticipated, identify and protect suitable sources	Select Board, Town Manager, Public Works, Conservation Commission. Long term.
	2.3: Explore options for regional delivery of local services.	Select Board, Town Manager. Mid-term.
	2.4: Support county wide and regional planning for emergency management.	Select Board, Town Manager, Police and Fire Depts. Ongoing.
	2.5: Continue to promote waste reduction and recycling practices, including expansion of cooperation with neighboring communities.	Select Board, Town Manager, Public Works. Ongoing.
	2.6: Expand access to sewer system, according to the 2007 Sewer System Master Plan.	Select Board, Town Manager, Public Works. Long term.

<b>Policies:</b>	<b>Strategies:</b>	<b>Implementing Party/Timeframe:</b>
	<p>2.7: Maintain and modernize the sanitary treatment plan according to federal standards.</p> <p>2.8: Expand communications with MSAD 54 for the purpose of providing improved adult education and training programs targeted to job qualifications.</p> <p>2.9: Incorporate Capital Investment portion of this Plan into the town's existing capital improvements planning and update the CIP annually as part of the regular budget process.</p> <p>2.10: Evaluate all capital improvement projects for possible grant eligibility or alternative funding sources such as impact fees.</p>	<p>Select Board, Town Manager, Public Works. Ongoing.</p> <p>Select Board, Town Manager, School Board. Mid-term.</p> <p>Select Board, Town Manager. Ongoing.</p> <p>Select Board, Town Manager. Ongoing.</p>

## **Chapter 11: Fiscal Capacity**

### **Fiscal Management**

Comprehensive plans are not intended to dictate day-to-day financial decisions of local government; they are intended to identify long-term trends and needs resulting from growth and development. These needs are usually resolved by new or expanded capital facilities or an increased range of public services. These needs must be balanced with the capacity of a town to fund them.

A significant element of the public services picture is the ability of the town to finance and maintain its services. Town governments are faced with multiple challenges: ordinary population growth, sprawling new patterns of development, new technology, mandates from state and federal government, and more sophisticated demands from residents for leisure services, protection, education, and more. Coupled with a heavy reliance on property taxes, fiscal management is key to delivery of all other services.

Local property values were last assessed in 2009; however, another revaluation is in progress and slated for completion in 2025.

Due to Skowhegan's turnover rate with town officials, particularly the Town Manager position, the town's accounting and budgeting process has not been as clear as is ideal. The town is in good financial condition; however, staffing consistency and steady oversight of financial matters would be beneficial. In fact, much of the necessary financial material necessary for review and inclusion in this Comprehensive Plan was not available at the time of writing. Regardless of Skowhegan's staffing challenges, the town has received sound financial management and has stayed in compliance with 30 MRSA, Section 5061, as amended, which requires that no municipality incur debt that exceeds 15 percent of the state valuation. Skowhegan's debt, in fact, was lower than 2 percent of that state valuation between 2018 and 2022 (Table 1). No data after 2022 was available.

Skowhegan has explored regional cost-sharing opportunities with neighboring communities, including participating in regional solid waste disposal agreements and discussions through the Kennebec Valley Council of Governments (KVCOG) on shared infrastructure planning and emergency management.

Future capital investments outlined in the Capital Investment Plan (CIP) will be primarily funded through a mix of reserve accounts, capital equipment replacement funds, bonding as needed, and state and federal grants. Specific funding strategies are further detailed in the CIP. With municipal debt consistently under 2% of state valuation (Table 1 below) and well below the 15% limit set by 30-A M.R.S.A. § 5701, Skowhegan maintains ample borrowing capacity for future capital projects.



**TABLE 1: SKOWHEGAN DEBT ANALYSIS**

Year	Total Debt	Percent of Valuation
2018	\$14,611,689	1.48%
2019	\$15,731,257	1.58%
2020	\$14,481,542	1.33%
2021	\$22,014,022	1.84%
2022	\$20,580,264	1.72%

*Source: 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022, & 2023 Annual Reports*

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

Tax Exempt Properties	2022
Total Value Government and Municipal	\$26,081,600
Literary and Scientific	\$981,700
Total exempt churches and parsonages	\$5,816,300
Fraternal Organizations	\$623,700
Property leased by hospitals	\$0
Pollution control facilities	\$20,000,000
Quasi-governmental organizations	\$4,288,700
Total Value Veteran exemptions	\$1,574,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$59,366,000</b>
<b>STATE VALUATION</b>	<b>\$1,195,300,000</b>
<b>Percent Exempt</b>	<b>4.96%</b>

*Source: 2022 Municipal Valuation Return Statistical Summary*

Table 2 displays the portion of the town's tax base that is exempt from taxation. These properties account for slightly more than five percent of the entire state valuation for 2022. To offset this, the town could explore fees in lieu of taxes to recover some support for especially relevant municipal services (e.g., roads and public safety), thereby expanding the town's income.

**TABLE 3: SKOWHEGAN'S BUDGET INFORMATION**

YEAR	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023*
<b>STATE VALUATION</b>	\$993,050,000	\$1,084,050,000	\$1,195,900,000	\$1,195,300,000	\$1,256,250,000
<b>COUNTY TAX</b>	\$2,402,383	\$2,381,162	\$2,556,947	\$2,666,111	
<b>EDUCATION APPROPRIATION</b> (Special Assessment)	\$9,296,531	\$9,083,051	\$8,892,737	\$9,130,562	
<b>MIL RATE</b>	0.01724	0.01800	0.01835	0.01748	0.01748
<b>REVENUES</b>					
General Fund (taxes, fees, etc.)	\$17,033,797	\$16,295,243	\$16,892,571	\$17,509,002	
Intergovernmental	\$4,805,243	\$6,507,199	\$6,479,101	\$6,671,353	
Charges for Services	\$296,160	\$297,656	\$370,553	\$432,400	
Interest	\$5,000	\$30,000	\$30,000	\$5,000	
Miscellaneous	\$66,645	\$33,679	\$62,908	\$146,261	
<b>TOTAL REVENUES</b>	<b>\$22,206,845</b>	<b>\$23,163,777</b>	<b>\$23,835,133</b>	<b>\$24,801,888</b>	
<b>EXPENDITURES</b>					
General Government	\$1,569,299	\$1,946,084	\$1,614,489	\$1,828,889	
Public Safety	\$2,883,390	\$2,892,008	\$3,151,592	\$3,558,702	
Public Works	\$1,369,250	\$1,369,163	\$1,588,159	\$1,642,292	
Health and Sanitation	\$1,414,168	\$1,451,265	\$1,543,230	\$1,535,251	
Leisure Services	\$467,657	\$474,367	\$524,216	\$613,440	
Social Services	\$285,820	\$221,467	\$221,998	\$216,779	
Special Assessments (Education)	\$9,296,531	\$9,083,051	\$8,892,737	\$9,130,562	
Unclassified	\$1,975,339	\$2,082,041	\$2,156,844	\$2,292,118	
<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURES</b>	<b>\$21,663,837</b>	<b>\$21,900,608</b>	<b>\$22,250,212</b>	<b>\$23,484,144</b>	
<b>TOTAL DIFFERENCE</b>	<b>\$543,008</b>	<b>\$1,263,169</b>	<b>\$1,584,921</b>	<b>\$1,317,744</b>	

Source: Town of Skowhegan Annual Reports

In Table 3 above, the most current information available for Skowhegan's revenues and expenses was from 2022, due to a number of reasons. Unfortunately, budget information past 2022 was not available for review at the time of writing. However, based on the information that was available and presented in Table 3, Skowhegan's accounting practices have been managed well.

The town's mil rate is a calculated value which means taxpayers pay the mill rate for each thousand dollars of their property's assessed value. For example, for the 2022 tax year, property assessed for \$150,000.00, the assessed taxes were calculated by multiplying \$150,000.00 by the mil rate:  $150,000.00 \times 0.0183 = \$2,745$ .

Education appropriation is Skowhegan's biggest expense, accounting for between 38-40% percent of the budget between 2019 and 2022.

Property taxes are the largest contributor to the town's budget. Those are broken down by category in Table 4.

**TABLE 4: REAL AND PERSONAL PROPERTY BY TYPE**

Year	Land	Buildings	Total Land and Buildings	Mil Rate	State Valuation	Total Taxable Personal Property	Motor Vehicle Excise Tax	Distribution and Transmission
2018	\$178,323,200	\$388,005,700	\$566,328,900	0.01820	\$985,050,000	—**	\$1,561,397	\$22,700,000
2019	\$217,760,800	\$366,475,800	\$584,236,600	0.01724	\$993,050,000	\$276,896,900	\$1,568,334	\$26,266,000
2020	\$181,636,700	\$396,443,300	\$578,080,000	0.01880	\$1,084,050,000	\$268,345,800	\$1,502,970	\$25,900,000
2021	\$199,329,300	\$400,273,000	\$599,602,300	0.01835	\$1,195,900,000	\$267,400,300	\$1,751,645	\$27,200,000
2022*	\$197,831,200	\$442,297,100	\$640,128,300	0.01748	\$1,195,300,000	\$274,552,800	\$1,567,726	\$27,178,000

*Source: Municipal Valuation Statistical Summary (2018-2022)*

*\*Most recent data available*

*\*\*This data is not available for 2018*

Between 2018 and 2022, the mil rate has increased by 12 percent, which is not a dramatic increase. Motor vehicle excise tax increased by 9 percent and the state valuation increased by 27 percent.

Excise taxes are generally tied to economic conditions also but in general this revenue source will likely continue to increase slightly each year.

**Table 5: Six Years of State Valuations for Skowhegan**

Year	State Valuation
2018	\$985,050,000
2019	\$993,050,000
2020	\$1,084,050,000
2021	\$1,195,900,000
2022	\$1,195,300,000
2023	\$1,256,250,000

*Source: Municipal Valuation Statistical Summary*

**Accounting Practices:**

The Town historically conducted annual audits through Brantner, Thibodeau & Associates (2019-2022), however, an audit has not been completed since 2022 due to substantial staff turnover and associated administrative delays. The next audit is scheduled for Fall 2025. Despite these challenges, the town continues to maintain sound financial practices and internal controls, as best as could be determined. Skowhegan's annual reports include a detailed audit report and description of all town funds accounting practices. Reports for 2019-2022 were all favorable in their characterization of the town's approach to financial management.

## **Capital Investment Plan**

### **Description of Existing Process:**

The Capital Investment Plan (CIP) component of the Comprehensive Plan identifies growth related capital investments and a strategy for accommodating them. The CIP anticipates future expenses, sets priorities and timetables, and proposes a mechanism to fund them. The CIP is important because it alerts both municipal officials and citizens about future expenses and allows the town to find the most cost-effective way to finance the Improvement.

The CIP covered in this chapter will include items includes items identified in the comprehensive plan which are called capital expenses. A capital expense is defined as having a cost that is not a maintenance or operating expense. Skowhegan does basic capital planning for its municipal facilities; however, no working CIP was available for inclusion in this section. At the very least, the town should maintain a prioritized list of anticipated capital needs.

While Skowhegan does not have a formal CIP outside of what is detailed here, there have been discussions about developing a plan in the future and the Town maintains an informal list of Capital Improvement Projects per department.

The creation and development of a formal municipal CIP is the responsibility of the Town Manager. However, the Town Manager must rely on town staff and committees to submit needs and cost estimates and set priorities. Thus, the CIP process should ideally be prepared alongside the annual budget, so that a portion of the annual budget is set aside to fund the CIP. This can be in the form of contributions to a reserve fund, one-time appropriations, or commitment to pay interest on a loan.

Skowhegan's Select Board, in conjunction with the Town Manager, should consider the development of a formal CIP by incorporating the guidelines needed to reach the goals of the initial project list presented in this plan. The capital investments listed below include those identified by this plan as well as other capital improvement projects that have come up in town discussions. Due to turn over in Town Managers during the writing of the plan and Skowhegan's lack of a formal CIP, much of what is identified in the tables below is general.

Going forward, any reference to a CIP will be the data detailed in this section.

### ***Why a CIP?***

The development and maintenance of a Capital Investments Plan would allow Skowhegan the ability to forecast upcoming major expenses with minimal surprises. Developing a CIP presents the town with the opportunity to:

- Engage in a reasoned discussion about priorities.
- Prepare a pre-planned list that better enables Skowhegan to take advantage of unexpected opportunities, such as grants, low interest rates and price drops.

- Forecast, plan, and mitigate property tax impacts.

### ***Financing the CIP:***

A source of funding for each item has been proposed. The less certain the item is, the more speculative the funding can be. The principal threat to a stable budget is the one-time, large ticket expenditure, such as an expense brought on by an emergency or a new building. In Skowhegan, capital improvements are funded through a combination of appropriations, reserve funds, grants, lease programs, or bonding.

- Annual appropriations: While funding a major purchase in a one-time annual appropriation can be disruptive to the budget, it works for lower-priced items or when a continuing monetary stream can be tapped for regular needs.
- Undesignated fund: In keeping with its fund balance policy, the town maintains an adequate amount in undesignated funds. Funds more than those allocated may be used for one-time capital expenditure or to address emergencies or even catastrophic needs that may unexpectedly arise.
- Reserve accounts: Skowhegan's maintains a reserve account to pay for capital improvements on an as-needed basis.
- Bonding/lease-purchase agreements: As of 2022, Skowhegan has not used bonding, but they have permission to do so, as necessary, for equipment purchases. Permission is through the legislative body.
- Grants: Grants are competitive and cannot be relied upon. A grant is acceptable for "wish list" items, but not for essentials. A grant search should be part of the annual CIP update process.
- Outside contributions: In many cases, other organizations may join with the town to contribute to a project of joint benefit. This may include other towns or organizations such as Somerset Woods Trustees or Main Street Skowhegan. While these funding sources may be more reliable than grants, it requires coordination with timetables outside of the town's control.

Financing of the CIP may come from any number of sources, but the most crucial element is to ensure the impact on the annual town budget is spread out over time. Under this Plan, the major impacts will come from Capital Improvement Funds.

As of 2022, Skowhegan has sufficient borrowing power but has not taken advantage of this option for the last several years, due to successful budget planning and oversight. While borrowing is a viable option, the town would rather make purchases outright, using capital improvement funds, where feasible.

### **Shared Investments**

Skowhegan has historically been proactive in planning for future expenses and collaborating with neighboring towns to maximize opportunities. For example, the town collaborates with neighboring communities on education and emergency response.

**Priority Level:**

L= Low

M= Medium

H= High

**EMERGENCY SERVICES:**

Department	Project/Need	Priority	Estimated Replacement Timeframe	Estimated Cost	Primary Funding Source
Fire Department	New Fire Gear	Ongoing	Yearly	TBD	Budgeted, Capital Fund, Grants

**PUBLIC WORKS:**

Department	Project/Need	Priority	Estimated Replacement Timeframe	Estimated Cost	Primary Funding Source
Public Works	Second Bridge over Kennebec River	Ongoing	Ongoing	TBD	DOT, Federal Grants
Public Works	Malbons Mills Bridge on the Notch Road	M	2027	TBD	Budgeted Capital Fund, DOT
Public Works	Implement Sidewalk & Bike Trail System	Ongoing	Yearly	TBD per project	DOT, Local Match

**UTILITIES AND TRANSFER STATION:**

Department	Project/Need	Priority	Estimated Replacement Timeframe	Estimated Cost	Primary Funding Source
Sewer Department	General maintenance	M	Ongoing	TBD	Budgeted, Capital Fund
Sewer Department	SCADA Upgrade, Dewatering Upgrade	H	2025	TBD	Budgeted, Capital Fund

Transfer Station	General maintenance	M	Ongoing	TBD	Budgeted, Capital Fund
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**TOWN OFFICE, TOWN STAFF, ELECTED OFFICIALS:**

Department	Project/Need	Priority	Estimated Replacement Timeframe	Estimated Cost	Primary Funding Source
Town Office	Expansion of Town Office	M	2035	\$1 million	Grants



## Fiscal Capacity Policies and Strategies

Policies:	Strategies:	Implementing Party/Timeframe:
<b>Fiscal Capacity:</b>  Skowhegan is in acceptable financial condition, with no debt and sound financial management. In general, revenues have been reasonable stable in the last decade. The Town Manager and Select Board are committed towards achieving a balanced budget with respect to the municipal side and seek innovative and sustainable solutions to that end  <b>State Goal: To encourage orderly growth and development in appropriate areas of each community, while protecting the state's rural character, making efficient use of public services, and preventing development sprawl.</b>		
Policies:	Strategies:	Implementing Party/Timeframe:
1. To finance existing and future facilities and services in a cost effective manner.	1.1: Formalize, review, and update the Town's Capital Improvement Plan on an annual basis, incorporate improvements into the annual budget, and expand its scope to 10 years into the future.	Select Board / Near-term / 2025-2026.
2. To explore grants available to assist in the funding of capital investments within the community.	2.1: Maintain a working knowledge and listing of grants and deadlines for financing special projects.	Select Board / Economic Development Office / Near-term / 2025-2026.
3. To reduce Maine's tax burden by staying within LD 1 spending limitations.	3.1: Explore opportunities to work with neighboring communities to plan for and finance shared or adjacent capital investments to increase cost savings and efficiencies.	Town Manager / Select Board / Ongoing.

## **Chapter 12: Existing Land Use**

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

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

### **Introduction**

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

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

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

The Existing Land Use chapter serves to review the existing land use patterns and development in Skowhegan. Like other communities in central Maine, Skowhegan can be characterized as a rural residential community; however, Skowhegan has the unique distinction of being a regional hub, and the Somerset County seat. As such, Skowhegan acts as a service center and place of employment for many surrounding communities. And, for those who work outside of town, Skowhegan is within easy commuting distance to other, larger service centers. For these reasons and more, Skowhegan is ideally situated and, in the last several years, has been growing at a rapid pace.

Skowhegan remains committed to enhancing the economic vitality of the downtown, through encouraging appropriate commercial and residential growth. The town has a strong sense of community and desire to preserve its heritage as a rural community, through the conservation of farmland, open space, and environmental assets. Additionally, residents and town officials recognize that increasing and promoting recreational offerings is paramount to the town's continued growth.

## **Settlement Patterns**

The history of the town of Skowhegan is closely linked to its land-use patterns, particularly regarding the development and evolution of mills along the Kennebec River. Skowhegan's strategic location along the river has played an essential role in the development and growth of the town.

The town's earliest land uses were characterized by the establishment of sawmills in the 1820s, reflecting the abundant timber resources of the surrounding region. The growth of the timber industry led to the expansion of logging operations and the construction of mills along the riverbanks, strategically using waterpower for wood processing.

With the explosion in demand for textiles in the mid-19th century, Skowhegan's land use was transformed to allow for the construction of cotton and wool mills. These mills, often located close to the river for water-powered machinery, had a significant impact on the town's layout and land use. Proximity to water sources not only facilitated industrial processes but also influenced the clustering of residential areas around the spinning mills, creating a distinct spatial pattern.

In recent years, Skowhegan's land use planning has centered on preserving its industrial heritage while diversifying land use to meet modern needs. With 95% of growth occurring in the rural areas and only 5% in the designated growth area, the town has focused on balancing historic preservation with contemporary development. The growth area holds significant potential, with numerous buildable lots available, though they have yet to be put on the market. Efforts to repurpose former factory sites for mixed-use projects reflect a strategic approach to integrating the town's history with its evolving land-use needs.

The link between Skowhegan's land use planning and its industrial history remains strong, with initiatives to repurpose mill spaces and celebrate the town's heritage. At the same time, agriculture plays a pivotal role in the town's history and current economy, with residents deeply valuing the agricultural traditions that have shaped their community. Cultural events, highlighting both the industrial past and agricultural roots, help to create a strong sense of place and identity. These efforts ensure that Skowhegan's history—both industrial and agricultural—continues to influence its present and future land use strategies, fostering a community that honors its past while planning for the future.

## **Characteristics of Skowhegan's Land**

Skowhegan has an abundance of natural resources, outlined further in the Critical Natural Resources and Water Resources chapters. When considering land use planning, it is imperative to plan with consideration of these fragile, natural resources, if not just for their inherent values, then also for Skowhegan's property values.

Fortunately, Skowhegan has maintained many of its natural resources in good condition despite development. Town officials and the Planning Board consider all proposed

development in context of preserving natural resources. Skowhegan also partners with the Somerset Woods Trustees, Somerset Soil and Water Conservation District, Skowhegan Outdoors, and Lake George Regional Park in the conservation of land and water resources.

Also inherently intertwined with the town's identity is its proximity to the Kennebec River. Undeniably, this one asset has shaped the town's history more than any other factor, and it still does to this day.

### *Downtown Skowhegan*

Undisputably, Skowhegan's downtown, originally established during settlement, is one of the town's dominant land use features. This area encompasses the dams and historic mill buildings, the "flatiron block" of storefronts, blocks of single-family homes and apartments built over the past 200 or so years. This part of Skowhegan is also the heart of Somerset County's medical, legal, financial, and governmental services, as well as the Town Office and public works services. It also held the town's police and fire services until they were recently moved to the north side of town into a new building. Over the years, the downtown area has expanded to include Madison Avenue, the hospital district, the Northgate Industrial Park, and the school complex on West Front Street.

It is noteworthy that, despite the unchanged footprints of many of the buildings in the downtown area, endeavors to incorporate additional residential and commercial units are emerging. One example is the recent renovation of the late 1800's building at 65 Water Street, which allows for mixed-uses. The revitalization features two commercial tenants on the ground floor, with a third on the second floor. There are also apartments available on the second floor, which aligns with the community's vision by enhancing economic vitality, encouraging more employment options, and creating housing options.

Further, this inclination towards smaller spaces aligns with evolving social habits. The surge of online retail has diminished the necessity for expansive physical retail spaces, as consumers increasingly embrace digital shopping. Concurrently, the ascent of remote work is reshaping the demand for office spaces, resulting in many companies downsizing their physical presence. These trends underscore a change in retail patterns.

The town's center is at the convergence of two major highways, so development naturally occurred outward along these roads. Route 2 to the west gradually narrows to more widely spaced homes and open lands; Route 2 to the east has a cluster of commercial development in the Dudley Corner/River Road areas but otherwise it is primarily rural. Since the town center is just a half mile from the Madison town line to the north, Route 201 in that direction has been heavily developed, and has been the focal point of commercial growth for several years.

The downtown area is served by both public water and sewer systems and is densely developed enough to require such systems. Skowhegan's sewer system was designed to handle wastewater from homes, businesses, and institutions. However, during heavy

rain or when groundwater seeps in, the system can overflow. To manage this, ten combined sewer overflow (CSO) points were added in 1973 to release untreated water into the Kennebec River. Due to stricter environmental regulations, towns with CSO issues must develop plans to reduce them. Skowhegan's first CSO Master Plan was approved in 2012, with an update in 2019. The abatement work is ongoing, though significant progress has been made.

Route 201 to the south contains a mix of commercial development and private homes. It is anchored by the SAPPI paper mill on the Fairfield town line and the Southgate Industrial Park to the north of it which has two available remaining lots. Southgate Industrial Park's biggest challenge in attracting new businesses is its limited water supply. There were discussions about tapping into an aquifer located across the street, but this aquifer relies on recharge from the Kennebec River. If any dam removal causes the river level to drop, it could disrupt the aquifer's ability to provide water, making it impossible to supply the industrial park. This uncertainty around the water source creates a significant barrier to economic growth and expansion in the area.

There are no significant concentrations of development in the remainder of town. The rural roads have seen quite a few individual homes and small subdivisions. There are large tracts of undeveloped land, and particularly along the boundary with Canaan to the east. Lake George and Oak Pond have some seasonal camps and a few year-round homes on their shores.

In 2022, the Skowhegan Select Board and Main Street Skowhegan began working with the Maine DOT on a Village Partnership Initiative (VPI) to further study a second bridge over the Kennebec in downtown and other alternatives to improve transportation safety and accessibility in downtown. The final draft of this study was accepted by the Select Board in 2025 and more information on it is included in the Transportation chapter.

Main Street Skowhegan has partnered with the town on many studies and continues to be a driving force for revitalization of Skowhegan's downtown.

### *Residential Land Uses*

New housing construction is primarily a function of multiple economic factors, including the availability of land, public sewer and water, and roads. The supply of land in the rural areas of town is the chief influence for siting new homes.

Presently, residential land uses are most concentrated in the downtown area due to existing development patterns, ease of access, and connectivity to public water and sewer. The downtown area is built up but not at capacity, though available land in the downtown area is limited, there are a large number of vacant residential properties.

Skowhegan's downtown area is a mixture of uses, including commercial land uses, mixed-use, and institutional. The inclusion of residential units in a mixed-use downtown area yields numerous advantages. These residences contribute to a vibrant urban

lifestyle, fostering social and cultural activities. They drive the local economy, promoting foot traffic in shops and expanding the customer base. With a focus on urban revitalization, and improved quality of life, mixed-use residential units are pivotal to the downtown's prosperity and vitality.

Skowhegan's development is occurring primarily on a lot by lot basis and in planned subdivisions. The Town has approved several subdivisions over the years that have not lived up to their potential and are just sitting idle at the time of writing. Several subdivisions that were approved in the 1950s are only now being developed in the 2020s. There is some, limited, evidence of sprawl; however, as noted in the community's vision statement, the town recognizes the need for more housing opportunities, while also striving to ensure that new development does not infringe on environmental assets, a balance that will be challenging to meet.

Skowhegan endeavors to be a community that allows residents to live and use their land without over regulation, as long as it does not have a negative impact of adjacent properties or the peace of the community. For this reason, there is no immediate concern over the location of the current housing development. The Code Enforcement Officer tracks all permits issued and will continue to monitor and track residential growth to ensure it is consistent with the community's vision. The Skowhegan Code Enforcement Officer uses IWorQ to track permits and land use violations. The ability for residents to apply for permits online and the Code Enforcement Officer to track permitting electronically contributes to the overall efficiency of the office.

Since Skowhegan does not have land use controls, such as zoning, there is no effective way to direct housing development into specific locations through regulation. Perhaps the biggest influence in the location and types of development is the availability of public infrastructure including public water and sewer. It is considerably less expensive to develop in a location served by public water and sewer, than in parts of town where private wells and septic systems must be created. There is capacity for additional connection to public water and sewer. While expansion is needed, especially on Route 201 to encourage more development, it is not anticipated as there is more work needed on the Skowhegan sewer system to complete CSO updates.

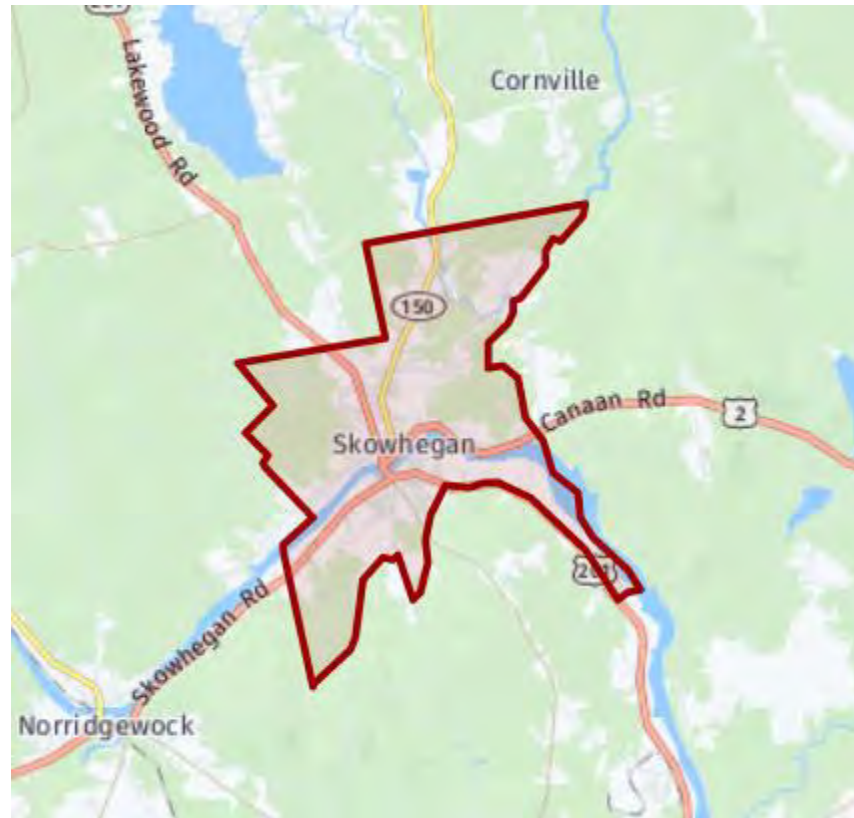
### *Census Designated Place*

Skowhegan has the notable feature of having a Census Designated Place or CDP. A CDP is a concentration of population defined by the United States Census Bureau for statistical purposes only. A CDP is not the same as a town; it is a location delineated by the Census Bureau based on population density in that area.

Skowhegan's Census Designated Place had a population of 6,404 at the 2020 Census. The boundaries of the CDP are comprised of the primary, original settlement in Skowhegan and consists of approximately 13.36 square miles, of which 0.72 square miles are water. Skowhegan is classified as U1 Census Class Code, which means it is a Census Designated Place with an official federally recognized name.

In Figure 1 below, outlined and shaded in red, is the official, federally recognized Census Designated Place in Skowhegan. The CDP is the most densely populated and developed portion of town. Of Skowhegan's entire population of 8,620 (2020 Census), approximately 74 percent of the entire population lived within the CDP. Skowhegan's CDP ranks 25th (85<sup>th</sup> percentile) for population density when compared to the 153 other CDPs throughout the State of Maine.

**FIGURE 1: SKOWHEGAN'S CENSUS DESIGNATED PLACE BOUNDARY**



*Source: 2020 Census*

### *Subdivision Developments*

New subdivisions typically reflect patterns of development throughout town and beyond. Subdivisions are regulated in Skowhegan by both the Town of Skowhegan Subdivision Review Ordinance, adopted in 1989 and amended through 2012. Consideration should be given to updating this Ordinance to reflect the most recent state requirements.

The analysis and statistics on the number of subdivisions in Skowhegan is based on the state definition of "subdivision." Maine defines subdivision as:

*The division of a tract or parcel of land into three or more lots within any five-year period that begins on or after September 23, 1971. This definition applies whether the division is accomplished by sale, lease, development, buildings or otherwise. The term “subdivision” includes the division of a new structure or structures on a tract or parcel of land into three or more dwelling units within a five-year period, the construction or replacement of three or more dwelling units on a single tract or parcel of land and the division of an existing structure or structures previously used for commercial or industrial use into three or more dwelling units within a five-year period.*

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

- Gifts to [of land] relatives,
- Transfer to governmental entity,
- Transfer to conservation organizations,
- Transfer of lots for forest management, agricultural management, or conservation of natural resources,
- Unauthorized subdivision lots in existence for at least 20 years.

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

In Skowhegan, development is primarily occurring both lot by lot and in planned subdivisions. Over the years, the town has approved several subdivisions, but many of these developments have not reached their full potential and are currently sitting idle. As for existing subdivisions, many are not at capacity, with several from the 1950s now being developed after remaining underutilized for decades. This slow development within older subdivisions reflects the ongoing growth and development trends in the area. Recent development, however, aligns with the community’s vision, indicating that the town is moving in the desired direction.

Skowhegan does not have regulatory measures, such as zoning, to encourage new residential development into previously approved subdivision.

### *Industrial and Commercial Development*

Historically and currently, most commercial development in Skowhegan has occurred along the Kennebec River, in the downtown area. The downtown is still the prominent location for commercial and industrial development, as it has public water and sewer access and has easy access to the main roads going in and out of town.

The downtown area contains the highest concentration of commercial or mixed-use buildings. Water Street and the Flatiron Block represent iconic commercial architecture from the 19th Century. Several of these buildings have been actively occupied for decades, and others are currently undergoing renovation.



Assisted by Main Street Skowhegan and the town's Community Development Program, the town center is continually undergoing revitalization. There are constraints to this trend: most of the buildings have virtually no parking or expansion capabilities, and many cannot provide handicapped access to their upper stories. The greatest opportunity for redevelopment is the former Solon Manufacturing mill building on Island Ave. The three-story brick mill is in the process of conversion to retail and other uses. The redevelopment of the Spinning Mill is a prime example of adaptive land use, transforming an old industrial site into a mixed-use development that blends commercial, residential, and recreational spaces. This project aligns with Skowhegan's broader goals of revitalizing its downtown area, attracting new businesses, and addressing housing needs. The integration of a boutique hotel, commercial spaces, and workforce housing reflects a shift toward sustainable, multi-use land development that supports both economic growth and community revitalization. Additionally, the use of a Tax Increment Financing (TIF) district to fund infrastructure improvements further highlights the town's commitment to enhancing its land use through public-private partnerships. The project is expected to be completed in 2025.

Madison Avenue is the primary commercial highway. Lower Madison Avenue is a blend of historic homes (many converted to commercial use) and older commercial buildings. The upper portion of the road is characterized by more modern commercial architecture, much of which is built on the sites of older commercial buildings. The entire length of Madison Avenue, from town center to Madison, is less than a mile.

Madison Avenue has the capacity for increased occupancy. Two older retail complexes are under-utilized, and new construction pads are available at a third.

Waterville Road – Route 201 south of town – contains more opportunities for commercial growth. This is a high-traffic road, and the direct link to Interstate 95, with quite a bit of developable land. Currently, the frontage is characterized by a variety of development, from classy riverfront homes, to small, roadside businesses. The factor constraining greater development of the road is the lack of public water and sewer.

The SAPPI paper mill and the town's Southgate Industrial Park are at the very southern end of Route 201. The park was sited there because of proximity to the mill's three-phase power and still has two available lots, however lack of public utilities remains an obstacle..

Prospective plans for the second bridge show it linking up to Route 201 just south of the built-up area. Five miles of frontage south of the proposed juncture has no geographic nor ownership constraints. While there is not currently a demand for large commercial tracts, this area is certainly appropriate if public sewer (at a minimum) were available.

Another focus of growth is the Redington-Fairview General Hospital on Route 104/Fairview Ave. The hospital is expanding its campus, with a new medical office building and added parking, expected to be completed by 2027. It owns additional tracts, suitable for further growth of health-related services.

The Northgate Industrial Park, located off Route 150, was created in the mid-1970s. It consists of nine lots and has access to public utilities. All of the lots in the park have been sold.

In addition, there are various small businesses scattered throughout town. Encouraging small businesses in town is in keeping with the community's vision for enhancing economic vitality, increasing jobs, promoting character, and increasing services in town. Ideally, new small businesses would establish in existing structures that were previously housed commercial or industrial uses, as this would not only revitalize old buildings but also reduce the need for unnecessary construction, both of which align with the community's vision.

In addition to traditional commercial businesses, there are several recreation-based businesses. The Skowhegan River Park project reflects a shift in land use toward recreational development, focusing on enhancing public access to the Kennebec River and promoting outdoor tourism. The construction of the whitewater park, along with riverfront improvements, signals a trend of utilizing waterfront properties for leisure and environmental restoration rather than traditional industrial or residential uses. This development is part of broader efforts to transform Skowhegan into a regional outdoor destination, aligning with the growing interest in sustainable, recreational land uses that support both environmental preservation and economic growth. These recreation-based projects fulfill the community's need for activities and encourage community involvement.

Skowhegan's recent commercial and industrial development aligns with the community's vision by providing a mixture of services in the downtown area, repurposing existing commercial buildings, and promoting outdoor recreation.

### *The Institutional and Service Sector*

As the Somerset County seat, other towns look to Skowhegan to continue to provide governmental, health, medical, legal and other services to the area. Nearly all the services are located conveniently in the downtown area.

Additionally, a range of Skowhegan's businesses and municipal services that provide a range of critical services to the region are also located in the downtown area. These include, but are not limited to the Town Office, Police, Fire, and Public Works. The schools and hospital are also in the downtown area.

### **Land Use Trends**

Currently, most of the newer developments in Skowhegan have been spread throughout town, on a lot-by-lot basis. Most of the development has taken place outside of the designated growth area and in the rural area of town, despite lack of public utilities.

Downtown Skowhegan continues to see yearly development and has potential. There are many buildable lots, though they are currently not for sale.

Skowhegan's town staff, particularly the land use administration, is evolving as the town continues to grow. The town has adequate capacity to track, document, and issue permits through the Code Enforcement Officer and Planning Office Administrator. The Code Enforcement Officer is employed full-time and is fully certified. The Planning Board is active and involved in permitting and the land use regulatory process. The Planning Board consists of seven full-time volunteer members and two alternate volunteer members, aided by the assistance of a professional consulting planner from the Kennebec Valley Council of Governments.

The lack of land use regulations or incentives to develop within the growth area, coupled with the limited capacity remaining in the existing designated growth area have resulted in residential development in more rural parts of town.

New residential development is more challenging to direct into growth areas than commercial development because there are fewer regulatory and nonregulatory incentives. For example, most new commercial development would opt for a location served by public water and sewer connections (a nonregulatory incentive); however, this is rarely a consideration for residential development. Additionally, most people moving to Skowhegan appreciate the town's rural atmosphere, resulting in housing construction in rural areas.

## **Land Use Regulation**

Skowhegan has multiple ordinances for regulating local development; however, taken together, they place few restrictions on new home construction, and increasingly tighter restrictions on larger and more complex development.

Skowhegan's land use-related ordinances are as follows:

- Building Safety Ordinance- adopted 1997, amended through 2018
- Floodplain Management Ordinance, amended through 2024
- Property Maintenance Ordinance, adopted 2022
- Shoreland Zoning Ordinance, amended through 2021
- Site Plan Review Ordinance, adopted 1995, amended through 2022
- Subdivision Review Ordinance, adopted 1989, amended through 2012
- Utility Scale Solar Energy Facility Ordinance, adopted 2021

Two ordinances are mandated: the Shoreland Zoning Ordinance (detailed further below), which restricts development within 250' of rivers and ponds, and within 75' of primary streams; and the Floodplain Management Ordinance, which restricts development on the 100-year floodplain. These are the only ordinances which constitute "zoning," affecting

only certain property owners. All other ordinances apply equally throughout the jurisdiction.

The Building Safety Ordinance sets standards for minimum lot size at 20,000 square feet for lots with private septic systems, and setbacks of 5 feet outside of developed blocks with common walls. Although these are very basic standards which are almost always exceeded, there has been no occasion or reason to consider increasing them. The Building Safety Ordinance also requires new development to be inspected for fire safety purposes prior to building occupancy. Though this Ordinance sets minimum lot sizes and setback requirements, those are a function required by state law.

The current Subdivision Review Ordinance should continue to be amended and kept current with state law and best management practices for stormwater management, erosion, and street access.

The Subdivision Review Ordinance requires that subdivision lots have 100 feet of road frontage and 10,000 square feet of land area if on public sewer, 200 feet and 40,000 square feet of land area if on a private septic system. Thus, the Subdivision Review Ordinance sets higher standards for development than those for individually created lots

The Site Plan Review Ordinance was overhauled in 2022 and in 2021. a companion document, Site Plan Review Procedure, was created to clarify major versus minor developments and other application requirements. This Ordinance sets a permitting process for non-residential development, based on the proposed size of the structure. The threshold determination between Major and Minor development is detailed below:

Minor- 5,000 – 10,000 square feet general floor area, or 10,000 square feet of impervious surface or conversion of existing areas or sign. This type of application requires a site visit with the Staff Review Committee.

Major- More than 10,000 square feet of gross floor area or require a Traffic Movement Permit. This type of application is far more involved with much more regulatory oversight. It requires a Site Inventory and Analysis, followed by Planning Board review and a public hearing.

This Ordinance contains standards to provide the appropriate town staff and the Planning Board with an opportunity to review applications to limit a development's potential burden on traffic, water flows, town services, the neighbors, and other elements.

Neither the Subdivision Review Ordinance nor Site Plan Review Ordinance regulate development based on zoning. Both ordinances contain different standards for some urban development, i.e. within the sewer area or the urban compact area (roadway segments designated by MDOT).

The town staff, in conjunction with the KVCOG Planner that assists the Planning Board, have worked to ensure that all ordinances relating to land use have remained relatively up to date. While some may need minor updating, no major updates are needed.

Skowhegan's Shoreland Zoning Ordinance breaks the town into six shoreland districts:

1. Resource Protection
2. Limited Residential
3. Limited Commercial
4. General Development
5. Wetlands Protection
6. Stream Protection

1. Resource Protection District: The Resource Protection District includes areas in which development would adversely affect water quality, productive habitat, biological ecosystems, or scenic and natural values. This District shall include the following areas when they occur within the limits of the shoreland zone, exclusive of the Stream Protection District and the Wetland Protection District, except that areas which are currently developed and areas which meet the criteria for the Limited Commercial or General Development, need not be included within the Resource Protection District.

- a. Areas within two hundred fifty (250') feet, horizontal distance, of the upland edge of freshwater wetlands, and wetlands associated with great ponds and rivers, which are rated "moderate" or "high" value waterfowl and wading bird habitat, including nesting and feeding areas, by the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife (DIF&W) that are depicted on a Geographic Information System (GIS) data layer maintained by either MDIF&W or the Department as of December 31, 2008. For the purposes of this paragraph "wetlands associated with great ponds and rivers" shall mean areas characterized by non-forested wetland vegetation and hydric soils that are contiguous with a great pond or river, and have a surface elevation at or below the water level of the great pond or river during the period of normal high water. "Wetlands associated with great ponds or rivers" are considered to be part of that great pond or river.
- b. Flood plains along rivers and flood plains along artificially formed great ponds along rivers, defined by the hundred (100) year flood plain as designated on the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) Flood Insurance Rate Maps or Flood Hazard Boundary Maps, or the flood of record, or in the absence of these, by soil types identified as recent flood plain soils.
- c. Areas of two or more contiguous acres with sustained slopes of twenty (20%) percent or greater.
- d. Areas of two (2) or more contiguous acres supporting wetland vegetation and hydric soils, which are not part of a freshwater wetland as defined,

and which are not surficially connected to a water body during the period of normal high water.

- e. Land areas along rivers are subject to severe bank erosion, undercutting, or riverbed movement.
2. Limited Residential District: The Limited Residential District includes those areas suitable for residential and recreational development. It includes areas other than those in the Resource Protection District, Wetlands Protection District, or Stream Protection District, and areas, which are used less intensively than those in the Limited Commercial District, and the General Development Districts.
  4. Limited Commercial District: The Limited Commercial District includes areas of mixed, light commercial and residential uses, exclusive of the Stream Protection District and Wetlands Protection District, which should not be developed as intensively as the General Development Districts. This district includes areas of two (2) or more contiguous acres in size devoted to a mix of residential and low intensity business and commercial uses. Industrial uses are prohibited.
  5. General Development District: The General Development District includes the following types of areas:
    - a. Areas of two (2) or more contiguous acres devoted to commercial, industrial or intensive recreational activities, or a mix of such activities, including but not limited to the following:
      - i. Areas devoted to manufacturing, fabricating, or other industrial activities;
      - ii. Areas devoted to wholesaling, warehousing, retail trade and service activities, or other commercial activities; and
      - iii. Areas devoted to intensive recreational development and activities, such as, but not limited to amusement parks, racetracks, and fairgrounds.
    - b. Areas otherwise discernable as having patterns of intensive commercial, industrial or recreational uses.

Portions of the General Development District may also include residential development. However, no area shall be designated as a General Development District based solely on residential use.

In areas adjacent to great ponds classified GPA and adjacent to rivers flowing to great ponds classified GPA, the designation of an area as a General Development District shall be based upon uses existing at the time of adoption of this Ordinance. There shall be no newly established General Development Districts or expansions

in area of existing General Development Districts adjacent to great ponds classified GPA, and adjacent to rivers, which flow to great ponds, classified GPA.

6. Wetland Protection District: The Wetlands Protection District includes all land areas within two hundred fifty (250') feet, horizontal distance, of the upland edge of a freshwater wetland not rated "moderate" or "high" value by the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife as of December 31, 2008.
7. Stream Protection District: The Stream Protection District includes all land areas within seventy-five (75') feet, horizontal distance, of the normal high-water line of a stream, exclusive of those areas within two hundred and fifty (250') feet, horizontal distance, of the normal high water line of a great pond or river or within two hundred and fifty (250') feet, horizontal distance of the upland edge of a freshwater wetland. Where a stream and its associated shoreland area are located within two hundred and fifty (250') feet, horizontal distance, of the above water bodies or wetlands, that land area shall be regulated under the terms of the shorelands district associated with that water body or wetland.

Skowhegan's 2010 Comprehensive Plan delineates the growth area as much of downtown, it continues north along Madison Avenue to the Madison town line, north along North Avenue to Mann Road, and further along Malbons Mill Road. It extends west past Mary Street on Norridgewock Avenue and includes key areas south of the Kennebec River, such as the schools on West Front Street. Additionally, it includes the area south to Bloomfield Street and outward along Route 104 and Route 201 (Waterville Road). In 2010, the future growth areas expanded further west on West Front Street, south on Route 104, east on Waterville Road, and north on North Ave and East Madison Road. Although Skowhegan has little in the way of official regulatory measures to direct growth into the designated growth areas, there are other non-regulatory measures that can be employed for directing growth.

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

## **Non-Regulatory Measures**

In addition to the ordinances detailed above, Skowhegan also has a few non-regulatory means for directing growth to desired locations. The most obvious non-regulatory

measure is the public sewer and water connectivity in the downtown area. The availability of municipal water and sewer lowers development costs in the designated growth areas and helps to locate future development where desired. While there is capacity to add users to the current system, expansion is not expected to the system in the near future as Skowhegan focuses on projects related to CSO.

Besides municipal sewer and water, Skowhegan has already acted on other non-regulatory measures to encourage appropriate development in desired areas. For example, Skowhegan has been in the process of revitalizing and redeveloping its downtown area, including improving aesthetics, sidewalk maintenance, creating green space, and working with Maine DOT to improve walkability.

The Recreation Advisory Committee has also been instrumental in promoting the downtown through the development and creation of walking and biking trails throughout town that provide connectivity to local hubs. The trails, used by both Skowhegan residents and visitors, create a sense of place and provide a more walkable downtown (see Recreation chapter for more details). This committee has worked in conjunction with the town and Main Street Skowhegan to secure grants for the continued work of trail development.

Much of downtown Skowhegan's redevelopment and improvement was spearheaded by the 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, Main Street Skowhegan. This organization, formed in 2005 by a group of citizens focuses on the ongoing revitalization of historic Skowhegan. They actively collaborate and engage hundreds of volunteers and dozens of partner organizations and businesses in the region via a variety of economic and community development activities. According to an economic analysis completed in 2024, Main Street Skowhegan (MSS) had a substantial impact on the region by supporting over 80 jobs annually, generating more than \$2.2 million in earnings, and facilitating \$6.1 million in local sales. MSS not only helps new businesses and creates jobs, but they also involved in community events to promote tourism, increasing the economic viability of the town. MSS plays a pivotal role in enhancing the local economy, promoting entrepreneurship, and attracting new investment to the area, all which encourages appropriate growth to the downtown area.

By promoting the downtown area through revitalization, beautification, increasing green space, holding community events, and promoting the town's unique history, Skowhegan emphasizes and embraces the current and historic importance of the downtown area, while providing places where people can gather and feel a sense of place.

Another untraditional approach the town takes to encourage development/redevelopment in appropriate locations is including a link on the town website showcasing vacant and/or abandoned properties.

Just as important as encouraging appropriate development in certain areas is discouraging development in inappropriate areas. Skowhegan partners with Somerset Woods Trustees, Lake George Regional Park, and other organizations and municipal



entities in preventing sprawl, protecting natural resources, and directing development away from Skowhegan's rural areas. Non-regulatory measures to direct growth away from rural areas also preserve open space, farmland, and forestland.

Essentially, the historical development pattern of Skowhegan helps in directing growth to the already developed areas within town. All these non-regulatory measures, intentional or unintentional, work to direct future growth and development into the designated growth areas, while protecting the town's rural areas, preserving natural resources, reducing the impact of sprawl, and reducing the cost of supplying municipal services to areas outside of the town's center.

Directing growth into areas that are already developed and preserving the rural character of the town are in keeping with the community's vision statement of enhancing the economic vitality of the town, while also conserving farms, forests, and open space.

### **Agriculture and Open Space**

As farming and forestry were the historical economic cornerstones of the community, these resource-based practices should be supported and afforded protection. They are as important today as they have always been. Skowhegan partners with the following organizations to protect and conserve forests, shorelands, fields, farmland, and wildlife habitat: Somerset Woods Trustees, Maine Farmland Trust, Skowhegan Conservation Commission, Maine Woodlot Owners Association, Somerset Soil and Water Conservation District, Lake George Regional Park, and Land for Maine's Future, as well as others.

Enrollment in the Open Space, Farmland, and Tree Growth Tax Law are encouraged to reduce property tax valuations. The amount of acreage enrolled in these tax law programs adds up to around 10,306 combined acres.

This number does not include land that has been conserved in a trust or protected in any other way; the 10,306 acres accounts only for private land enrolled in one of the State's Tax Law programs. Of Skowhegan's 37,664 acres of land, the land preserved in the state's tax law programs accounts for 27.4 percent of the total land area in Skowhegan. For further information on agriculture and forestry in Skowhegan, see the Agriculture and Forestry chapter of this Plan.

This aligns with the community's vision by preserving farmland, forestland, and open space, as well as acknowledging the importance of preserving natural resources not only for their inherent beauty but also for the important role they play in providing wildlife habitat.

### **Skowhegan's Rural-Urban Balance**

The size of the area designated as rural in Skowhegan far exceeds the size of the Census Designated Place and the area designated as the growth area. The Census Designated Place accounts for only about 21 percent of the town's total land base and houses nearly 74 percent of the total population, underscoring the increased density in this area. With about 27 percent of the land base in a State Tax Law program Skowhegan's provides the best of both rural and urban life to its residents.

Skowhegan's more rural areas are less likely to see any high-density development simply because they lack public utilities to support these land uses. When considering options to promote growth areas, availability of public utilities is at the forefront of the discussion. To encourage appropriate development in keeping with the town's character, protecting the rural areas from future over-development and sprawl is key, as is providing amenities residents want and need in more appropriate areas.

### **Floodplain Management Ordinance**

The town participates in the National Flood Insurance Program and agrees to comply with the National Flood Insurance Act of 1968 (P.L. 90-488, as amended) as outlined in the Floodplain Management Ordinance, adopted in 2024. Maps are updated with federal data releases.

### **Projections**

#### Population and Housing Projections

Referring to the population projections in the Community Profile and Housing chapter, it is difficult to anticipate a high demand for housing. However, that does not consider the decline in average household size. Between 1970 and 2010, the simple fact of the shrinking household drove demand for around 16 new homes per year. Between 1990 and 2010, while Skowhegan was beginning to lose population, it added about 570 – (Census) housing units to the tax rolls, actually overachieving this demand. (Local records show adding approximately 186 new units over the last 9 years, including 31 new mobile homes. This does not include the 117 existing mobile homes that were relocated to or in Skowhegan between 2012-2021.)

The State Economist's Office predicts a population of 9,041 people by 2040- an increase of 402 people (4.7 percent increase).

While average household size cannot shrink indefinitely, continued decline should be taken into consideration when projecting the anticipated need for housing. As of the 2023 ACS, Skowhegan's average household size is 2.18. If a five percent decrease in average household size is assumed over the next 15-year period, the average household size would be 2.07 persons per household.

**Highlighted in Green:** With Skowhegan's current population of 8,639 people and current average household size of 2.18, the existing, year-round housing stock of 4,046 units is

adequate for accommodating this population. In fact, according to 2023 ACS data, the current population only occupies 3,876 houses, leaving 170 vacant. However, given the higher age of Skowhegan's housing stock and the significant number of vacant houses, many of these properties may require extensive repairs or may not be habitable.

**Highlighted in Gold:** Based on the State Economist's population project of an increased population to 9,041 people, combined with the current average household size of 2.18, Skowhegan's current housing stock would be insufficient to accommodate this increase. This population increase would require approximately 4,147 housing units, 101 more than currently exist in Skowhegan.

**Highlighted in Orange:** Based on the State Economist's population project of an increased population to 9,041 people, combined with a (hypothetical) decreased average household size of 2.07 people per household, Skowhegan's current housing stock would be short 322 houses. This projected population and smaller average household size would require approximately 4,368 housing units and the existing housing stock of 4,046 housing units would not be sufficient.

**TABLE 1: POPULATION PROJECTIONS AND HOUSING NEEDS, BASED ON HOUSEHOLD SIZE**

	Population	Total Current Housing Units (Minus Seasonal)	Average Household Size	Amount of Housing Needed	Deficit?
<b>Current</b>	8,639	4,046	2.18	3,876*	N/A
<b>State Economist's Population Projection</b>	9,041	4,046	2.18	4,147	Yes, 101 houses
<b>State Economist's Population Projection (with 5% decrease in average household size)</b>	9,041	4,046	2.07	4,368	Yes, 322 houses

Source: 2023 ACS

\*Currently occupied

Based on Table 1, Skowhegan will need roughly 100 additional housing units by 2040 to accommodate its residents if the population projection by the State Economist is attained with the current average household size. This situation is exacerbated if the average household size continues to decline. If the State Economist's population projection is met, and the hypothetical, decreased average household size of 2.07 people per household is also attained, then the town will be at a deficit of 322 houses by 2040.

**It is essential to bear in mind that these population projections are based on past trends, not current circumstances.** Skowhegan's observed current trends since 2000

are of a rebounding population, while the State Economist's population projection is a more dramatic increase. The most likely scenario is slow, incremental growth.

It is also essential to understand that the components of the population will most assuredly change. The aging population and the trend towards decreased average household size will undoubtedly impact the need for certain housing types. Eventually, the decline in household size will plateau if it has not already, but the median age will likely continue to increase for some time, based on the Baby Boom generation.

The aging population is a necessary consideration. This demographic has a specific set of requirements, such as handicapped accessible homes so residents can age in place, the construction of more one-story homes, appropriately sized homes, and elderly housing facilities. Additionally, with the increase in residents, both younger and seniors living alone, the demand for smaller homes will increase. In short, the population may not change drastically in number, but the changes in the demographics of the population will result in the need for more homes or different types of homes.

Regardless of population projections, population fluctuation, and existing housing stock, it is unreasonable to assume no new houses will be built. The construction of new houses will consume more land for development. Since Skowhegan does not have zoning, the minimum lot size requirements are determined by the availability of public water and sewer connections, set forth in the Building Safety Ordinance. For lots that can be connected to the town sewer, the minimum lot size is 10,000 square feet. For lots without served by the town sewer, the minimum lot size is 40,000 square feet.

Under the State Economist's population projection and a hypothetical decreased household size to 2.07 people per household (Table 1- row in orange), Skowhegan would need to add approximately 322 housing units to accommodate the population increase over the next 15 years. Theoretically, if those houses were built in an area with access to the town sewer, those 322 houses would only take up 3,220,000 square feet or about 74 acres. This estimation does not include other necessities such as driveways, roads, or utilities which would take up more land.

Conversely, if all 322 hypothetical houses were built in other parts of town that are not served by public sewer on lots of the 40,000 square feet minimum lot size, the outcome would be vastly more land taken up. Even on minimum lot sizes, these additional houses would take up 12,880,000 square feet of land or approximately 300 acres. Again, this does not take into consideration other necessities such as driveways, roads, or utilities which would take up more land.

Of course, both hypothetical situations detailed above are just examples. In reality, there are far too many variables to predict the number of houses anticipated in a 15-year period, much less where they would be constructed. While commercial development should be carefully directed to appropriate areas to preserve Skowhegan's rural character and natural resources, the right of residents to build homes on rural property remains fundamental.

Ideally, new homes would be encouraged within Skowhegan's designated growth area because this approach supports efficient infrastructure use, minimizes environmental impact, and strengthens the town's economic and social hubs. Concentrating development in designated areas helps reduce the cost of extending roads, utilities, and emergency services while protecting open spaces and natural habitats. It also promotes a vibrant community by maintaining walkable neighborhoods, supporting local businesses, and fostering a sense of connection among residents. This approach aligns with Skowhegan's vision and comprehensive planning guidelines while still respecting residents' choices for rural living.

However, many people choose to live in rural areas because they seek privacy, more space, and a quieter lifestyle, away from the congestion of urban centers. Rural living offers the opportunity for larger properties, closer proximity to nature, and the freedom to engage in agricultural or recreational activities that aren't as easily accessible in more densely developed areas. These preferences are important to consider when planning for the town's growth, as they reflect the values of residents who are invested in preserving the rural landscape while still fostering sustainable development.

#### *Institutional, Industrial, and Commercial Projections*

New commercial and industrial development in the last 10 years has fluctuated and increased in Skowhegan. The town has seen existing businesses grow and expand, new businesses redevelop existing buildings, and unfortunately, some businesses have left for various reasons. Overall, Skowhegan's local economy and tax base have both increased in recent years.

Fortunately, Skowhegan's new commercial development, unlike housing, is much more likely to occur in the existing built-up area. New commercial development is also easier to direct than housing, in part because of the Site Plan Review Ordinance, detailed in this chapter. In the last 10 years, much of the commercial growth has occurred within reach of the town's sewer system, but not all.

An increase in growth for the industrial and commercial sectors is anticipated for the next 10 years. This is due to several factors. Skowhegan is a regional hub and is easily accessible, making it a logical place for new businesses to locate. In addition, several existing businesses in Skowhegan have expanded in the last few years, which increased employment opportunities and attracted new residents to town.

The efforts to revitalize and improve Skowhegan's downtown are also an attraction to new businesses. Skowhegan Site Plan Review Ordinance serves as a functional tool for assessing new businesses, ensuring that developments meet necessary standards for safety, environmental impact, and community considerations. It provides a structured review process for projects, helping guide how they are built and how they interact with their surroundings.

However, its effectiveness is somewhat limited without further land use regulation. While the ordinance does a good job evaluating individual projects, it lacks the broader

framework additional land use regulations could provide, which would serve to direct where certain types of businesses are best suited within the community. In its current form, the ordinance relies more on a case-by-case review rather than a clear, long-term strategy for directing growth to appropriate parts of town earmarked for commercial or industrial land uses, making it less effective at managing the town's growth effectively.

If the anticipated commercial development comes to fruition in the coming years, the Site Plan Review Ordinance will need to be continually monitored and re-evaluated for its effectiveness in adequately directing growth to meet the town's vision while ensuring that development occurs in such a way that it balances economic growth with community needs and infrastructure capacity.

## **Analysis**

The 2010 Comprehensive Plan says that "Skowhegan is the clear population, commercial, and service center for Somerset County, and as such will continue to be the focus of development for the region." This statement is as true today as it was back in 2010. As the region's economy shifts; however, from an industrial base to a service base and internet sales, different styles and patterns of development emerge. The town has the infrastructure to support the changes; but existing policies and standards must be carefully monitored to ensure they guide the development into that infrastructure.

The traditional industrial base tended to be oriented towards power needs (waterpower along the river, then three-phase transmitted power); it was highly capitalized and relied heavily on labor proximity. The end result was a dense development pattern- the current downtown. The new service base and internet-driven economy is much more diversified and small-scale; it is oriented towards clients/customers, and reliant on visibility and access. Through deliberate efforts and careful planning and consideration, the current land use trends and development patterns have come to align with the community's vision.

Skowhegan's vision of being a historic and contemporary hub of Somerset County, a service center, and a small town coincide with the downtown revitalization efforts, successes in encouraging redevelopment of existing buildings to enhance economic vitality, and preservation of open land.

The town will need to continue to protect its natural resources and rural areas to prevent negative impacts related to growth and development as the town grows and changes. Continued monitoring of growth, housing, and development will be necessary to ensure population growth is not stymied by lack of available housing.

As the senior population continues to grow, the town may need to consider the demand and options to encourage the construction of specific types of homes, such as one-story houses, handicapped-accessible houses, or senior housing.

Skowhegan should remain aware of population and land use trends and regularly review and update the existing municipal ordinances for effectiveness in managing land uses to protect natural resources.

The town does not wish to impose any further land use regulations or restrictions, letting citizens use their land in ways they see fit, so long as they respect the property values of their neighbors and the peace of the community. However, to ensure continued alignment of the community vision with land use trends, careful monitoring of growth and development is necessary.

## Chapter 13: Future Land Use

### Skowhegan's Comprehensive Plan Vision:

*Skowhegan recognizes its role as the historic and contemporary hub of Somerset County, a service center and a small town. The town desires to enhance the economic vitality of its downtown, including promoting commercial growth, new employment and housing opportunities, while maintaining a strong connection with rural values, through the conservation of farms, forests and open space. Skowhegan seeks to grow its industrial base, promoting the wellbeing of its current businesses and encouraging the development of new businesses, not just in the town's industrial parks but also in the historic downtown and the town's many existing structures that have historically been used for commercial and industrial use. Skowhegan acknowledges the importance of its environmental assets, not just the quality of its rivers, lakes, streams, and groundwater but also its wildlife and other natural resources. Skowhegan seeks to develop and maintain its recreational facilities, including sports facilities, the Kennebec River Gorge, and access to local trails. The town appreciates the rights of residents to live and use their land in ways they see fit, so long as they respect the property values of their neighbors and the peace of the community.*

### Overview:

As the Comprehensive Plan vision relates to future land use, this section seeks to highlight the steady growth and change in Skowhegan over the last decade, while plotting a path to preserve and improve the qualities residents appreciate and cherish. Ensuring Skowhegan retains the qualities that make it both a contemporary hub of Somerset County and service center community, while protecting the historic, small-town character is paramount and can be achieved through proper land use strategies. To preserve these unique characteristics of Skowhegan, it is essential to plan with the future in mind.

Neighboring towns look to Skowhegan as a regional hub and a service center. Skowhegan can expect to carry a burden of not just commercial growth but also employment growth. Care must be taken to meet these needs, but a balance must be struck between meeting these needs and protecting Skowhegan's abundant, natural resources, as well as the numerous important historic landmarks. Skowhegan's future land use requires continued focus to meet economic, commercial, and housing demands, as well as to preserve and secure valuable natural resources for future generations.

### Future Growth:

A Land Use Plan consists of a map and narrative describing Skowhegan's future designated growth areas and rural areas. It includes recommendations and suggested strategies—both regulatory and non-regulatory—to guide development in a desirable way.



This Future Land Use Plan will be built upon the 2010 Comprehensive Plan, and the existing municipal ordinances.

A fundamental part of Skowhegan's future is its plan for growth. This Plan is based on many assumptions that support continued growth while striving to maintain the elements that residents' value. Examples of assumed future growth include increased and additional economic development, expansion of public services, new home construction, and increased job opportunities. The physical impacts that are a direct result of projected future growth and development are the primary focus of this chapter.

A necessary consideration for future growth is that public services are more costly to provide for development that is spread throughout town, rather than to village areas or other high-density locations; this must be considered for future growth. This includes not just roads, but also schools, buses, utilities, fire protection, and other public services.

To prevent unnecessary expenditure and ensure sustainability, existing growth trends, trends of development in rural areas, and Skowhegan's historic growth patterns must be thoughtfully balanced. This can be achieved by guiding future development with careful intent and providing cost-effective public services. All of which is in keeping with the community's vision of embracing the town's history and protecting natural resources, while continuing to provide the services valued by both residents and citizens of neighboring communities.

### **Explanation of the Future Land Use Plan & Designated Growth Areas**

The purpose of the Comprehensive Plan as a whole, and ultimately the Future Land Use Plan, is to highlight issues raised by the Town of Skowhegan and its residents, determine desirable outcomes, and chart possible strategies to accomplish these outcomes in appropriate sections of this Plan. The Plan is not intended to implement or direct any specific regulatory or policy changes, as that would be too narrow a focus and outside the scope of the Plan. Implementation of the provisions of this Plan would be accomplished within the context of the town's established administrative procedures and policies -- for example, formal adoption of ordinance revisions, Select Board consideration, and public participation.

When considering designating future growth areas, consideration of location is paramount. For example, the location of a growth area needs to make sense in relation to public services. Some services are directly location-sensitive, such as public water and sewer services, and road access. Others are less location sensitive, such as proximity to fire stations, recreation areas, or schools. Ideally, development should be encouraged in locations that have easy access to public water, public sewer, well-maintained roads, and preferably near schools and existing service centers. Secondary considerations when locating growth areas include proximity of wetlands, watersheds, or other natural restrictions.

If designated growth areas are expanded, the expansion should be a logical extension of current, existing growth areas. Care must be taken not to create a growth area so large that it would make the designation meaningless. The size must be limited and dictated by expected, future growth and natural constraints.

Properly managed land uses provide a layer of protection for Skowhegan's numerous natural resources and the character of the town. The policies and strategies to manage future land use are detailed further in the Future Land Use Plan Policies and Strategies.

A fundamental strategy when promoting a designated growth area is to direct a minimum of 75 percent of municipal growth-related capital investments into these locations. This strategy demonstrates the town's commitment to using public investments and land use regulations to reduce or discourage development pressure in other areas, while encouraging it in the designated growth areas. It is important to note that road maintenance and other maintenance-type expenditures in designated rural areas would not count as a "growth-related" expenditure.

### **2010 Comprehensive Plan's Designated Growth Areas:**

The 2010 Comprehensive Plan delineates Skowhegan's growth area generally as such:

"...The area served by the existing public sewer system (see the *Growth Areas Map* in the Appendix). This includes all future development within reach of the sewer and already required by ordinance to hook in.

The growth area designated by this plan will be altered over the course of the planning period, to include any land to which public sewer is extended, either at public or private expense.

Within the general growth area, a sub-growth area is identified to encourage high density commercial or mixed-use development. This designation is based on the existing design characteristics, which include multi-story buildings and a high percentage of lot coverage. This area is a blend of existing designations: the "downtown" and the historic district. Within this area, certain requirements will be relaxed, and other strategies will be employed to maintain existing densities."

The growth area described in the 2010 Plan can be seen on the *Growth Areas Map* in the Appendix. This growth area was a natural extension of the existing built-up portion of town, which is a logical choice and excellent planning practice.

The 2010 Comprehensive Plan identified a "sub-growth" area within the designated growth area, for the purpose of encouraging high-density commercial and/or mixed-use development in a location with existing multi-story buildings and a high percentage of lot coverage. This location includes portions of both the downtown and historic district. To encourage the desired growth in this location, certain requirements were relaxed, and other strategies were employed to maintain existing densities.

This Plan also acknowledged that most of the sewerage area has already been developed with minimal land area available for new construction. The new development in that area was anticipated to be infill of the few vacant parcels, redevelopment of commercial sites, or redevelopment or replacement of existing housing at higher densities.

For that reason, the 2010 Comprehensive Plan recognized the eventual and inevitable need to expand into undeveloped areas, particularly for **commercial growth**.

The proposed areas for expansion included:

- Route 201 South: 260 acres (highest priority)
- Route 150 North: 280 acres
- Route 201 North: 17 acres
- Route 2 West: 68 acres
- Route 104 South: 336 acres

Residential growth was not provided a specific location in the 2010 Comprehensive Plan; it was anticipated to be throughout the designated growth area, either as new housing construction where feasible, as infill in existing buildings, or as mixed-use.

Designating these locations as growth areas was a logical decision, as they were already developed, but still had room to accommodate projected future growth. However, most of the development takes place outside of Skowhegan's growth area. Only a small percentage has taken place within Skowhegan growth areas since the 2010 Comprehensive Plan. There has been a shift in this trend in recent years with many major commercial developments in the growth area including the redevelopment of the Spinning Mill, expansions of New Balance and the hospital, and a recent new development approved for Maine Grains on Court Street. Residential development in the growth area has potential, but there are many buildable lots that are not on the market. There are also limitations to residential development downtown, including parking requirements.

Approximately 95% of Skowhegan's development occurs outside the designated growth area due to the town's long-standing tradition of unrestricted land use. With few limitations guiding where new construction can take place, homes, businesses, and agricultural operations have spread along rural roadways and open land, leading to a more dispersed pattern of development rather than concentrated growth in planned areas.

The visions and sentiments of Skowhegan's 2010 Comprehensive Plan was not so different from the town's current vision and sentiment. The previous plan proposed the following guidelines, which are still applicable today:

1. New growth should minimize the cost of town services in relation to revenues generated;
2. Development of land should not have an adverse effect on the value or enjoyment of neighboring properties;

3. New development should not degrade public natural resources, in particular water and air quality;
4. Within these boundaries, landowners should have the right to use their property as they see fit.

These guidelines are not far removed from the current path the town has chosen, to regulate the development of land in proportion to its potential impacts. Rather than laying down rules about who can do what with their land, the town's rules provide protection for residents' priorities. In essence, the town does not regulate *what* people can do with their land, but *how well* they do it.

### **Delineating Future Growth Areas:**

Since the 2010 Comprehensive Plan, Skowhegan's anticipated future growth is predominantly expected in residential land uses. To accommodate these growth patterns, the Future Land Use Plan delineates a larger, residential growth area, as well as locations for future commercial and industrial development, as delineated on the *Growth Areas Map* in the Appendices.

The designation of a sub-growth area is unnecessary in the updated 2025 Comprehensive Plan, as that area will just be referred to as generally part of the designated growth area.

This proposed future growth area is similar to that proposed in the 2010 Comprehensive Plan in that it includes the downtown area, and the corridors along Routes 201 (N & S), 104, 150, and 2 W.

Skowhegan does not need to expand its current growth areas, as there is still ample opportunity for development within the existing boundaries. Recent and upcoming commercial projects set to be completed or started in 2025 demonstrate that businesses continue to invest in designated growth areas, utilizing available land and infrastructure. This trend indicates that Skowhegan's growth areas are still viable for economic expansion, supporting both new businesses and the town's long-term development goals. Rather than extending the growth boundary, efforts should focus on maximizing the potential of these areas by improving infrastructure and supporting strategic infill development.

Residential development, while facing some challenges such as parking requirements and limited available buildings, still has room for growth within the designated areas. Buildable lots exist, providing opportunities for new housing without the need for outward expansion. By focusing on making better use of existing properties and addressing barriers to residential growth, Skowhegan can enhance its housing stock while maintaining the efficiency of its infrastructure and public services. Many residents share the sentiment that the town should "work on what we have before we do more,"

emphasizing the importance of strengthening the core of the community before considering further expansion.

**For more accurate details on the exact location of the designated growth areas, please see the *Growth Areas Map* in the Appendix of this plan.**

Skowhegan's Future Land Use Plan and the delineation of growth areas is in keeping with the community's vision because it builds upon the original downtown area and major transportation corridors, which preserves the town's character and charm. Encouraging residential growth in the designated growth area will aid in meeting housing needs and result in housing near existing amenities, which reduces sprawl, and the costs associated with provided public services to large developments away from the town's center. Future development in the designated growth area will prevent development in the rural areas and protect natural resources.

Continued encouragement of development in these areas provides ample opportunities for commercial and industrial growth, further supporting Skowhegan as a service center and hub of Somerset County. Additionally, providing appropriate locations for commercial and industrial development serves to enhance the town's economic vitality while providing employment opportunities for residents.

By providing appropriate locations for various types of development, Skowhegan is protecting its natural resources, and conserving farms, forests, and open space.

The four pillars outlined in the 2010 Plan are still applicable and will continue to serve Skowhegan well in working towards the community's vision for the town.

1. New growth should minimize the cost of town services in relation to revenues generated;
2. Development of land should not have an adverse effect on the value or enjoyment of neighboring properties;
3. New development should not degrade public natural resources, in particular water and air quality;
4. Within these boundaries, landowners should have the right to use their property as they see fit.

### **Features that Shape the Growth Areas:**

The Future Land Use Plan and the designated growth areas, established in 2010, will remain unchanged as they continue to align with recent development trends and anticipated growth. Expanding the growth area is unnecessary because existing development patterns fit within the current boundaries and there is still room for further growth. Land that can easily be developed is a finite commodity, due to several potential challenges, such as access, topography, and wetlands.

The areas chosen as designated growth areas coincide with the historical development patterns of the town and are shaped by natural constraints. These areas are characterized by road access, proximity to public facilities, and proximity to other developed land.

The designated growth areas of the Future Land Use Plan are shaped by both natural opportunities and constraints. There are two basic categories of constraints on development: **environmental constraints and public service constraints**.

Environmental constraints are covered in the Natural Resources chapter of this Plan. The main constraints are wetlands, steep slopes, groundwater protection, and floodplains. The *Topographic Map*, *Water Resources Map*, and *Critical Natural Resources Map* in the Appendix of this Plan show the locations of many of these constraints.

Wetlands are not a significant concern in Skowhegan, as there are not many wetlands in developable areas. Steep slopes are a limiting factor in parts of Skowhegan, mostly on the west side of town near larger hills or Lake George, requiring limited or thoughtful development. But in other areas of town, steep slopes are not a concern.

A significant groundwater aquifer is located along the intersection of Route 150 and Steward Hill Road, which is an already developed part of town within the designated growth area. There are other aquifers known throughout town as well. Additionally, there are known floodplains along the Kennebec River and in several other developed parts of town. Both floodplains and groundwater aquifers are environmental constraints that must be considered when developing in these areas.

Recent flooding events in Skowhegan have highlighted the challenges of developing in low-lying and flood-prone areas, posing a significant barrier to growth. Rising water levels, particularly along the Kennebec River and its tributaries, have caused property damage, infrastructure strain, and increased costs for flood mitigation. These risks make certain areas less desirable for development, as businesses and homeowners face higher insurance premiums, construction limitations, and the potential for future damage. Additionally, the need for improved stormwater management and resilience planning diverts resources away from new development efforts. Given these ongoing challenges, prioritizing development in safer, elevated areas within the existing growth boundaries is the most responsible and sustainable approach for Skowhegan's future.

The town's Floodplain Management Ordinance is intended to protect the floodplain from development, but there is nothing to protect aquifers. An ordinance that was intended to protect aquifers would likely only control the types of commercial and/or industrial development that used chemicals that could potentially seep into the groundwater.

While certain soils are preferable for septic systems and for supporting foundations, poor soils can be engineered to support development, though this is more costly. The *Soil Map* in the Appendix shows the pattern of soil throughout town.

Of the constraints detailed above, quite possibly the biggest challenge is flooding. Skowhegan should consider the best approaches to direct new developments into areas that are not prone to flooding. Other environmental constraints in the designated growth area are minimal in comparison.

Routes 201, 2, 104, and 150 serve as the main transportation corridors into and out of Skowhegan, with Routes 201 and 2 intersecting in the downtown area. This intersection creates a high-traffic zone in an otherwise walkable downtown, presenting challenges for both vehicle access and pedestrian safety. Heavy traffic congestion, particularly during peak hours, makes navigating the downtown difficult for residents, visitors, and business patrons. The increased vehicle presence also impacts the small-town feel of Skowhegan's downtown, making it less inviting for foot traffic and local commerce.

To address these concerns, several studies have explored the possibility of constructing a second bridge over the Kennebec River to help alleviate congestion. While such a project could provide a much-needed alternative route for through traffic, opinions among residents remain mixed. Some believe a second bridge would improve mobility and reduce the strain on downtown roads, while others worry about the cost, environmental impact, and potential disruption to existing neighborhoods. The debate over this infrastructure project continues as the town seeks to balance traffic management with community needs.

Safety concerns have also become a growing issue, particularly along Madison Avenue, where residents and business owners have reported issues with reckless driving and limited police presence. The lack of consistent enforcement has led to increased worries about speeding, aggressive driving, and overall safety for pedestrians and cyclists. Addressing these concerns through improved policing and traffic-calming measures could help restore a greater sense of security in the downtown area.

Speeding is another issue affecting major roadways within the designated growth areas, especially along Route 201. The high speeds on this corridor create hazards for both vehicles and pedestrians, particularly in areas where development is increasing. Some community members have proposed lowering speed limits in key sections to enhance safety and improve the overall flow of traffic.

To help address these traffic and safety concerns, Skowhegan partnered with the Maine Department of Transportation through the Village Partnership Initiative Study. This study provided several recommendations for traffic calming and pedestrian safety improvements, many of which are detailed further in the Transportation Chapter. Implementing these strategies will be key to making downtown and the surrounding growth areas safer and more accessible for all users. As Skowhegan continues to grow, a comprehensive approach to transportation planning—including potential infrastructure improvements, traffic enforcement, and speed management—will be essential to maintaining a safe and accessible community.

Since Skowhegan's initial settlement pattern was along the Kennebec River, continued development in this area is not only logical, but also inevitable. The town's existing growth areas are shaped by natural opportunities such as existing dense development patterns, numerous road junctions, and public utilities. However, this area is not without its challenges of both environmental and public service constraints, such as frequent flooding, a main crossroads intersection in the middle of the downtown, and the limitations of public utilities.

### **Current Land Use Regulation:**

Skowhegan does not regulate land uses by zoning district designations (i.e. commercial vs. residential) aside from the mandatory Shoreland Zoning Ordinance, nor does the town designate districts with different minimum lot sizes (aside from access to public sewer). Skowhegan's ordinances are detailed further in the Existing Land Use chapter, but summarized here:

- Building Safety Ordinance-
  - Serves to protect the health and safety of Skowhegan residents based on state building statutes.
  - Regulates minimum lot size based on if the lot is in the Shoreland Zone and if it has access to public sewer.
  - Establishes setback requirements.
- Floodplain Management Ordinance-
  - Regulates how land designated as floodplain can and cannot be used.
- Holding Tank Ordinance-
  - Establishes requirements for the use and maintenance of holding tanks.
- Property Maintenance Ordinance
  - Establishes a minimum standard for the maintenance of structures and the ground of property for the purposes of protecting public health, safety, property values, and to prevent nuisance conditions.
- Shoreland Zoning Ordinance-
  - Intended to protect and maintain healthful conditions, prevent and control water pollution, and to protect areas determined to be within the Shoreland Zone.
  - Established 6 different Shoreland districts within Skowhegan, each with its own intended purpose.
- Site Plan Review Ordinance-
  - Establishes standards for non-residential development to protect the public health and safety, promote the general welfare of the community, and conserve the environment.
- Subdivision Review Ordinance-
  - Establishes standards for processing and reviewing subdivision applications, assures new development meets the town's goals, protect



public health, safety, natural environment, and to minimize the potential impact of development on neighboring properties.

- Assures that a minimal level of services and facilities are available to residents of new subdivisions.
- Promotes development in an economically sound and stable community.

The Shoreland Zoning Ordinance and Floodplain Management Ordinance are mandatory ordinances, and the Subdivision Review Ordinance is based on the state subdivision statute.

Land use controls are intended to preserve the rural character of the town by directing growth into appropriate, predetermined locations, and away from rural areas. While Skowhegan's land use-related ordinances, taken together, work toward preventing conflict with natural resource protection, public health and safety concerns, preventing flood damage, and ensuring economic well-being, they fall short of directing new residential development to growth areas and away from rural areas.

Without zoning or land use regulations that detail appropriate land uses per district, regulatory oversight for directing growth is stymied. Out of necessity, commercial and industrial growth are often established in areas that have connections to public water and sewer; however, residential growth is more challenging to direct, particularly without any zoning or land use regulations.

### **Development in Skowhegan's Growth Area:**

Below is a description and analysis of the various sections of Skowhegan, including their intended purpose, current development status, and why they were chosen as either part of the designated growth area or rural area.

Most of the new commercial and industrial developments in Skowhegan have been within the growth areas, which is ideal. However, residential development has occurred quite frequently in the rural areas. The town will need to consider creative ways to encourage residential development in desired locations to continue to protect natural resources and the town's rural character, while also providing much needed housing options.

One way of accomplishing this is by strategically delineating locations intended for growth that are already developed and have capacity for additional development. Lots with connections to public water and sewer are less costly to build on than those that require private wells and septic systems.

Skowhegan's existing designated growth area is appropriate in size and consists of the entire downtown area and the corridors along Routes 201 (N & S), 104, 150, and 2 W. The town's Code Enforcement Officer, in conjunction with the Administrative Assistant track permit applications and permits issued. Since the 2010 Comprehensive Plan, roughly 95% of development has taken place outside the growth area.

The designated growth areas are defined by existing dense development patterns and infrastructure. They provide locations for a variety of residential, commercial, and municipal land uses, even without zoning to direct such uses. The current designated growth area is the entirety of the village/downtown part of Skowhegan, and the corridors along the main routes coming into and going out of town.

Skowhegan's downtown was the initial, historic settlement of the town. Today, the downtown area has mixed land uses, including retail, commercial, residential, municipal, recreational, and more. This area is served by public sewer and water services, allowing an increased density of development on smaller lot sizes. The town, in conjunction with Main Street Skowhegan, has been working to revitalize the downtown, including removing, redeveloping, or replacing older houses and buildings, improving the river park, encouraging new businesses, improving economic vitality, and much more.

The Local Economy chapter of this Plan details existing commercial, industrial, and retail development throughout Skowhegan. Because of the accessibility of public water and sewer and the roads, all this type of development has been within Skowhegan's growth area.

### *Downtown*

Skowhegan initially formed around the Kennebec River; the town center area encompasses the dams and historic mill buildings, the "flatiron block" of storefronts, blocks of single-family homes and apartments built over the past 200 years, the heart of Somerset County's medical, legal, financial, and governmental services, as well as Skowhegan's town office, police, fire, and public works services. Over the years, the downtown has expanded to encompass Madison Avenue, the hospital district, the Northgate Industrial Park, and the school complex on West Front Street.

The configuration of the downtown has been shaped since Skowhegan's early days when settlements were predominantly established near mills and people traveled mostly by train. The area has multiple road junctions, with several primary roads leading in and out. The downtown seeks to maintain the existing character and mixed-use land use patterns, offering a variety of retail, housing, and services that contribute to the town's status of being the contemporary hub of Somerset County.

Currently, the downtown contains the highest density mixture of residential, commercial, and recreational land uses. Water Street and the Flatiron Block, in particular, represent iconic commercial architecture from the 19th Century. Several of these buildings have been actively occupied for decades, and others are currently undergoing renovation.

Assisted by Main Street Skowhegan and the town's Community Development Program, the town center is undergoing revitalization. The former Solon Manufacturing building on Island Avenue is an example of successful redevelopment. The three-story historic brick building has been restored to its former grandeur and is keeping with historic period.

There are constraints to this redevelopment trend: most of the buildings have virtually no parking or expansion capabilities, and many cannot provide handicapped access to their upper stories. While the Planning Board is looking into reviewing parking requirements, buildings in the historic downtown area still must meet life safety standards.

The downtown as a designated growth area strives to promote a compact and dense (rather than sprawling) pattern of development, by allowing mixed land-use patterns on smaller lots and redevelopment of existing structures. In the parts of the downtown served by public water and sewer, the minimum lot size is 10,000 square feet for residential land uses, 40,000 square feet for recreational facilities, and 20,000 square feet for all other land uses. All these dimensions are aimed at promoting a more compact pattern of development. This location seeks to ensure proposed development and land uses are compatible with existing land uses, while maintaining the historical integrity and small-town character.

Designating the downtown as a growth area aligns with the community's vision as this area is the ideal and logical location for continued growth of mixed-uses, including commercial and residential land uses at a higher density than in other locations. Development in this area, if done properly, will minimize sprawl in rural areas and protect natural resources. There are various structures in the downtown area which could be redeveloped by prospective businesses, which would improve economic vitality and provide employment opportunities.

### *Route 201 Corridor*

Route 201 bisects of the town, running generally north to south. As this has historically been a major travel corridor, this area is already developed; although land is still available for future development. This area is partially served by public water and sewer. The Route 201 corridor is characterized by existing residential and commercial land uses.

Route 201 (Waterville Road) in the southern part of town is anchored by the SAPPI paper mill, on the Fairfield town line and the Southgate Industrial Park just north of it. The park was sited there because of proximity to the mill's three-phase power, however, lacks connection to public sewer and water. A study was completed that looked into gaining water from an aquifer across Route 201. That plan is still feasible, though that aquifer is dependent on the Kennebec River for recharge. If any dam removal is completed on the Kennebec River, there are concerns water access may be lost.

The Southgate Industrial Park is not at capacity, with room for additional development. Right now, capacity is limited to those businesses that do not require large amounts of water. If there was a business that did, the Town should consider looking into options for connection to water. This part of Route 201 contains more opportunities for commercial growth. Currently, the frontage is characterized by a variety of developments, from classy riverfront homes, to small, roadside businesses. In 2025, the Planning Board approved a new subdivision development for the old drive in theater site. There has also been calls to lower the speed limit on Route 201 through the urban compact area with growing

development. Perhaps the factor constraining greater development of the road is the lack of public water and sewer.

The part of Route 201 north of downtown (Madison Avenue) is only half a mile long before it reaches the Madison town line. In that direction, Route 201 has been heavily developed, and was the focal point of commercial growth for several years.

Madison Avenue is the primary commercial highway. Lower Madison Avenue, closer to Skowhegan's town center, is a blend of historic homes (many converted to commercial use) and older commercial buildings. The upper portion of the road is characterized by more modern commercial architecture, much of which is built on the sites of older commercial buildings.

Madison Avenue has the capacity for increased occupancy. Two older retail complexes are under-utilized, and new construction pads are available at a third. The town's new Public Safety Building is now located at the northern end of Madison Avenue. The Skowhegan Fairgrounds have become increasingly busy with events happening year-round. Madison Avenue was also the focal point of the VPI Study, details included in the Transportation Chapter. Madison Avenue was also specifically called out by many residents in the public participation survey as needing attention by the town for its maintenance and safety concerns.

#### *Route 2 West (Norridgewock Road/Water Street/Canaan Road)*

This other major Route that bisects the town has had significant development over the years. This travel corridor leads to Norridgewock in the southwest, traveling parallel to the Kennebec River. The high school and community center are on this road, the latter of which is undergoing a major renovation as of this writing, detailed in the Recreation Chapter.

#### *Route 104 (Fairview Avenue)*

This corridor enters Skowhegan from the south and is a major travel corridor for anyone going to the Reddington Fairview Hospital, or the town center from Fairfield or Waterville. This area is prime for additional development. In fact, in the past decade, the hospital has expanded its campus several times, and was approved in 2025 for additional expansion of another medical office building and parking that should be completed by 2027.

#### *Route 150 (North Avenue/Beckwith Road)*

This corridor originates in the town center and travels north to Cornville. This area is ideal for future residential development. The Northgate Industrial Park is located here, though all lots have been sold.

## *Rural Areas*

Remaining portions of town, consisting of about 91 percent of the total, are identified as rural areas. Within these areas, development which would have a negative impact on town services, environmental resources, or rural lifestyles will be discouraged. Examples of this type of development are large conventional subdivisions, and businesses with more than 20 employees on site, unless they are resource related. Ordinance standards and other strategies will be used to discourage these forms of development. In addition, an Open Space Plan was developed and implemented to ensure protection for the highest priority rural areas.

There are no significant concentrations of development in the rural parts of town. The rural roads have seen quite a few individual homes and small subdivisions. There are large tracts of undeveloped land, particularly along the boundary with Canaan to the east. Lake George and Oak Pond have some seasonal camps and a few year-round homes on their shores.

Agriculture plays a vital role in Skowhegan's rural areas, shaping both its economy and its identity. Agriculture not only provides important local food sources but also contributes to the town's employment, with many residents working on farms or in related industries. Beyond its economic impact, farming helps preserve the rural landscape and scenic beauty of Skowhegan, maintaining open spaces that define much of the town's character. As the town grows, preserving agricultural land and supporting farming initiatives will be crucial to maintaining Skowhegan's rural heritage while balancing future development.

Skowhegan's Shoreland Zoning Ordinance breaks the town into six shoreland districts:

7. Resource Protection
8. Limited Residential
9. Limited Commercial
10. General Development
11. Wetlands Protection
12. Stream Protection

3. Resource Protection District: The Resource Protection District includes areas in which development would adversely affect water quality, productive habitat, biological ecosystems, or scenic and natural values. This District shall include the following areas when they occur within the limits of the shoreland zone, exclusive of the Stream Protection District and the Wetland Protection District, except that areas which are currently developed and areas which meet the criteria for the Limited Commercial or General Development, need not be included within the Resource Protection District.

- a. Areas within two hundred fifty (250') feet, horizontal distance, of the upland edge of freshwater wetlands, and wetlands associated with great ponds and rivers, which are rated "moderate" or "high" value waterfowl

and wading bird habitat, including nesting and feeding areas, by the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife (DIF&W) that are depicted on a Geographic Information System (GIS) data layer maintained by either MDIF&W or the Department as of December 31, 2008. For the purposes of this paragraph "wetlands associated with great ponds and rivers" shall mean areas characterized by non-forested wetland vegetation and hydric soils that are contiguous with a great pond or river, and have a surface elevation at or below the water level of the great pond or river during the period of normal high water. "Wetlands associated with great ponds or rivers" are considered to be part of that great pond or river.

- b. Flood plains along rivers and flood plains along artificially formed great ponds along rivers, defined by the hundred (100) year flood plain as designated on the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) Flood Insurance Rate Maps or Flood Hazard Boundary Maps, or the flood of record, or in the absence of these, by soil types identified as recent flood plain soils.
  - c. Areas of two or more contiguous acres with sustained slopes of twenty (20%) percent or greater.
  - d. Areas of two (2) or more contiguous acres supporting wetland vegetation and hydric soils, which are not part of a freshwater wetland as defined, and which are not surficially connected to a water body during the period of normal high water.
  - e. Land areas along rivers subject to severe bank erosion, undercutting, or riverbed movement.
4. Limited Residential District: The Limited Residential District includes those areas suitable for residential and recreational development. It includes areas other than those in the Resource Protection District, Wetlands Protection District, or Stream Protection District, and areas, which are used less intensively than those in the Limited Commercial District, and the General Development Districts.
8. Limited Commercial District: The Limited Commercial District includes areas of mixed, light commercial and residential uses, exclusive of the Stream Protection District and Wetlands Protection District, which should not be developed as intensively as the General Development Districts. This district includes areas of two (2) or more contiguous acres in size devoted to a mix of residential and low intensity business and commercial uses. Industrial uses are prohibited.
9. General Development District: The General Development District includes the following types of areas:
- a. Areas of two (2) or more contiguous acres devoted to commercial, industrial or intensive recreational activities, or a mix of such activities, including but not limited to the following:

- i. Areas devoted to manufacturing, fabricating, or other industrial activities;
  - ii. Areas devoted to wholesaling, warehousing, retail trade and service activities, or other commercial activities; and
  - iii. Areas devoted to intensive recreational development and activities, such as, but not limited to amusement parks, racetracks, and fairgrounds.
- b. Areas otherwise discernable as having patterns of intensive commercial, industrial or recreational uses.

Portions of the General Development District may also include residential development. However, no area shall be designated as a General Development District based solely on residential use.

In areas adjacent to great ponds classified GPA and adjacent to rivers flowing to great ponds classified GPA, the designation of an area as a General Development District shall be based upon uses existing at the time of adoption of this Ordinance. There shall be no newly established General Development Districts or expansions in area of existing General Development Districts adjacent to great ponds classified GPA, and adjacent to rivers, which flow to great ponds, classified GPA.

10. Wetland Protection District: The Wetlands Protection District includes all land areas within two hundred fifty (250') feet, horizontal distance, of the upland edge of a freshwater wetland not rated "moderate" or "high" value by the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife as of December 31, 2008.
11. Stream Protection District: The Stream Protection District includes all land areas within seventy-five (75') feet, horizontal distance, of the normal high-water line of a stream, exclusive of those areas within two hundred and fifty (250') feet, horizontal distance, of the normal high water line of a great pond or river or within two hundred and fifty (250') feet, horizontal distance of the upland edge of a freshwater wetland. Where a stream and its associated shoreland area are located within two hundred and fifty (250') feet, horizontal distance, of the above water bodies or wetlands, that land area shall be regulated under the terms of the shorelands district associated with that water body or wetland.

These land-use districts not included as growth areas are designated to protect natural resources, public drinking water supplies, and the character of the town by directing development into appropriate areas. Preservation of rural areas, natural resources, farms, forests, and open space aligns with the community's vision statement.

Protecting the rural parts of town also align with the community's vision for acknowledging the importance of environmental assets, wildlife habitat, waterbodies, and maintaining outdoor recreation areas and facilities.

### **Anticipated Growth:**

At the conclusion of the Existing Land Use and Housing chapters of this plan, population projections, and land consumption estimates were presented based on current and historic trends, ordinances, and minimum lot sizes.

The State Economist's Office predicts a population of 9,041 people by 2040- an increase of 402 people (4.7 percent increase).

Regardless of population changes in terms of numbers, Skowhegan's population is also changing demographically. Two impactful areas undergoing significant changes are median age and average household size.

Skowhegan's average household size has declined steadily for several decades and as of the 2023 ACS, is at 2.18 people per household. While average household size cannot shrink indefinitely, continued decline should be taken into consideration when projecting the anticipated need for housing. If a five percent decrease in average household size is assumed over the next 15-year period, the average household size would be 2.07 persons per household. Counterintuitively, smaller household sizes requires more housing just to accommodate the same number of people.

The median age in Skowhegan has been increasing for decades, as well. Since 1980, the median age has increased nearly 43 percent. As of 2022, Skowhegan residents' median age was 45.7 years old.

Currently, Skowhegan has a housing stock of 4,046, not including seasonal housing, and a population of 8,639 people.

Detailed more thoroughly in the Housing and Existing Land Use chapters, if the State Economist's population projection are fulfilled, and:

- The average household size stays the same, there will be a deficit of 101 houses in 15 years. This would require roughly seven new houses per year.
- The average household size decreases by five percent, there will be a deficit of 322 houses in 15 years. This would require roughly 21 houses per year.

Due to housing unit prices and general shortages of housing units in the region, Skowhegan could likely add 10 or more housing units to its housing stock per year and there would still be a need for additional housing. However, it is important to bear in mind the *style* and *type* of housing unit that is needed. What appears to be in highest demand are **right-sized housing units for seniors looking to downsize, single-person**



**households, or small families just starting out. Currently, there seems to be less need for large, 3- to 4-bedroom houses on large lots.**

The construction of new houses will require land for development, and since Skowhegan does not have zoning, the minimum lot size requirements are determined by the availability of public water and sewer connections, set forth in the Building Safety Ordinance, and detailed below:

Minimum Lot Sizes:

- Not served by town sewer and not in the Shoreland Zone: 20,000 square feet.
- Served by town sewer and in the Shoreland Zone: 10,000 square feet.
- Not served by town sewer and in the Shoreland Zone: 40,000 square feet.

The desirable, logical location for new housing would be either the downtown area, as redevelopment of existing structures, or along the corridors that make up the designated growth areas. Other ideal locations would be in existing subdivisions that are not at capacity. Ideally, new housing would be developed within locations that connection to the public sewer system is feasible, resulting in reduced lot sizes and increased density.

Since residential growth is more challenging to direct than commercial, new houses will likely continue to be built in the rural areas of Skowhegan. Without zoning or land use regulations, Skowhegan has minimal ability to direct residential development, aside from Shoreland Zoning.

New commercial and industrial developments are more difficult to predict, though easier to direct. With the town's public water and sewer accessibility, and ease of transportation access, there have been several new businesses opening in Skowhegan and expansion of existing businesses.

Depending on the level of intensity and impact, new commercial development could locate in any part of the designated growth area. The most likely scenario for new commercial businesses coming to Skowhegan would be for them to locate in empty or underutilized existing buildings, or redevelop existing buildings, based on recent trends. There are a plethora of appropriate locations throughout Skowhegan's growth area that could accommodate new commercial or industrial development.

The town should continue to promote itself as a service center and the contemporary hub of Somerset County and continue expanding its tax base by drawing in new businesses, which would continue enhancing economic vitality, and increasing employment options, all of which align with the community's vision.

Skowhegan's Site Plan Review Ordinance is robust, thorough and provides the Planning Board with appropriate oversight in commercial and industrial development. Even without zoning, this ordinance is adequate in directing commercial and industrial development to desired locations in town.

## **Comprehensive Plan Implementation:**

The challenge in the creation of this Plan is to work with the current rate of development and to manage it in such a way as to reduce the impacts it will have on both the town's rural character, natural resources, and on town services. The best way to accomplish this is by encouraging new development to locate close to existing public services and near each other, rather than in rural areas. Skowhegan's designated growth area fits the criteria for directing new development into more densely settled areas and close to existing town services, but the town needs to find a way to successfully encourage most new development, particularly residential, to locate in the designated growth areas, either through regulatory or non-regulatory measures, to realize the town's vision.

The town should continue tracking and monitoring growth and development by tracking and documenting permits issued. The Code Enforcement Officer and Planning Office, in conjunction with the Planning Board are instrumental in tracking permits issued and subdivisions.

Permit trends should be reviewed annually to monitor growth patterns and ensure that development aligns with the town's overall vision. If growth begins to exceed expectations or occur in areas not fully supported by current infrastructure, this review provides an opportunity to evaluate the town's ability to accommodate these changes effectively. The goal is not to restrict development, but to ensure that the necessary facilities and resources are in place to support growth in a way that maintains the town's character and meets the needs of its residents. This ongoing review allows Skowhegan to adapt to growth, ensuring that the community's needs and long-term vision are well-supported.

Tracking the following applications is recommended:

- The location of new residential structures.
- The location of new commercial structures.
- Conversions from seasonal camps to year-round residences.

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

The Planning Board and town officials should mandate a regularly scheduled, comprehensive review of all ordinances related to land use to ensure they reflect the town's changing needs. These reviews should be in conjunction with the annual town budget process.

The effectiveness of land use planning is typically not vastly different across town lines. Therefore, this plan recommends the town make efforts to meet periodically with neighboring communities to coordinate land-use designations and regulatory and non-regulatory strategies.

<b>Policies:</b>	<b>Strategies:</b>	<b>Implementing Party/Timeframe:</b>
<p><b>Land Use Plan:</b></p> <p>Skowhegan has a site plan review, subdivision, shoreland, and floodplain ordinance that work collaboratively to manage growth and reduce the impacts on natural resources.</p> <p>The growth area laid out in the 2010 Comprehensive Plan (mostly downtown and major transportation corridors crossroad such as 104 and 201) is not at capacity and commercial development is picking up in the growth area, though residential development is still spread out through town.</p> <p>Another challenge will be managing future land uses while still providing protection to the area's abundant natural resources that continue to draw in tourists.</p> <p><b>State Goal: To encourage orderly growth and development in appropriate areas of each community, while protecting the state's rural character, making efficient use of public services, and preventing development sprawl.</b></p>		
<b>Policies:</b>	<b>Strategies:</b>	<b>Implementing Party/Timeframe:</b>
1. To coordinate the community's land use strategies with other local and regional land use planning efforts.	<p>1.1 Assign responsibility for implementing the Future Land Use Plan to the appropriate committee, board or municipal official.</p> <p>1.2 Meet with neighboring communities to coordinate land use designations and regulatory and non-regulatory strategies.</p>	<p>Planning Board / Near-term / 2025-2026.</p> <p>Economic and Community Development Office / Planning Board / Near-term / 2025-2026.</p>
2. To support the locations, types, scales, and intensities of land uses the community desires as stated in its vision.	<p>2.1 Using the descriptions provided in the Future Land Use Plan narrative, maintain, enact or amend local ordinances as appropriate to:</p> <p>a. Clearly define the desired scale, intensity, and location of future development;</p> <p>b. Establish or maintain fair and efficient permitting procedures, and explore streamlining</p>	Planning Board / Near-term . 2025-2026.

Policies:	Strategies:	Implementing Party/Timeframe:
	<p>permitting procedures in growth areas; and</p> <p>c. Clearly define protective measures for critical natural resources and, where applicable, important natural resources.</p> <p>d. Clearly define protective measures for any proposed critical rural areas and/or critical waterfront areas, if proposed.</p> <p>2.2 Periodically (at least every five years) evaluate implementation of the plan in accordance with Section 2.7 of the Chapter 208 Comprehensive Plan Review Criteria Rule.</p> <p>2.3: Foster, promote, and encourage recently established businesses in appropriate areas to allow for more services for residents.</p> <p>2.4: Investigate possible grant opportunities to extend public sewer and water lines to areas designated as growth areas and to the Southgate Industrial Park.</p> <p>2.5: Appoint a Comprehensive Plan Implementation Committee to work with the Planning Board periodically in reviewing the implementation and effectiveness of the Future Land Use Plan.</p> <p>2.6: Use the online permitting system to create a report that will detail types of permits and locations to be presented to the Planning Board on a predetermined basis.</p>	<p>Planning Board / Ongoing.</p> <p>Economic and Community Development Office / Ongoing.</p> <p>Economic and Community Development Office / Ongoing.</p> <p>Select Board / Near-term 2026-2027.</p> <p>Planning Board / Planning Office / Ongoing.</p>

<b>Policies:</b>	<b>Strategies:</b>	<b>Implementing Party/Timeframe:</b>
3. To support the level of financial commitment necessary to provide needed infrastructure in growth areas.	3.1 Direct a minimum of 75% of new municipal growth-related capital investments into designated growth areas identified in the Future Land Use Plan.	Planning Board / Planning Office / Ongoing.
	3.2 Include in the Capital Investment Plan anticipated municipal capital investments needed to support proposed land uses.	Town Manager / Ongoing.
	3.3: Continue to promote enrollments in current-use agricultural and tree growth tax programs.	Economic and Community Development Office / Ongoing.
	3.4: Incorporate future potential for agriculture and forestry into the town's economic development planning and strategies.	Economic and Community Development Office / Ongoing.
	3.5: Continue to market any available land and buildings for commercial development and expand access to land by improving access to the area.	Economic and Community Development Office / Ongoing.
	3.6: Work with the Chamber of Commerce and other entities to improve amenities and attractions in the village area and minimize commercial vacancies.	Economic and Community Development Office / Ongoing.
	3.7: Prioritize road improvements to give preference to roads in growth areas as part of the road improvement plan. This can be accomplished, in part, by appointing a Roads Committee.	Highway Department / Ongoing.

<b>Policies:</b>	<b>Strategies:</b>	<b>Implementing Party/Timeframe:</b>
4. To establish efficient permitting procedures, especially in growth areas.	<p>4.1 Provide the Code Enforcement Officer and Planning Board with the tools, training, and support necessary to enforce land use regulations, and ensure that the Code Enforcement Officer is certified in accordance with 30-A M.R.S.A. §4451.</p> <p>4.2: The CEO/Planning Board chairman should continue summarizing the findings from tracking permits in a yearly report, shared annually with the Select Board. The results of this report should be considered with the goals, policies, and strategies of the Comprehensive Plan.</p>	<p>Town Manager / Ongoing.</p> <p>Planning Office / Ongoing.</p>
5. To protect critical rural and critical waterfront areas from the impacts of development.	<p>5.1 Track new development in the community by type and location.</p> <p>5.2: Review and update the following ordinances with current language and standards: Building Permit and Lot Size, Shoreland Zoning, Floodplains Management, and Subdivision.</p> <p>5.3: Consider reviewing and updating tax maps either annually or biannually. Make updated tax maps available to the public via the town website and paper copies in the Town Office.</p> <p>5.4: Update and modernize existing zoning maps to comply with Shoreland Zoning mandates and incorporate local zoning changes.</p>	<p>Planning Office / Ongoing.</p> <p>Planning Board / Ongoing.</p> <p>Planning Office / Ongoing.</p>

<b>Policies:</b>	<b>Strategies:</b>	<b>Implementing Party/Timeframe:</b>
6. Encourage development (large scale housing or non-natural resource commercial development) to occur with the towns designated growth area.	6.1: Consider revising the existing Subdivision, Shoreland Zoning, Floodplain Management and Building Permit and Lot Size Ordinances to ensure that they encourage appropriate development within the designated growth area.	Planning Board / Ongoing.
	6.2: If changes to existing Ordinances are deemed insufficient to encourage development in the growth area and protect natural resources, decide whether any new Land Use Regulations should be considered by the town.	Planning Board / Ongoing.
	6.3: Review lot sizes in all zoning districts to ensure they are still relevant and in keeping with the town's goals.	Planning Board / Ongoing.
	6.4: Identify infrastructure and parking improvements, façade improvements, and amenities for the designated growth area.	Economic and Community Development Office / Ongoing.
	6.5: Explore incentives to encourage the redevelopment/revitalization of existing vacant or underutilized structures in the downtown area.	Economic and Community Development Office / Ongoing.
	6.6: Explore options for increasing the availability of right-sized housing to include housing for a variety of citizens' needs such as work force housing, senior housing, and housing for singles.	Economic and Community Development Office / Planning Office / Ongoing.
	6.7: For newly developed housing units, consider encouraging that a certain number or percentage be designated specifically for	Economic and Community Development Office / Planning Office / Ongoing.

Policies:	Strategies:	Implementing Party/Timeframe:
	<p>seniors.</p> <p>6.8: Promote senior housing in locations with easy access to stores, health services, and other needed services.</p> <p>6.9: Encourage the construction of additional, right-sized dwelling units to meet a variety of housing needs.</p> <p>6.10: Explore options to encourage mixed-use housing in the village area, specifically in existing, underutilized buildings.</p> <p>6.11: Consider amending the Ordinances to streamline the permitting process for additional dwelling units and accessory dwelling units on residential lots with existing housing units on them.</p> <p>6.12: Consider revising the ordinances to streamline the process of converting a single-family home into a multifamily home.</p> <p>6.13: Review all town ordinances relating to land use to update definitions, technology, state standards, and Best Management Practices.</p>	<p>Economic and Community Development Office / Planning Office / Ongoing.</p> <p>Economic and Community Development Office / Planning Office / Ongoing.</p> <p>Economic and Community Development Office / Planning Office / Ongoing.</p> <p>Planning Board / Mid-term 2026-2027.</p> <p>Planning Board / Mid-term 2026-2027.</p> <p>Planning Board / Ongoing.</p>
<p>7. Continue to promote and market Skowhegan has a regional service center and outdoor recreational destination.</p>	<p>7.1: Continue to work with the Old Canada Road National Scenic Byway organization, Main Street Skowhegan, and Kennebec Valley Tourism Council.</p> <p>7.2: Seek ways to collaborate with various, appropriate committees, boards, citizens, etc., on the creation, promotion, expansion, and maintenance of</p>	<p>Economic and Community Development Office, Main Street Skowhegan / Ongoing.</p> <p>Economic and Community Development Office / Rec Advisory Committee / Ongoing.</p>



<b>Policies:</b>	<b>Strategies:</b>	<b>Implementing Party/Timeframe:</b>
	outdoor recreational opportunities.	
8. Ensure all new amendments to the Site Plan Ordinance, Subdivision Ordinance, and any other ordinances require the utmost protection of natural resources.	<p>8.1: When considering lot size reductions, do not reduce lot sizes in Public Water, Resource Protection, Shoreland, and Stream Protection districts.</p> <p>8.2: Ensure Shoreland Zoning is upheld for any new development or construction.</p> <p>8.3 Regularly review Shoreland Zoning restrictions for ongoing regulatory compliance and appropriateness.</p> <p>8.4: Consider setting a maximum percentage of impervious surface or maximum percent allowable lot on all lots to protect waterbodies.</p> <p>8.5: Explore the possibility of developing an Open Space Plan.</p> <p>8.6: Ensure critical natural areas are designated as Critical Resource Areas on Zoning Maps reflecting changes made because of this plan.</p>	<p>Planning Board / Ongoing.</p> <p>Planning Board / Ongoing.</p> <p>Planning Board / Ongoing.</p> <p>Planning Board / Near-term 2025-2026.</p> <p>Planning Board / Longterm.</p> <p>Planning Office / Ongoing.</p>

# Capital Investment Plan

## Description of Existing Process:

The Capital Investment Plan (CIP) component of the Comprehensive Plan identifies growth related capital investments and a strategy for accommodating them. The CIP anticipates future expenses, sets priorities and timetables, and proposes a mechanism to fund them. The CIP is important because it alerts both municipal officials and citizens about future expenses and allows the town to find the most cost-effective way to finance the Improvement.

The CIP covered in this chapter will include items includes items identified in the comprehensive plan which are called capital expenses. A capital expense is defined as having a cost that is not a maintenance or operating expense. Skowhegan does basic capital planning for its municipal facilities; however, no working CIP was available for inclusion in this section. At the very least, the town should maintain a prioritized list of anticipated capital needs.

As the coordinator for all the town's activities, the Town Manager is responsible for the development and maintenance of the CIP. However, the Town Manager must rely on town staff and committees to submit needs and cost estimates and set priorities. Thus, the CIP process should ideally be prepared alongside the annual budget, so that a portion of the annual budget is set aside to fund the CIP. This can be in the form of contributions to a reserve fund, one-time appropriations, or commitment to pay interest on a loan.

Skowhegan's Select Board, in conjunction with the Town Manager, should strive to develop the CIP by maintaining a prioritized list of anticipated capital needs and incorporating the guidelines needed to reach the goals of the initial project list presented in this plan.

The capital investments listed below include both those identified by this plan and other capital improvement projects that have come up in town discussions over the past five years. Due to turn over in Town Managers during the writing of the plan and Skowhegan's lack of a formal CIP, much of what is identified in the tables below is general.

## ***Why a CIP?***

The development and maintenance of a Capital Investments Plan would allow Skowhegan the ability to forecast upcoming major expenses with minimal surprises. Developing a CIP presents the town with the opportunity to:

- Engage in a reasoned discussion about priorities.
- Prepare a pre-planned list that better enables Skowhegan to take advantage of unexpected opportunities, such as grants, low interest rates and price drops.
- Forecast, plan, and mitigate property tax impacts.

### ***Financing the CIP:***

A source of funding for each item has been proposed. The less certain the item is, the more speculative the funding can be. The principal threat to a stable budget is the one-time, large ticket expenditure, such as an expense brought on by an emergency or a new building. In Skowhegan, capital improvements are funded through a combination of appropriations, reserve funds, grants, lease programs, or bonding.

- Annual appropriations: While funding a major purchase in a one-time annual appropriation can be disruptive to the budget, it works for lower-priced items or when a continuing monetary stream can be tapped for regular needs.
- Undesignated fund: In keeping with its fund balance policy, the town maintains an adequate amount in undesignated funds. Funds more than those allocated may be used for one-time capital expenditure or to address emergencies or even catastrophic needs that may unexpectedly arise.
- Reserve accounts: Skowhegan's maintains a reserve account to pay for capital improvements on an as-needed basis.
- Bonding/lease-purchase agreements: As of 2022, Skowhegan has not used bonding, but they have permission to do so, as necessary, for equipment purchases. Permission is through the legislative body.
- Grants: Grants are competitive and cannot be relied upon. A grant is acceptable for "wish list" items, but not for essentials. A grant search should be part of the annual CIP update process.
- Outside contributions: In many cases, other organizations may join with the town to contribute to a project of joint benefit. This may include other towns or organizations such as Somerset Woods Trustees or Main Street Skowhegan. While these funding sources may be more reliable than grants, it requires coordination with timetables outside of the town's control.

Financing of the CIP may come from any number of sources, but the most crucial element is to ensure the impact on the annual town budget is spread out over time. Under this Plan, the major impacts will come from Capital Improvement Funds.

As of 2022, Skowhegan has sufficient borrowing power but has not taken advantage of this option for the last several years, due to successful budget planning and oversight. While borrowing is a viable option, the town would rather make purchases outright, using capital improvement funds, where feasible.

### **Shared Investments**

Skowhegan has historically been proactive in planning for future expenses and collaborating with neighboring towns to maximize opportunities. For example, For example, the town collaborates with neighboring communities on education and emergency response.

**Priority Level:**

L= Low

M= Medium

H= High

**EMERGENCY SERVICES:**

Department	Project/Need	Priority	Estimated Replacement Timeframe	Estimated Cost	Primary Funding Source
Fire Department	New Fire Gear	Ongoing	Yearly	TBD	Budgeted, Capital Fund, Grants

**PUBLIC WORKS:**

Department	Project/Need	Priority	Estimated Replacement Timeframe	Estimated Cost	Primary Funding Source
Public Works	Second Bridge over Kennebec River	Ongoing	Ongoing	TBD	DOT, Federal Grants
Public Works	Malbons Mills Bridge on the Notch Road	M	2027	TBD	Budgeted Capital Fund, DOT
Public Works	Implement Sidewalk & Bike Trail System	Ongoing	Yearly	TBD per project	DOT, Local Match

**UTILITIES AND TRANSFER STATION:**

Department	Project/Need	Priority	Estimated Replacement Timeframe	Estimated Cost	Primary Funding Source
Sewer Department	General maintenance	M	Ongoing	TBD	Budgeted, Capital Fund
Sewer Department	SCADA Upgrade, Dewatering Upgrade	H	2025	TBD	Budgeted, Capital Fund

Transfer Station	General maintenance	M	Ongoing	TBD	Budgeted, Capital Fund
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**TOWN OFFICE, TOWN STAFF, ELECTED OFFICIALS:**

Department	Project/Need	Priority	Estimated Replacement Timeframe	Estimated Cost	Primary Funding Source
Town Office	Expansion of Town Office	M	2035	\$1 million	Grants

## **Regional Coordination**

### **Shared Resources and Facilities**

Transportation infrastructure is one of Skowhegan's most important areas of regional coordination. A key initiative has been the Village Partnership Initiative (VIP) with the Maine Department of Transportation (Maine DOT), which explores the possibility of a second bridge over the Kennebec River. This project aims to enhance safety, reduce congestion, and improve connectivity for not only Skowhegan but also surrounding communities. The VIP reflects Skowhegan's commitment to creating a well-integrated transportation network that benefits the entire region.

Water resources also play a central role in regional coordination. Skowhegan shares Lake George with the Town of Canaan, making it essential to manage the lake collaboratively. The town works closely with Canaan and the State of Maine to preserve water quality, address invasive species, and ensure that land use around the lake remains compatible with conservation goals. Skowhegan's stewardship of this shared resource is integral to both the town and the surrounding community.

In addition to water resources, Skowhegan shares responsibility for managing aquifers and conservation areas with neighboring towns and regional organizations. Through partnerships with the Somerset County Soil and Water Conservation District and Somerset Woods Trustees, Skowhegan participates in regional efforts to protect natural resources and maintain the ecological health of the area.

Skowhegan is also a major employer for surrounding communities, providing a variety of jobs in the public and private sectors. This role as an economic driver extends beyond its town limits, helping to support the local economies of neighboring municipalities.

Skowhegan has also made significant contributions to regional solid waste management. The town allows neighboring communities to use its solid waste transfer station, providing a vital service to surrounding towns. In addition, Skowhegan hosts a regional household hazardous waste collection event, which benefits numerous communities in the area by providing a safe and convenient way to dispose of hazardous materials.

### **Regional Coordination Efforts**

Skowhegan is deeply involved in several regional initiatives and organizations that promote growth, sustainability, and community development. The town works closely with the Kennebec Valley Council of Governments (KVCOG), which plays a crucial role in coordinating regional economic development and planning efforts. Skowhegan participates in the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS), which aims to strengthen regional economic resilience and diversify industries. KVCOG's support helps Skowhegan align its policies with the broader goals of the region, ensuring that resources are used efficiently and effectively.

Skowhegan is also closely connected to the Somerset County government, with a particular focus on public safety and law enforcement. The town coordinates with the Somerset County Sheriff's Office to provide regional law enforcement services and ensure public safety across both the town

and county. This close relationship strengthens regional cooperation and helps Skowhegan better serve its residents and surrounding communities.

As Somerset County's seat, Skowhegan serves as a hub for regional businesses and economic development. The Somerset Economic Development Corporation works with Skowhegan to foster economic growth, attract new businesses, and support existing ones. The Skowhegan Area Chamber of Commerce plays an important role in promoting local businesses and organizing events that strengthen the town's connections with surrounding communities.

Skowhegan's Recreation Department and recreation center also serve as a regional resource. While primarily benefiting Skowhegan residents, the recreation center is open to non-residents for a fee, making it a regional asset. The town offers a variety of recreational programs and activities that attract people from neighboring towns, fostering community engagement and promoting an active, healthy lifestyle.

Additionally, the Old Canada Road Scenic Byway, which passes through Skowhegan on its way to Canada, draws many tourists to the area. This scenic route helps promote regional tourism, with visitors spending time in Skowhegan and exploring the surrounding areas. Main Street Skowhegan in collaboration with the Kennebec Valley Tourism Council are working to promote the upper part of this region and harness its marketing potential.

Skowhegan also continues to collaborate with Waterville on a regional tourism master plan and brand strategy initiative. Main Street Skowhegan, Central Maine Growth Council, and the Mid-Maine Chamber of Commerce are working collaboratively to overcome regional challenges and spur economic and community revitalization. Skowhegan has been a spoke of a regional "hub and spoke" entrepreneurial ecosystem for several years now, with the launch of the Skowhegan Center for Entrepreneurship. The town's efforts to improve its recreational and cultural offerings, including the expansion of the River Park, further enhance its appeal to both locals and visitors alike.

## **Identification of Conflicts and Strategies for Coordination**

While Skowhegan benefits from strong regional partnerships, occasional conflicts may arise, particularly in areas like land use and resource management. For example, Skowhegan and neighboring municipalities may have differing policies related to zoning near shared resources such as Lake George. Additionally, transportation planning, particularly the development of a second bridge over the Kennebec River, may present conflicting priorities between Skowhegan and nearby towns.

To address these challenges, Skowhegan focuses on collaborative planning efforts and open communication. Regular coordination meetings with neighboring communities, regional organizations, and state agencies ensure that all stakeholders are involved in decision-making processes. Skowhegan also works with these partners to mediate conflicts and build consensus, ensuring that all parties have a voice in the outcome.

Skowhegan is committed to fostering regional cooperation through continuous dialogue and a shared understanding of common goals. The town's approach to managing conflicts emphasizes finding solutions that benefit the entire region, promoting long-term sustainability and shared prosperity.

**Local Economy**

- Policy 1. To support the type of economic development activity the community desires, reflecting the community's role in the region.
- Strategy 1.1: If appropriate, assign responsibility and provide financial support for economic development activities to the proper entity (e.g., a local economic development committee, a local representative to a regional economic development organization, the community's economic development director, a regional economic development initiative, or other).
- Policy 3. To coordinate with regional development corporations and surrounding towns as necessary to support desired economic development.
- Strategy 3.1: Participate in any regional economic development planning efforts.
- Strategy 3.2: Explore options to coordinate with the regional school system for training opportunities for young workers.



## **Housing**

- Policy 1. Encourage and promote adequate affordable and workforce housing to support the community's and region's economic development.
- Strategy 1.3: Create or continue to support a community affordable/workforce housing committee and/or regional affordable housing coalition.
- Strategy 2.1: Support the efforts of local and regional housing coalitions in addressing affordable and workforce housing needs.
- Policy 3. Encourage and support the efforts of regional housing coalitions or groups with similar purposes in addressing affordable and workforce housing needs.
- Strategy 3.2: Explore options to encourage workforce housing development to support community and regional economic development.

## **Public Facilities and Services**

- Strategy 2.3: Explore options for regional delivery of local services.
- Strategy 6.2: Work with the school board to undertake long-term school facilities planning.
- Strategy 6.3: Receive from the Fire Department an annual assessment of the adequacy of and need for future replacement of fire equipment.
- Strategy 6.5: Continue to plan for long-range solid waste disposal and recycling needs.
- Policy 7. Continue to seek increased opportunities for regional cooperation with neighboring towns.
- Strategy 7.1: Establish a protocol to look at opportunities for equipment sharing, including purchases of new equipment.
- Strategy 7.2: Engage neighboring towns in planning for disaster mitigation.
- Strategy 7.3: Continue contacts and discussions with neighboring towns and regional entities on new ways to provide more efficient services.
- Policy 8. Work with state and county officials to increase enforcement of traffic laws, especially in residential areas along Route 201.

## **Transportation**

- Policy 1. To prioritize community and regional needs associated with safe, efficient, and optimal use of transportation systems.
- Strategy 2.1: Initiate or actively participate in regional and state transportation efforts.
- Strategy 2.2: Work with MDOT to improve the existing transportation system.
- Strategy 6.1: Continue collaboration with Old Canada Road National Scenic Byway, Main Street Skowhegan, and Kennebec Valley Tourism Council in developing bike paths.
- Strategy 7.3: Work with MDOT to implement pedestrian safety improvements including flashing crosswalk signs along Main Street.
- Strategy 7.6: Engage MDOT in exploring options to increase pedestrian safety on Main Street, such as flashing crosswalk signs, additional signage, flashing speed limit signs, speed limit signs that photograph license plates of vehicles traveling above the posted speed limit, etc.

## **Recreation**

- Strategy 1.3: Investigate the possibility of coordinating with neighboring towns in the development of a shared community building to serve all ages.
- Strategy 2.1: Work with public and private partners to extend and maintain a network of trails for motorized and non-motorized uses. Connect with regional trail systems where possible.
- Strategy 2.2: Work with an existing local land trust or other conservation organizations to pursue opportunities to protect important open space or recreational land.
- Strategy 3.1: Continue to develop the River Park Project in the Kennebec River Gorge area, by raising and allocating funds for the next phase in completing the project.
- Strategy 4.5: Continue to collaborate with the Old Canada Road National Scenic Byway, Main Street Skowhegan, and Kennebec Valley Tourism Council in improvement initiatives.
- Strategy 8.1: Seek options to pursue and maintain increased trail connectivity, such as connecting with regional trail systems, where possible. Formalize these arrangements with easements or licenses where applicable.

## **Ag & Forestry**

- Strategy 2.3: Include agriculture, commercial forestry operations, and land conservation that supports them in local or regional economic development plans.
- Strategy 2.4: Engage agricultural and forestry organizations in supporting and expanding forestry operations, such as Maine Woodlot Owners, New England Forestry Foundation, National Association of State Foresters, or Sustainable Forest Initiative.
- Strategy 3.2: Work with schools to encourage partnerships with local farms by procuring locally grown food.
- Strategy 3.3: Engage sources to assist in the development of a forestry curriculum such as the Maine Tree Foundation, Project Learning Tree, Maine Audubon, and Professional loggers and contractors.
- Strategy 3.4: Engage students and faculty from the regional schools in a forestry curriculum & paid internships with local loggers, sawmills and supporting industries.

## **Environmental Resources**

- Policy 2. To coordinate with neighboring communities and regional and state resource agencies to protect shared critical natural resources.
- Strategy 2.1: Initiate and/or participate in interlocal and/or regional planning, management, and/or regulatory efforts around shared critical and important natural resources.
- Policy 5. To cooperate with neighboring communities and regional/local advocacy groups to protect water resources.
- Strategy 5.1: Participate in local and regional efforts to monitor, protect and, where warranted, improve water quality.

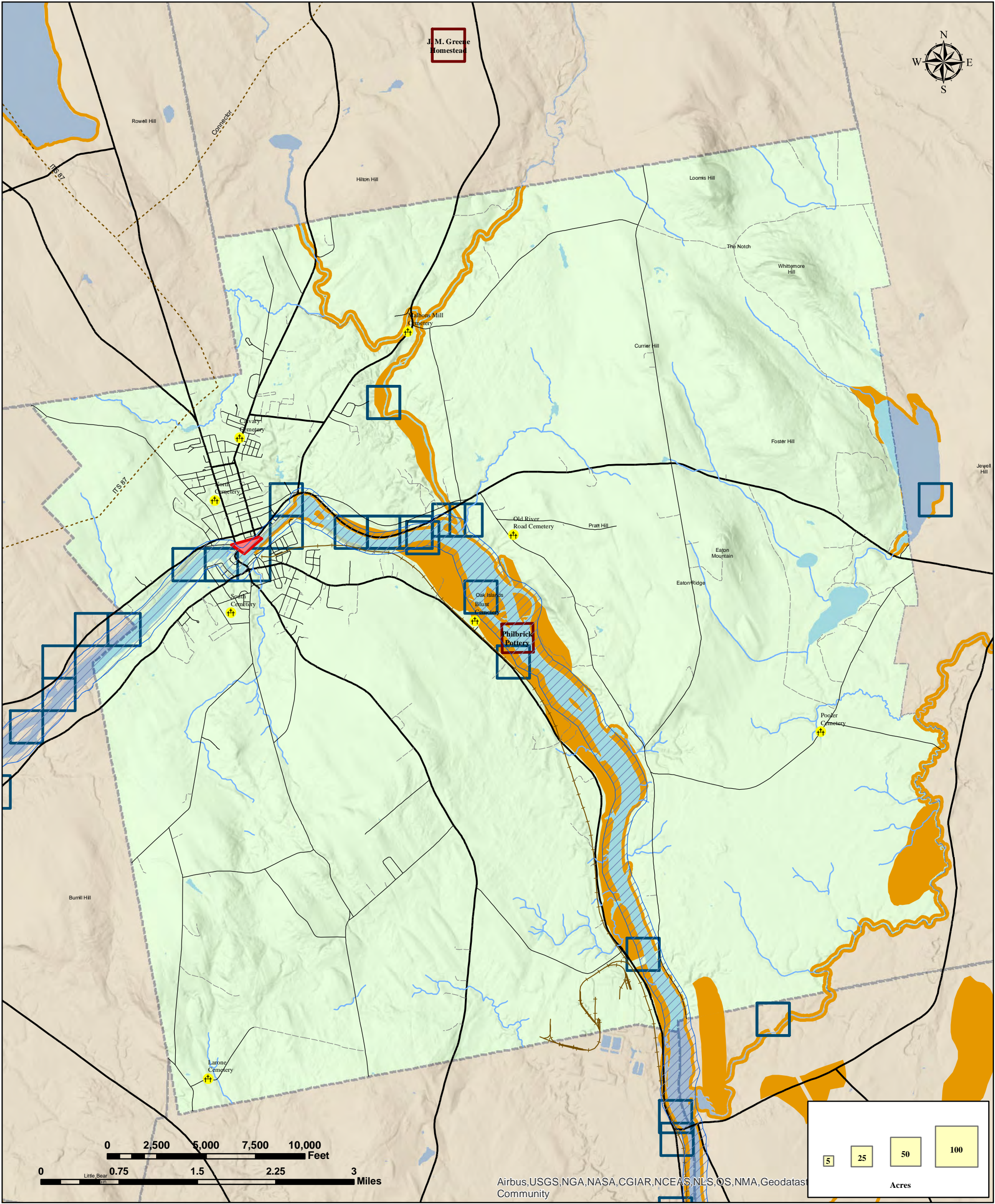
## **Future Land Use Plan**

- Policy 1. To coordinate the community's land-use strategies with other local and regional land-use planning efforts.
- Strategy 1.2: Meet with neighboring communities to coordinate land-use designations and regulatory and non-regulatory strategies.
- Policy 7. Continue to promote and market Skowhegan as a regional service center and outdoor recreational destination.
- Strategy 7.1: Continue to work with the Old Canada Road National Scenic Byway organization, Main Street Skowhegan, Kennebec Valley Tourism Council, and the numerous outdoor recreational outfitters throughout town.

## APPENDICES

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# Town of Skowhegan

## Somerset County, Maine

### Historic and Archeological Resources Map

### 2022 Comprehensive Plan

Map Legend	
Roads	Arnold Trail to Quebec Historic District
Private Roads	Skowhegan Historic District
Lakes, Ponds & Rivers	Known Historic Archaeological Sites
Streams	Known Prehistoric Archaeological Sites
Cemeteries	Areas sensitive for Prehistoric Archaeology



Neither KVCOG nor the Town of Skowhegan assume any liability for the data delineated herein. All information depicted on this map is for planning purposes only and non-regulatory. Boundary data is based on digital sources and may differ from ground-based observations.  
Data Sources: Maine Office of GIS, Maine DOT Created 10-2018 by JG



Town of Skowhegan  
Somerset County, Maine  
Historic Resources Map  
2022 Comprehensive Plan

Map Legend

Historic Properties

●

Eligible

●

Listed

✖

Not Eligible but of note

Skowhegan Historic District

⚡

Skowhegan Cemeteries

Building Footprints

Local Roads

Private Roads

Kennebec Valley

Council of Governments

Regional service, local results

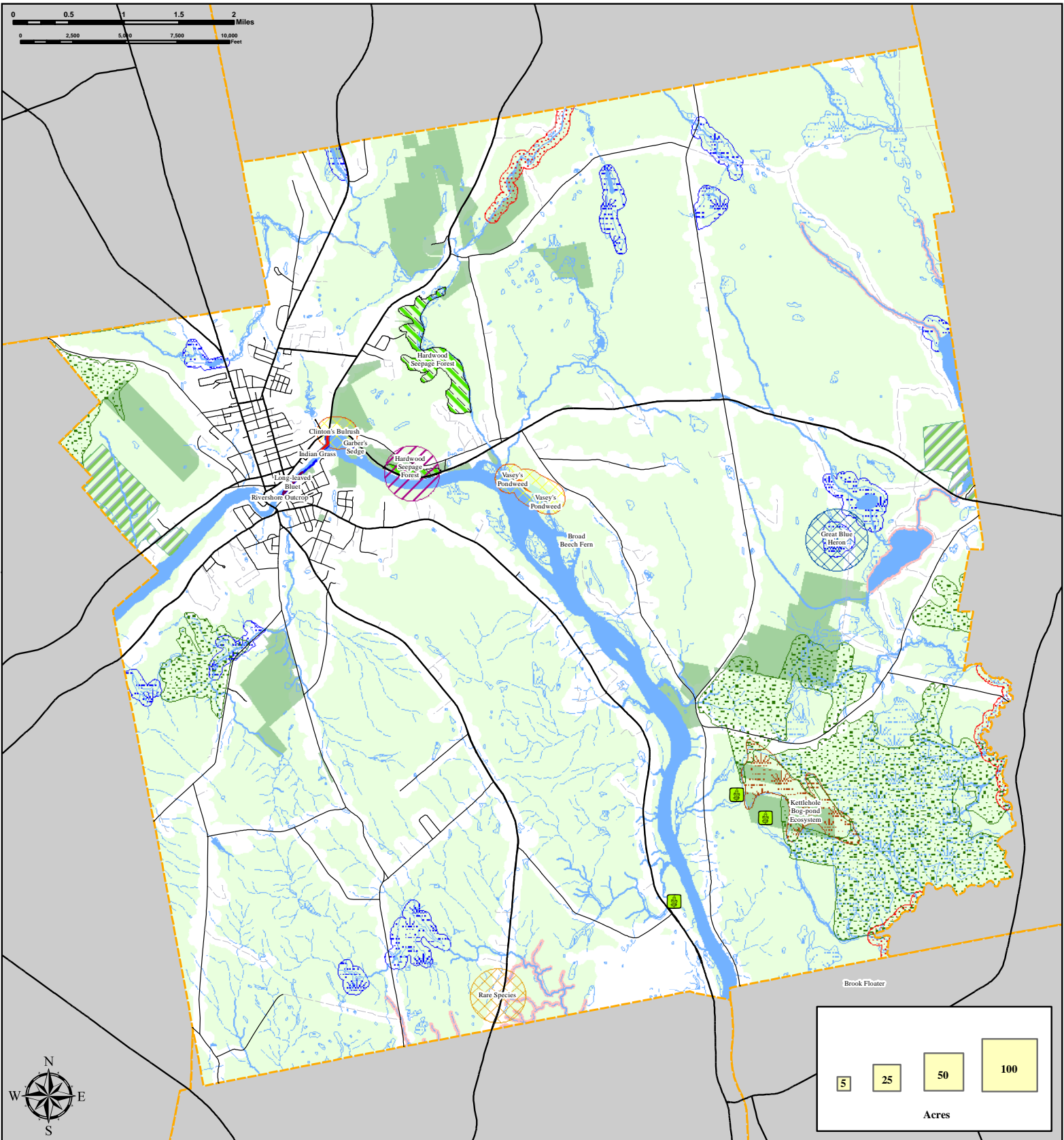
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Data Sources: Maine Office of GIS, Maine DOT

Created 02-2021 by JG

This map displays the historic resources of Skowhegan, Maine. It features a network of streets including Joyce St, Ash St, Center St, Olive St, Willow St, Prescott Dr, Dickie St, Dennis St, Patrick St, Michael St, Waverly Rd, Cherry St, Jackson St, Jordan Ln, Apple Way, Chamberlain St, Bido Ln, Union St, Fairview Ave, Main St, Wymon St, Bailey St, Green St, Pine St, Turner Ave, Bridge St, Alice St, Western St, Dodge Ct, Patten Ct, Elm St, Bennett Ave, Pleasant St, Madison Ave, Court St, Leavitt St, Dismore St, Kennebec St, Bush St, Russell Ave, and North Ave. Historic properties are marked with colored dots: green for eligible properties and red for listed properties. A large red shaded area indicates the Skowhegan Historic District. Other notable locations include the Samuel Gould House, Skowhegan Free Public Library, Skowhegan Fire Department, Skowhegan Municipal Building, United States Post Office, Strand Cinema, Somerset Masonic Building, Governor Abner Coburn House, Governor Abner Coburn Barn, Blockfield Academy, First Baptist Church, Skowhegan Drive-In Theatre Ticket Booth, Skowhegan Drive-In Theatre Site, and Skowhegan Fire Station. The map also shows the Kennebec River, the Swinging Bridge, and various cemeteries. A scale bar (0 to 1,000 feet) and a north arrow are located in the bottom right corner.

A north arrow pointing towards the top of the map, with 'N' at the top, 'S' at the bottom, 'E' to the right, and 'W' to the left. Below the arrow is a scale bar marked with 0, 250, 500, 750, and 1,000 feet.



# **Town of Skowhegan** **Somerset County, Maine** **Critical Natural Resources Map** **2023 Comprehensive Plan**



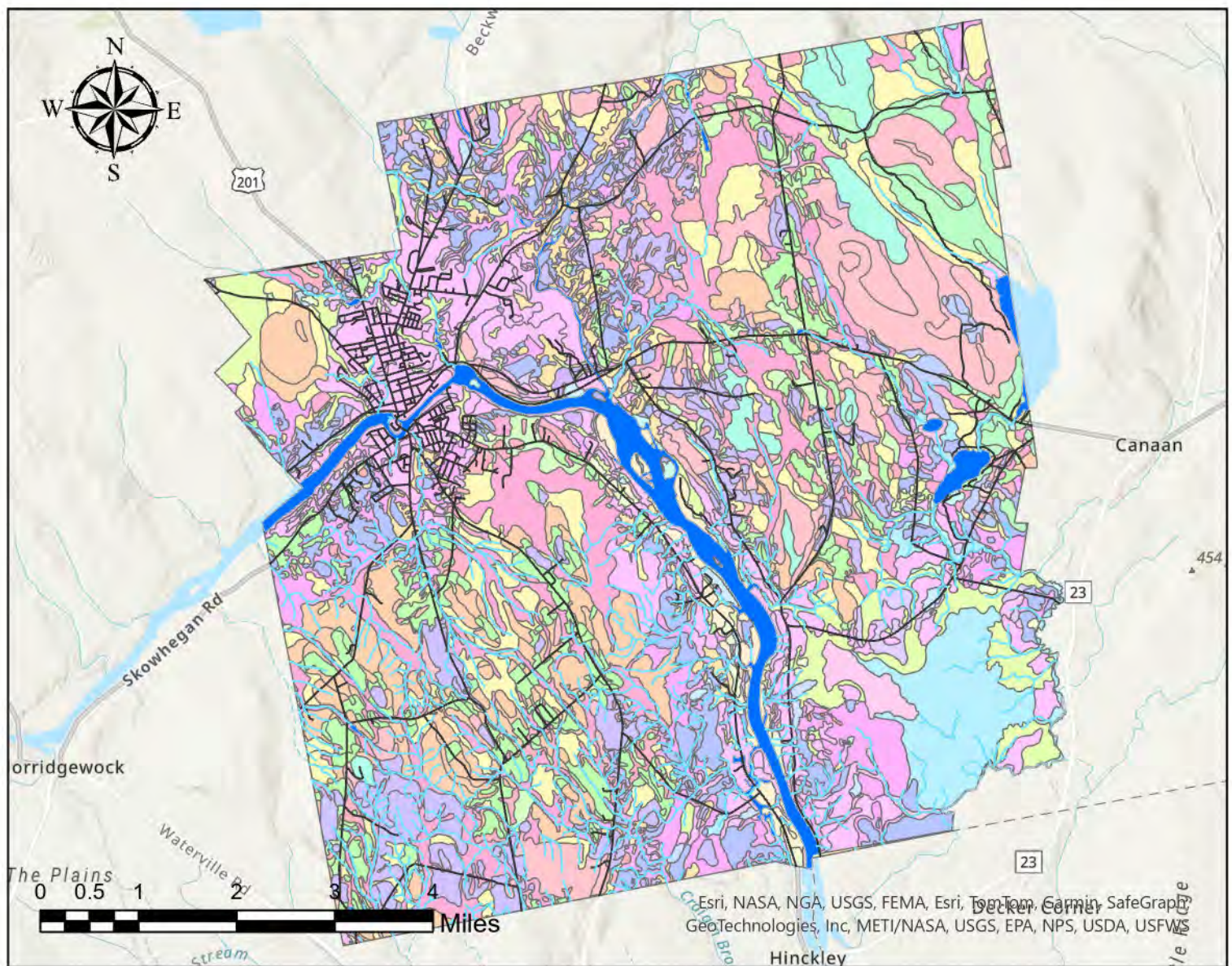
- Roads**
- State Highway
  - State Aid
  - Local
  - Private
- Lakes, Ponds & Rivers**
- Perennial Streams
  - Intermittent Streams
  - Wetlands
  - Undeveloped Blocks
- Conserved Lands**
- Private
  - State

- Species: Endangered, Threatened, of Concern**
- Broad Beech Fern
  - Clinton's Bulrush
  - Garber's Sedge
  - Indian Grass
  - Long-leaved Bluet
  - Vasey's Pondweed
  - Wild Coffee
  - Wild Garlic
  - Wild Ginger
  - Brook Floater
  - Great Blue Heron
  - Rare Species (Name Withheld)

- Rare, threatened, and endangered plant Habitats**
- Hardwood Seepage Forest
  - Kettlehole Bog-pond Ecosystem
  - Riverstone Outcrop
  - Wild Brook Trout Habitat
  - Inland Waterfowl / Wading bird Habitat
  - Deer Wintering Areas
  - Bald Eagle Nesting Site
  - Significant Vernal Pools

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 Data Sources: Maine Office of GIS, Maine DOT Created 01-2023 by JG





### Legend

#### SOIL TYPE

ADAMS LOAMY SAND	DIXMONT SILT LOAM	MIXED ALLUVIAL LAND	ROCK LAND, THORNDIKE AND LYMAN MATERIALS	THORNDIKE-BANGOR SILT LOAMS
BANGOR SILT LOAM	DIXMONT VERY STONY SILT LOAM	MONARDA SILT LOAM	SCANTIC SILT LOAM	THORNDIKE-PLAISTED LOAMS
BANGOR VERY STONY SILT LOAM	DUNE LAND	MONARDA VERY STONY SILT LOAM	SKOWHEGAN LOAMY FINE SAND	WALPOLE FINE SANDY LOAM
BIDDEFORD SILT LOAM	GRAVEL PITS	PEAT AND MUCK	STETSON FINE SANDY LOAM	WATER BODIES GREATER THAN 40 ACRES IN SIZE
BUXTON SILT LOAM	HADLEY SILT LOAM	PLAISTED GRAVELLY LOAM	SUFFIELD SILT LOAM	WINOOSKI SILT LOAM
COLTON GRAVELLY SANDY LOAM, DARK MATERIALS	LIMERICK SILT LOAM	PLAISTED VERY STONY LOAM	THORNDIKE VERY ROCKY SILT LOAM	
	MADAWASKA FINE SANDY LOAM			
	MELROSE FINE SANDY LOAM			

## Town of Skowhegan

## Somerset County

### Soil Types

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Data Sources: Maine Office of GIS, Maine DOT.

Created 07-2024 by CRB

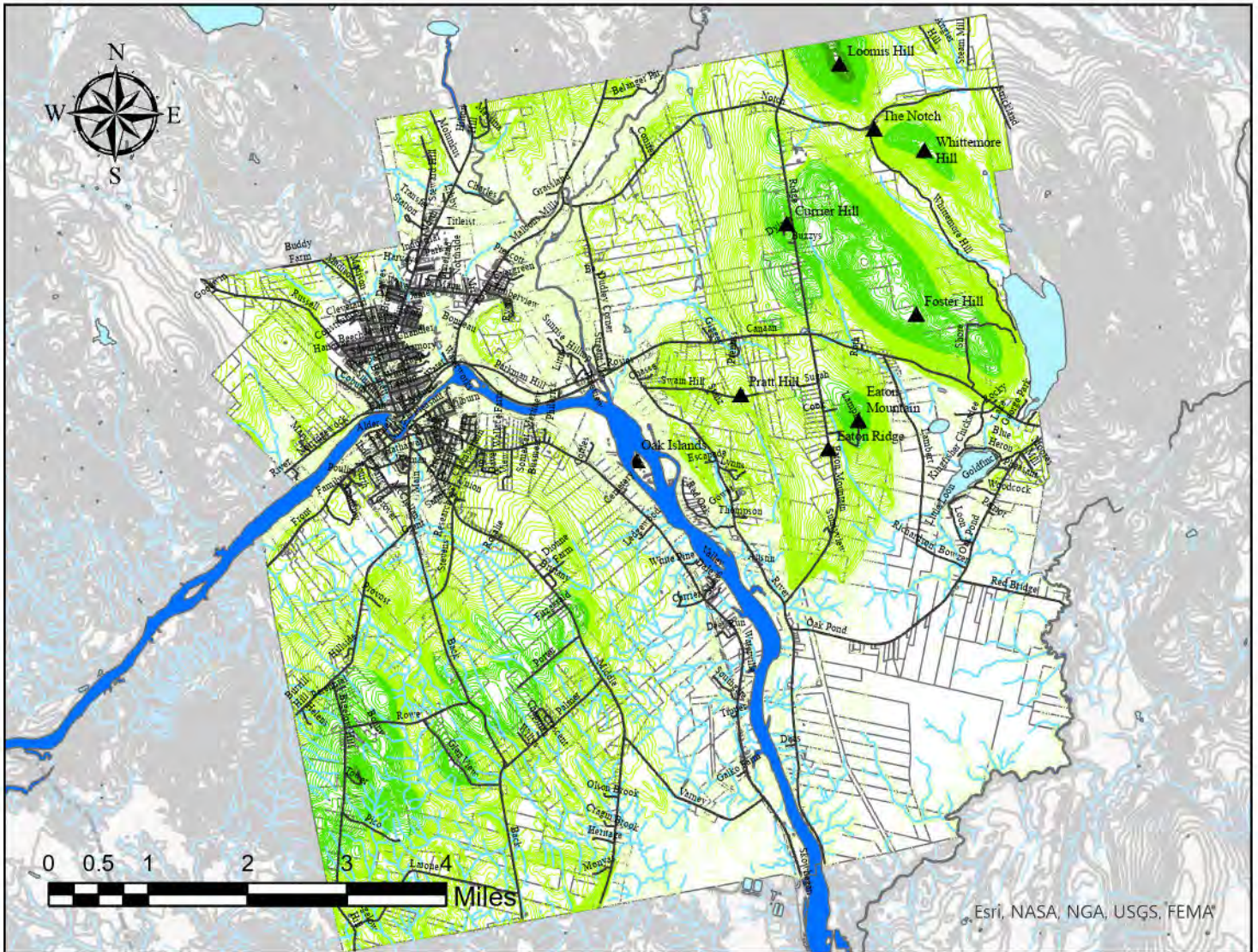




# Town of Skowhegan

## Somerset County

### Topographic Map



#### Legend

##### ELEVATION (Feet)

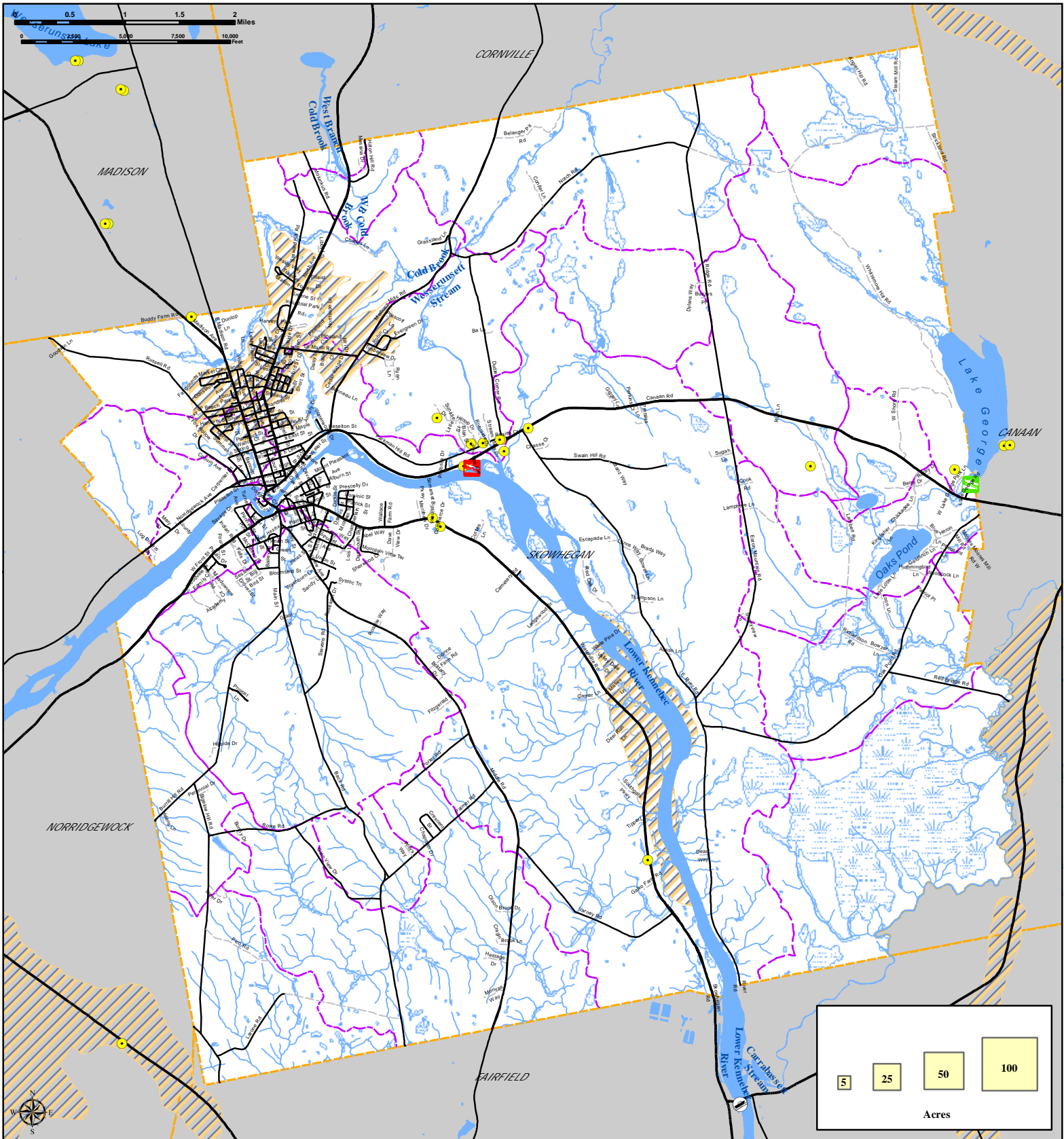
- 120-250
- 260-500
- 510-750
- 760-870
- Lower Kennebec River
- Lakes and Ponds
- Hills
- Roads
- Streams

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Data Sources: Maine Office of GIS, Maine DOT.

Created 7-2024 by CRB.



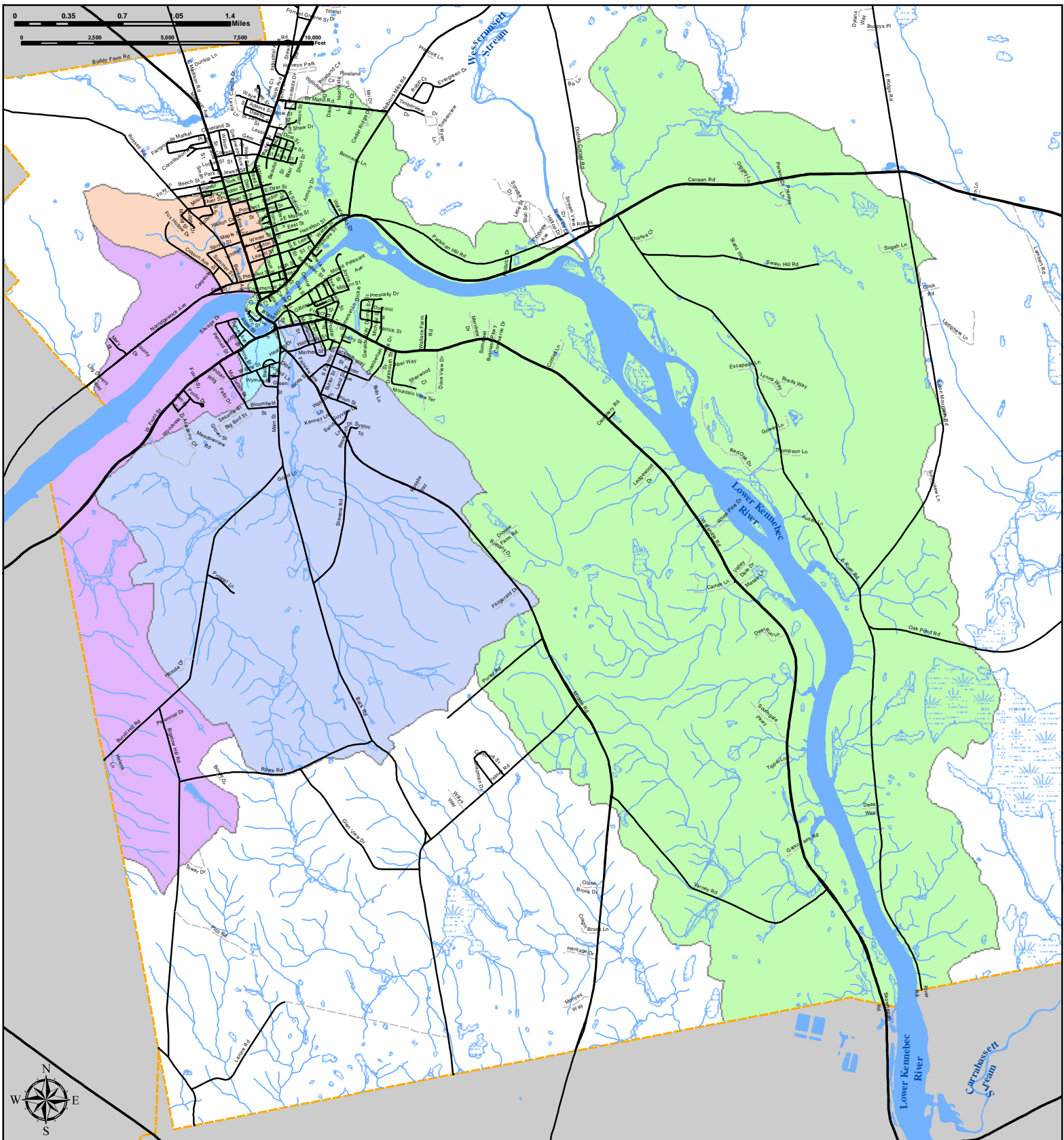


**Town of Skowhegan**  
**Somerset County, Maine**  
**Water Resources Map**  
**2022 Comprehensive Plan**

Map Legend	
<b>Roads</b>	<b>Lakes, Ponds &amp; Rivers</b>
State Highway	Class B Stream
State Aid	Wetlands
Local	Drainage Divides
Private	
	Aquifer w/Flow of 10-50 gpm
	Somerset Woods Trustees Boat Launch
	State Boat Launch
	Public Water Supply Wells



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 Data Sources: Maine Office of GIS, Maine DOT Created 01-2022 by JG



**Town of Skowhegan  
Somerset County, Maine**

**Kennebec River  
Direct Watersheds**

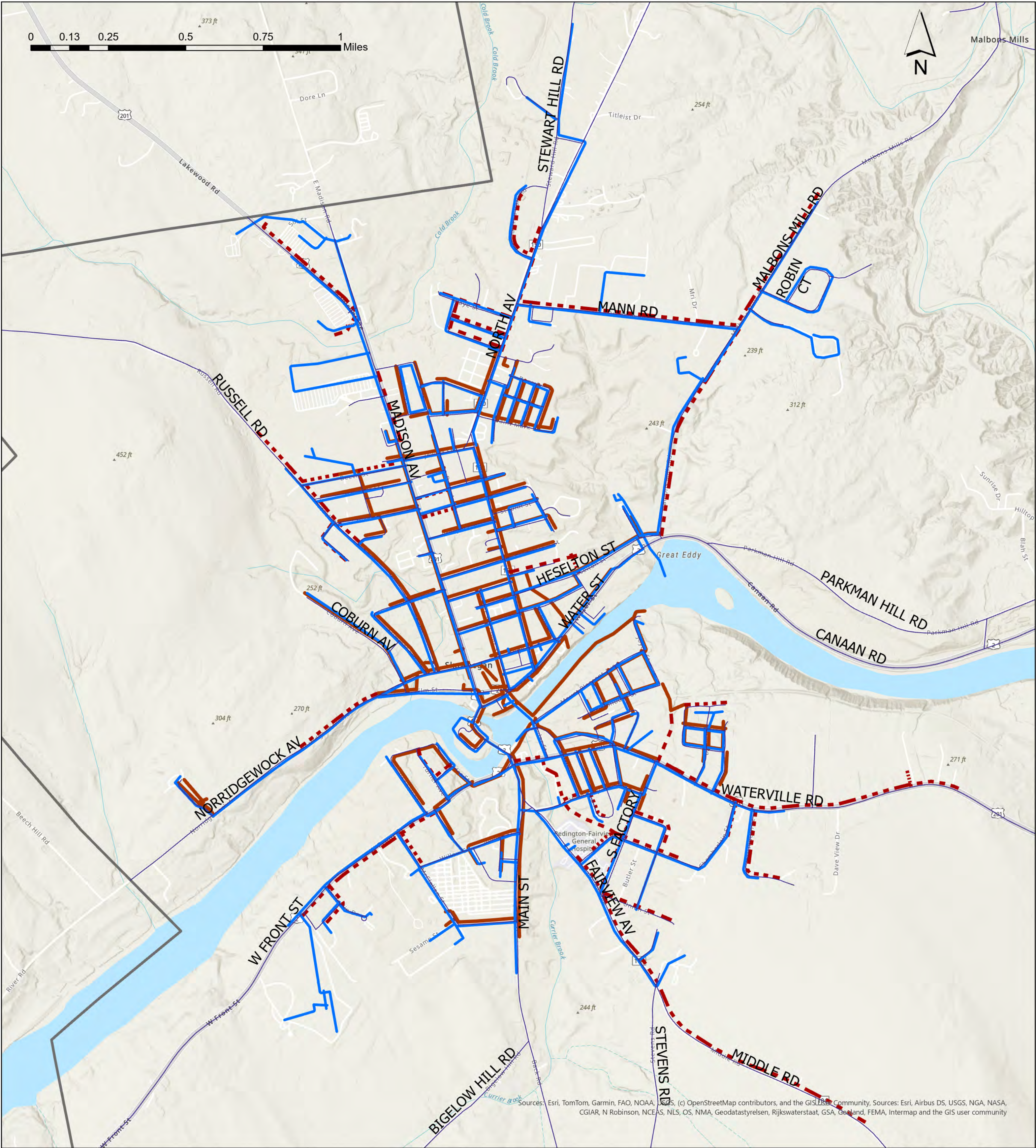
**Map Legend**

<b>Roads</b>	Lakes, Ponds & Rivers
State Highway	Class B Stream
State Aid	Wetlands
Local	
Private	



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Data Sources: Maine Office of GIS, Maine DOT Created 05-2022 by JG





## Town of Skowhegan

Somerset County

### Water and Sewer Service Map 2025 Comprehensive Plan

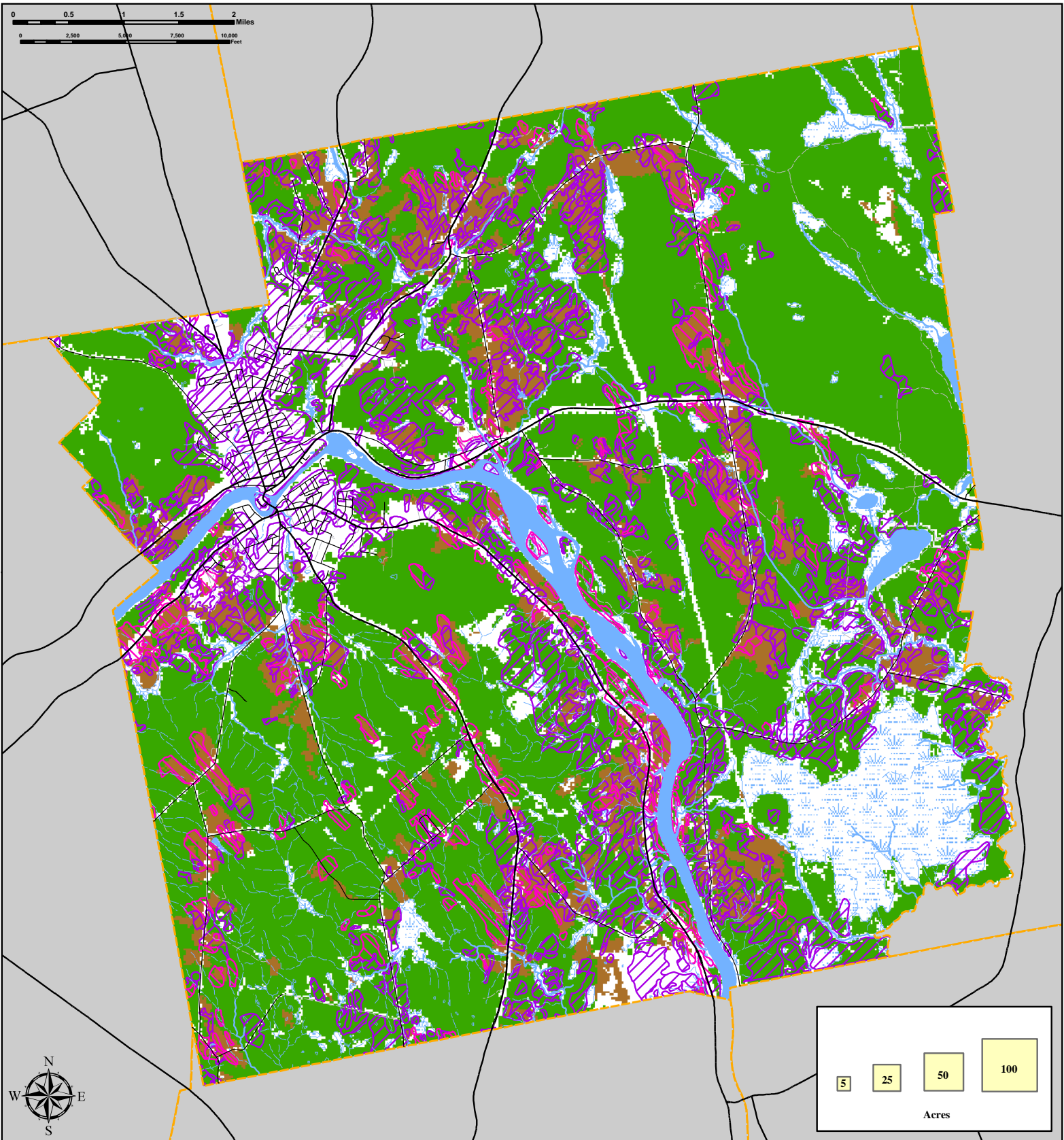
#### Legend

- Water Service
- Combined Sewer
- Sanitary Sewer
- Skowhegan DOT Roads



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**Town of Skowhegan**  
**Somerset County, Maine**  
**Agriculture and Forestry Resources Map**  
**2023 Comprehensive Plan**

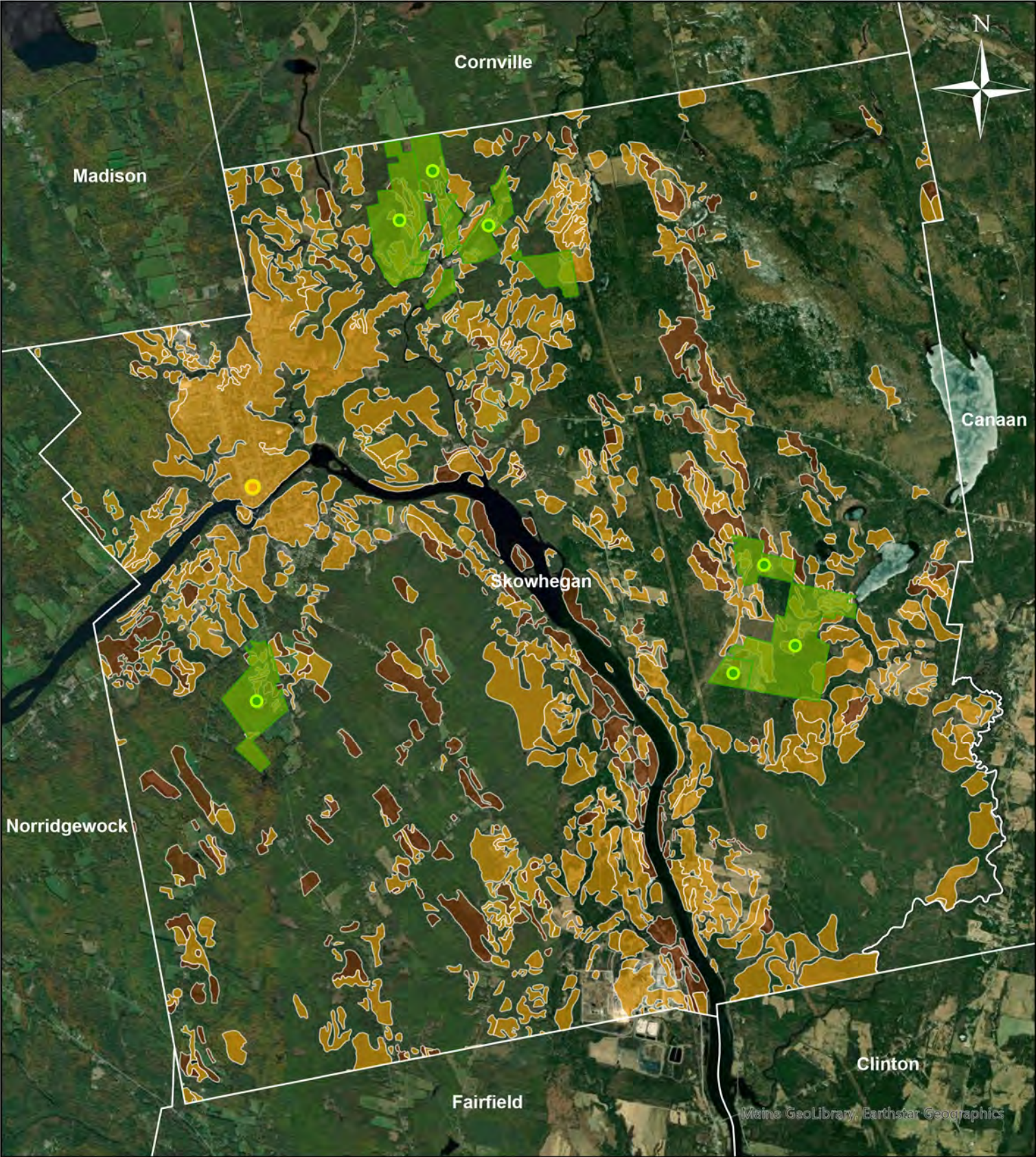


Map Legend		
<b>Roads</b>	Lakes, Ponds & Rivers	<b>Farmland Soils</b>
State Highway	Perennial Streams	All areas are prime farmland
State Aid	Intermittent Streams	Farmland of statewide importance
Local	Wetlands	<b>Land Cover</b>
Private		Crops / Hay / Pasture
		Forest

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 Data Sources: Maine Office of GIS, Maine DOT Created 04-2023 by JG



# Agriculture and valuable soils in Skowhegan



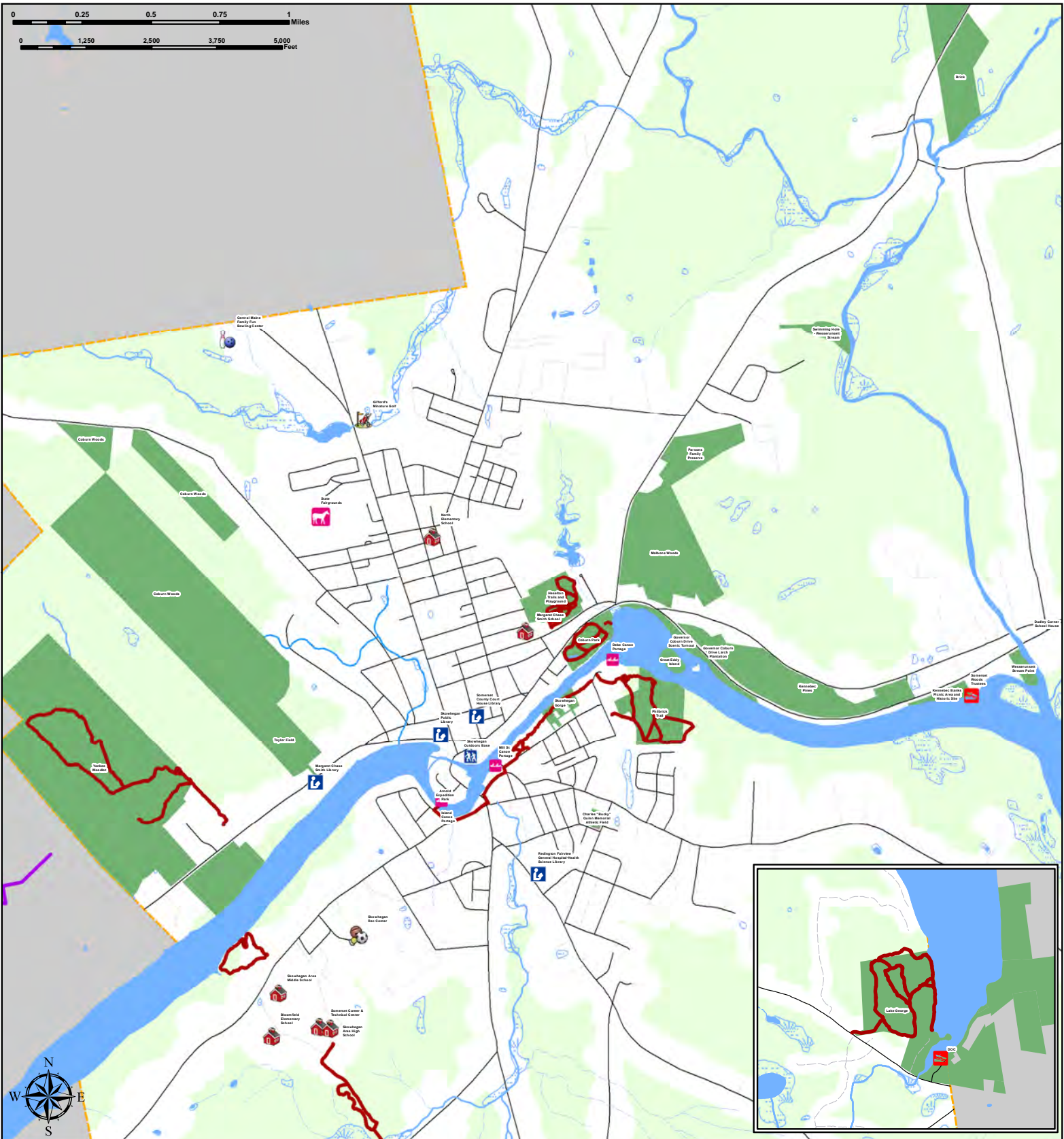
- Farm creamery business
- Easement-protected farm
- Farmland conserved by MFT
- Prime farmland
- Farmland of statewide importance

0 0.5 1 2 Miles

Note: information on this map is provided for purposes of discussion and visualization only; mapped boundaries and acreages are approximate.

Created by Amanda Wheeler, Maine Farmland Trust, 2/19/2025  
Data sources: Maine Office of GIS; MFT records

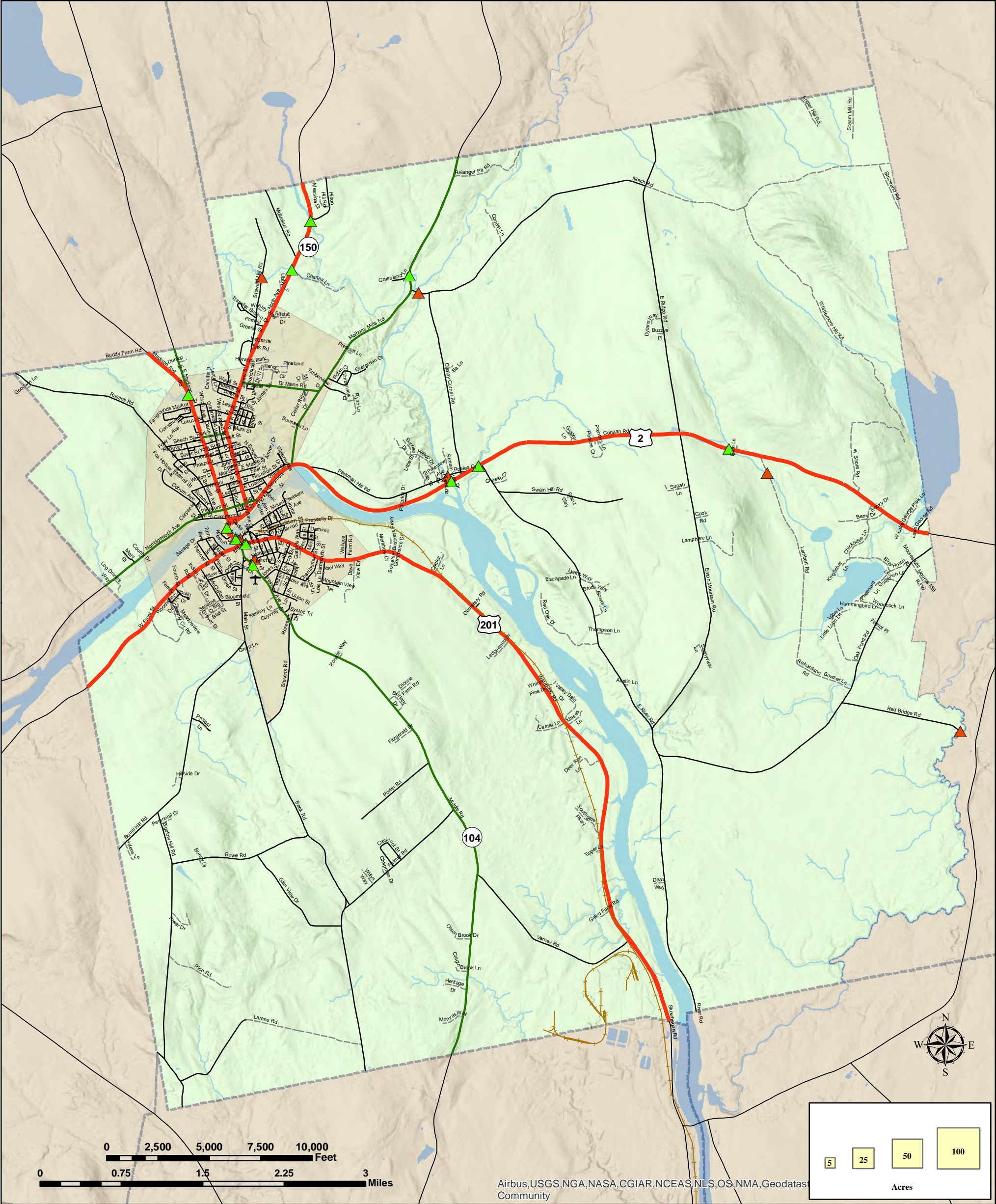




**Town of Skowhegan**  
**Somerset County, Maine**  
**Recreation Resources Map**  
**2025 Comprehensive Plan**

Map Legend	
<b>Roads</b>	Lakes, Ponds & Rivers
State Highway	Perennial Streams
State Aid	Intermittent Streams
Local	Wetlands
Private	Trails
	Conserved Lands / Parks





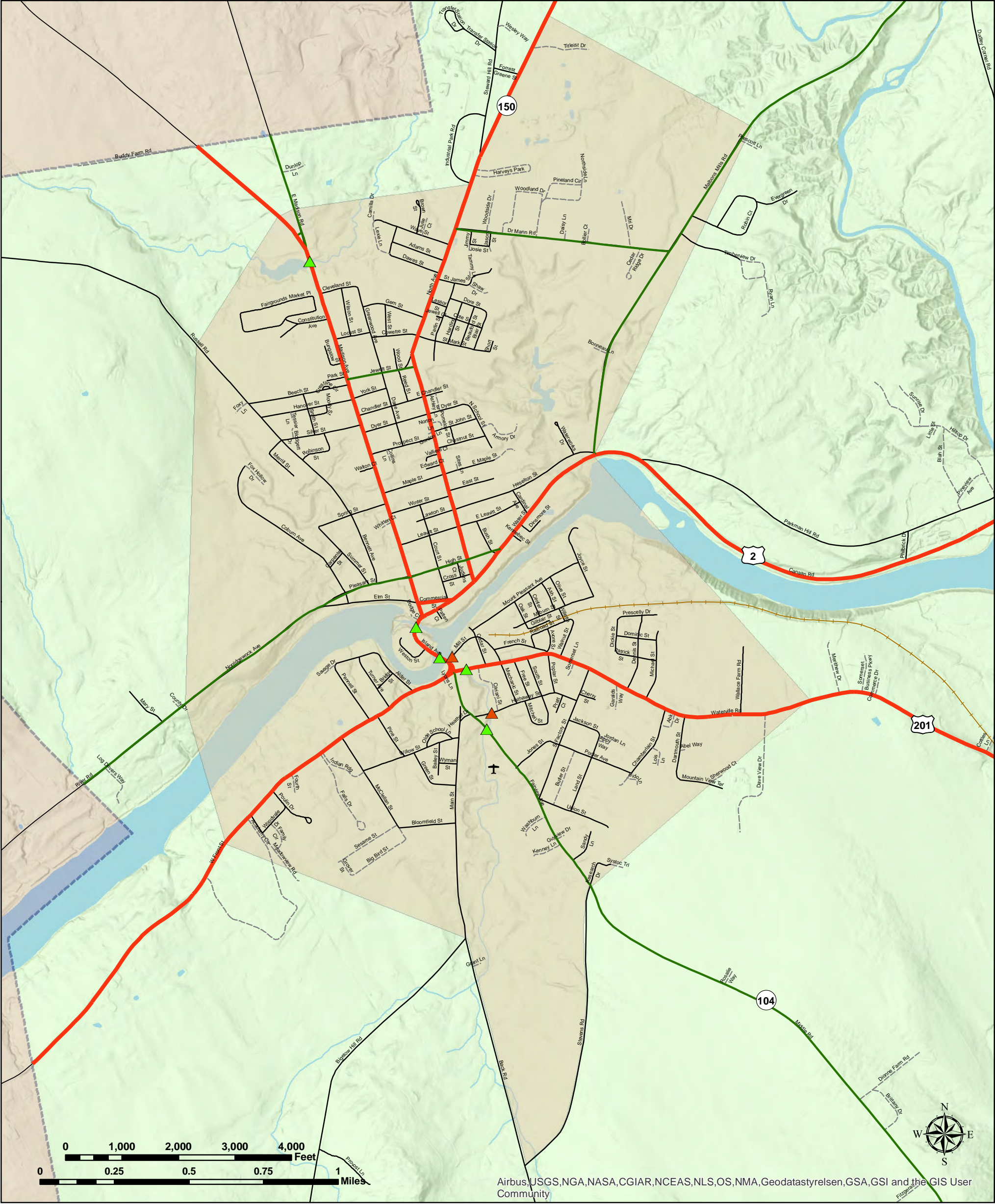
**Town of Skowhegan**  
**Somerset County, Maine**  
**Transportation Map**  
**2022 Comprehensive Plan**



Map Legend	
Roads (Jurisdiction)	Bridges (Maintainer)
<span style="color: red;">—</span> State Highway	<span style="color: green;">▲</span> State DOT
<span style="color: green;">—</span> State Aid	<span style="color: orange;">▲</span> Town
<span style="color: black;">—</span> Local	<span style="color: blue;">—</span> Lakes, Ponds & Rivers
<span style="color: gray;">---</span> Private	<span style="color: lightblue;">—</span> Streams
	<span style="background-color: #d2b48c; border: 1px solid black; display: inline-block; width: 20px; height: 10px;"></span> Compact Urban Area

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Data Sources: Maine Office of GIS, Maine DOT Created 02-2021 by JG





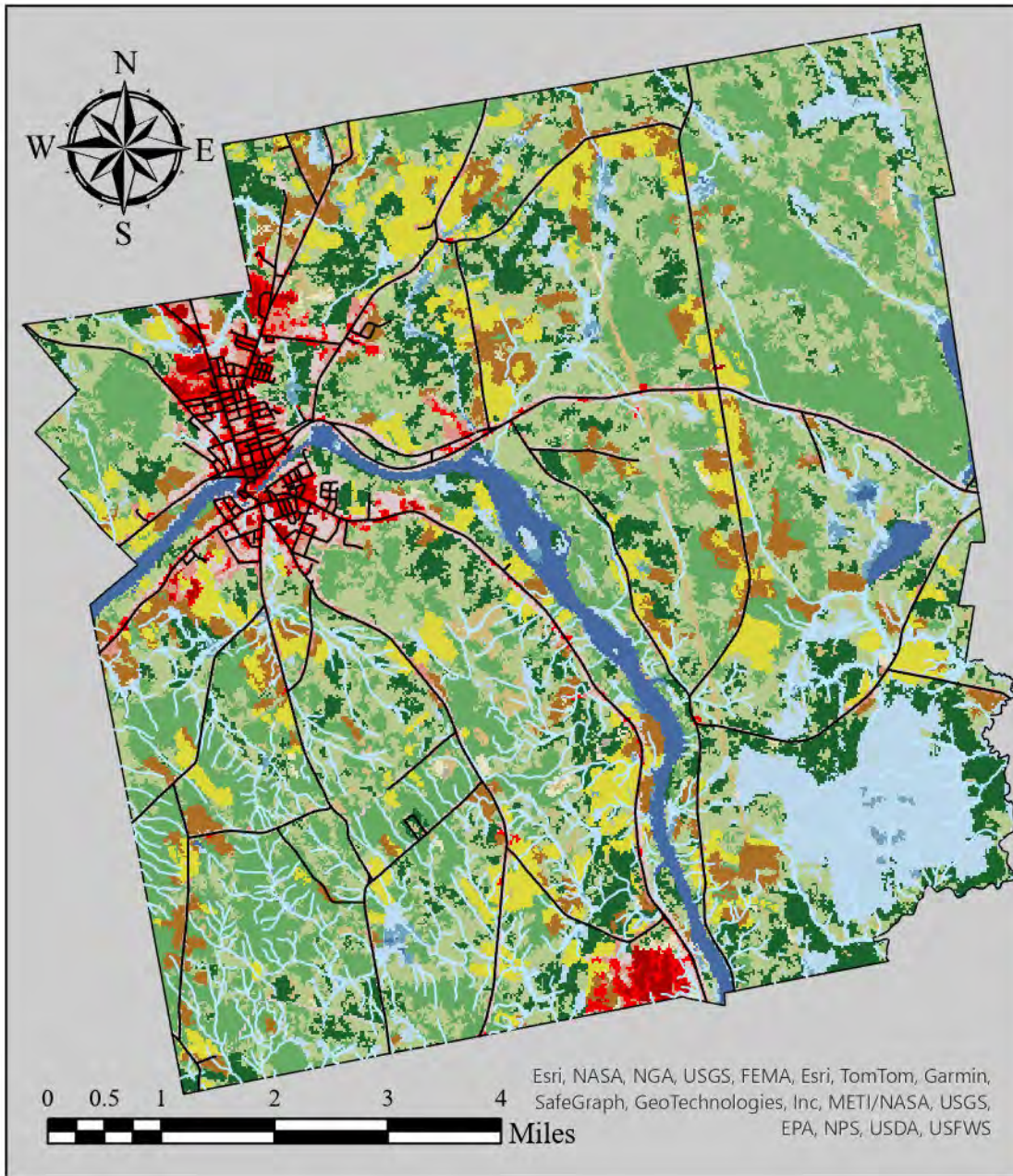
**Town of Skowhegan**  
**Somerset County, Maine**  
**Transportation Map**  
**2022 Comprehensive Plan**



Map Legend	
Roads (Jurisdiction)	Bridges (Maintainer)
<span style="color: red;">—</span> State Highway	<span style="color: green;">▲</span> State DOT
<span style="color: green;">—</span> State Aid	<span style="color: orange;">▲</span> Town
<span style="color: black;">—</span> Local	<span style="color: blue;">—</span> Lakes, Ponds & Rivers
<span style="color: gray;">---</span> Private	<span style="color: lightblue;">—</span> Streams
	<span style="background-color: #f0e68c; border: 1px solid black; display: inline-block; width: 20px; height: 10px;"></span> Compact Urban Area

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Data Sources: Maine Office of GIS, Maine DOT Created 02-2021 by JG





# Town of Skowhegan Somerset County

## Existing Land Use Map

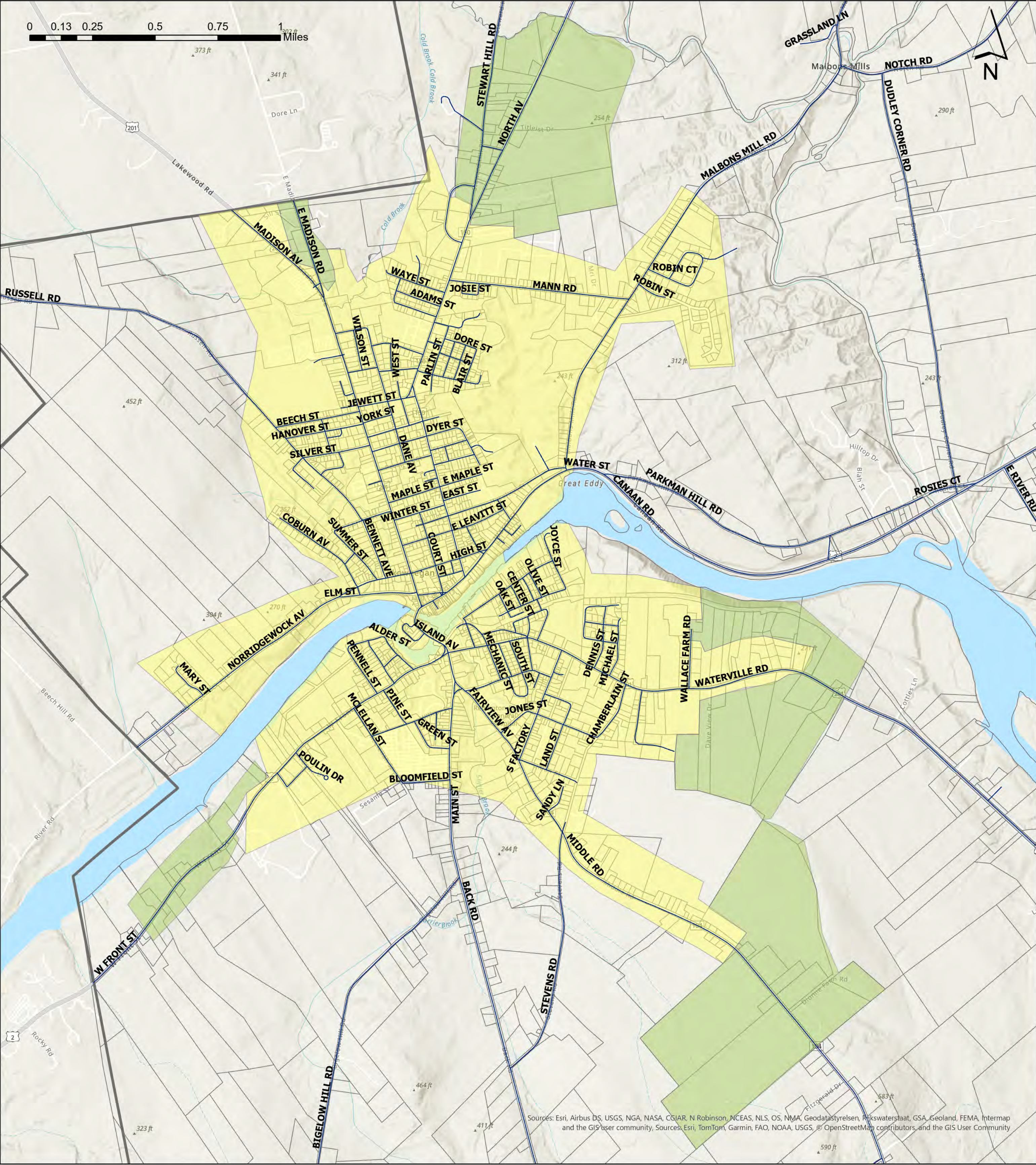
### Legend

- Streams
- Roads
- Unclassified
- Open Water
- Developed, Open Space
- Developed, Low Intensity
- Developed, Medium Intensity
- Developed, High Intensity
- Barren Land
- Deciduous Forest
- Evergreen Forest
- Mixed Forest
- Shrub/Scrub
- Herbaceous
- Hay/Pasture
- Cultivated Crops
- Woody Wetlands
- Emergent Herbaceous Wetlands



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Boundary data is based on digital sources and may differ from ground-based observations.  
Data Sources: Maine Office of GIS, Maine DOT  
Created 07-2024 by CRB





Sources: Esri, Airbus DS, USGS, NGA, NASA, CGIAR, N Robinson, NCEAS, NLS, OS, NMA, Geodatastyrelsen, Rijkswaterstaat, GSA, Geoland, FEMA, Intermap and the GIS user community, Sources: Esri, TomTom, Garmin, FAO, NOAA, USGS, OpenStreetMap contributors, and the GIS User Community

**Town of Skowhegan**  
**Somerset County**  
**Growth Areas Map**  
**2025 Comprehensive Plan**

**Legend**

<span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:10px; background-color:yellow; border:1px solid black;"></span> Growth Area	<span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:10px; border:1px solid black;"></span> Parcels
<span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:10px; background-color:lightgreen; border:1px solid black;"></span> Future Growth Area	<span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; border-bottom:2px solid blue;"></span> Skowhegan DOT Roads



Neither KVCOG nor the Town of Winslow assume any liability for the data delineated herein. All information depicted on this map is for planning purposes only and non-regulatory. Boundary data is based on digital sources and may differ from ground-based observations. Data Sources: Maine Office of GIS, Maine DOT. Created 02-2025 by CD.

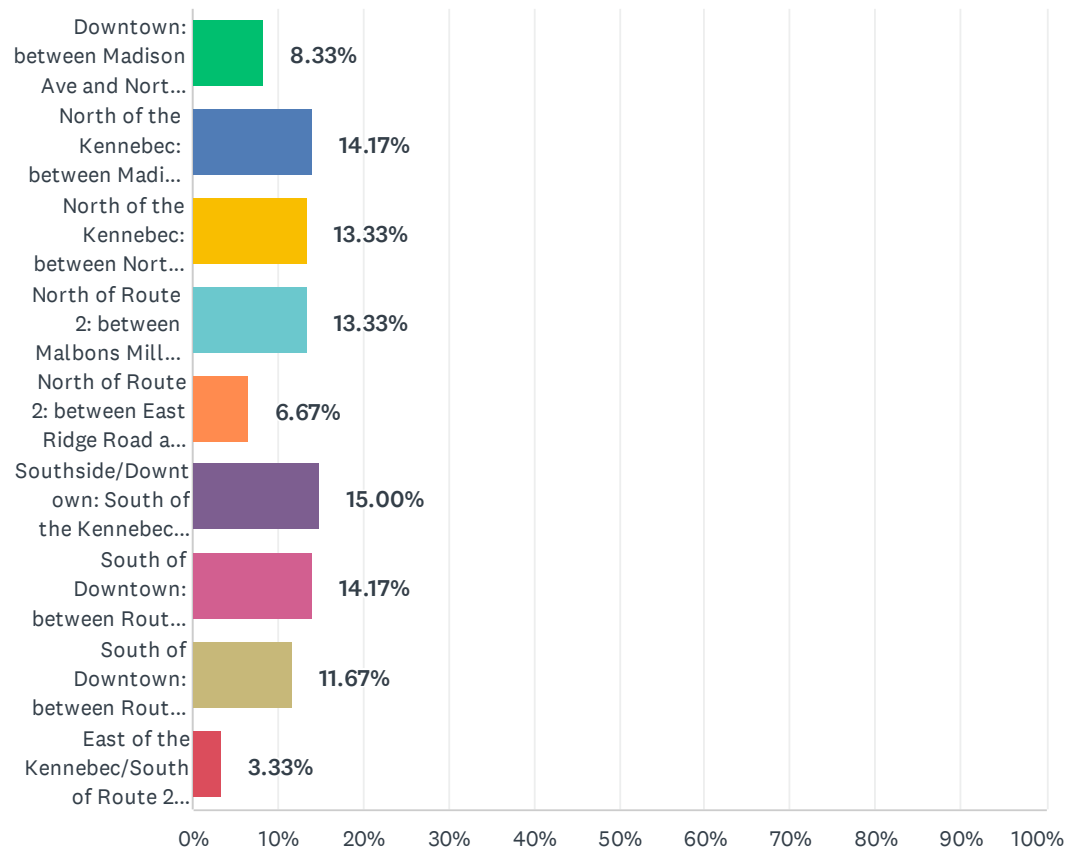


## List of Acronyms

ADA = American with Disabilities Act  
ACS = American Community Survey  
BTIP = Biennial Transportation Improvement Program  
BwH = Beginning with Habitat Program (MDIFW)  
CEO = Code Enforcement Officer  
CIP = Capital Investment Plan  
CRF = Critical Rate Factor  
DACF = Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry  
DWA = Deer Wintering Area  
DWP = Drinking Water Program  
GPA = Great Pond Standard  
HCL = High Crash Location  
LID = Low Impact Development  
LMA = Labor Market Area  
KVCAP = Kennebec Valley Community Action Program  
KVCOG = Kennebec Valley Council of Governments  
MDEP = Maine Department of Environmental Protection  
MDIFW = Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife  
MDOL = Maine Department of Labor  
MDOT = Maine Department of Transportation  
MHPC = Maine Historical Preservation Commission  
MNAP = Maine Natural Areas Program (MDOC)  
MRSA = Maine Revised Statutes Annotated  
MSHA = Maine State Housing Authority  
MUTCD = Manual Uniform Traffic Control Devices  
NRPA = Natural Resources Protection Act  
RSU = Regional School Unit  
SDWA = Federal Safe Drinking Water Act  
SWAP = Maine Source Water Assessment Program  
TIF = Tax Increment Financing

## Q1 What part of Skowhegan do you live in?

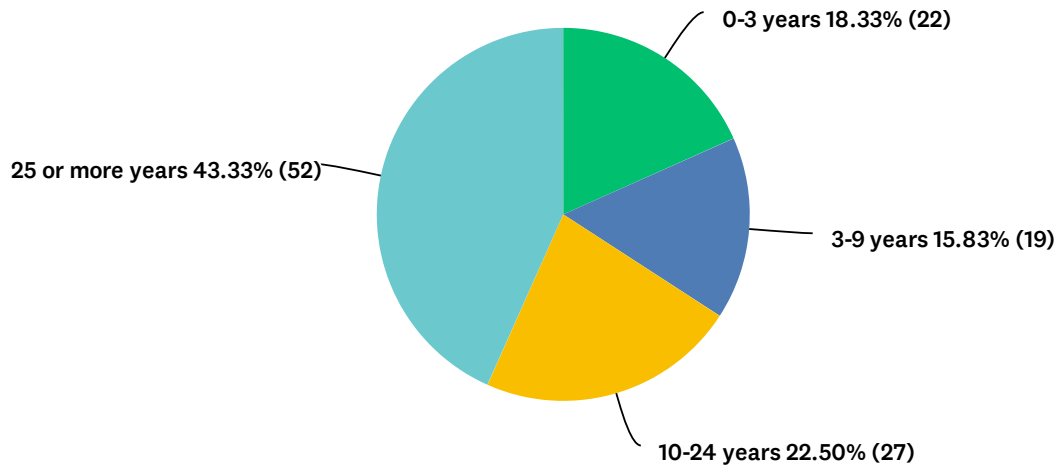
Answered: 120   Skipped: 1



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Downtown: between Madison Ave and North Ave	8.33%	10
North of the Kennebec: between Madison Ave and Norridgewock	14.17%	17
North of the Kennebec: between North Ave and Malbons Mills	13.33%	16
North of Route 2: between Malbons Mills and East Ridge Road	13.33%	16
North of Route 2: between East Ridge Road and Lake George	6.67%	8
Southside/Downtown: South of the Kennebec, from the High School to the Hospital to the New Balance	15.00%	18
South of Downtown: between Route 104 and Norridgewock	14.17%	17
South of Downtown: between Route 104 and the Kennebec	11.67%	14
East of the Kennebec/South of Route 2 (Canaan Bog)	3.33%	4
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>120</b>

## Q2 How many years have you lived in Skowhegan?

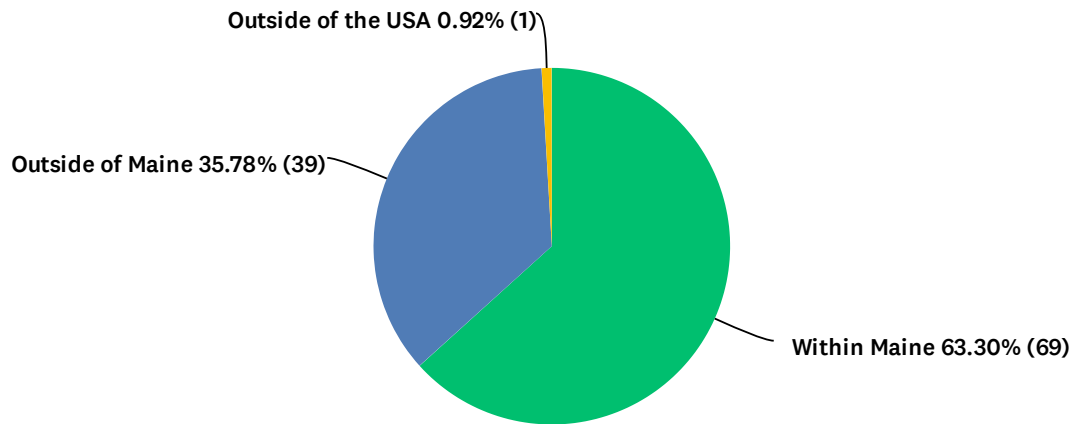
Answered: 120 Skipped: 1



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
0-3 years	18.33%	22
3-9 years	15.83%	19
10-24 years	22.50%	27
25 or more years	43.33%	52
TOTAL		120

### Q3 Where was the last place you lived before you came to Skowhegan?

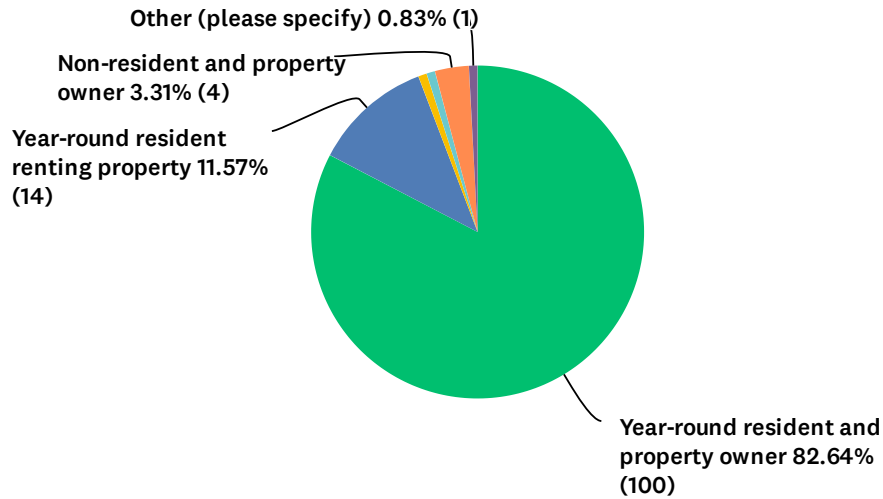
Answered: 109 Skipped: 12



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Within Maine	63.30%	69
Outside of Maine	35.78%	39
Outside of the USA	0.92%	1
TOTAL		109

## Q4 What best describes you:

Answered: 121 Skipped: 0



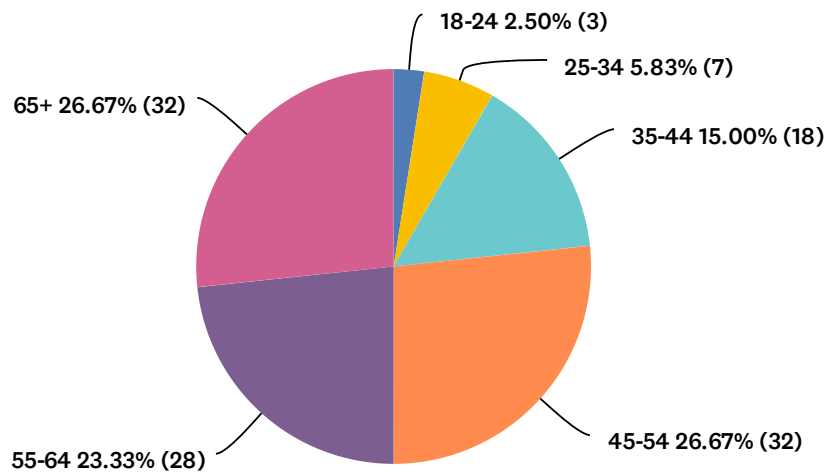
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Year-round resident and property owner	82.64%	100
Year-round resident renting property	11.57%	14
Occasional use resident and property owner	0.83%	1
Occasional use resident renting property	0.83%	1
Non-resident and property owner	3.31%	4
Other (please specify)	0.83%	1
TOTAL		121

#	OTHER (PLEASE SPECIFY)	DATE
1	Parsonage	1/17/2025 11:35 AM



## Q5 What is your age?

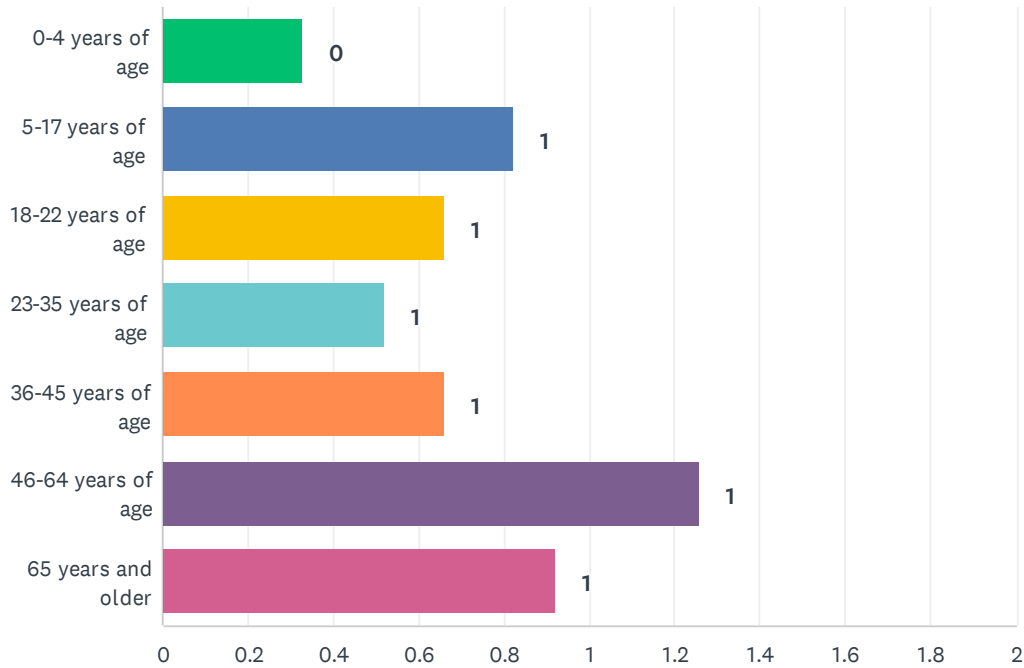
Answered: 120    Skipped: 1



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Under 18	0.00%	0
18-24	2.50%	3
25-34	5.83%	7
35-44	15.00%	18
45-54	26.67%	32
55-64	23.33%	28
65+	26.67%	32
TOTAL		120

## Q6 How many people in each of these age groups live in your residence?

Answered: 116    Skipped: 5

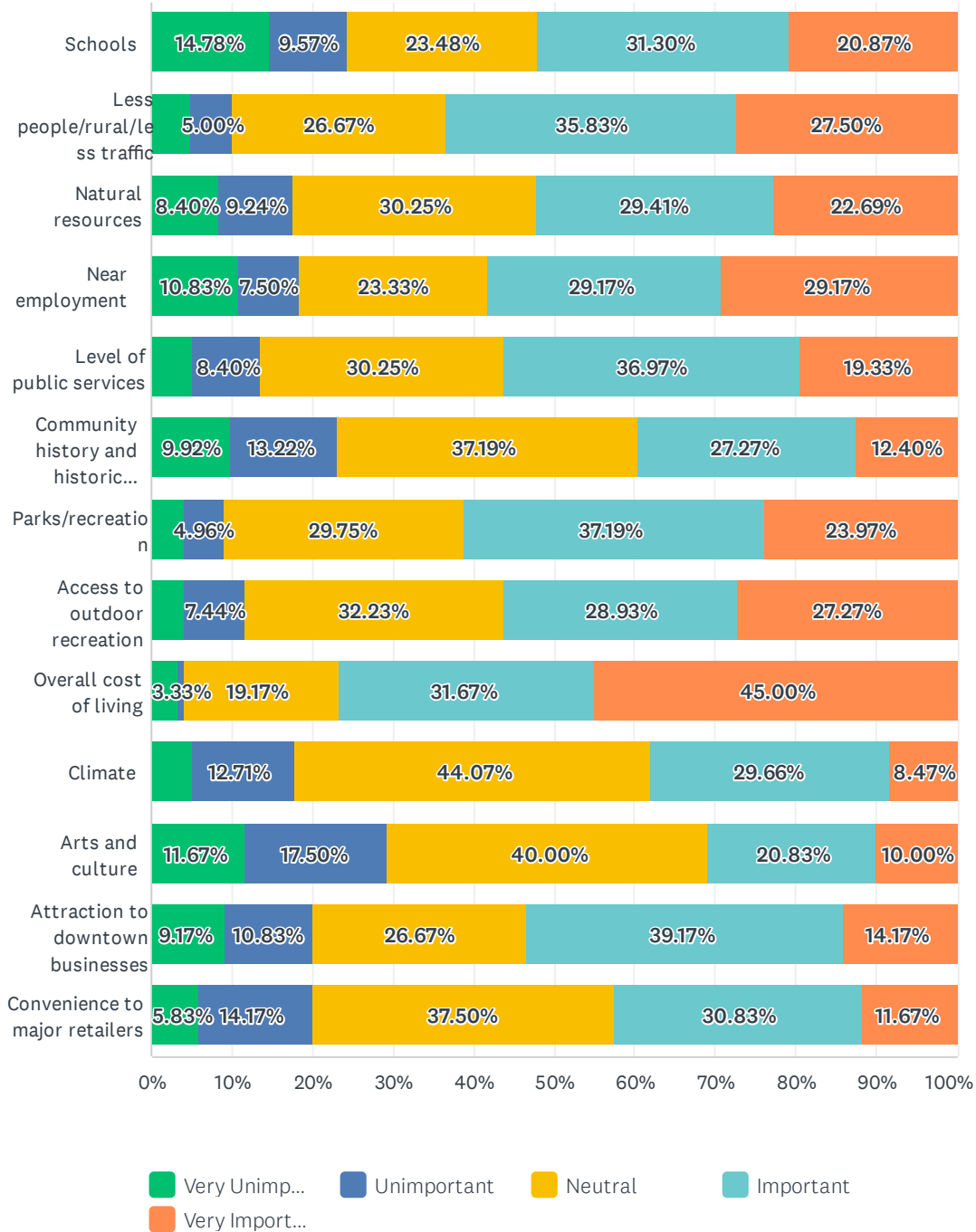


ANSWER CHOICES	AVERAGE NUMBER	TOTAL NUMBER	RESPONSES
0-4 years of age	0	16	49
5-17 years of age	1	46	56
18-22 years of age	1	31	47
23-35 years of age	1	25	48
36-45 years of age	1	33	50
46-64 years of age	1	93	74
65 years and older	1	58	63
Total Respondents: 116			

#	0-4 YEARS OF AGE	DATE
1	0	2/26/2025 10:21 PM
2	0	2/26/2025 10:37 AM
3	0	2/26/2025 9:25 AM
4	0	2/26/2025 7:28 AM
5	0	2/26/2025 7:04 AM
6	0	2/26/2025 5:09 AM
7	0	2/26/2025 12:36 AM

## Q7 How important were each of the following to you when choosing to live in Skowhegan?

Answered: 121 Skipped: 0

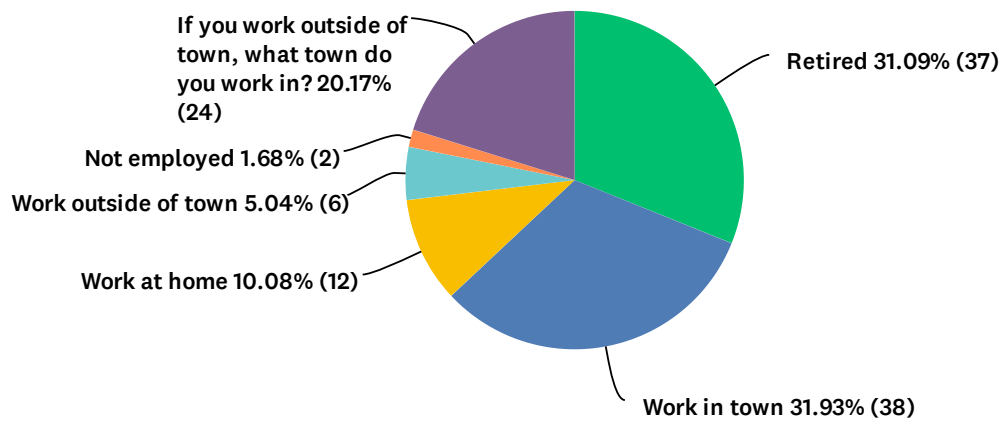


# Skowhegan Comprehensive Plan Survey

	VERY UNIMPORTANT	UNIMPORTANT	NEUTRAL	IMPORTANT	VERY IMPORTANT	TOTAL
Schools	14.78% 17	9.57% 11	23.48% 27	31.30% 36	20.87% 24	115
Less people/rural/less traffic	5.00% 6	5.00% 6	26.67% 32	35.83% 43	27.50% 33	120
Natural resources	8.40% 10	9.24% 11	30.25% 36	29.41% 35	22.69% 27	119
Near employment	10.83% 13	7.50% 9	23.33% 28	29.17% 35	29.17% 35	120
Level of public services	5.04% 6	8.40% 10	30.25% 36	36.97% 44	19.33% 23	119
Community history and historic buildings	9.92% 12	13.22% 16	37.19% 45	27.27% 33	12.40% 15	121
Parks/recreation	4.13% 5	4.96% 6	29.75% 36	37.19% 45	23.97% 29	121
Access to outdoor recreation	4.13% 5	7.44% 9	32.23% 39	28.93% 35	27.27% 33	121
Overall cost of living	3.33% 4	0.83% 1	19.17% 23	31.67% 38	45.00% 54	120
Climate	5.08% 6	12.71% 15	44.07% 52	29.66% 35	8.47% 10	118
Arts and culture	11.67% 14	17.50% 21	40.00% 48	20.83% 25	10.00% 12	120
Attraction to downtown businesses	9.17% 11	10.83% 13	26.67% 32	39.17% 47	14.17% 17	120
Convenience to major retailers	5.83% 7	14.17% 17	37.50% 45	30.83% 37	11.67% 14	120

## Q8 Your employment status:

Answered: 119 Skipped: 2



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Retired	31.09%	37
Work in town	31.93%	38
Work at home	10.08%	12
Work outside of town	5.04%	6
Not employed	1.68%	2
If you work outside of town, what town do you work in?	20.17%	24
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>119</b>

#	IF YOU WORK OUTSIDE OF TOWN, WHAT TOWN DO YOU WORK IN?	DATE
1	Husband travels state. I work remotely at home	2/26/2025 10:37 AM
2	Sales in the state	2/25/2025 9:36 PM
3	Clinton	2/25/2025 8:00 PM
4	Augusta	2/25/2025 6:41 PM
5	Watervill	2/25/2025 6:17 PM
6	Waterville	2/25/2025 3:10 PM
7	Fairfield/Augusta	1/27/2025 8:58 AM
8	Waterville	1/20/2025 3:00 PM
9	Travel central Maine and western Maine	1/20/2025 2:56 PM
10	Pittsfield	1/20/2025 1:09 PM
11	Work in Skowhegan, Madison, Bingham and Jackman	1/20/2025 9:38 AM
12	Half from home and other half in Kennebec and Somerset Counties	1/20/2025 2:12 AM

# Skowhegan Comprehensive Plan Survey

13	Augusta	1/19/2025 7:26 PM
14	Benton	1/18/2025 9:55 AM
15	Waterville	1/18/2025 9:07 AM
16	Waterville	1/17/2025 8:12 PM
17	Winslow	1/17/2025 5:45 PM
18	N/A	1/17/2025 12:56 PM
19	Waterville	1/17/2025 12:20 PM
20	Gardiner	1/17/2025 5:14 AM
21	The entirety of the Kennebec Valley	1/16/2025 11:04 PM
22	Bath	1/16/2025 10:59 PM
23	Waterville	1/16/2025 4:37 PM
24	State wide	1/16/2025 4:00 PM

## Q9 What type of businesses would you like to see in town?

Answered: 99    Skipped: 22

#	RESPONSES	DATE
1	More things for kids, more activities, something other than Walmart.	2/27/2025 10:09 PM
2	Larger retailers other than Walmart, resturants....not pizza.	2/26/2025 10:21 PM
3	Starbucks	2/26/2025 8:08 PM
4	sit down family style restaurant craft store - to buy craft supplies clothing store	2/26/2025 7:27 PM
5	Bette resturants	2/26/2025 3:42 PM
6	Cafes	2/26/2025 2:12 PM
7	Sporting goods (children's sports, outdoor recreation, etc), healthier take out food options, niche kitchen and housewares	2/26/2025 10:37 AM
8	Clothing retailer we need more choices	2/26/2025 9:25 AM
9	Retail stores	2/26/2025 9:25 AM
10	Better food options	2/26/2025 7:28 AM
11	A bookstore.	2/26/2025 7:04 AM
12	Something for kids/teen entertainment.	2/26/2025 5:09 AM
13	More restaurants	2/26/2025 12:36 AM
14	Nonprofits. Arts/crafts stores. Places focused on performing arts. Affordable retailers. Community centers. Pool hall. Bowling alley. Consignment shops--maybe a hospice thrift store..	2/25/2025 11:21 PM
15	A steak restaurant	2/25/2025 9:45 PM
16	Major restaurant	2/25/2025 9:36 PM
17	More things for kids to do stuff in a safe place	2/25/2025 9:34 PM
18	Shoe store. Technical schools. YMCA. Eaton Mtn open. Bookstore	2/25/2025 9:24 PM
19	Many but most come and go....our climate doesn't sustain most businesses because winter is longer than summer; demographics (income and age) of town residents don't support anything 'high end'	2/25/2025 8:54 PM
20	Big box stores and more grocery.	2/25/2025 8:33 PM
21	All types	2/25/2025 8:03 PM
22	More young entrepreneurs/business owners. Something like Bullmoose/a book store. Card/game store. Something for young people to do rather than be delinquents.	2/25/2025 8:02 PM
23	More Restaurants	2/25/2025 6:57 PM
24	More ethnic restaurants	2/25/2025 6:47 PM
25	other retail stores other than wal-mart	2/25/2025 6:45 PM
26	Better food selection, deli, etc	2/25/2025 6:41 PM
27	More family restaurants, shopping.	2/25/2025 5:16 PM
28	Bagel Shop	2/25/2025 5:16 PM
29	A bookstore	2/25/2025 5:08 PM



## Skowhegan Comprehensive Plan Survey

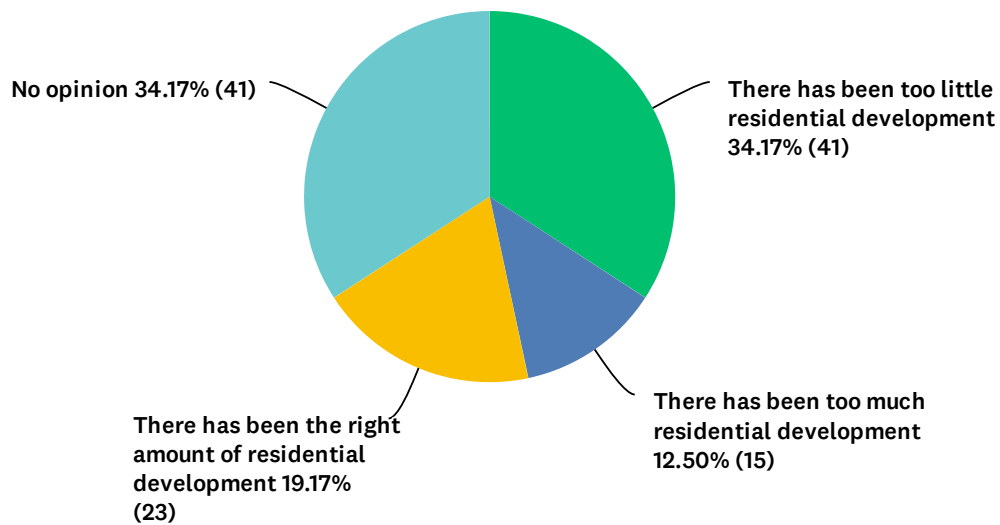
30	Indoor recreation for children Good family restaurant	2/25/2025 4:51 PM
31	Better retail stores	2/25/2025 4:34 PM
32	A better variety of restaurants and stores for shopping. All Skowhegan offers is bars and car repair shops.	2/25/2025 3:56 PM
33	Shops for nerds/geeks	2/25/2025 3:51 PM
34	sit down restaurants, a music center for children and adults.	2/25/2025 3:29 PM
35	Better restaurants	2/25/2025 3:18 PM
36	Grocery store on south side of town. A major one.	2/25/2025 3:12 PM
37	Outdoor recreation store	2/25/2025 3:11 PM
38	Thrift Store	2/25/2025 3:10 PM
39	Restaurants and a real hotel	2/25/2025 3:00 PM
40	I'm just upset that you are getting rid of the movie theater to add in a mobile home park. Terrible idea.	2/25/2025 2:54 PM
41	Health care, essential retail	2/24/2025 9:57 PM
42	Clothing store,	2/24/2025 9:01 PM
43	Locally owned businesses and shops....keep the big box and franchises the h*ll away. Revitalize downtown and surrounding areas with local ownership.	2/24/2025 11:20 AM
44	Another higher end bistro style restaurant.	2/24/2025 9:44 AM
45	Kitchen/cooking Outdoor recreation	2/6/2025 8:14 AM
46	Book store, arts and crafts, shoe store, etc.	2/4/2025 5:59 PM
47	Restaurant, retail and recreation.	1/30/2025 2:52 PM
48	Outdoor related businesses and food service.	1/28/2025 11:20 AM
49	Retail	1/27/2025 10:48 AM
50	Farmers Mkt in a store, shared by farmers, open at least 5 days a week. Or an Armish Mkt.	1/27/2025 9:14 AM
51	Sustainable small businesses focused on outdoor activities	1/27/2025 8:58 AM
52	discount stores such as Mardens or Big Lots	1/27/2025 8:52 AM
53	Sushi restaurant Book store with a cafe Better retail shopping Better walking trails Pool	1/23/2025 8:39 PM
54	Food industry. Outdoor related businesses.	1/23/2025 8:08 PM
55	More clothing options, more "department store" type stores (other than WalMart!), bookstore	1/21/2025 10:38 AM
56	Revitalize Ski Mountain, more hotels, buy and revitalize Drive In movie theater.	1/20/2025 8:49 PM
57	Recreation retail	1/20/2025 7:15 PM
58	basic goods	1/20/2025 5:19 PM
59	Recreational cannabis	1/20/2025 4:35 PM
60	A variety of sit down restaurants, a bookstore, a grocery store in the downtown and additional hotels/accommodations.	1/20/2025 4:09 PM
61	Clothing stores	1/20/2025 3:58 PM
62	Good restaurants not just pizza and sandwich shops	1/20/2025 2:56 PM
63	lodging restaurants	1/20/2025 1:09 PM
64	Music and the performing arts. With the fairgrounds and the opera house, Skowhegan is well positioned to build a music-oriented economy that would strengthen the town's economic base and be complimentary to the River Park.	1/20/2025 10:23 AM

## Skowhegan Comprehensive Plan Survey

65	None	1/20/2025 10:15 AM
66	We have the right amount of business in town now	1/20/2025 9:53 AM
67	Business that cater to outdoor recreation and natural resources	1/20/2025 9:38 AM
68	Fine with what is here now.	1/20/2025 9:28 AM
69	Another good restaurant	1/20/2025 8:21 AM
70	More grocery stores, clothing stores, GOOD restaurants, and recreation for children and adolescents	1/20/2025 2:12 AM
71	More for teens	1/19/2025 9:07 PM
72	Businesses that pay a wage that allow a good living. Skowhegan needs to attract more businesses and brainstorm how to lower the electricity rates.	1/19/2025 8:46 PM
73	Smaller Maine owned businesses	1/19/2025 7:26 PM
74	New cobbler, candy store, seamstress, Chick-fil-A	1/19/2025 7:59 AM
75	Better restaurants	1/18/2025 4:04 PM
76	more senior housing options	1/18/2025 12:16 PM
77	Specialty shops	1/17/2025 11:39 PM
78	An optometrist	1/17/2025 9:47 PM
79	Better food options, book store, spa and nails, clothing,	1/17/2025 8:12 PM
80	Independent shops. Maybe arts and crafts. Boutiques. Clothing. Shoes	1/17/2025 7:43 PM
81	Retail	1/17/2025 5:45 PM
82	Good restaurants More stores downtown and actually have something like watervilles downtown.	1/17/2025 12:56 PM
83	Bookstore.	1/17/2025 12:20 PM
84	A place where people can go and play pool.	1/17/2025 11:36 AM
85	Manufacturing	1/17/2025 11:35 AM
86	Family and youth activities/adventure	1/17/2025 10:31 AM
87	More Restaurants better food sources	1/17/2025 5:14 AM
88	quality outdoor Gear & clothing, Bookstores, Childrens apparel & toys, affordable casual family friendly dining without long wait, arcade, crafts,	1/16/2025 11:04 PM
89	Department store for house hold needs not a chain retailer like Walmart. More Mom and Pop style.	1/16/2025 10:59 PM
90	Clothing stores	1/16/2025 10:45 PM
91	More local businesses	1/16/2025 9:34 PM
92	More food choices	1/16/2025 9:29 PM
93	Downtown retail, arts & entertainment	1/16/2025 9:24 PM
94	Children's recreation	1/16/2025 9:06 PM
95	I am unconcerned with businesses in town. I am more concerned with the unanticipated levels of noise caused by trucks in town.	1/16/2025 8:45 PM
96	Would like clothing and home goods stores but there isn't enough business to sustain them.	1/16/2025 7:58 PM
97	Evening restaurants	1/16/2025 6:46 PM
98	Sit down dining restaurants	1/16/2025 4:37 PM
99	Summer time fun park or water park with water slides	1/16/2025 4:00 PM

## Q10 What is your opinion on residential development in the past decade:

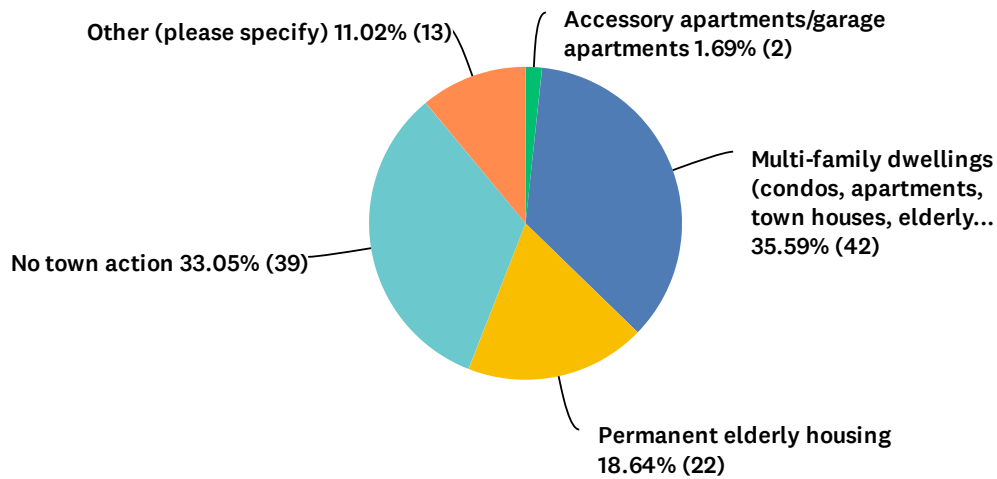
Answered: 120 Skipped: 1



ANSWER CHOICES		RESPONSES	
There has been too little residential development		34.17%	41
There has been too much residential development		12.50%	15
There has been the right amount of residential development		19.17%	23
No opinion		34.17%	41
TOTAL			120

## Q11 What type of housing should the town consider or pursue?

Answered: 118 Skipped: 3



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Accessory apartments/garage apartments	1.69%	2
Multi-family dwellings (condos, apartments, town houses, elderly housing)	35.59%	42
Permanent elderly housing	18.64%	22
No town action	33.05%	39
Other (please specify)	11.02%	13
TOTAL		118

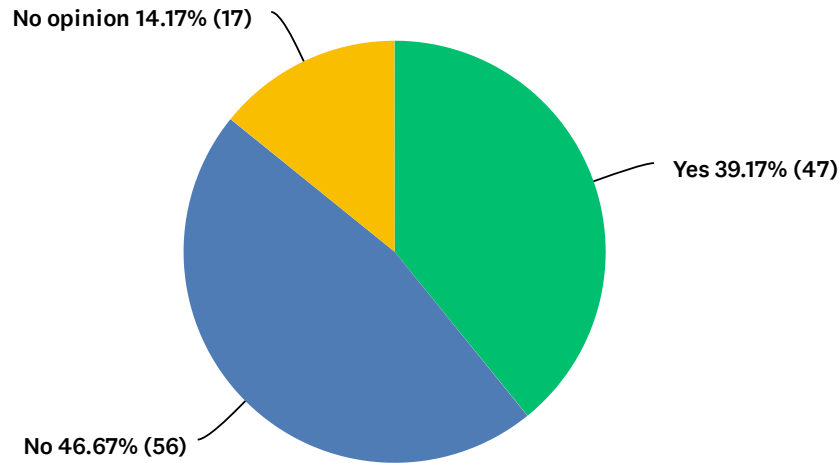
#	OTHER (PLEASE SPECIFY)	DATE
1	No more trailer parks please. Accessory apartments are ideal for seasonal workers and those on contract. Would support a well drawn up subdivison community.	2/26/2025 10:37 AM
2	More affordable housing whether it be preexisting structures ect. Also affordable elderly housing	2/26/2025 9:25 AM
3	AFFORDABLE HOUSING!!!	2/25/2025 11:21 PM
4	Many beautiful homes are falling apart because of high taxes.	2/25/2025 3:12 PM
5	Need more affordable homes available for younger employed individuals and families	2/24/2025 9:01 PM
6	All of the possibilities! Elderly, apartments, work force housing	1/21/2025 10:38 AM
7	Make it easier to renovate 2nd and 3rd floors in the downtown for housing.	1/20/2025 4:09 PM
8	All of the above, but the town needs to address land use first. A zoning ordinance is way past due.	1/20/2025 10:23 AM
9	Assisted living elderly apartments	1/20/2025 9:38 AM
10	Housing for the homeless.	1/17/2025 12:20 PM
11	Tiny homes	1/17/2025 5:14 AM

## Skowhegan Comprehensive Plan Survey

12	Single family homes that don't cost 300k+ Nobody starting a family dreams of living in a multifamily dwelling and paying rent to make landlords richer. and what are accessory apartments other than a fancy way to say storage units.	1/16/2025 11:04 PM
13	Obviously housing in general is a problem	1/16/2025 9:34 PM

## Q12 Would you support the use of town funds in support of affordable housing initiatives?

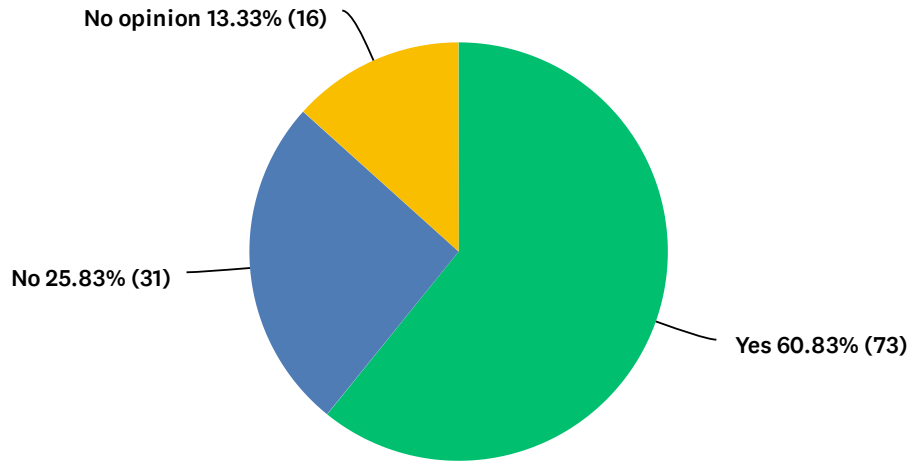
Answered: 120 Skipped: 1



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	39.17%	47
No	46.67%	56
No opinion	14.17%	17
TOTAL		120

## Q13 Do you feel there is a need for housing options other than single family housing in Skowhegan?

Answered: 120 Skipped: 1

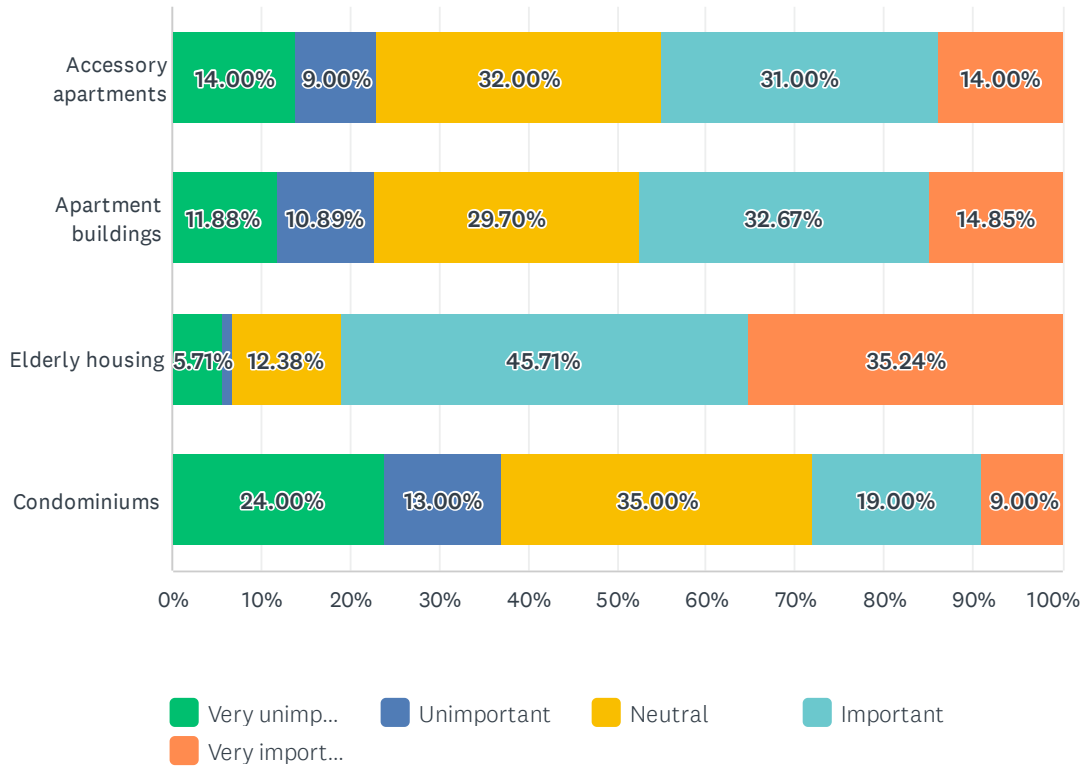


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	60.83%	73
No	25.83%	31
No opinion	13.33%	16
TOTAL		120



## Q14 If you feel there is a need for optional housing types, please rate the following in terms of importance:

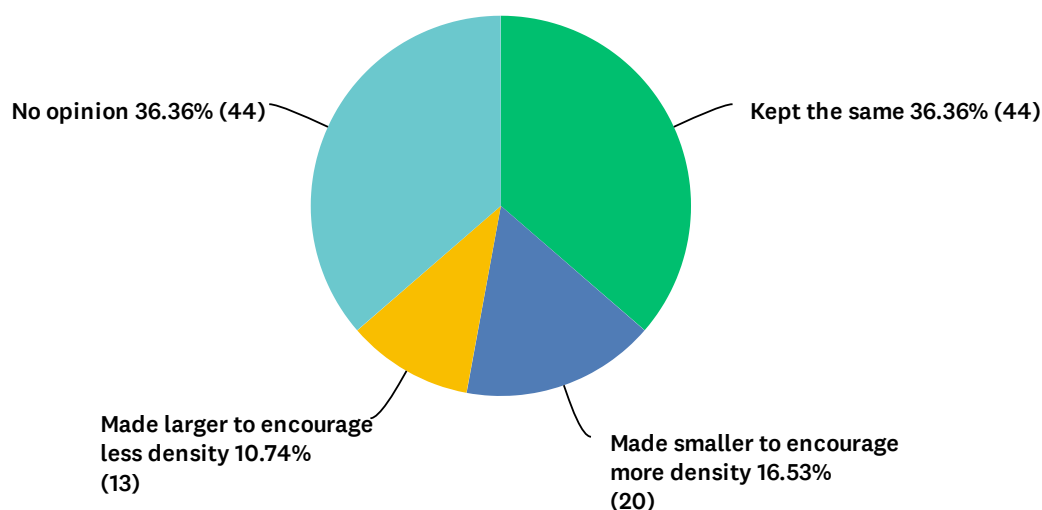
Answered: 105    Skipped: 16



	VERY UNIMPORTANT	UNIMPORTANT	NEUTRAL	IMPORTANT	VERY IMPORTANT	TOTAL
Accessory apartments	14.00% 14	9.00% 9	32.00% 32	31.00% 31	14.00% 14	100
Apartment buildings	11.88% 12	10.89% 11	29.70% 30	32.67% 33	14.85% 15	101
Elderly housing	5.71% 6	0.95% 1	12.38% 13	45.71% 48	35.24% 37	105
Condominiums	24.00% 24	13.00% 13	35.00% 35	19.00% 19	9.00% 9	100

**Q15 For lots with connection to municipal sewer, the minimum lot size is 6,500 square feet; lots connected to a central, on-site subsurface wastewater disposal system approved by Maine Department of Human Services, the minimum lot size is 12,000 square feet; for those without connection to municipal sewer, the minimum lot size is 20,000 square feet. Do you think the minimum lot size in town should be:**

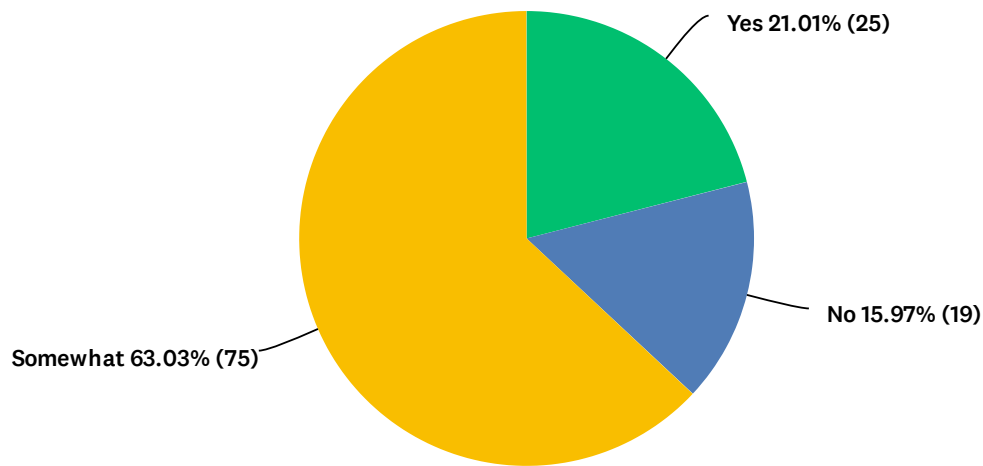
Answered: 121 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Kept the same	36.36%	44
Made smaller to encourage more density	16.53%	20
Made larger to encourage less density	10.74%	13
No opinion	36.36%	44
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>121</b>

## Q16 Are you familiar with the current ordinances in Skowhegan?

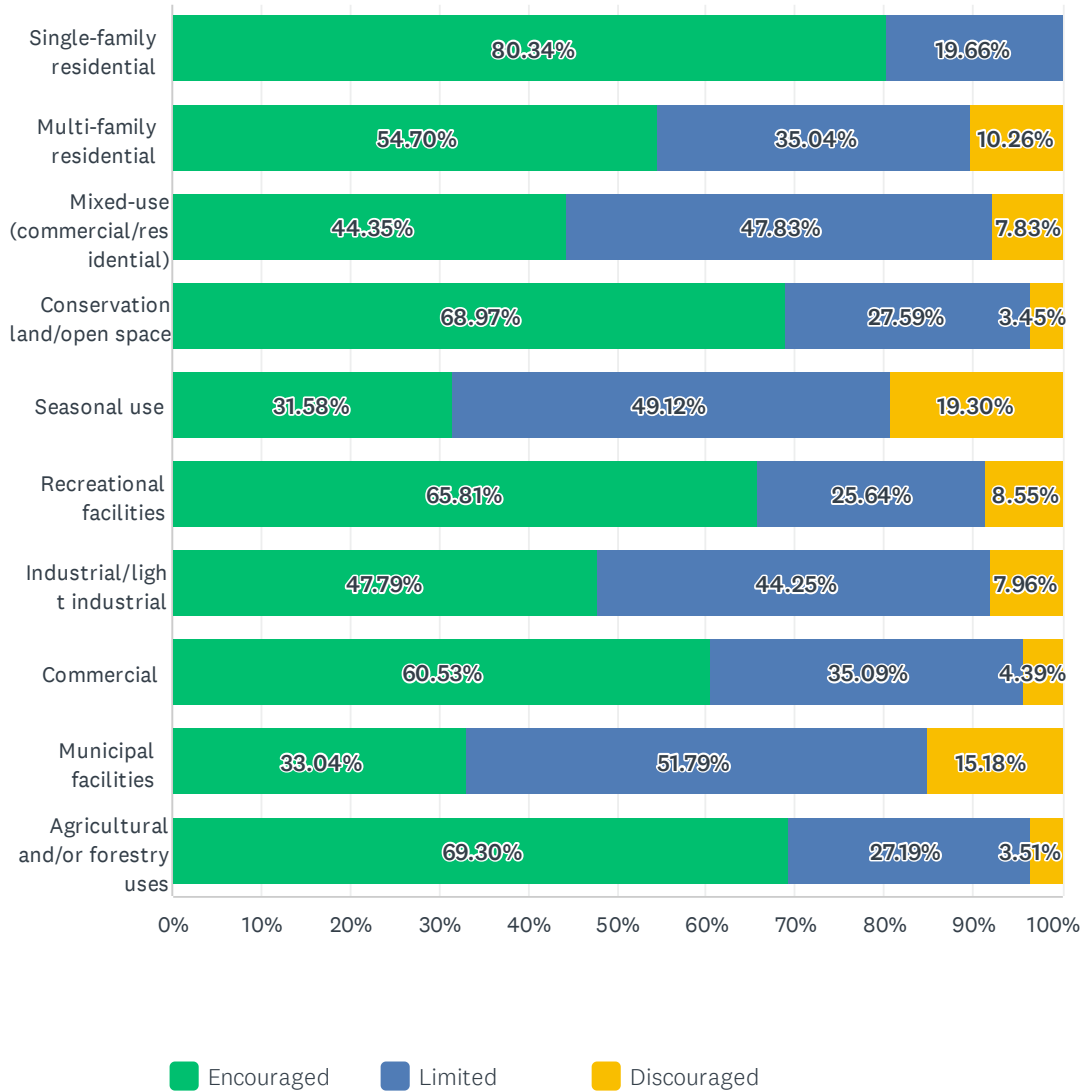
Answered: 119 Skipped: 2



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	21.01%	25
No	15.97%	19
Somewhat	63.03%	75
TOTAL		119

## Q17 Please indicate whether the following land use types should be encouraged, limited, or discouraged:

Answered: 117 Skipped: 4

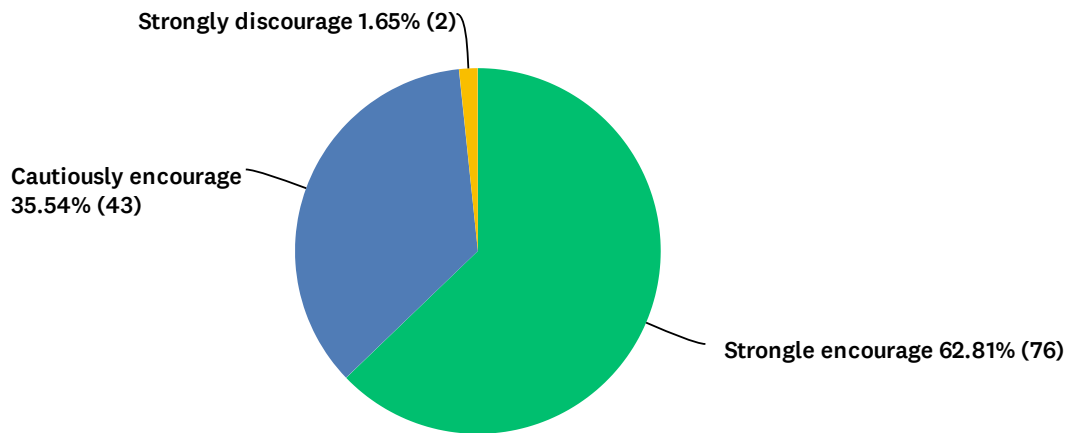


# Skowhegan Comprehensive Plan Survey

	ENCOURAGED	LIMITED	DISCOURAGED	TOTAL
Single-family residential	80.34% 94	19.66% 23	0.00% 0	117
Multi-family residential	54.70% 64	35.04% 41	10.26% 12	117
Mixed-use (commercial/residential)	44.35% 51	47.83% 55	7.83% 9	115
Conservation land/open space	68.97% 80	27.59% 32	3.45% 4	116
Seasonal use	31.58% 36	49.12% 56	19.30% 22	114
Recreational facilities	65.81% 77	25.64% 30	8.55% 10	117
Industrial/light industrial	47.79% 54	44.25% 50	7.96% 9	113
Commercial	60.53% 69	35.09% 40	4.39% 5	114
Municipal facilities	33.04% 37	51.79% 58	15.18% 17	112
Agricultural and/or forestry uses	69.30% 79	27.19% 31	3.51% 4	114

## Q18 To what extent should Skowhegan encourage additional businesses?

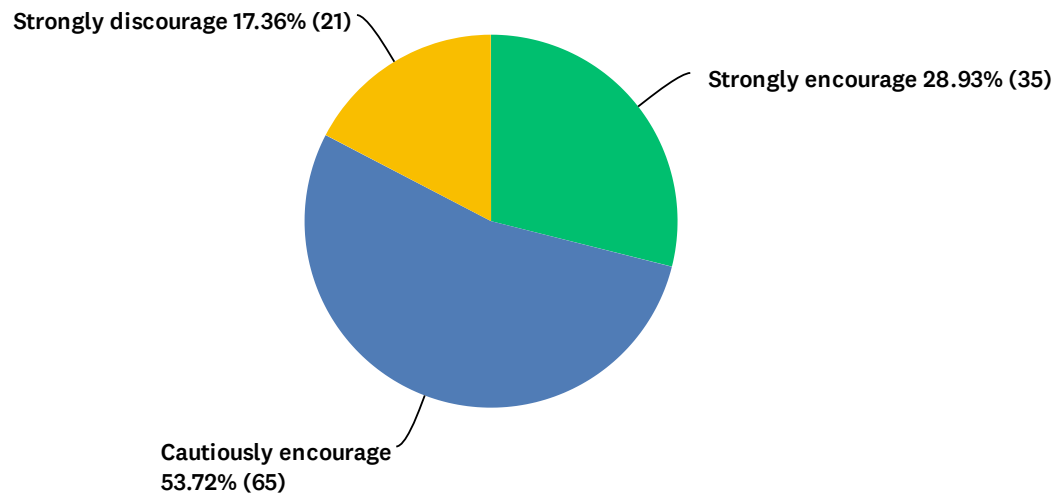
Answered: 121 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES		RESPONSES	
Strongle encourage		62.81%	76
Cautiously encourage		35.54%	43
Strongly discourage		1.65%	2
TOTAL			121

## Q19 To what extent should the town encourage industrial development?

Answered: 121 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Strongly encourage	28.93%	35
Cautiously encourage	53.72%	65
Strongly discourage	17.36%	21
TOTAL		121

## Q20 What type of industrial development would you like to see in Skowhegan? (i.e. mills, quarries, etc.)

Answered: 59    Skipped: 62

#	RESPONSES	DATE
1	NO QUARRIES!!!!!! Left our last home due to blasting moving closer and closer. Agriculture	2/26/2025 10:37 AM
2	Electronis	2/26/2025 9:25 AM
3	Mills	2/26/2025 7:28 AM
4	No thank you.	2/25/2025 11:21 PM
5	None	2/25/2025 9:45 PM
6	Mill	2/25/2025 9:34 PM
7	Any that are interested	2/25/2025 8:03 PM
8	None	2/25/2025 8:02 PM
9	Production facilities	2/25/2025 6:57 PM
10	Industrial development for forest products	2/25/2025 6:47 PM
11	Higher skillset jobs that will encourage additional education.	2/25/2025 6:41 PM
12	Wood products manufacturing	2/25/2025 5:08 PM
13	None	2/25/2025 4:51 PM
14	Mills	2/25/2025 4:34 PM
15	None	2/25/2025 3:56 PM
16	Mill	2/25/2025 3:51 PM
17	Places that can employ high school graduates who want to stay local.	2/25/2025 3:12 PM
18	Factories	2/25/2025 3:10 PM
19	I'm for any industrial development that will ease the tax burden of the citizens.	2/25/2025 3:00 PM
20	Not sure. I just strongly don't approve of the mobile home park that is being added instead of the drive-in theater.	2/25/2025 2:54 PM
21	Factories and mills reopened instead of being turned into apartment buildings and bars	2/25/2025 2:36 PM
22	Employers	2/24/2025 9:57 PM
23	Industries with positive fir within a community	2/24/2025 9:01 PM
24	None	2/24/2025 11:20 AM
25	The type that produce tax revenue	2/11/2025 10:06 PM
26	Manufacturing,processing, laboratory.	1/30/2025 2:52 PM
27	Anything that will bring high paying jobs.	1/28/2025 11:20 AM
28	Mills	1/27/2025 10:48 AM
29	Only clean/sustainable industry that would have minimal impacts on the health and well being of community	1/27/2025 8:58 AM
30	Anything that encourages skilled-labor employment.	1/23/2025 8:08 PM

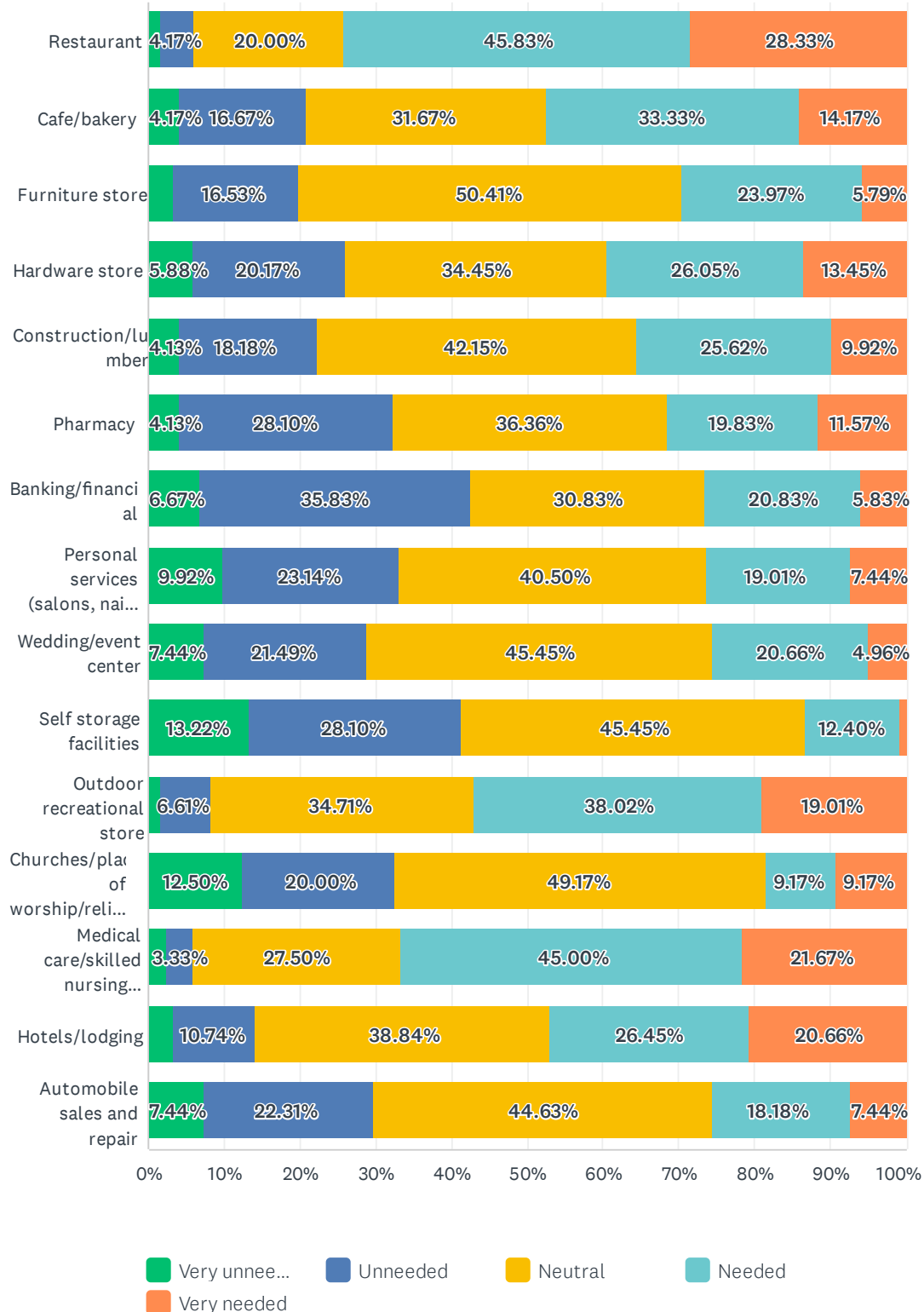


## Skowhegan Comprehensive Plan Survey

31	Light manufacturing	1/21/2025 10:38 AM
32	Small scale manufacturing Hotel	1/20/2025 7:15 PM
33	Trades and basic services	1/20/2025 5:19 PM
34	Why are we talking about industrial development when the town clearly have pillars outline from its strategic plan around food/ag and outdoor rec? If there should be any development it should be focused on ensuring the town excels in areas it has already outlined years ago and also in line with the states economic goals. Don't change the goal post when you haven't even tried achieving what was originally set years ago.	1/20/2025 4:09 PM
35	We need another production mill of some form in town	1/20/2025 3:58 PM
36	anything that pays well	1/20/2025 1:09 PM
37	Work with UMO to attract a sustainable wood products production facility.	1/20/2025 10:23 AM
38	None	1/20/2025 10:15 AM
39	Mills and manufacturing sites in industrial parks	1/20/2025 9:53 AM
40	Development that does not have a negative impact on the environment.	1/20/2025 9:38 AM
41	All jobs!	1/20/2025 2:12 AM
42	I would like to see the dam protected along with the jobs at Sappi.	1/19/2025 8:46 PM
43	Mills. There are still buildings suitable for sale and use	1/19/2025 7:26 PM
44	We have enough	1/19/2025 7:59 AM
45	Factory work that anyone could do.	1/18/2025 4:04 PM
46	I prefer cottage industry. We have New Balance and Sappi. Maybe textiles.	1/17/2025 11:39 PM
47	None, we don't want more people to move here	1/17/2025 9:47 PM
48	Tech business	1/17/2025 8:12 PM
49	None	1/17/2025 5:45 PM
50	Better restaurants	1/17/2025 3:30 PM
51	Detox, rehab center	1/17/2025 11:35 AM
52	Manufacturing not large chain stores	1/17/2025 5:14 AM
53	data centers, textile manufacturing, wood fiber industry, metal smithing	1/16/2025 11:04 PM
54	Mill for jobs, more updated municipal buildings,	1/16/2025 10:59 PM
55	Small manufacturing Definitely no quarries except sand/gravel	1/16/2025 9:24 PM
56	Can you just regulate the logging and short haul trucks within town limits?	1/16/2025 8:45 PM
57	No opinion	1/16/2025 7:58 PM
58	Manufacturing	1/16/2025 6:46 PM
59	Water park or fun pa	1/16/2025 4:00 PM

## Q21 Please indicate your opinion regarding the need for the following uses in town:

Answered: 121 Skipped: 0



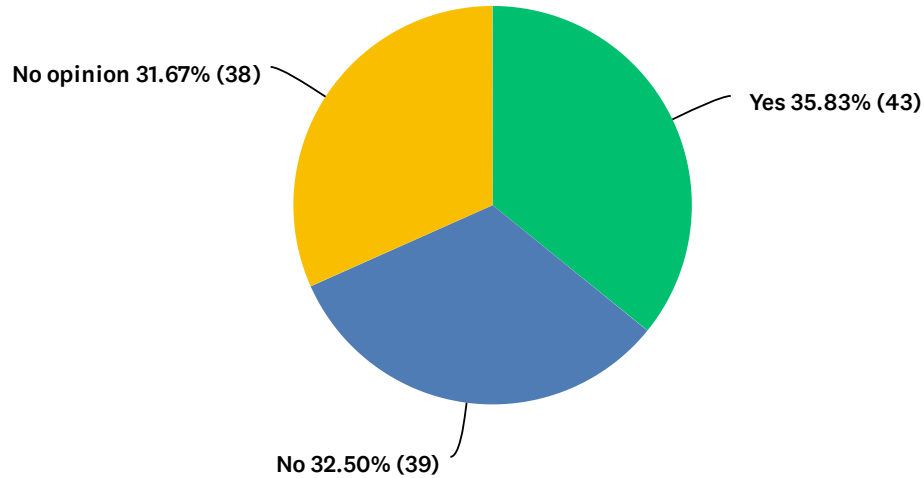
# Skowhegan Comprehensive Plan Survey

	VERY UNNEEDED	UNNEEDED	NEUTRAL	NEEDED	VERY NEEDED	TOTAL
Restaurant	1.67% 2	4.17% 5	20.00% 24	45.83% 55	28.33% 34	120
Cafe/bakery	4.17% 5	16.67% 20	31.67% 38	33.33% 40	14.17% 17	120
Furniture store	3.31% 4	16.53% 20	50.41% 61	23.97% 29	5.79% 7	121
Hardware store	5.88% 7	20.17% 24	34.45% 41	26.05% 31	13.45% 16	119
Construction/lumber	4.13% 5	18.18% 22	42.15% 51	25.62% 31	9.92% 12	121
Pharmacy	4.13% 5	28.10% 34	36.36% 44	19.83% 24	11.57% 14	121
Banking/financial	6.67% 8	35.83% 43	30.83% 37	20.83% 25	5.83% 7	120
Personal services (salons, nail studios, etc.)	9.92% 12	23.14% 28	40.50% 49	19.01% 23	7.44% 9	121
Wedding/event center	7.44% 9	21.49% 26	45.45% 55	20.66% 25	4.96% 6	121
Self storage facilities	13.22% 16	28.10% 34	45.45% 55	12.40% 15	0.83% 1	121
Outdoor recreational store	1.65% 2	6.61% 8	34.71% 42	38.02% 46	19.01% 23	121
Churches/places of worship/religious institutions	12.50% 15	20.00% 24	49.17% 59	9.17% 11	9.17% 11	120
Medical care/skilled nursing facilities	2.50% 3	3.33% 4	27.50% 33	45.00% 54	21.67% 26	120
Hotels/lodging	3.31% 4	10.74% 13	38.84% 47	26.45% 32	20.66% 25	121
Automobile sales and repair	7.44% 9	22.31% 27	44.63% 54	18.18% 22	7.44% 9	121

#	OTHER (PLEASE SPECIFY)	DATE
1	Clothing Stores	2/26/2025 9:25 AM
2	We have all the above mentioned businesses	1/20/2025 8:49 PM
3	Cannabis dispensary	1/20/2025 4:35 PM
4	Those marked unneeded are so because plenty of them already exist in town.	1/20/2025 4:09 PM
5	Grocery store	1/19/2025 8:46 PM
6	Supermarkets.	1/17/2025 11:39 PM
7	Detox center	1/17/2025 11:35 AM
8	A police force and town council to uphold noise ordinances for logging trucks and Jake brake usage.	1/16/2025 8:45 PM

## Q22 Do you feel that recent development has been in keeping with the character of Skowhegan?

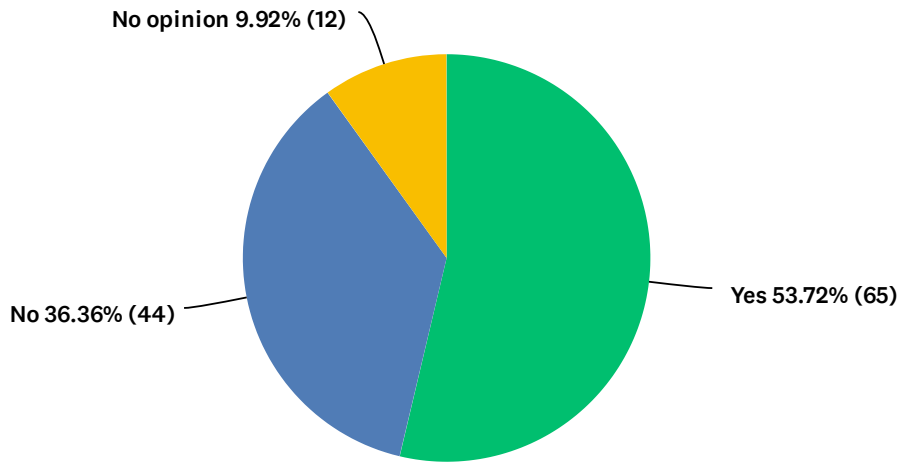
Answered: 120 Skipped: 1



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	35.83%	43
No	32.50%	39
No opinion	31.67%	38
TOTAL		120

**Q23 Would you support the construction of large-scale commercial facilities (i.e. Walmart) or large-scale industrial facilities (i.e. mill or quarry) in Skowhegan?**

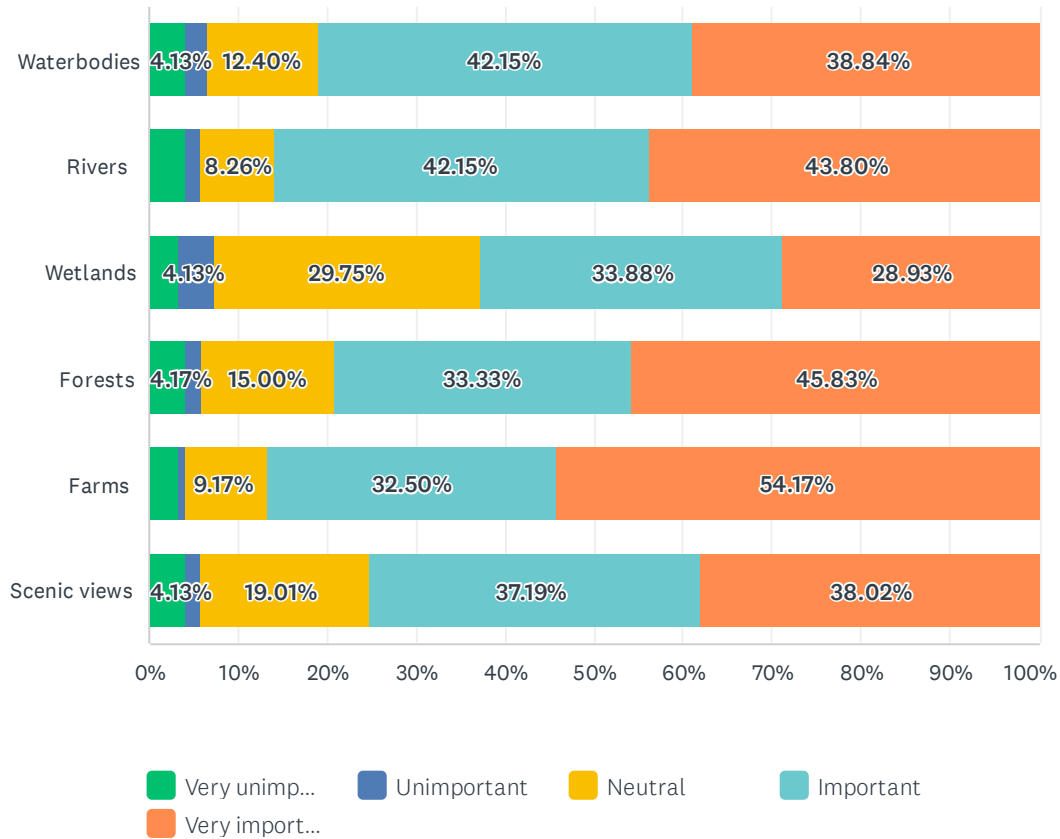
Answered: 121   Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	53.72%	65
No	36.36%	44
No opinion	9.92%	12
TOTAL		121

## Q24 Please indicate how important each of these resources are to you:

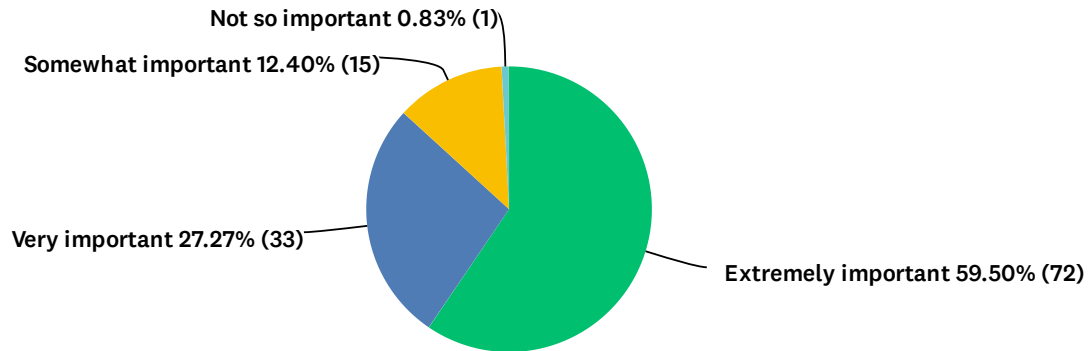
Answered: 121 Skipped: 0



	VERY UNIMPORTANT	UNIMPORTANT	NEUTRAL	IMPORTANT	VERY IMPORTANT	TOTAL
Waterbodies	4.13% 5	2.48% 3	12.40% 15	42.15% 51	38.84% 47	121
Rivers	4.13% 5	1.65% 2	8.26% 10	42.15% 51	43.80% 53	121
Wetlands	3.31% 4	4.13% 5	29.75% 36	33.88% 41	28.93% 35	121
Forests	4.17% 5	1.67% 2	15.00% 18	33.33% 40	45.83% 55	120
Farms	3.33% 4	0.83% 1	9.17% 11	32.50% 39	54.17% 65	120
Scenic views	4.13% 5	1.65% 2	19.01% 23	37.19% 45	38.02% 46	121

## Q25 How would you rate the importance for the protection and promoting the development or retention of farms and farmland?

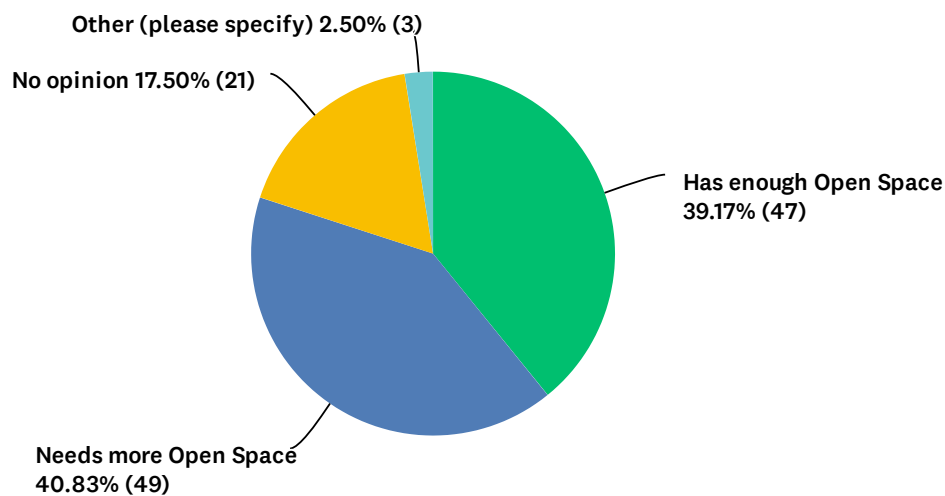
Answered: 121 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Extremely important	59.50%	72
Very important	27.27%	33
Somewhat important	12.40%	15
Not so important	0.83%	1
Not at all important	0.00%	0
TOTAL		121

**Q26 Open Space** is land which is set aside, either in a natural state or for recreational and/or passive purposes and is protected from future development in perpetuity. Open space may include nature preserves (i.e. wildlife habitat, natural resource areas), wetlands (tidal and inland), farms, cemeteries, forests, parks, beaches and other recreational facilities. It may be privately owned (by a land trust or neighborhood association, for example) or publicly owned (by the town or the state). Some open space land is available for public use, while access to other land is restricted. Open space planning can link land parcels to form wildlife corridors or protect important wetland systems or provide trails for passive recreation. In your opinion, the town:

Answered: 120 Skipped: 1



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Has enough Open Space	39.17%	47
Needs more Open Space	40.83%	49
No opinion	17.50%	21
Other (please specify)	2.50%	3
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>120</b>

#	OTHER (PLEASE SPECIFY)	DATE
1	Would like to see a nice pier with rented boat slots or storage to the river. Love the walking trails along the river but we can't make use of them currently b/c of the drugs our children have found and encampments. Too dangerous	2/26/2025 10:37 AM
2	Somerset Wood Trustees are doing excellent job	1/20/2025 8:49 PM



## Skowhegan Comprehensive Plan Survey

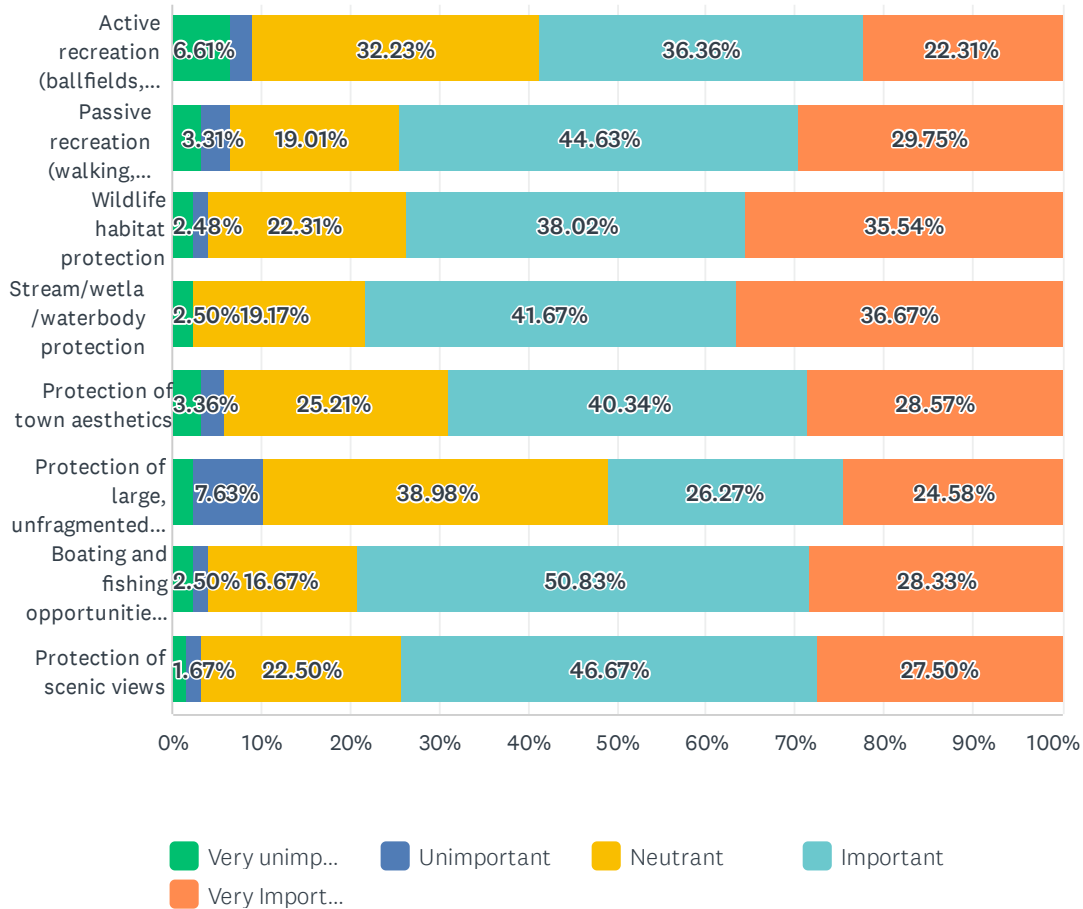
3 If there should be any open space to be added it should be in the downtown. Close off Water street to through traffic and make it pedestrian friendly.

---

1/20/2025 4:09 PM

## Q27 Please indicate how important each of the following open space categories are to you.

Answered: 121 Skipped: 0

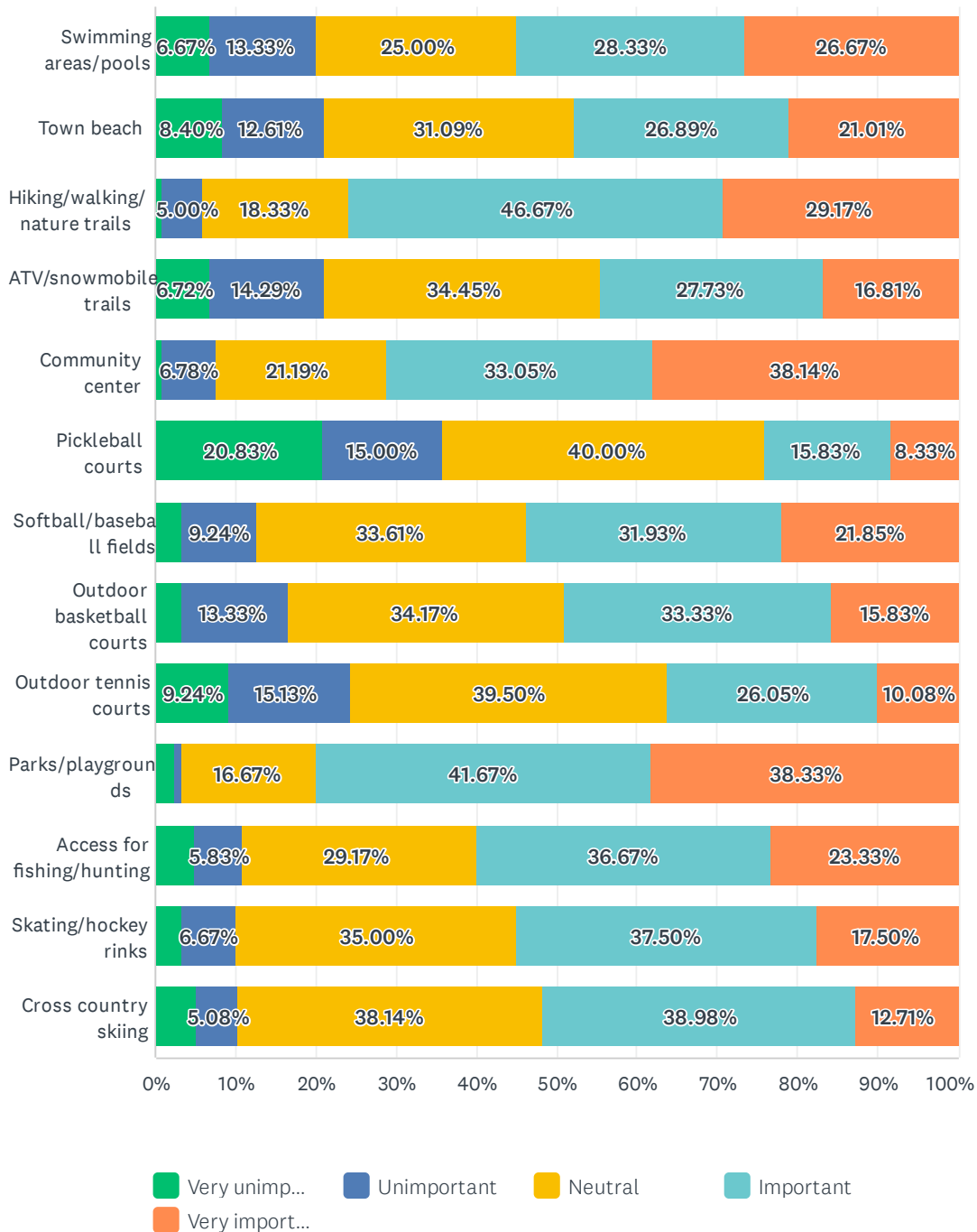


# Skowhegan Comprehensive Plan Survey

	VERY UNIMPORTANT	UNIMPORTANT	NEUTRANT	IMPORTANT	VERY IMPORTANT	TOTAL
Active recreation (ballfields, sports programs, tennis)	6.61% 8	2.48% 3	32.23% 39	36.36% 44	22.31% 27	121
Passive recreation (walking, hiking, biking, nature preserves)	3.31% 4	3.31% 4	19.01% 23	44.63% 54	29.75% 36	121
Wildlife habitat protection	2.48% 3	1.65% 2	22.31% 27	38.02% 46	35.54% 43	121
Stream/wetlands/waterbody protection	2.50% 3	0.00% 0	19.17% 23	41.67% 50	36.67% 44	120
Protection of town aesthetics	3.36% 4	2.52% 3	25.21% 30	40.34% 48	28.57% 34	119
Protection of large, unfragmented parcels of land	2.54% 3	7.63% 9	38.98% 46	26.27% 31	24.58% 29	118
Boating and fishing opportunities/water access	2.50% 3	1.67% 2	16.67% 20	50.83% 61	28.33% 34	120
Protection of scenic views	1.67% 2	1.67% 2	22.50% 27	46.67% 56	27.50% 33	120

Q28 Public facilities include schools, roads, parks and municipal buildings and other structures. These facilities and the services they provide are paid for, in large part, through the property taxes that citizens pay. The following questions are designed to allow the town to determine what level of facilities improvements would be supported. Please indicate how important each of the following recreation categories are to you:

Answered: 120 Skipped: 1



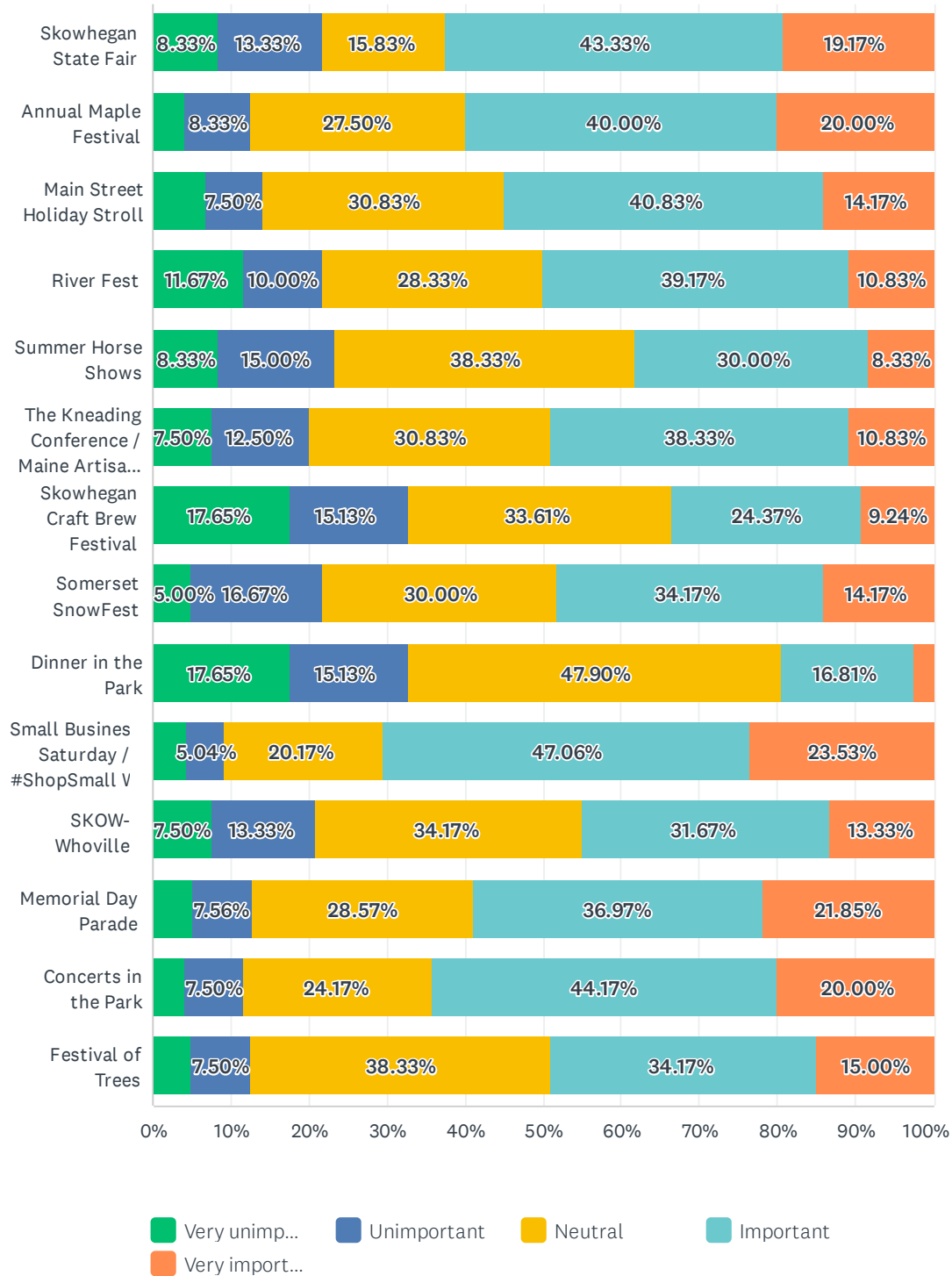
# Skowhegan Comprehensive Plan Survey

	VERY UNIMPORTANT	UNIMPORTANT	NEUTRAL	IMPORTANT	VERY IMPORTANT	TOTAL
Swimming areas/pools	6.67% 8	13.33% 16	25.00% 30	28.33% 34	26.67% 32	120
Town beach	8.40% 10	12.61% 15	31.09% 37	26.89% 32	21.01% 25	119
Hiking/walking/nature trails	0.83% 1	5.00% 6	18.33% 22	46.67% 56	29.17% 35	120
ATV/snowmobile trails	6.72% 8	14.29% 17	34.45% 41	27.73% 33	16.81% 20	119
Community center	0.85% 1	6.78% 8	21.19% 25	33.05% 39	38.14% 45	118
Pickleball courts	20.83% 25	15.00% 18	40.00% 48	15.83% 19	8.33% 10	120
Softball/baseball fields	3.36% 4	9.24% 11	33.61% 40	31.93% 38	21.85% 26	119
Outdoor basketball courts	3.33% 4	13.33% 16	34.17% 41	33.33% 40	15.83% 19	120
Outdoor tennis courts	9.24% 11	15.13% 18	39.50% 47	26.05% 31	10.08% 12	119
Parks/playgrounds	2.50% 3	0.83% 1	16.67% 20	41.67% 50	38.33% 46	120
Access for fishing/hunting	5.00% 6	5.83% 7	29.17% 35	36.67% 44	23.33% 28	120
Skating/hockey rinks	3.33% 4	6.67% 8	35.00% 42	37.50% 45	17.50% 21	120
Cross country skiing	5.08% 6	5.08% 6	38.14% 45	38.98% 46	12.71% 15	118

#	OTHER (PLEASE SPECIFY)	DATE
1	Would so live to see a town public pool. Would gladly pay a temporary tax to see one built with overwinter access.	2/26/2025 10:37 AM
2	Dog park, inside pool	2/25/2025 10:40 PM
3	Maintain safe walking areas	2/25/2025 6:47 PM
4	Trails available for horses, walking, skiing	2/24/2025 9:57 PM
5	bluejays and greenways	1/27/2025 8:58 AM
6	Downhill Skiing at Eaton mountain	1/20/2025 8:49 PM
7	The town is spending too much money on the rec center. Q	1/19/2025 8:46 PM
8	I think our town does an excellent job of this other than the recent loss of memorial field. The rec center, Park, trail system, school playgrounds, lake George are terrific. If more central space could be made for playground/basketball courts the north elementary property or Margaret Chase Smith properties would be fantastic.	1/16/2025 11:04 PM
9	Quieter trucks not using Jakes in town	1/16/2025 8:45 PM

## Q29 Please indicate how important each of the following community events are to you:

Answered: 120 Skipped: 1

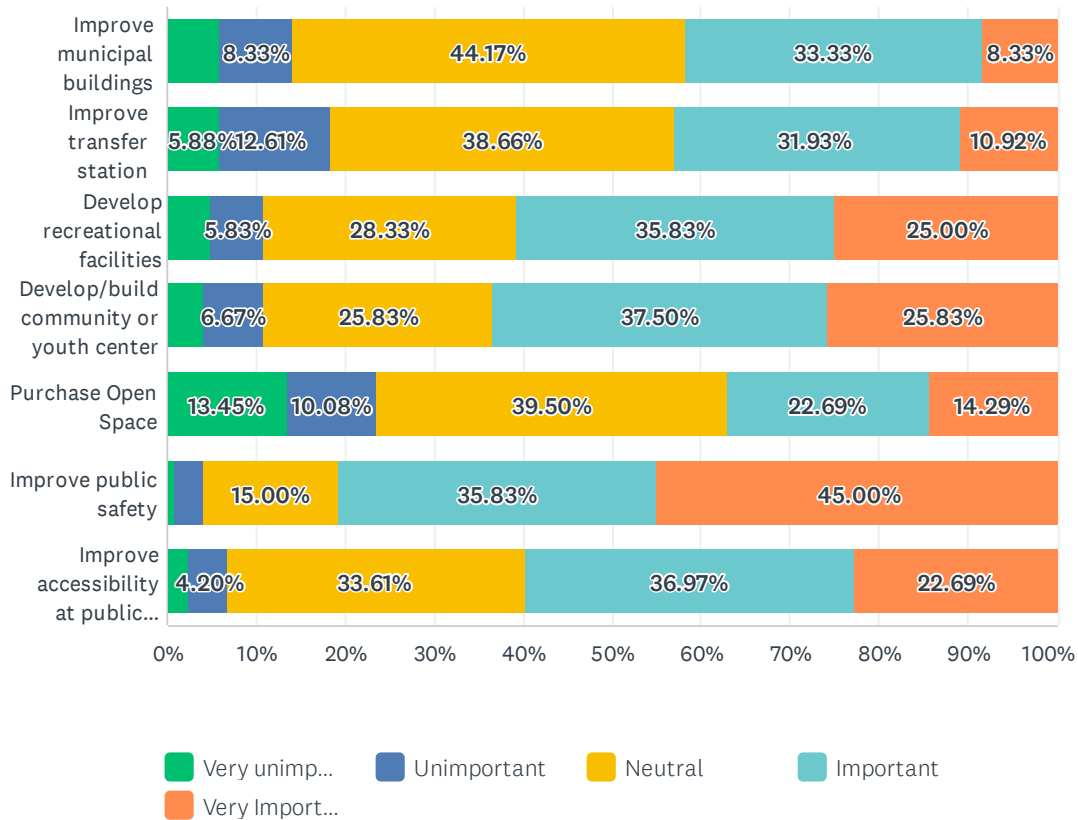


# Skowhegan Comprehensive Plan Survey

	VERY UNIMPORTANT	UNIMPORTANT	NEUTRAL	IMPORTANT	VERY IMPORTANT	TOTAL
Skowhegan State Fair	8.33% 10	13.33% 16	15.83% 19	43.33% 52	19.17% 23	120
Annual Maple Festival	4.17% 5	8.33% 10	27.50% 33	40.00% 48	20.00% 24	120
Main Street Holiday Stroll	6.67% 8	7.50% 9	30.83% 37	40.83% 49	14.17% 17	120
River Fest	11.67% 14	10.00% 12	28.33% 34	39.17% 47	10.83% 13	120
Summer Horse Shows	8.33% 10	15.00% 18	38.33% 46	30.00% 36	8.33% 10	120
The Kneading Conference / Maine Artisan Bread Fair	7.50% 9	12.50% 15	30.83% 37	38.33% 46	10.83% 13	120
Skowhegan Craft Brew Festival	17.65% 21	15.13% 18	33.61% 40	24.37% 29	9.24% 11	119
Somerset SnowFest	5.00% 6	16.67% 20	30.00% 36	34.17% 41	14.17% 17	120
Dinner in the Park	17.65% 21	15.13% 18	47.90% 57	16.81% 20	2.52% 3	119
Small Business Saturday / #ShopSmall Week	4.20% 5	5.04% 6	20.17% 24	47.06% 56	23.53% 28	119
SKOW-Whoville	7.50% 9	13.33% 16	34.17% 41	31.67% 38	13.33% 16	120
Memorial Day Parade	5.04% 6	7.56% 9	28.57% 34	36.97% 44	21.85% 26	119
Concerts in the Park	4.17% 5	7.50% 9	24.17% 29	44.17% 53	20.00% 24	120
Festival of Trees	5.00% 6	7.50% 9	38.33% 46	34.17% 41	15.00% 18	120

## Q30 Please indicate how important each of the following categories are to you:

Answered: 120 Skipped: 1



	VERY UNIMPORTANT	UNIMPORTANT	NEUTRAL	IMPORTANT	VERY IMPORTANT	TOTAL
Improve municipal buildings	5.83% 7	8.33% 10	44.17% 53	33.33% 40	8.33% 10	120
Improve transfer station	5.88% 7	12.61% 15	38.66% 46	31.93% 38	10.92% 13	119
Develop recreational facilities	5.00% 6	5.83% 7	28.33% 34	35.83% 43	25.00% 30	120
Develop/build community or youth center	4.17% 5	6.67% 8	25.83% 31	37.50% 45	25.83% 31	120
Purchase Open Space	13.45% 16	10.08% 12	39.50% 47	22.69% 27	14.29% 17	119
Improve public safety	0.83% 1	3.33% 4	15.00% 18	35.83% 43	45.00% 54	120
Improve accessibility at public properties and buildings	2.52% 3	4.20% 5	33.61% 40	36.97% 44	22.69% 27	119

#	OTHER (PLEASE SPECIFY)	DATE
1	Very concerned with public safety around the cmnty ctr and river trails. These events are nice but many events are during work hours so we are unable to attend. Also, usually posted on	2/26/2025 10:37 AM



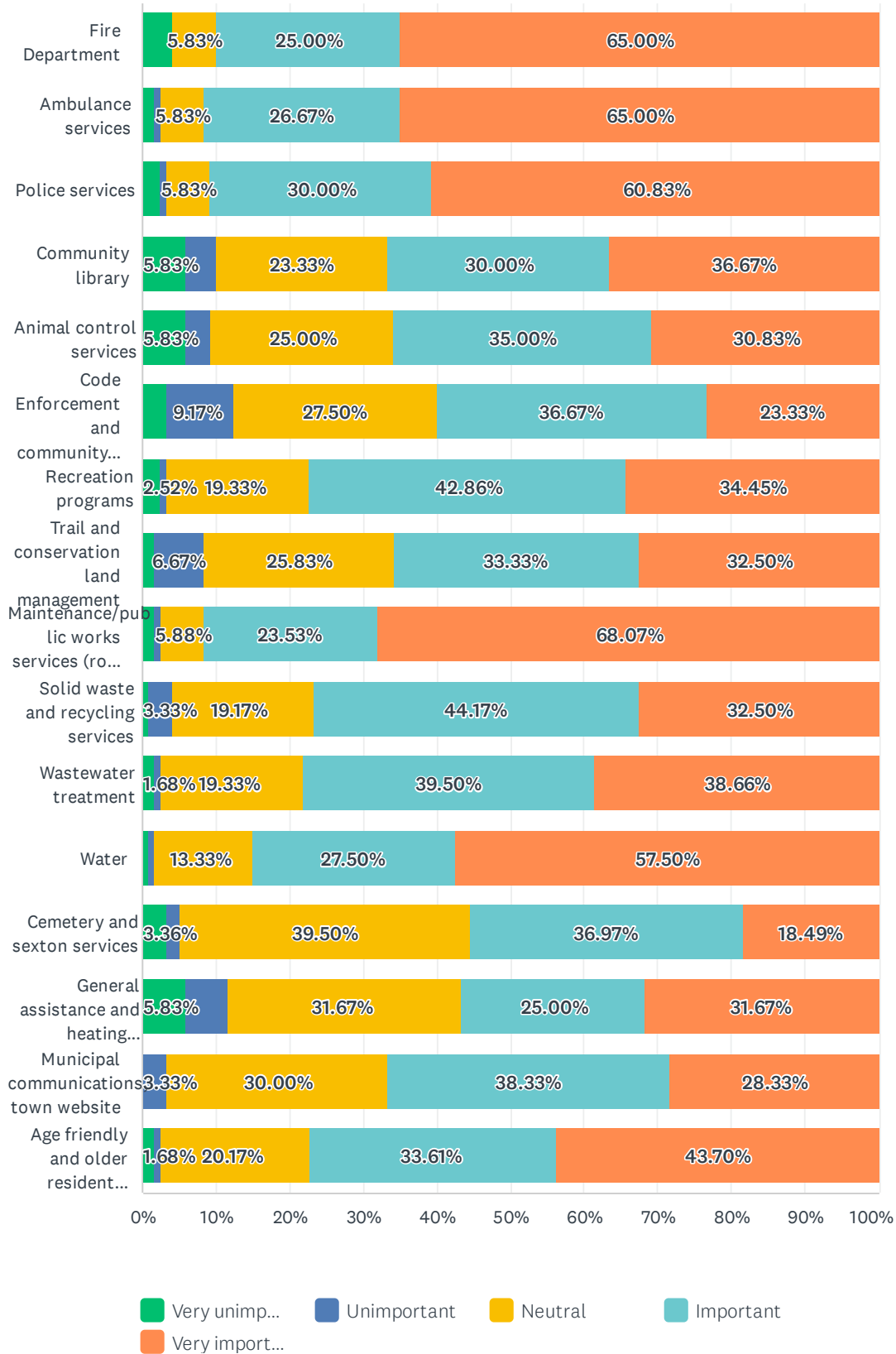
## Skowhegan Comprehensive Plan Survey

	social media but little info on town website.	
2	Improve traffic and speeding for safer pedestrian walking	2/25/2025 10:40 PM
3	Our dump is great	2/25/2025 6:47 PM
4	supervision of phones while driving	2/24/2025 9:01 PM
5	Support and improve what we already have	1/20/2025 8:49 PM
6	The town has spent too much money on fancy municipal buildings.	1/19/2025 8:46 PM
7	the dumps fine, the town office is fine. Improve policing of the transient/panhandling issue and homeless in the woods off of trail systems.	1/16/2025 11:04 PM
8	We need a fire station on the south side even if it only holds one truck. Very concerned about fire protection on the south side.	1/16/2025 10:45 PM
9	Improve policing of Madison Ave	1/16/2025 8:45 PM

**Q31 Please indicate how important each of the following public service categories are to you:**

Answered: 120   Skipped: 1

# Skowhegan Comprehensive Plan Survey



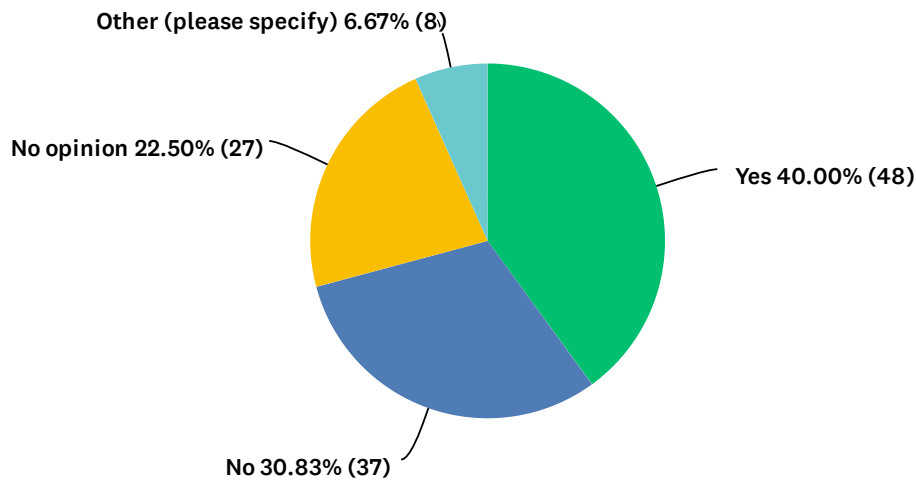
# Skowhegan Comprehensive Plan Survey

	VERY UNIMPORTANT	UNIMPORTANT	NEUTRAL	IMPORTANT	VERY IMPORTANT	TOTAL
Fire Department	4.17% 5	0.00% 0	5.83% 7	25.00% 30	65.00% 78	120
Ambulance services	1.67% 2	0.83% 1	5.83% 7	26.67% 32	65.00% 78	120
Police services	2.50% 3	0.83% 1	5.83% 7	30.00% 36	60.83% 73	120
Community library	5.83% 7	4.17% 5	23.33% 28	30.00% 36	36.67% 44	120
Animal control services	5.83% 7	3.33% 4	25.00% 30	35.00% 42	30.83% 37	120
Code Enforcement and community planning services	3.33% 4	9.17% 11	27.50% 33	36.67% 44	23.33% 28	120
Recreation programs	2.52% 3	0.84% 1	19.33% 23	42.86% 51	34.45% 41	119
Trail and conservation land management	1.67% 2	6.67% 8	25.83% 31	33.33% 40	32.50% 39	120
Maintenance/public works services (road maintenance and snow removal)	1.68% 2	0.84% 1	5.88% 7	23.53% 28	68.07% 81	119
Solid waste and recycling services	0.83% 1	3.33% 4	19.17% 23	44.17% 53	32.50% 39	120
Wastewater treatment	1.68% 2	0.84% 1	19.33% 23	39.50% 47	38.66% 46	119
Water	0.83% 1	0.83% 1	13.33% 16	27.50% 33	57.50% 69	120
Cemetery and sexton services	3.36% 4	1.68% 2	39.50% 47	36.97% 44	18.49% 22	119
General assistance and heating assistance	5.83% 7	5.83% 7	31.67% 38	25.00% 30	31.67% 38	120
Municipal communications, town website	0.00% 0	3.33% 4	30.00% 36	38.33% 46	28.33% 34	120
Age friendly and older resident support services	1.68% 2	0.84% 1	20.17% 24	33.61% 40	43.70% 52	119

#	OTHER (PLEASE SPECIFY)	DATE
1	More of a United Way or Meals on Wheels presence	2/26/2025 10:37 AM
2	Safety of public areas	2/25/2025 6:47 PM
3	Skowhegan needs to reduce property taxes. This will encourage more development.	1/19/2025 8:46 PM
4	Stop the use of jake brakes in town	1/16/2025 8:45 PM

## Q32 Skowhegan's police services are provided by Skowhegan Police Department. Do you think there needs to be expanded capacity for the Skowhegan Police Department?

Answered: 120 Skipped: 1

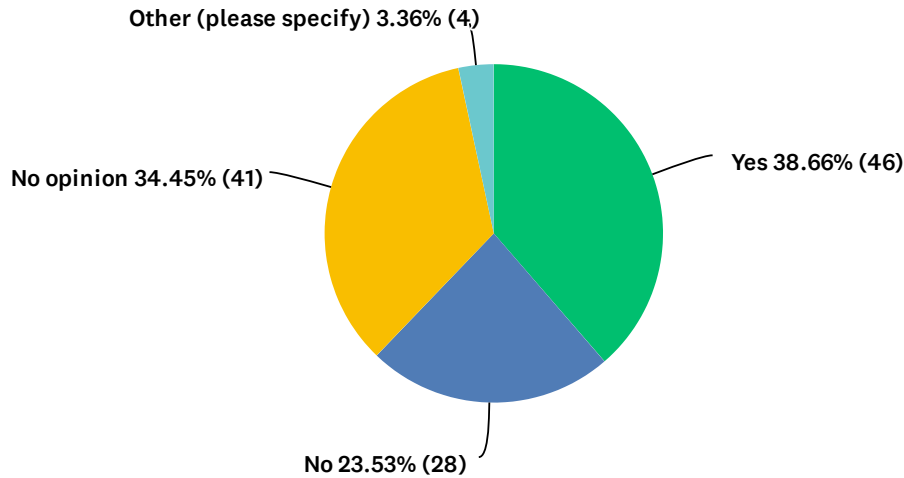


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	40.00%	48
No	30.83%	37
No opinion	22.50%	27
Other (please specify)	6.67%	8
TOTAL		120

#	OTHER (PLEASE SPECIFY)	DATE
1	Our police are wonderful	2/25/2025 6:47 PM
2	TV	2/25/2025 6:17 PM
3	What service, one is at the hospital 24/8 and the rest are a useless waste of taxpayer money	2/25/2025 2:36 PM
4	If CMP will provide unusual increase in usage to track down illegal cannabis growers	1/20/2025 8:49 PM
5	Need more of a presence in downtown and on southside of town. Mistake putting police out of town	1/20/2025 7:15 PM
6	Needs evaluation	1/17/2025 11:39 PM
7	somewhat. more presence in town regarding speeding on Madison Ave non stop, the homeless drug addicts living in the woods and panhandling, blatant drug use and sales rampant in town Walmart parking lot & woods on edge, cumbys, woods behind Russell Rd warehouse, main st up the hill, all areas around walking bridge and DB trail, winter st	1/16/2025 11:04 PM
8	Absolutely not. They need to be called to task for not doing their jobs on Madison Ave.	1/16/2025 8:45 PM

## Q33 Do you think there is need for additional Emergency Medical Services (EMS)?

Answered: 119 Skipped: 2

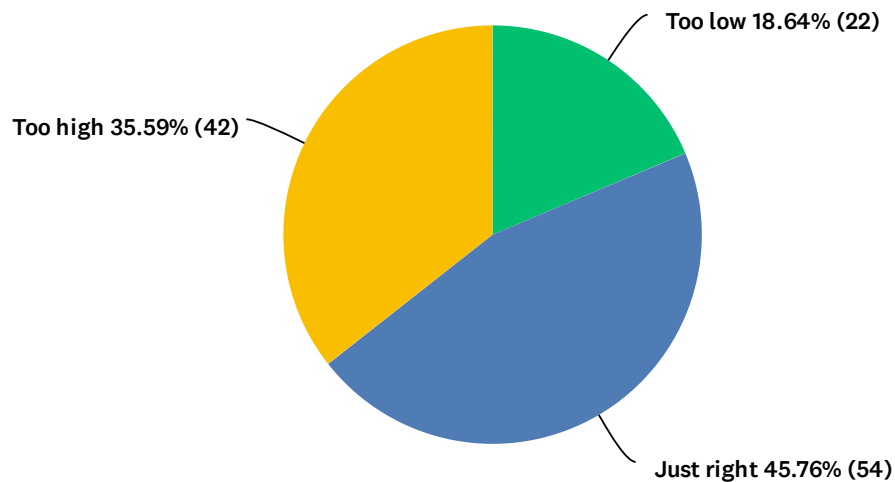


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	38.66%	46
No	23.53%	28
No opinion	34.45%	41
Other (please specify)	3.36%	4
TOTAL		119

#	OTHER (PLEASE SPECIFY)	DATE
1	Had to wait a bit for an ambulance in emergency, I know they did the best they could	2/25/2025 6:47 PM
2	The town should never get into the ambulance service,	1/21/2025 5:51 AM
3	Needs evaluation	1/17/2025 11:39 PM
4	if it's more cost effective than the fire department and police needing to accompany every call	1/16/2025 11:04 PM

Q34 About 57% of your tax bill pays for Education (RSU/MSAD 54), about 16% pays for County taxes and services, and about 27% pays for municipal infrastructure and services. Is the level of spending on municipal infrastructure and services in town:

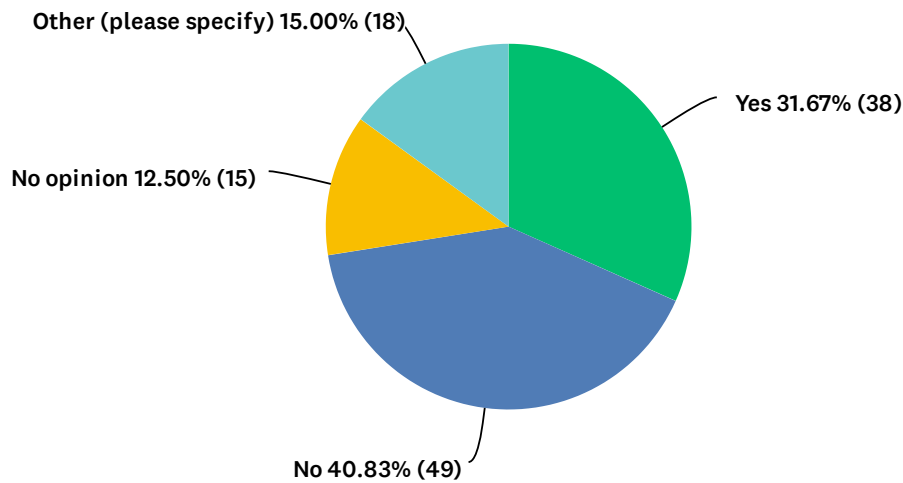
Answered: 118 Skipped: 3



ANSWER CHOICES		RESPONSES	
Too low		18.64%	22
Just right		45.76%	54
Too high		35.59%	42
TOTAL			118

## Q35 Are you satisfied with Skowhegan's network of roads?

Answered: 120 Skipped: 1



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	31.67%	38
No	40.83%	49
No opinion	12.50%	15
Other (please specify)	15.00%	18
TOTAL		120

#	OTHER (PLEASE SPECIFY)	DATE
1	Better lighting in town. Also would love to see walkability improve in town but not sure how to go about it... reduced speed, prominent crosswalk lighting, stop light at the island clock... Can we please clean up the storefronts? Our buildings look dingy and dirty. The signage is not attractive. Our downtown looks very unattractive with a mismatched aesthetic of signs and dirty buildings. It's the first impression people get when driving through our town and is very unattractive. Recommend a uniform sign ordinance... like wood or faux wood signs with green and/or gold lettering. The computer repair store sign is like this I believe.	2/26/2025 10:37 AM
2	Need another bridge	2/26/2025 9:25 AM
3	Meh. Some of them are in bad shape or the pattern is challenging.	2/25/2025 11:21 PM
4	Lots of crosswalks yet cars still go over 25mph in town and residential areas	2/25/2025 10:40 PM
5	The roads are awful everywhere	2/25/2025 9:36 PM
6	Worst roads in central maine	2/25/2025 8:03 PM
7	Taxes are too high for the roads to be falling apart like they are	2/25/2025 8:02 PM
8	There are A LOT of pot holes on the roads that need to be fixed!	2/25/2025 2:54 PM
9	some need paving, maintenance	1/27/2025 8:58 AM
10	More side walks and efforts to slow traffic	1/20/2025 7:15 PM

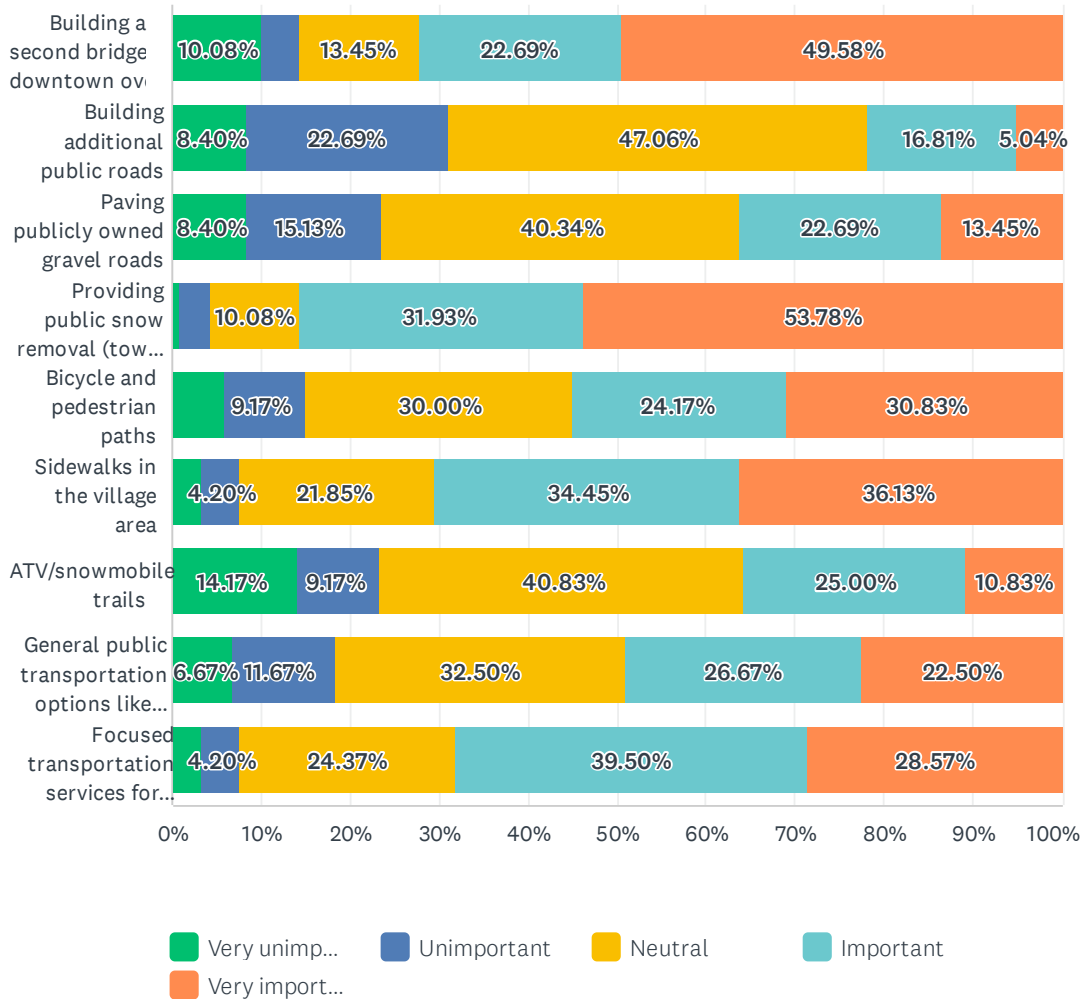


## Skowhegan Comprehensive Plan Survey

11	Traffic pattern downtown is less than ideal	1/20/2025 8:21 AM
12	Skowhegan needs another bridge outside the center of town.	1/19/2025 8:46 PM
13	A 2nd bridge would help greatly!!!	1/18/2025 9:07 AM
14	They are terrible. One of the basic needs the town should take care of	1/17/2025 11:35 AM
15	the network is fine other than needing a second bridge, and the lack of maintenance to ME-DOT roads and sidewalks.russell Rd needs a sidewalk.	1/16/2025 11:04 PM
16	WE NEED A SECOND BRIDGE IN TOWN BESIDES THE TWO THAT CROSS THE DAMN BY THE OLD FIRE DEPARTMENT. ADD A SECOND BRIDGE UP STREAM OR DOWN STREAM ASAP!	1/16/2025 10:59 PM
17	We don't need another bridge.	1/16/2025 9:24 PM
18	Needs improvement	1/16/2025 6:46 PM

## Q36 How important are each of the following areas to the future of transportation in Skowhegan?

Answered: 120 Skipped: 1



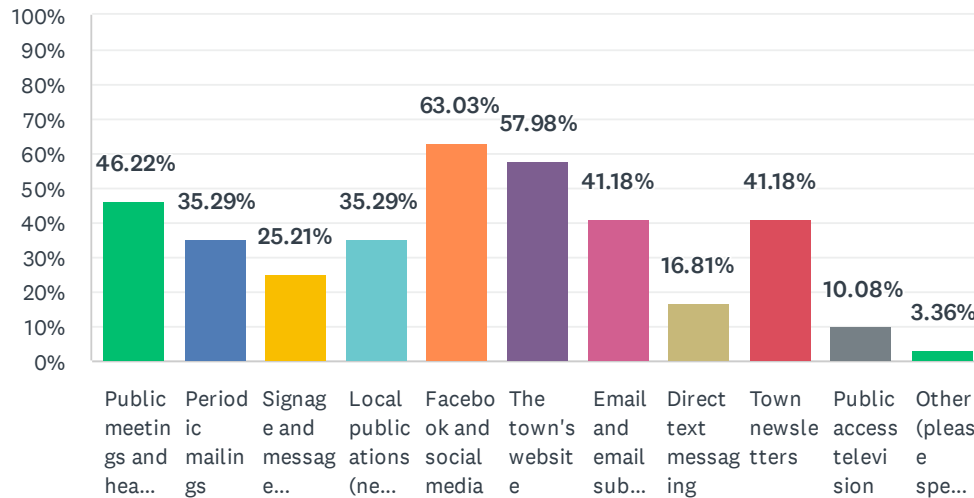
# Skowhegan Comprehensive Plan Survey

	VERY UNIMPORTANT	UNIMPORTANT	NEUTRAL	IMPORTANT	VERY IMPORTANT	TOTAL
Building a second bridge downtown over the Kennebec River	10.08% 12	4.20% 5	13.45% 16	22.69% 27	49.58% 59	119
Building additional public roads	8.40% 10	22.69% 27	47.06% 56	16.81% 20	5.04% 6	119
Paving publicly owned gravel roads	8.40% 10	15.13% 18	40.34% 48	22.69% 27	13.45% 16	119
Providing public snow removal (town crew and equipment)	0.84% 1	3.36% 4	10.08% 12	31.93% 38	53.78% 64	119
Bicycle and pedestrian paths	5.83% 7	9.17% 11	30.00% 36	24.17% 29	30.83% 37	120
Sidewalks in the village area	3.36% 4	4.20% 5	21.85% 26	34.45% 41	36.13% 43	119
ATV/snowmobile trails	14.17% 17	9.17% 11	40.83% 49	25.00% 30	10.83% 13	120
General public transportation options like local bus services	6.67% 8	11.67% 14	32.50% 39	26.67% 32	22.50% 27	120
Focused transportation services for those with limited mobility or restricted driving abilities	3.36% 4	4.20% 5	24.37% 29	39.50% 47	28.57% 34	119

#	OTHER (PLEASE SPECIFY)	DATE
1	A reliable bus service... nice for our elderly and those commuting to work and doctor etc	2/26/2025 10:37 AM
2	ATV trails would bring in a lot of needed money to the town.	1/19/2025 8:46 PM
3	Make people shovel own sidewalks to cut costs	1/17/2025 11:35 AM
4	Ticketing the loud trucks on Madison Ave	1/16/2025 8:45 PM

## Q37 How would you like to be kept informed about happenings in the town?

Answered: 119 Skipped: 2



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Public meetings and hearings	46.22%	55
Periodic mailings	35.29%	42
Signage and message boards	25.21%	30
Local publications (newspapers)	35.29%	42
Facebook and social media	63.03%	75
The town's website	57.98%	69
Email and email subscription lists, such as E-alerts	41.18%	49
Direct text messaging	16.81%	20
Town newsletters	41.18%	49
Public access television	10.08%	12
Other (please specify)	3.36%	4
Total Respondents: 119		

#	OTHER (PLEASE SPECIFY)	DATE
1	Information getting out to residents that are not tech savvy	2/26/2025 9:25 AM
2	Radio station	2/25/2025 10:40 PM
3	E mail list would be grea	2/25/2025 6:47 PM
4	Prefer emails, news, please don't use Facebook	1/20/2025 8:49 PM

## Q38 What do you like best about Skowhegan?

Answered: 84 Skipped: 37

#	RESPONSES	DATE
1	It has character.	2/27/2025 10:09 PM
2	Strong community	2/26/2025 3:42 PM
3	I love the history of Skowhegan and hope we don't let it slip away by giving in to those offended by history. We need to embrace the native history of our town before we lose it	2/26/2025 2:12 PM
4	It's potential for recreational draw and constant through traffic make it super ideal for growth if done right in keeping with its small town charm. Sparseness and low density.	2/26/2025 10:37 AM
5	Quaint downtown area ( rotary area)	2/26/2025 9:25 AM
6	The level of conservative voices being heard.	2/26/2025 9:25 AM
7	The large Indian	2/26/2025 7:28 AM
8	The revitalized downtown.	2/26/2025 7:04 AM
9	The citizens	2/26/2025 5:09 AM
10	A lot of it feels rural but I can grab butter in a matter of minutes. I love the farmer's market. I love Mainely Grains and ask the art stuff. I love all the ways there are to really around town.	2/25/2025 11:21 PM
11	Quaint downtown	2/25/2025 10:40 PM
12	Hometown feel and needs to stay that way	2/25/2025 9:36 PM
13	I like how the community helps one another	2/25/2025 9:34 PM
14	That an effort is being put forth to improve	2/25/2025 9:24 PM
15	Small town feel	2/25/2025 8:33 PM
16	It's my town	2/25/2025 8:03 PM
17	How underdeveloped and quiet it used to be	2/25/2025 8:02 PM
18	Community	2/25/2025 8:00 PM
19	Downtown area	2/25/2025 6:57 PM
20	Outdoor opportunities that feel safe for elderly woman	2/25/2025 6:47 PM
21	Everything	2/25/2025 5:16 PM
22	Sense of community	2/25/2025 5:16 PM
23	The gorge	2/25/2025 5:08 PM
24	Being able to walk downtown	2/25/2025 4:51 PM
25	Quiet town been here all my life	2/25/2025 4:34 PM
26	Nothing. The town is a depressing place to live.	2/25/2025 3:56 PM
27	The aesthetic	2/25/2025 3:51 PM
28	Familiar with everything	2/25/2025 3:18 PM
29	The small town relationship.	2/25/2025 3:12 PM
30	Not a lot at them moment. I was born and raised here and came home after a military career. Very disappointing.	2/25/2025 3:00 PM

## Skowhegan Comprehensive Plan Survey

31	I like that it is a quiet, small community. However, I have to say for the 3rd time, that I am very upset about the mobile home community that is about to be built on Waterville road. I live very close to that and it's going to bring way more traffic. and I hope crime does not increase due to that.	2/25/2025 2:54 PM
32	Not much it's a overrated drug infested cesspool honestly	2/25/2025 2:36 PM
33	Rural qualities	2/24/2025 9:57 PM
34	My Neighbors. The sense of growrh.	2/24/2025 9:01 PM
35	Its small town feel and intimacy, its bright future, its location in Maine, its location on the river, its people	2/24/2025 11:20 AM
36	Small town vibe with nice amenities.	2/24/2025 9:44 AM
37	Job opportunity, comparatively speaking.	2/11/2025 10:06 PM
38	No pot shops	2/6/2025 8:14 AM
39	It's potential	2/4/2025 5:59 PM
40	Community, school, and Athletics	1/30/2025 2:52 PM
41	The size of the town and the availability of services within a general rural setting.	1/28/2025 11:20 AM
42	Born and raised here. It's home	1/27/2025 10:48 AM
43	We are lucky to live in a town with a hospital. Good choice of stores to shop.	1/27/2025 9:14 AM
44	Local flavor of businesses, famers market, maine grains, small businesses down town (Bankery, small restaurants, etc) Enjoy strolling through downtown at Christmas and in spring/fall, love Coburn park! Love the river walks and drives	1/27/2025 8:58 AM
45	Small town with most services and businesses available	1/27/2025 8:52 AM
46	The river	1/23/2025 8:39 PM
47	It's my home.	1/23/2025 8:08 PM
48	Keep it small	1/21/2025 5:51 AM
49	It's location	1/20/2025 8:49 PM
50	The people, history and location	1/20/2025 7:15 PM
51	not much	1/20/2025 5:19 PM
52	There is immense opportunity in Skowhegan and the future looks bright.	1/20/2025 4:09 PM
53	Small centrally located town. Location	1/20/2025 3:58 PM
54	Family activities	1/20/2025 2:56 PM
55	Small town lifestyle.	1/20/2025 1:09 PM
56	The people	1/20/2025 10:23 AM
57	Nothing	1/20/2025 10:15 AM
58	That it is a small town	1/20/2025 9:53 AM
59	I was born in Skowhegan almost 58 years ago. Although a significant portion of my family has moved to other towns, states, my heart remains here in Skowhegan.	1/20/2025 9:38 AM
60	Whole area - closeness to most things.	1/20/2025 9:28 AM
61	Community events	1/20/2025 2:12 AM
62	I've lived here all my life and am looking to move elsewhere. I see Skowhegan as an extremely poor community. This was once a proud and healthy community.	1/19/2025 8:46 PM
63	It's a great small town where neighbors once cared about neighbors	1/19/2025 7:26 PM
64	Downtown activities	1/19/2025 7:59 AM

## Skowhegan Comprehensive Plan Survey

65	It's my home town of 80 years, some changes have been good many have not. At one time there were five churches in the town	1/18/2025 4:04 PM
66	small town/country atmosphere, business options, willingness to improve the town as needed	1/18/2025 12:16 PM
67	Community outreach events and free programs offered for the youth through the rec and school	1/18/2025 9:07 AM
68	Small town feel. Sense of community.	1/17/2025 11:39 PM
69	Small town feel	1/17/2025 9:47 PM
70	It's quiet and friendly	1/17/2025 8:12 PM
71	Library	1/17/2025 5:45 PM
72	It is where I grew up, Coburn park is great along with the veterans memorial.	1/17/2025 12:56 PM
73	Size	1/17/2025 11:35 AM
74	That it is centrally located and close to everything.	1/17/2025 10:31 AM
75	Continued improvemen	1/17/2025 5:14 AM
76	Everything. I love it here. Every town needs work. I believe we have enough people who care to make it something better or at least address the current issues and try to find solutions to some of it.	1/16/2025 11:04 PM
77	Small town with decent amenities and great people.	1/16/2025 10:59 PM
78	I actually love being able to walk to the Farmers market, also Amy's cheese Shop is amazing, George's market lovely local people. The cinema is one of my favorite things to do with the grandkids. And mostly people are just good. (Mostly) 😊	1/16/2025 9:34 PM
79	History Small town Sentimental	1/16/2025 9:24 PM
80	Sometimes it seems quiet and inviting	1/16/2025 8:45 PM
81	Small town feel. Community spirit	1/16/2025 7:58 PM
82	People	1/16/2025 6:46 PM
83	Lots of locally owned businesses!	1/16/2025 4:37 PM
84	Nothing	1/16/2025 4:00 PM

## Q39 What do you like least about Skowhegan?

Answered: 90 Skipped: 31

#	RESPONSES	DATE
1	The roads and the drug issue	2/27/2025 10:09 PM
2	The roads	2/26/2025 3:42 PM
3	Too many homeless that hang out in downtown, too many drug addicts and not enough police presence to keep it in check.	2/26/2025 2:12 PM
4	Unsafe due to nonviolent crime (property damage, petty theft, etc), inundated with drug use, and public intoxication.	2/26/2025 10:37 AM
5	Not enough options for dining and clothing shops! Always usually leave town 😞	2/26/2025 9:25 AM
6	The cost that the progressives are costing us. We do not have to keep up with Waterville or Colby collage. Champagne living with a beer budget.	2/26/2025 9:25 AM
7	Only one bridge with traffic congestion	2/26/2025 7:28 AM
8	The drug problem.	2/26/2025 7:04 AM
9	The drug and homeless issues	2/26/2025 5:09 AM
10	The culture can be pretty harsh and racist.	2/25/2025 11:21 PM
11	Free food options	2/25/2025 10:40 PM
12	Th roads and the overspending of tax money spent at town meetings for the library	2/25/2025 9:36 PM
13	We need more housing for the elderly and homeless. We also need public transportation	2/25/2025 9:34 PM
14	Rampant drug problem with a police and fire dept too far out of town.	2/25/2025 9:24 PM
15	The traffic	2/25/2025 8:33 PM
16	Roads...lack of good roads is killing Skowhegan	2/25/2025 8:03 PM
17	How much the crime rates have skyrocketed, tax payers don't have much of a say in anything that happens and our money is wasted, the condition of the roads, our school system, taxes doubling and making it hard for those who have lived in Skowhegan their entire lives to afford to stay...	2/25/2025 8:02 PM
18	Drugs	2/25/2025 8:00 PM
19	Property taxes are insane.	2/25/2025 6:57 PM
20	The metal buildings everywhere!	2/25/2025 6:47 PM
21	Traffic across the bridge	2/25/2025 5:16 PM
22	Condition of main roads	2/25/2025 5:16 PM
23	Some of the politics	2/25/2025 5:08 PM
24	Corrupt politics	2/25/2025 4:51 PM
25	Needs better businesses	2/25/2025 4:34 PM
26	Crime, drugs, panhandlers, downtown area is in shambles, graffiti painted on the storefronts is very distracting and down right ugly, lack of decent restaurants, ugly orange crosswalks, location of the fire station, lack of a second bridge, large log trucks driving through the town, excessively high property taxes and little to no town services for me other than plowing the snow off the roads.	2/25/2025 3:56 PM
27	The inability to properly defend itself against angry mobs	2/25/2025 3:51 PM



## Skowhegan Comprehensive Plan Survey

28	Drugs drugs drugs behind Cumberland farm. In broad daylight	2/25/2025 3:18 PM
29	Too many changes to our community	2/25/2025 3:12 PM
30	The taxes, the blue and orange sidewalks, the crime, the location of the fire dept., panhandlers everywhere, and the lack of restaurants. Also, unkempt property everywhere...clearly no code enforcement.	2/25/2025 3:00 PM
31	That you're building a mobile home community on waterville road. That never should have been approved.	2/25/2025 2:54 PM
32	Taxes are too high	2/25/2025 2:48 PM
33	Drugs ,crime, lack of jobs, things for kids to do ,useless excuse for law enforcement ,the most pathetic excuse for roads I've ever driven on	2/25/2025 2:36 PM
34	Traffic control	2/24/2025 9:57 PM
35	Nothing really fits here	2/24/2025 9:01 PM
36	Walmart, McDonald's, Dunkin', and other similar big boxes and franchises that siphon money out of the community. Keep it local!	2/24/2025 11:20 AM
37	Dilapidated buildings and lack of speed enforcement on roads with a posted speed of 25 mph. Eighteen wheelers speeding through downtown.	2/24/2025 9:44 AM
38	Downtown. That a few big names dictate how the town grows, or doesn't.	2/11/2025 10:06 PM
39	Lack of transparency	2/6/2025 8:14 AM
40	The school system and lack of action with the drug issues in this town.	2/4/2025 5:59 PM
41	The amount on transience and substance abuse.	1/30/2025 2:52 PM
42	The lack of attention to detail as it relates to upkeep of town street signs and the traffic triangles. None of which look good. Also the lack of accountability for departments that are underperforming.	1/28/2025 11:20 AM
43	Too many trails. Leads to homeless camps and drug use. We don't need any more.	1/27/2025 10:48 AM
44	Madison Ave condition, lack of speed enforcment and traffic laws.	1/27/2025 9:14 AM
45	Walmart area and strip malls I that area...ugh roads in this area are bad and traffic is not managed well here.	1/27/2025 8:58 AM
46	transients and not feeling as safe as I did a few years ago	1/27/2025 8:52 AM
47	The amount of homeless people, drug users, and mentally ill people always walking around down town	1/23/2025 8:39 PM
48	Commercial Street looks awful. Sidewalks and signage are bad.	1/23/2025 8:08 PM
49	Taxes	1/21/2025 5:51 AM
50	High poverty, generational poverty, high taxes, high rates of alcohol and/or substance misuse disorder	1/20/2025 8:49 PM
51	Lack of leadership and elected town leaders willing to take responsibility for their decisions	1/20/2025 7:15 PM
52	The recreational hub idea	1/20/2025 5:19 PM
53	Drug problem	1/20/2025 4:56 PM
54	It's stuck in the past.	1/20/2025 4:09 PM
55	We lost all of our small retail stores from yesteryear.	1/20/2025 3:58 PM
56	Road condition	1/20/2025 2:56 PM
57	The recent influx of homeless/addicted people and the town government not doing anything about it. My recently graduated daughter will not go downtown to pick up takeout alone after dark.	1/20/2025 1:09 PM

## Skowhegan Comprehensive Plan Survey

58	taking over	1/20/2025 12:50 PM
59	The unrestricted commercial truck traffic.	1/20/2025 10:23 AM
60	Taxes	1/20/2025 10:15 AM
61	That town hall wants to spend and have everything a major city has. Overspending on new everything and school budget going up every year. We are a haven for drug use. More enforcement and fines on property owners who lease to them. Landlords could clean this up without police help if they were vigilant. Get rid of homeless shelters and don't allow any more.	1/20/2025 9:53 AM
62	I miss the way Skowhegan was when I was a child; less developed. Although, I understand the need to keep pace with progress.	1/20/2025 9:38 AM
63	Fire Department was moved so far out of town. Very inconvenient and also too much money was spent on the new building. Didn't have to be that big. Should have been centralized in town. Also the drug issues. Trying to get white water rafting going. With dams closing it doesn't make sense. So much money has been wasted on this!	1/20/2025 9:28 AM
64	Drugs	1/20/2025 2:12 AM
65	The addicts everywhere	1/19/2025 9:07 PM
66	Chinese marijuana grows, crime, poverty, homelessness, high taxes etc	1/19/2025 8:46 PM
67	Trying to become a large city. We are a farming and textile community. Leave it small.	1/19/2025 7:26 PM
68	Drugs	1/19/2025 7:59 AM
69	At one time there were five churches in the downtown area. Now we have five bars, not a good transition.	1/18/2025 4:04 PM
70	The town road conditions, traffic congestion in town during busy traveling times.	1/18/2025 12:16 PM
71	The drug trafficking!!!! And the fact that most roads are treated like an Indy 500 for the general public. The speeding is ridiculous, I'm surprised we don't have more accidents!	1/18/2025 9:07 AM
72	Not much really.	1/17/2025 11:39 PM
73	Too many development plans. It's making people who have been here a long time want to leave. People feel like they're being forced out of their town.	1/17/2025 9:47 PM
74	Lack of shopping and decent food options	1/17/2025 8:12 PM
75	Allowing homeowners to keep their diseased, dying and derelict trees allowed next to power lines.	1/17/2025 5:45 PM
76	The drugs, the way it looks rundown. Also the downtown area needs major improvements to make it more inviting, Main Street needs to focus back on the downtown rather than taking over a town project and focusing just on that. I thought that was the point. Also community and economic development needs to do their job and help bring in businesses and work with them when they have questions.	1/17/2025 12:56 PM
77	The roads are not safe enough for my 12yo to ride a bike on.	1/17/2025 11:35 AM
78	The back door dealings that happen and lack of transparency.	1/17/2025 10:31 AM
79	Deceit from town officials/fire station	1/17/2025 5:14 AM
80	Always almost getting hit simply crossing streets in downtown. I would think the non-operational blinking lights would be a liability	1/17/2025 12:22 AM
81	The lack of gainful employment options which has led our population down the hole of degradation via drugs and lack of work ethic. Lack of hope & positivity for many who continue to just lose despite themselves.	1/16/2025 11:04 PM
82	Drugs seem to be on the rise ... It's noticeable.	1/16/2025 10:59 PM
83	Taxes, and dislike that the fire station is too far from the southside of town. There should be fire apparatus on the south side considering the locations of school the hospital, new balance and sappi, not to mention the number of home owners that pay taxes that are now at least 18	1/16/2025 10:45 PM

## Skowhegan Comprehensive Plan Survey

minutes for the fire department to respond to fires. It would be interesting to see the arrival time at the fire on 400 middle road last Thursday.

84	The drugs, the needles left in the streets. Not being able to walk across the street without being hit by a car. I tried taking my grandkids to the Winter market at boynton's, 12 cars sped past wants to actually stopped as we were halfway through the crosswalk another one almost hit us 😞 so actually being able to walk in town would be a big deal.	1/16/2025 9:34 PM
85	The way some downtown buildings look. Lack of young women in government. Lack of downtown stores and shops. Speeding	1/16/2025 9:24 PM
86	The fact that it is neither quiet or inviting. The road noise is horrendous and if you speak up about it, the townies form a vulgar lynch mob.	1/16/2025 8:45 PM
87	Focus on tge water park. We have many residents struggling to keep their heads above water. We should be using our tax dollars to help our residents rather than focusing on a seasonal park that will appeal to a limited number of people but will benefit a small handful of businesses in the downtown area. The additional expense to the town to service the park once built will be an additional burden to people that already can't afford to live here. It isn't right that we focus on doing this for the benefit of an exceptional few while at the expense of everyone else	1/16/2025 7:58 PM
88	Trolling of public servants on social media	1/16/2025 6:46 PM
89	Run of the river project ideas	1/16/2025 4:37 PM
90	The BS from selectmen hire out state business and there local businesses here town do the work	1/16/2025 4:00 PM

## Q40 What problems would you most like to see local government address?

Answered: 85   Skipped: 36

#	RESPONSES	DATE
1	Taxes, Drugs, traffic, transportation and favoritism in what your name is.	2/27/2025 10:09 PM
2	The homeless and drug users	2/26/2025 3:42 PM
3	Homeless and drug addicts	2/26/2025 2:12 PM
4	SAFETY! Homelessness. LAW ENFORCEMENT OF DRUG USE AND NONVIOLENT CRIME.	2/26/2025 10:37 AM
5	School bullying	2/26/2025 9:25 AM
6	Spending and traffic patterns	2/26/2025 9:25 AM
7	The drug problem.	2/26/2025 7:04 AM
8	Drugs	2/26/2025 5:09 AM
9	Affordability and accessibility.	2/25/2025 11:21 PM
10	Speeding and bad driving. Not safe for pedestrians	2/25/2025 10:40 PM
11	Taxes	2/25/2025 9:36 PM
12	Housing for homeless	2/25/2025 9:34 PM
13	Maintenance of established areas such as trails to be safe. Police don't patrol	2/25/2025 9:24 PM
14	The lack of a second bridge	2/25/2025 8:33 PM
15	Roads...a second bridge is SOOO critical to Skowhegans survival.	2/25/2025 8:03 PM
16	Crime rates, drugs, theft, and overspending/where are our taxes truly going? Too much housing development all at once.	2/25/2025 8:02 PM
17	Drugs	2/25/2025 8:00 PM
18	Taxes	2/25/2025 6:57 PM
19	Slumlords	2/25/2025 6:47 PM
20	New bridge	2/25/2025 5:16 PM
21	Condition of main roads	2/25/2025 5:16 PM
22	Homelessness	2/25/2025 5:08 PM
23	Their corruption	2/25/2025 4:51 PM
24	All items in #39	2/25/2025 3:56 PM
25	Sidewalks	2/25/2025 3:51 PM
26	Drugs and crime. Clean up the dumpy house intown	2/25/2025 3:18 PM
27	Too many homeless people and drugs.	2/25/2025 3:12 PM
28	Increase low income senior housing, and homelessness.	2/25/2025 3:10 PM
29	Reduce our taxes. Ours have more than doubled in five years.	2/25/2025 3:00 PM
30	Traffic enforcement	2/24/2025 9:57 PM
31	Traffic. Living south of the Kennebec, a major concern is traffic and the challenges for Fire Fighters and Police to get through the traffic tangle on the island	2/24/2025 9:01 PM

## Skowhegan Comprehensive Plan Survey

32	Lack of enforced zoning, difficulty of making a living wage	2/24/2025 11:20 AM
33	A longer rec path; possibly a a rail trail. Speed enforcement.	2/24/2025 9:44 AM
34	Clean up drugs, get rid of homeless shelter, stop bending knee to big names.	2/11/2025 10:06 PM
35	Homeless/drug use	2/6/2025 8:14 AM
36	The drug issues.	2/4/2025 5:59 PM
37	Social programs. Athletic fields. Roads	1/30/2025 2:52 PM
38	I'd like to see traffic signs stand up straight. I'd like to have the town address the lack of leadership, transparency and honesty that comes out of our Recreation Department.	1/28/2025 11:20 AM
39	Drugs, lack of police presence on the Southside. Trails full of drug addicts.	1/27/2025 10:48 AM
40	Another bridge	1/27/2025 9:14 AM
41	green spaces for the citizens	1/27/2025 8:58 AM
42	increased protection of residents and property	1/27/2025 8:52 AM
43	The mismanagement and lack of transparency with regards to our parks and recreation department. They only cater to field hockey.	1/23/2025 8:39 PM
44	The poor service, upkeep, and management of our Parks and Recreation department. It is a disgrace.	1/23/2025 8:08 PM
45	Improving educational opportunities for adults as well as for children.	1/21/2025 10:38 AM
46	Taxes are to high.	1/21/2025 5:51 AM
47	Alleviating taxes, increase state and federal funding for whatever qualifies in town (roads, Opera House, Historic downtown district revitalization, small and medium business federal and state grants, etc)	1/20/2025 8:49 PM
48	See staff have more training and resources they need	1/20/2025 7:15 PM
49	Traffic and speeding	1/20/2025 5:19 PM
50	Homeless	1/20/2025 4:56 PM
51	Support new housing development and invest if possible. Reinforce that the town does not have a parking problem. Better communication. Create a system that allows downtown residents to park in the downtown and not be towed.	1/20/2025 4:09 PM
52	DRUGS	1/20/2025 3:58 PM
53	People begging for money at street corner	1/20/2025 2:56 PM
54	homeless/drug addicts loitering in the downtown begging and harassing citizens.	1/20/2025 1:09 PM
55	Lack of zoning and long-term land use planning.	1/20/2025 10:23 AM
56	Lower taxes	1/20/2025 10:15 AM
57	Open drug use, homeless begging on our streets, and other unsavory acts.	1/20/2025 9:53 AM
58	I do not see any significant problems currently.	1/20/2025 9:38 AM
59	Roads and streets conditions.	1/20/2025 9:28 AM
60	Drugs and homeless knocking on my door asking for handouts!	1/20/2025 2:12 AM
61	The homeless	1/19/2025 9:07 PM
62	Encourage business growth	1/19/2025 8:46 PM
63	The people. Get the drugs off the streets and hold criminals accountable	1/19/2025 7:26 PM
64	More elderly affordable housing	1/19/2025 7:59 AM
65	Drugs and homelessness.	1/18/2025 4:04 PM

## Skowhegan Comprehensive Plan Survey

66	Upkeep of town roads, commit to building another bridge in town	1/18/2025 12:16 PM
67	Lowering property tax especially for people with no children. Saving the hydro dam and using that power generated for the town, especially when CMP has outages.	1/17/2025 11:39 PM
68	Wasteful spending and poor budgeting	1/17/2025 9:47 PM
69	I don't know, homelessness	1/17/2025 8:12 PM
70	Elderly homelessness	1/17/2025 5:45 PM
71	Everything including transparency	1/17/2025 12:56 PM
72	The roads, enforcement of our laws	1/17/2025 11:35 AM
73	Road improvement, cut unnecessary spending to lower taxes vs raising them every year. Consolidate the economic development groups, Skowhegan has too many levels and waste of \$\$.	1/17/2025 10:31 AM
74	More public transparency, less deceit, and shady dealings behind closed .	1/17/2025 5:14 AM
75	Loss of commercial tax base. We can't just keep increasing property taxes on residents who have no way to increase their income levels.	1/16/2025 11:04 PM
76	Road repair	1/16/2025 10:59 PM
77	Increase Fire and police protection	1/16/2025 10:45 PM
78	Most definitely the drugs, and the traffic situation.	1/16/2025 9:34 PM
79	Drugs	1/16/2025 9:29 PM
80	Homeless	1/16/2025 9:24 PM
81	Madison Ave, truckers using jakes in town, drivers revving their engines and speeding, crosswalk and pedestrian safety, etc. Address this issue by holding the chief accountable before someone gets killed in a 25mph zone.	1/16/2025 8:45 PM
82	See #39	1/16/2025 7:58 PM
83	Water quality	1/16/2025 6:46 PM
84	Homeless population and drug problem in town	1/16/2025 4:37 PM
85	Start hiring local businesses not out state businesses	1/16/2025 4:00 PM

## Q41 In a couple of sentences, describe the town in which you'd like to live.

Answered: 69 Skipped: 52

#	RESPONSES	DATE
1	A welcoming friendly place with nostalgia, history and character that makes one feel embraced by it's people, history and surroundings.	2/27/2025 10:09 PM
2	Good roads, good people good food can't find any of that here	2/26/2025 3:42 PM
3	I want to feel safe in my town.	2/26/2025 2:12 PM
4	I would like us to be known for being family friendly. We would love to see a bustling, vibrant downtown with clean, upscale shops. Income producing cultural attractions, entertainment, sports and community events. A community known for it's good schools and sense of belonging where everyone knows everyone.	2/26/2025 10:37 AM
5	Accessibility to everything from stores, recreation, food services, Governmental services right in our town	2/26/2025 9:25 AM
6	1975. 😊	2/26/2025 9:25 AM
7	Clean, bright and community support	2/26/2025 5:09 AM
8	I want to live in a place that offers enrichment but not at the expense of affordability. I want art and food options, and I also want a lot of affordable housing and accessible public assistance programs for people who struggle.	2/25/2025 11:21 PM
9	I like the town - always have. I think its grown alot since I was younger & I do miss seeing all the trees & wildlife	2/25/2025 9:34 PM
10	Small town growing to provide jobs and training to retain youth and attract professionals	2/25/2025 9:24 PM
11	No druggjes walking the streets with no traffic to deal with on a daily basis. I would also like the towns folk to be more friendly.	2/25/2025 8:33 PM
12	One that cares enough about the future to throw off the influence of one citizen ( YES, we all know who that is) and build a second bridge outside of downtown with a true way to go AROUND downtown for those that have no need or desire to go through it...the only path forward for Skowhegan	2/25/2025 8:03 PM
13	A quiet town that takes the voices of it's people seriously. A school system we can be proud of. Low crime, less drugs. Lower cost of living. Plenty of things for the younger population to do (basketball/tennis courts, baseball fields, parks).	2/25/2025 8:02 PM
14	Quaint	2/25/2025 8:00 PM
15	Tax payer friendly	2/25/2025 6:57 PM
16	A town which honors and preserves the natural beauty and provides a welcoming environment for all kinds of people the	2/25/2025 6:47 PM
17	Skowhegan	2/25/2025 5:16 PM
18	Whaite water park, Walking trails, cultural events at Opera House	2/25/2025 5:16 PM
19	A town that takes care of it's citizens.	2/25/2025 5:08 PM
20	Anywhere other than Skowhegan. If I had known that Skowhegan was such a dilapidated, filthy and drug ridden town, I would never have moved here. There are so many other clean and nice towns in Maine I could have chosen; a mistake that I am certainly ashamed of.	2/25/2025 3:56 PM
21	One that embraces its Native American heritage and doesn't let those that dont let people from outside of town decide who gets to celebrate it	2/25/2025 3:51 PM
22	I would like to see our town return to a friendlier atmosphere.	2/25/2025 3:12 PM

## Skowhegan Comprehensive Plan Survey

23	Someplace where our tax dollars are spent wisely on infrastructure, police officers who keep panhandlers off the streets, and selectmen who keep their egos in check and remember who they are serving.	2/25/2025 3:00 PM
24	I would like to live in a safe community. Safety is very important for me.	2/25/2025 2:54 PM
25	A safe town to walk, drive with speed limits enforced, sidewalks cleared and maintained in winter, adequate parking in the town center for access to shopping.	2/24/2025 9:57 PM
26	We are pleased to live in a small size city with a sense of growth in which we can take pride. Our generally supportive culture is a gift.	2/24/2025 9:01 PM
27	Local ownership of businesses and residential property, lots of non-motorized outdoor recreation, no blighted properties, festivals/concerts/outdoor events, arts and cultural opportunities, preservation/restoration of old buildings	2/24/2025 11:20 AM
28	A small pedestrian friendly town town with a bookstore and higher end shops and restaurants.	2/24/2025 9:44 AM
29	A downtown that's actually attractive to shop and spend time and money. A downtown that people aren't dreading driving through.	2/11/2025 10:06 PM
30	Low crime/intolerant of drugs	2/6/2025 8:14 AM
31	A lively town with locally owned shops and a thriving community.	2/4/2025 5:59 PM
32	A town exactly like Skowhegan with nicer sidewalks, a more vibrant downtown, and a recreation department that is administered more efficiently and with better decision making.	1/28/2025 11:20 AM
33	Peaceful, quiet, not a lot of action	1/27/2025 10:48 AM
34	Skowhegan, with bridge, traffic speed and laws enforced and slow growing tax bills.	1/27/2025 9:14 AM
35	small, friendly, easy to get around in by foot, bike or car. Safe. Lots of outdoor recreational opportunities	1/27/2025 8:58 AM
36	I want better aesthetics. And better businesses Something more like Camden.	1/23/2025 8:39 PM
37	A community that is clean, efficient, and friendly.	1/23/2025 8:08 PM
38	Small town with little to no crime, safe place to live. Keep Skowhegan, Skowhegan!	1/21/2025 5:51 AM
39	Safe, clean, diverse, friendly, with access to sustainable healthy food (which is now superb), some outdoors (we have great amount already), family friendly activities (like we have- bowling, trampoline, Rec center, etc), good schools	1/20/2025 8:49 PM
40	Rich history and great potential on the banks of the Kennebec	1/20/2025 7:15 PM
41	Quiet and very slow growth	1/20/2025 5:19 PM
42	My focus is the downtown. It's a beautiful area with a ton of potential and can help to set the town apart from others. It'd be great to see the buildings fully occupied and being used to their highest potential use. Close Water street to vehicles and route traffic via Madison Ave and commercial street making the downtown more of an open market. Exceptions can be made for delivery vehicles. There are plenty of places around the world that operate this way. I envision people living downtown, restaurants, outdoor activities and just a lively scene. Photos from the past show pedestrians walking up and down the downtown village. We can make this happen again.	1/20/2025 4:09 PM
43	This town.	1/20/2025 3:58 PM
44	I'd like to live in an attractive town that is safe, with a well-maintained infrastructure, good public services and excellent schools, that are staffed by professionals who are paid well enough to compete for the most competent employees. This ideal town will have a long-range plan based on proven urban planning policies that encourage safe and lively downtowns, transportation safety and efficiency and address kind-term development issues related to climate change and quality of life.	1/20/2025 10:23 AM
45	More rural outside 54 district	1/20/2025 10:15 AM
46	One in which you would not feel you have to lock up valuables in your own yard.	1/20/2025 9:53 AM
47	I wish to live in a smaller town where neighbors know each other and want to work together to	1/20/2025 9:38 AM



## Skowhegan Comprehensive Plan Survey

	maintain a pleasant environment to live, work and play.	
48	Drugfree, clean, quiet.	1/20/2025 9:28 AM
49	I'd like less traffic going through Main St to go North in summer.	1/20/2025 2:12 AM
50	I'd like to see Skowhegan to be a community where you can work hard and have a nice life. It's totally unaffordable.	1/19/2025 8:46 PM
51	Small Maine living. Farmers prospering and being able to provide affordable fresh food for sale to the community	1/19/2025 7:26 PM
52	Less speeding, less drugs, small town atmosphere, lots of town activities, things for kids to do	1/19/2025 7:59 AM
53	It would be wonderful if we had more solid families again. Time has not been good to the family life. Children need a mom and dad that can help them grow into good adults.	1/18/2025 4:04 PM
54	When roads are improved, Skowhegan is a pretty nice to live!	1/18/2025 12:16 PM
55	I've pretty much found it in Skowhegan.	1/17/2025 11:39 PM
56	I moved here because I like the sleepy old fashioned little town that was safe but still had the amenities we needed	1/17/2025 9:47 PM
57	Maintained town with main attractions to draw people in to support future development.	1/17/2025 8:12 PM
58	Safe trees, walkable sidewalks and reliable public transportation. More jobs for the elderly population. Modern animal shelter and senior center.	1/17/2025 5:45 PM
59	Waterville downtown, but live i would live in Pittsfield. Take Waterville downtown and put it in Pittsfield it would be a great town. Skowhegan could do the same things.	1/17/2025 12:56 PM
60	Some where that has compassion for the poor and also has safer roads	1/17/2025 11:35 AM
61	A town with fiscally responsible leaders that have the courage to make tough decisions, not just keep all as "business as usual".	1/17/2025 10:31 AM
62	Clean and inviting with nice restaurants and activities to draw in good people. Accountability and law enforcement to discourage bad people.	1/17/2025 5:14 AM
63	Skowhegan pre-2007. Nothing's been the same. Small business can't cut it in the techno corporate oligarchy world of today.	1/16/2025 11:04 PM
64	We moved from North Carolina to skowhegan on a whim. We feel like we made the right decision every day.	1/16/2025 10:59 PM
65	I think we have to figure out exactly what town we want to be. I used to see this skow Vegas stuff everywhere, I don't think that's what Skowhegan wants to be. I want to see more Farmers market bread Fair brewfest I think we can do that if we clean up the town. We are already a destination for things like that, but nobody wants to come to the park and find needles by their bench 😞	1/16/2025 9:34 PM
66	Not having people that bitch and complain about things that don't directly affect them and saying that we need to watch our spending when it's only a few extra dollars.	1/16/2025 9:24 PM
67	Peaceful and inviting is all I want	1/16/2025 8:45 PM
68	Id like to live in a town where it's residents are the single greatest asset and efforts to improve quality of life is in focus	1/16/2025 7:58 PM
69	Solon	1/16/2025 4:00 PM

## Q42 What is something you appreciate in our community today that exists thanks to the decisions and efforts of people who lived here more than 10 years ago?

Answered: 70   Skipped: 51

#	RESPONSES	DATE
1	The Indian, library, fair, and movie theater.	2/27/2025 10:09 PM
2	Nothing	2/26/2025 3:42 PM
3	Skowhegan Outdoors. Move More Kids Program.	2/26/2025 10:37 AM
4	Sports fields, recreational areas, picnic area/ park.	2/26/2025 9:25 AM
5	Restored store fronts down town.	2/26/2025 9:25 AM
6	Community events	2/26/2025 7:28 AM
7	The community support	2/26/2025 5:09 AM
8	All the cool art - statues (except for the big statue near Cumby's that one can go), murals, etc..	2/25/2025 11:21 PM
9	Cute businesses	2/25/2025 10:40 PM
10	That they help one another. I love how the food pantry helps the community	2/25/2025 9:34 PM
11	Coburn Park. Rec Dept	2/25/2025 9:24 PM
12	The making of a combined EMS, police and fire house.	2/25/2025 8:33 PM
13	.....Skowhegan has not been very forward thinking	2/25/2025 8:03 PM
14	I've never been, but the public library I've heard is an amazing place and I would someday like to bring my own children there to check it out. The Skowhegan State, as overpriced as it is, brings in a ton of money to the town and is very beneficial.	2/25/2025 8:02 PM
15	Keeping small businesses alive	2/25/2025 8:00 PM
16	Community center	2/25/2025 6:57 PM
17	The renovations and improvements downtown, grist mill, dedication of green spaces	2/25/2025 6:47 PM
18	Our beautiful downtown	2/25/2025 5:16 PM
19	Main Street Skowhegan	2/25/2025 5:16 PM
20	The movie theater	2/25/2025 5:08 PM
21	Nothing stands out to me. I haven't seen anything in the past 6 years that has improved the community at all. The new fire/police building is a waste of valuable resources and is the ugliest emergency services building I have ever seen. It looks like a diesel repair shop. The architects that designed the building missed the mark completely. The town of Oakland, for example, has a really beautiful fire station. Let's not forget that the building is also in the wrong location to adequately serve the community. The town screwed up significantly when it let the citizens vote on the location of the new emergency services building. It should never have been placed on the ballot.	2/25/2025 3:56 PM
22	The ultra wide sidewalks	2/25/2025 3:51 PM
23	The wonderful library, movie theater and Coburn park.	2/25/2025 3:00 PM
24	Conservation of lands for public use.	2/24/2025 9:57 PM
25	The river project. The growth of some small restaurants.	2/24/2025 9:01 PM

## Skowhegan Comprehensive Plan Survey

26	Coburn park, Somerset Woods Trustees land, protection of the shores of the Kennebec from encroachment and development	2/24/2025 11:20 AM
27	The existing rec path and conservation areas.	2/24/2025 9:44 AM
28	Nothing. I feel positive changes have just recently started happening.	2/4/2025 5:59 PM
29	Skowhegan fair grounds	1/30/2025 2:52 PM
30	The decision to partner with Main Street Skowhegan.	1/28/2025 11:20 AM
31	Appreciate all the improvements made to Skowhegan.	1/27/2025 9:14 AM
32	Leaf and brush pickup services	1/27/2025 8:52 AM
33	The Carl Wright complex	1/23/2025 8:39 PM
34	The decision to build our community center.	1/23/2025 8:08 PM
35	The park on the corner of the rotary that was previously a dilapidated old building, and the bustling farmers market!!	1/21/2025 11:00 AM
36	Maine Grains!	1/21/2025 10:38 AM
37	Nothing was a better place to live 20 plus years ago.	1/21/2025 5:51 AM
38	Farms, farmers market, Millers table and Mill, much more beautiful downtown, LGRP, SWT, renovated library and ever increasing clubs and activities, paved park	1/20/2025 8:49 PM
39	The efforts of Main Street and some key volunteers.	1/20/2025 7:15 PM
40	nothing	1/20/2025 5:19 PM
41	Local businesses such as Maine Grains, The Bankery, The Kneading Conference and more. Local businesses and the people who work in them make the town worth living in, investing in and encourages tourists to visit.	1/20/2025 4:09 PM
42	Rec. Department	1/20/2025 3:58 PM
43	I have been here for 22 years and truly like the community support for family activities	1/20/2025 2:56 PM
44	We are fortunate to have employers like SAPPI and New Balance in town. We are fortunate to have a community center/rec. department like we do.	1/20/2025 1:09 PM
45	Coburn Park is a real gem that deserves more budget support from the town.	1/20/2025 10:23 AM
46	.none	1/20/2025 10:15 AM
47	The small businesses that still survive. The willingness of people to support local business.	1/20/2025 9:53 AM
48	I enjoy Coburn Park and also the trails about town.	1/20/2025 9:38 AM
49	History	1/20/2025 2:12 AM
50	New stores	1/19/2025 9:07 PM
51	0	1/19/2025 8:46 PM
52	The support of local small businesses. The farmers market	1/19/2025 7:26 PM
53	Skowhegan Fair	1/19/2025 7:59 AM
54	Many families have been here for years and have made the town a nice place to live. The society today has caused a lot of that to be lost.	1/18/2025 4:04 PM
55	Shopping options and commitment of selectmen to the town	1/18/2025 12:16 PM
56	My family loves exploring the walking trails, especially the Debe River Walking trail, however, again with the drug issues around town I often don't feel safe going alone with my two children.	1/18/2025 9:07 AM
57	Having the Walmart and Hannaford close by is handy. Also Dollar Tree, Tractor Supply, Hammond and True Value close by. At the same time keeping the small town charm.	1/17/2025 11:39 PM
58	The downtown area looks a little bit more well-kept than it did 20 years ago	1/17/2025 9:47 PM

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59	Coburn woods and library support	1/17/2025 8:12 PM
60	Library services.	1/17/2025 5:45 PM
61	Not sure anymore	1/17/2025 12:56 PM
62	The stores that exist	1/17/2025 11:35 AM
63	Unknown	1/17/2025 10:31 AM
64	Not sure. The Walmart deal was bad for our town. People like                      did our town a disservice	1/17/2025 5:14 AM
65	The trail systems, continued upgrades at lake George, the rec department & center, the efforts of main Street skowhegan (despite personal thoughts on run of river, without there efforts nothing would be happening such as these surveys and work downtown)	1/16/2025 11:04 PM
66	That's hard to comment on.	1/16/2025 10:59 PM
67	Strand theatre, community center, trying to make the down town better. Never should have allowed Walmart	1/16/2025 9:24 PM
68	Existing rec center. Weston dam/station. Sappibuil	1/16/2025 7:58 PM
69	Town hall staff always very knowledgeable and helpful	1/16/2025 6:46 PM
70	The town has gone worse now then it was 10 yrs ago	1/16/2025 4:00 PM

## Q43 What might we choose to do today that will be appreciated by the people who live in Skowhegan 10 or more years from now?

Answered: 73   Skipped: 48

#	RESPONSES	DATE
1	Work to manage addiction issues providing access to needed support.	2/27/2025 10:09 PM
2	A second bridge	2/26/2025 3:42 PM
3	Get the homeless and drugs under control so we are safer	2/26/2025 2:12 PM
4	Clean up downtown storefronts and make them uniform with beautiful New England style signage.	2/26/2025 10:37 AM
5	Keep Coburn park clean, add foliage, perennials ect. More Events at the park with more seating.	2/26/2025 9:25 AM
6	Preservation of historical buildings	2/26/2025 9:25 AM
7	New bridge construction	2/26/2025 7:28 AM
8	Clean up the drugs	2/26/2025 5:09 AM
9	Keep it/Make it affordable. Invest in your snow removal equipment so the sidewalks remain accessible.. etc.	2/25/2025 11:21 PM
10	More accessible to enjoy outdoors- walking bridge and debe trail etc.	2/25/2025 10:40 PM
11	Taxes	2/25/2025 9:36 PM
12	We need to bring back mills - factorys were we make our own products here locally. This would gve people more jobs	2/25/2025 9:34 PM
13	Attract business	2/25/2025 9:24 PM
14	Build a second bridge	2/25/2025 8:33 PM
15	A second bridge	2/25/2025 8:03 PM
16	Lower the crime and cost of taxes so people that have lived here their entire lives can continue to live here happily for many years to come.	2/25/2025 8:02 PM
17	Upping the fight on drugs	2/25/2025 8:00 PM
18	Lower taxes	2/25/2025 6:57 PM
19	Public assess to clean and safe outdoor areas	2/25/2025 6:47 PM
20	More restaurants, better shopping	2/25/2025 5:16 PM
21	White water park	2/25/2025 5:16 PM
22	Run of River	2/25/2025 5:08 PM
23	Drastically reduce the town's budget (the town can operate with a lot less); change the town manager to an elected position so the residents can elect the town manager; replace all of the selectmen as they are completely useless; build a second bridge; provide a fire station on the other side of the river; upgrade the hideous sidewalks and crosswalks in the downtown area; remove the graffiti from the buildings located in the downtown area as it does nothing to improve the town's appearance; get rid of the panhandlers.	2/25/2025 3:56 PM
24	Fix the big Native American statue	2/25/2025 3:51 PM
25	Development of outdoor recreation spaces- we have the resources, let's use them! "Depression hates a moving target"	2/25/2025 3:11 PM

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26	Build that bridge and reroute the pulp trucks away from the rotary.	2/25/2025 3:00 PM
27	Fix the pot holes in the roads 😊	2/25/2025 2:54 PM
28	Conservation of water access and lands for recreation.	2/24/2025 9:57 PM
29	Continued growth and focus on outside activities	2/24/2025 9:01 PM
30	Protect the river, protect the land, keep absentee-owned businesses and property owners out	2/24/2025 11:20 AM
31	2nd bridge.	2/11/2025 10:06 PM
32	Finding uses for all the abandoned spaces in downtown. I feel there are many empty rooms/spaces that could be put to great use, like housing or new businesses.	2/4/2025 5:59 PM
33	Athletic fields.	1/30/2025 2:52 PM
34	Select board member Lambke pointed out that in order to properly install and maintain an artificial turf field it would require an endowment of \$1.5 million. We cannot afford to further pursue such a facility. We need to take a long hard look at the performance of our recreation department.	1/28/2025 11:20 AM
35	Leave the wildlife alone. No more trails	1/27/2025 10:48 AM
36	Another bridge	1/27/2025 9:14 AM
37	Investing in parks, open green spaces, and landscaping that invites people to enjoy	1/27/2025 8:58 AM
38	more elderly services	1/27/2025 8:52 AM
39	Have a rec center that is better managed for our youth	1/23/2025 8:39 PM
40	RECLAIM THE SKATING RINK AT THE FAIRGROUNDS. SHOULD NEVER HAVE BEEN MOVED. MORE OVERSIGHT OF OUR PARKS AND RECREATION.	1/23/2025 8:08 PM
41	Investing in the infrastructure for people to enjoy walking around our downtown. Unpave some parking lots and plant more trees!	1/21/2025 11:00 AM
42	Keep it a small family town, where you can walk around without danger.	1/21/2025 5:51 AM
43	Maintain what we have, it is sad to see Debe park now, build 2nd bridge, improve access and maintain Philbrick trails, make town walkable and bicycle-friendly	1/20/2025 8:49 PM
44	Investing in youth.	1/20/2025 7:15 PM
45	Stop the river park	1/20/2025 5:19 PM
46	Invest in the town. Encourage employers to provide living wage jobs. Invest in creating new housing and actively support developers. This will help to increase the tax base and provide additional services to the community. The town should actively be working towards not being so reliant on Sappis tax base. Also make the decision to not encourage chain businesses. Instead actively support local.	1/20/2025 4:09 PM
47	State of the art outdoor recreation facility	1/20/2025 3:58 PM
48	Keep family a priority , provide place for family to enjoy	1/20/2025 2:56 PM
49	Invest in a multiuse field with an artificial surface at the community center and fund its ongoing maintenance.	1/20/2025 1:09 PM
50	Uncontrolled commercial truck traffic is destroying the historic downtown. An effective solution to that problem would be transformative.	1/20/2025 10:23 AM
51	Stop spending	1/20/2025 10:15 AM
52	Enforce actions that make people keep premises clean and safe.	1/20/2025 9:53 AM
53	Uncertain	1/20/2025 9:38 AM
54	Ending white water rafting efforts.	1/20/2025 9:28 AM
55	Bridge North that avoids Main Street and INCREASING police presence. Need a K9 and more officers patrolling so the drug users aren't taking over	1/20/2025 2:12 AM

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56	Return to smaller neighborhood schools.	1/19/2025 8:46 PM
57	Continuing to invest in small businesses and farmers	1/19/2025 7:26 PM
58	Clean out the drugs, rent control board, and more elderly housing	1/19/2025 7:59 AM
59	Stop trying to make our town over, try to bring back a more friendly community. Die hard Skowhegan people will never forget how the woke society forced the town to take away our Indian name. It was wrong then and it's wrong now. Just stop and remember the elders that made this town what it is today.	1/18/2025 4:04 PM
60	Build another bridge in town to ease traffic flow	1/18/2025 12:16 PM
61	Hopefully keeping the character the same but making necessary improvements and upgrades. Not allowing an excess of solar farms in the township area.	1/17/2025 11:39 PM
62	Stop trying to turn our little town into a big sprawling Big Town	1/17/2025 9:47 PM
63	Grow the area with businesses and restaurants	1/17/2025 8:12 PM
64	Yoga at the library.	1/17/2025 5:45 PM
65	Creating housing options	1/17/2025 11:35 AM
66	A large daycare and elder daycare combined. Ensure enough farmland to raise real food.	1/17/2025 10:31 AM
67	Be open and transparent in all public dealings. Improve ratio for tax dollars paid to service provided. Better value for tax dollars.	1/17/2025 5:14 AM
68	Improve the downtown in regards to quality of retail options, make the town fully walkable, clean up the drug problem & bring some forms of gainfulemployment for the masses.	1/16/2025 11:04 PM
69	Keeping the town up with the times and keeping a sense of historical feel. That small town feel while being modern.	1/16/2025 10:59 PM
70	Get the projects that have been started completed and listen to the people that are involved day to day instead of people that think they know what is best.	1/16/2025 9:24 PM
71	Address the issues on Madison ave	1/16/2025 8:45 PM
72	Find a way to remove the traffic bottlenecks downtown	1/16/2025 7:58 PM
73	2nd river bridge downtown	1/16/2025 6:46 PM

## Q44 Please include any thoughts or comments.

Answered: 37   Skipped: 84

#	RESPONSES	DATE
1	I cringe when telling people where we live and brace for their reaction. I hate that we are known for our crime, lack of safety, and smelly air. I love our home and know it could be so much more. I see it in my mi d's eye.	2/26/2025 10:37 AM
2	Love the murals, art ect.	2/26/2025 9:25 AM
3	Please keep the population in mind when taking on debt.	2/26/2025 9:25 AM
4	Limit spending. Lower taxes	2/25/2025 9:24 PM
5	For the love of all things holy, please build the bridge. If you build it they will come	2/25/2025 8:33 PM
6	Did I mention a second bridge.....	2/25/2025 8:03 PM
7	Skowhegan has made great strides, especially to renovate existing brick buildings and keep green spaces safe and maintained. All municipal services and personnel are excellent.	2/25/2025 6:47 PM
8	I had high hopes when I moved to Skowhegan. Yet, I have been disappointed ever since I moved here and cannot wait to leave.	2/25/2025 3:56 PM
9	Hope that the statue gets fixed	2/25/2025 3:51 PM
10	My main purpose for filling this out was to say how upset I am that you're getting rid of the drive-in theater, to build a mobile home community. That makes me want to move. Unfortunately. And I was very happy here. But this is TERRIBLE news.	2/25/2025 2:54 PM
11	The tax assessments, disregarding the large SUCCESSFUL retail/industrial (NEW Balance and SAPPI)) is very discouraging!! Wrong and and an affront to the tax payers and retired residents who built this town.	2/24/2025 9:57 PM
12	Thanks for doing this work.	2/24/2025 9:01 PM
13	Skowhegan is a jewel in Maine because of its character and potential. Many places in Maine are sad and in decline. We must recognize the value of skowhegan's character and feel and not squander it away .... once we let it go, we will never get it back.	2/24/2025 11:20 AM
14	Downtown is a terrible place to have to drive through. We drive the extra miles to shop in Waterville because we loath driving through the town of Skowhegan.	2/11/2025 10:06 PM
15	I believe we need to reassess our public school system. I have been disappointed with our school for a very long time and feel we are letting down our youth. We need to be changing our town for them and not for us. Thank you.	2/4/2025 5:59 PM
16	Please consider doing more surveys that focus on the performance of each department in town. Surveys of this nature are far too general.	1/28/2025 11:20 AM
17	With the economy we have I think spending should be a large concern for the coming years.	1/27/2025 9:14 AM
18	I don't like the superintendent or other leaders of the high school. I don't feel the leadership of the high school has the kids best interest at heart. They don't allow big sponsorships for the sports teams to help with costs. They've turned down money from New Balance, Franklin Savings, and Hammond Lumber just to name a few simply bc they wanted their names displayed.	1/23/2025 8:39 PM
19	Commission a bi-annual survey for every department in town government.	1/23/2025 8:08 PM
20	Keep taxes low and keep the town small and safe,	1/21/2025 5:51 AM
21	Work with MSAD 54 toward helping people find employment, for example in New Balance, provide transportation there with KVCAP if needed. Encourage affordable housing, especially multifamily apartments/condo units. We need more businesses to pay taxes to town, and more	1/20/2025 8:49 PM



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working citizens. Decrease tax burden with bringing state and federal funding whenever possible.

22	Skowhegan is just seedy	1/20/2025 5:19 PM
23	Skowhegan has a ton of potential. Please don't squander it.	1/20/2025 4:09 PM
24	I moved here from Florida 22 years ago and never had a single regrets , the feeling of a small community and the wonderful people is still a daily blessing	1/20/2025 2:56 PM
25	Providing a second downtown bridge for more trucks to use will make the historic town center even more unlivable than it already is.	1/20/2025 10:23 AM
26	Lower taxes people have no kids	1/20/2025 10:15 AM
27	Revise tax statutes so that people who take care of properties do not get punished with higher tax rates while those who let property get run down get incentivized with lower taxes. That's a good way to make the whole town become run down. Every time someone makes improvements to their property the town immediately pounces with higher taxes. Many people are talking of selling and leaving because of this inequity. If you want a tourist economy you need to incentivize people to improve property not punish them for it. Tourists don't want to come to a run down mess of a town.	1/20/2025 9:53 AM
28	Bought house here just under 3 years ago and considering selling due to drug presence. Has gotten a bit better directly surrounding me, but still scary	1/20/2025 2:12 AM
29	Skowhegan has always lived the state motto The Way Life Should Be. Skowhegan is not a big city. If people want city life move to one don't move it here.	1/19/2025 7:26 PM
30	We don't need another bridge we need a bypass so we don't get all the traffic downtown. There is no need for all those log trucks and big tractor trailers to be trying to navigate the downtown area on a daily basis it's not safe or convenient for anyone	1/17/2025 9:47 PM
31	I love Skowhegan but the mental health issues that are ignored are creating an unsafe environment	1/17/2025 11:35 AM
32	I hope other means of input will happen for this and not just a survey that only a few people complete. Focus group conversations should happen with elderly, youth, the business community etc.	1/17/2025 10:31 AM
33	Be ethical and make good decisions in the interests of the majority.	1/17/2025 5:14 AM
34	I'd love to join some think tanks/committees regarding some of this if I have time. Born here, lived here majority of my life in same house even.	1/16/2025 11:04 PM
35	Keep the town positive and peaceful	1/16/2025 10:59 PM
36	Address the issues on Madison Ave	1/16/2025 8:45 PM
37	Stop focusing on 'downtown' and start focusing on THE town! Everyone pays taxes, not just those on Water Street	1/16/2025 7:58 PM

Road Name	Sec	From	To	Surface	Length	Importance	Traffic	Surface	Drainage
Adams Street		North Avenue	Dawes Street	Paved	0.18	low	low	Routine-2	Good-2
Alder Street		West Front Street	Turner Avenue	Paved	0.33	low	low	Preventive-2	Good-2
Ash Street		Mount Pleasant Ave	Milburn Street	Paved	0.09	low	low	No Maint-2	Good-2
Avore Street		Waterville Road	Railroad Street	Paved	0.08	low	low	Routine-2	Good-2
Back Road	1	Bigelow Hill Road	Stevens Road	Paved	1.18	medium	medium	No Maint-6	Good-6
Back Road	2	Stevens Road	Rowe Road	Paved	1	medium	medium	No Maint-6	Good-6
Back Road	3	Rowe Road	Glen View Drive	Paved	1	medium	medium	No Maint-6	Good-6
Back Road	4	Glen View Drive	Town Line	Paved	1	medium	medium	No Maint-6	Good-6
Bailey Street		Willow Street	End	Paved	0.11	low	low	No Maint-2	Good-2
Beauford Street		St. Marks Street	Dore Street	Paved	0.14	low	low	No Maint-2	Good-2
Beech Street		Madison Avenue	Russell Road	Paved	0.34	medium	medium	No Maint-6	Good-6
Bennett Ave		Pleasant Street	Spring Street	Paved	0.24	medium	medium	No Maint-6	Good-6
Bigelow Hill Road	1	Back Road	1.2	Paved	1.2	medium	medium	Preventive-6	Good-6
Bigelow Hill Road	2	1.2	2.4	Paved	1.2	medium	medium	Preventive-6	Good-6
Bigelow Hill Road	3	2.4	3.6	Paved	1.2	medium	medium	No Maint-6	Good-6
Bigelow Hill Road	4	3.6	4.7	Paved	1.1	medium	medium	No Maint-6	Good-6
Blair Street		St. Marks Street	Dore Street	Paved	0.13	low	low	No Maint-2	Good-2
Bloomfield Street		Main Street	McClellan Street	Paved	0.19	low-med	low-med	No Maint-4	Good-4
Bridge Street		Alder Street	Turner Avenue	Paved	0.07	low	low	Reconstruct-2	Good-2
Bungalow Street		Madison Avenue	End	Paved	0.09	low	low	Preventive-2	Good-2
Burrill Hill Road		Bigelow Hill Road	End of road	Paved	0.48	low	low-med	Routine-3	Good-3
Bush Street		Water Street	East Leavitt Street	Paved	0.12	low	low	No Maint-2	Good-2
Cardinal Street		Water Street	Heselton Street	Paved	0.09	low-med	low-med	Preventive-4	Good-4
Carpenter Street		Summer Street	Coburn Avenue	Paved	0.05	low	low	Preventive-2	Good-2
Cedar Street		Mount Pleasant Ave	Water Street	Paved	0.12	medium	low-med	No Maint-5	Good-5
Cemetery Road		Waterville Road	End of road	Gravel	0.16	low	low	Routine-2	Good-2

Road Name	Sec	From	To	Surface	Length	Importance	Traffic	Surface	Drainage
Center Street		Mount Pleasant Ave	Milburn Street	Paved	0.08	low	low	No Maint-2	Good-2
Chamberlain Street		Waterville Road	Pooler Avenue	Paved	0.24	low	low	Preventive-2	Good-2
Chandler Street		Madison Avenue	North Avenue	Paved	0.29	low-med	medium	No Maint-5	Good-5
Cherry Street		So. Factory Street	End of street	Gravel	0.02	low	low	Routine-2	Good-2
Chestnut Street		North Avenue	School Street	Paved	0.17	medium	low-med	Preventive-5	Good-5
Cleveland Street		Greenwood Avenue	Madison Avenue	Paved	0.12	low-med	medium	No Maint-5	Good-5
Coburn Avenue		Pleasant Street	End	Paved	0.49	low	low	Preventive-2	Good-2
Cote Street		St. Marks Street	Dore Street	Paved	0.13	low	low	Preventive-2	Good-2
Court Street		Water Street	Winter Street	Paved	0.33	medium	medium	Routine-6	Good-6
Cowette Street		North Avenue	Greenwood Avenue	Paved	0.151	low-med	low-med	No Maint-4	Good-4
Cresent Drive		Palmer Road	Palmer Road	Paved	0.5	low	low	Reconstruct-2	Poor-2
Cross Street		Court Street	North Avenue	Paved	0.093	low	low	No Maint-2	Good-2
Dane Avenue		Jewett Street	Prospect Street	Paved	0.25	low	low	Preventive-2	Good-2
Dartmouth Street		Waterville Road	End	Paved	0.3	low	low	No Maint-2	Good-2
Dawes Street		North Avenue	End	Paved	0.3	low	low	Preventive-2	Good-2
Dennis Street		Waterville Road	Prescelly Drive	Paved	0.25	low-med	low-med	No Maint-4	Good-4
Dickey Street		Patrick Street	Prescelly Drive	Paved	0.12	low	low	No Maint-2	Good-2
Dinsmore Street		Water Street	End	Paved	0.04	low	low	No Maint-2	Good-2
Dodge Court		Madison Avenue	End	Gravel	0.02	low	low	Routine-2	Good-2
Dominic Street		Dickey Street	Dennis Street	Paved	0.14	low	low	No Maint-2	Good-2
Dore Street		Parlin Street	St. James Street	Paved	0.13	low	low	No Maint-2	Good-2
Dr. Mann Road		North Avenue	Malbon's Mills Rd	Paved	0.72	medium	medium	No Maint-6	Good-6
Dudley Corner Road		Notch Road	Route 2	Paved	1.73	low	low	No Maint-2	Good-2
Dyer Street		Madison Avenue	North Avenue	Paved	0.22	low-med	low-med	No Maint-4	Good-4
East Chandler		North Avenue	End	Paved	0.07	low	low	Routine-2	Good-2
East Dyer Street		North Avenue	School Street	Paved	0.14	low	low	Routine-2	Good-2

Road Name	Sec	From	To	Surface	Length	Importance	Traffic	Surface	Drainage
East Leavitt Street		North Avenue	Cardinal Street	Paved	0.22	low-med	low	No Maint-3	Good-3
East Madison Road		Madison Avenue	Town Line	Paved	0.29	low-med	low-med	No Maint-4	Good-4
East Maple Street		North Avenue	End	Paved	0.17	low-med	low-med	No Maint-4	Good-4
East Ridge Road	1	Route 2	1.5 miles	Paved	1.5	medium	medium	Routine-6	Good-6
East Ridge Road	2	1.5	2.96	Paved	1.46	medium	medium	Routine-6	Good-6
East River Road	1	Route 2	1.14	Paved	1.14	med-high	medium	No Maint-7	Good-7
East River Road	2	1.14	2.28	Paved	1.14	medium	medium	No Maint-6	Good-6
East River Road	3	2.28	3.42	Paved	1.14	medium	medium	No Maint-6	Good-6
East River Road	4	3.42	4.56	Paved	1.14	medium	medium	No Maint-6	Good-6
East River Road	5	4.56	5.73	Paved	1.17	medium	medium	No Maint-6	Good-6
East Street		North Avenue	End	Paved	0.1	medium	low-med	No Maint-5	Good-5
Eaton Mountain Road		Route 2	East River Road	Paved	1.5	medium	medium	Preventive-6	Good-6
Eaton Mountain Road		1.5	2.96	Paved	1.4	medium	medium	Preventive-6	Good-6
Edward Court		North Avenue	End	Paved	0.04	low	low	Reconstruct-2	Good-2
Elm Street		Madison Avenue	Pleasant Street	Paved	0.31	low-med	medium	Preventive-5	Good-5
Fairview Avenue		Main Street	Compact Line	Paved	1.66	med-high	med-high	No Maint-8	Good-8
Forest Green St		North Avenue	Steward Hill Road	Paved	0.082	low	low	No Maint-2	Good-2
Free Street		Hathaway Street	Waterville Road	Paved	0.13	low	low	Preventive-2	Good-2
French Street		Waterville Road	Cedar Street	Paved	0.27	low	low	Preventive-2	Good-2
Gem Street		North Avenue	Greenwood Avenue	Paved	0.21	low-med	low-med	No Maint-4	Good-4
Gilblair Street		Oak Street	End of street	Gravel	0.09	low	low	Routine-2	Good-2
Glen View Drive		Rowe Road	Back Road	Paved	1.12	low	low	Preventive-2	Good-2
Grassland Lane		Malbon's Mills Rd	End of road	Gravel	0.2	low	low	Routine-2	Good-2
Green Street		Willow Street	Main Street	Paved	0.19	low	low	No Maint-2	Good-2
Greenwood Avenue		Cleveland Street	Jewett Street	Paved	0.31	low-med	low-med	No Maint-4	Good-4
Hanover Street		Madison Avenue	Russell Road	Paved	0.32	low-med	low-med	Preventive-4	Good-4

Road Name	Sec	From	To	Surface	Length	Importance	Traffic	Surface	Drainage
Harding Street		St. Marks Street	Dore Street	Paved	0.14	low	low	Preventive-2	Good-2
Hathway Street		Fairview Avenue	So. Factory Street	Paved	0.36	low-med	low-med	No Maint-4	Good-4
Heather Drive		Main Street	Fairview Avenue	Paved	0.04	low	low	No Maint-2	Good-2
Heselton Street		North Avenue	Route 2	Paved	0.51	medium	medium	No Maint-6	Good-6
High Street		Route 2	Madison Avenue	Paved	0.31	high	high	No Maint-10	Good-10
Hilton Hill Road		Route 150	End	Paved	0.54	low	low	Routine-2	Good-2
Industrial Park Road		Steward Hill Road	Steward Hill Road	Paved	0.34	low-med	low-med	No Maint-4	Good-4
Island Avenue		Water Street	Main Street	Paved	0.252	high	high	No Maint-10	Good-10
Jackson Street		Pooler Avenue	So. Factory Street	Paved	0.11	low	low	Preventive-2	Good-2
Jason Street		Dr. Mann Road	Josie Street	Paved	0.04	low	low	Preventive-2	Good-2
Jewett Street		North Avenue	Madison Avenue	Paved	0.223	high	high	No Maint-10	Good-10
Jimmy Street		Dr. Mann Road	Josie Street	Paved	0.04	low	low	No Maint-2	Good-2
Jones Street		Fairview Avenue	So. Factory Street	Paved	0.18	low-med	low-med	No Maint-4	Good-4
Josie Street		Jimmy Street	Jason Street	Paved	0.18	low	low	Preventive-2	Good-2
Joyce Street		Milburn Street	End	Paved	0.12	low-med	low	No Maint-3	Good-3
Judkins Court		Cross Street	High Street	Paved	0.05	low	low-med	No Maint-3	Good-3
Kennebec Street		Water Street	End of street	Paved	0.04	low	low	Rehabilitate-2	Good-2
Lambert Road		Route 2	End	Paved	0.56	low	low-med	Preventive-3	Good-3
Land Street		Union Street	Pooler Avenue	Gravel	0.19	low	low	Routine-2	Good-2
Landfill Road		Stewart Hill Rd	End of road	Paved	0.25	medium	low-med	No Maint-5	Good-5
Larone Road		Bigelow Hill Road	End of road	Gravel	0.2	low	low	Routine-2	Good-2
Lawton Street		North Avenue	Court Street	Paved	0.13	low-med	low	No Maint-3	Good-3
Leavitt Street		Madison Avenue	North Avenue	Paved	0.2	low	low-med	Preventive-3	Good-3
Lessor Street		North Avenue	Parlin Street	Paved	0.05	low	low	Preventive-2	Good-2
Locust Street		Madison Avenue	Greenwood Avenue	Paved	0.11	low-med	low-med	Routine-4	Good-4
Madison Avenue		Pleasant Street	Compact Line	Paved	1.76	low	low	Rehabilitate-2	Good-2

Road Name	Sec	From	To	Surface	Length	Importance	Traffic	Surface	Drainage
Main Street		Waterville Road	Bigelow Hill Road	Paved	0.79	low-med	low-med	No Maint-4	Good-4
Malbon's Mills Rd		Route 2	Compact line	Paved	1.25	low	med-high	No Maint-5	Good-5
Maple Street		Madison Avenue	North Avenue	Paved	0.21	low	low	Preventive-2	Good-2
Mary Street		Norridgewock Ave	End of street	Paved	0.11	low	low	Preventive-2	Good-2
McClellan Street		West Front Street	Bloomfield Street	Paved	0.35	low-med	low-med	No Maint-4	Good-4
Meadowview Drive		West Front Street	End of street	Paved	0.07	low-med	low	Routine-3	Good-3
Mechanic Street		Waterville Road	Hathaway Street	Paved	0.19	low	low	Preventive-2	Good-2
Merrill Street		Russell Road	End of street	Paved	0.18	low	low	Rehabilitate-2	Good-2
Micheal Street		Waterville Road	Dennis Street	Paved	0.25	low	low	No Maint-2	Good-2
Milburn Street		Joyce Street	Oak Street	Paved	0.29	low-med	low	No Maint-3	Good-3
Mill Street		Cedar Street	End of street	Paved	0.12	medium	low	No Maint-4	Good-4
Mitchell Street		Hathaway Street	End of street	Paved	0.1	low	low	Preventive-2	Poor-2
Molunkus Road		North Avenue	Town Line	Paved	0.7	low-med	low-med	Preventive-4	Good-4
Moody Street		Smith Street	Hanover Street	Paved	0.08	low	low	Rehabilitate-2	Good-2
Mount Pleasant Ave		Cedar Street	Joyce Street	Paved	0.42	low-med	low-med	Routine-4	Good-4
Mount View Terrace		Dartmouth Street	End of street	Paved	0.13	low	low	No Maint-2	Good-2
Norridgewock Ave		Elm Street	Compact Line	Paved	0.75	med-high	medium	Preventive-7	Good-7
North Avenue		Route 2	Compact Line	Paved	2.22	high	high	No Maint-10	Good-10
North School Street		East Dyer Street	End of street	Paved	0.16	low-med	low	Routine-3	Good-3
Notch Road	1	Malbon's Mills Rd	1.2	Paved	1.25	low-med	low	No Maint-3	Good-3
Notch Road	2	1.25	2.67	Paved	2.67	low-med	low-med	No Maint-4	Good-4
Oak Pond Road	1	Route 2	1.22	Paved	1.22	low-med	low	Preventive-3	Good-3
Oak Pond Road	2	1.22	2.42	Paved	1.2	low-med	low	Preventive-3	Good-3
Oak Pond Road	3	2.42	3.68	Paved	1.26	low-med	low	No Maint-3	Good-3
Oak Street		Mount Pleasant Ave	Milburn Street	Paved	0.08	low	low	Preventive-2	Good-2
Olive Street		Milburn Street	Mount Pleasant Ave	Paved	0.1	low	low	No Maint-2	Good-2

Road Name	Sec	From	To	Surface	Length	Importance	Traffic	Surface	Drainage
Palmer Road	1	Middle Road	Back Road	Paved	1.42	low-med	low-med	Routine-4	Good-4
Park Street		Madison Avenue	End of street	Paved	0.065	low-med	low	No Maint-3	Good-3
Parkman Hill Road		Route 2	End of road	Paved	1.4	medium	low-med	No Maint-5	Good-5
Parlin Street		St. Marks Street	St. James Street	Paved	0.27	low	low	Preventive-2	Good-2
Patrick Street		Micheal Street	Dickey Street	Paved	0.14	low	low	No Maint-2	Good-2
Pattern Court		Water Street	End of street	Paved	0.03	low	low	Preventive-2	Good-2
Pennell Street		West Front Street	Alder Street	Paved	0.21	low	low	Routine-2	Good-2
Philbrick Drive		Route 2	Parkman Hill Road	Paved	0.11	low-med	low-med	Preventive-4	Good-4
Pine Street		Willow Street	West Front Street	Paved	0.02	low	low	Preventive-2	Good-2
Pleasant Street		Madison Avenue	Elm Street	Paved	0.31	med-high	medium	No Maint-7	Good-7
Pomelow Street		St. John Street	Chestnut Street	Paved	0.06	low	low	Rehabilitate-2	Good-2
Pooler Avenue		So. Factory Street	Chamberlain Street	Paved	0.26	low-med	low	Preventive-3	Good-3
Poplar Street		Waterville Road	Hathaway Street	Paved	0.13	low	low	Preventive-2	Good-2
Porter Road		Middle Road	End of road	Gravel	0.6	low	low	Routine-2	Good-2
Poulin Drive		Route 2	End of street	Paved	0.21	low-med	low-med	Routine-4	Good-4
Pratt Court		Hathaway Street	End of street	Paved	0.06	low	low	Routine-2	Good-2
Prescelly Drive		Dickey Street	End of street	Paved	0.13	low	low	No Maint-2	Good-2
Prospect Street		North Avenue	Madison Avenue	Paved	0.21	low-med	low-med	Preventive-4	Good-4
Railroad Street		Walnut Street	French Street	Paved	0.19	low-med	low-med	Preventive-4	Good-4
Red Bridge Road		Oak Pond Road	Town Line	Gravel	1.13	low	low	Routine-2	Good-2
Reed Street		Jewett Street	Chandler Street	Paved	0.11	low-med	low	No Maint-3	Good-3
Robin Court		Malbon's Mills Rd	End of street	Paved	0.12	low	low	Preventive-2	Good-2
Robinson Street		Russell Road	Silver Street	Paved	0.15	low	low	No Maint-2	Good-2
Route 104		Compact Line	Town Line	Paved	3.93	med-high	med-high	No Maint-8	Good-8
Rowe Road		Back Road	Bigelow Hill Road	Paved	1.31	low	low-med	Routine-3	Good-3
Russell Road		Spring Street	Beech Street	Paved	0.5	low-med	medium	No Maint-5	Good-5

Road Name	Sec	From	To	Surface	Length	Importance	Traffic	Surface	Drainage
Russell Road	2	Beech Street	Town Line	Paved	0.8	low-med	medium	Preventive-5	Good-5
Russell Road	3	1.38	Town Line	Paved	0.81	low-med	medium	No Maint-5	Good-5
Sandy Lane		Fairview Avenue	End of street	Paved	0.12	low	low	Rehabilitate-2	Good-2
Short Street		Blair Street	End of street	Paved	0.03	low	low	Preventive-2	Good-2
Silver Street		Madison Avenue	Russell Road	Paved	0.28	low-med	low-med	No Maint-4	Good-4
Smith Street		Silver Street	Hanover Street	Paved	0.14	low	low	No Maint-2	Good-2
So. Factory Street		Fairview Avenue	Waterville Road	Paved	0.48	medium	medium	Preventive-6	Good-6
South Gate Parkway	1	201	End of road	Paved	0.51	low	low	No Maint-2	Good-2
South Street		Waterville Road	Hathaway Street	Paved	0.11	low	low-med	Rehabilitate-3	Good-3
Spring Street		Madison Avenue	Summer Street	Paved	0.24	low-med	low-med	No Maint-4	Good-4
St. James Street	1	North Avenue	Parlin Street	Paved	0.1	low	low	Preventive-2	Good-2
St. James Street	2	Parlin Street	End of street	Gravel	0.1	low	low	Routine-2	Good-2
St. John Street		School Street	North Avenue	Paved	0.15	low-med	low	Preventive-3	Good-3
St. Marks Street		North Avenue	Short Street	Paved	0.24	low-med	low	Preventive-3	Good-3
Stevens Road		Back Road	Fairview Avenue	Paved	1.01	low	low	No Maint-2	Good-2
Steward Hill Road	1	North Avenue	Landfill Road	Paved	0.5	medium	medium	No Maint-6	Good-6
Steward Hill Road	2	Landfill Road	End of road	Paved	0.55	low	low	No Maint-2	Good-2
Summer Street		Pleasant Street	Spring Street	Paved	0.26	low-med	low	No Maint-3	Good-3
Swain Hill Road		East River Road	End of road	Paved	1	low	low	Routine-2	Good-2
Timber View Drive		Malbon's Mills Rd	End of street	Paved	0.5	low-med	low-med	Preventive-4	Good-4
Turner Avenue		West Front Street	Alder Street	Paved	0.19	low-med	low	No Maint-3	Good-3
Union Street		So. Factory Street	End of street	Paved	0.25	low	low	No Maint-2	Good-2
Valliere Court		North Avenue	End of street	Gravel	0.05	low	low	Routine-2	Good-2
Varney Road	1	Middle Road	Mill Entrance	Paved	1	low-med	low-med	Preventive-4	Good-4
Varney Road	2	Mill Entrance	Waterville Road	Paved	0.84	medium	med-high	No Maint-7	Good-7
Wallace Farm Road		Waterville Road	End of street	Paved	0.24	low	low	Preventive-2	Good-2



Road Name	Sec	From	To	Surface	Length	Importance	Traffic	Surface	Drainage
Walnut Street		Waterville Road	Railroad Street	Paved	0.13	low-med	low-med	Preventive-4	Good-4
Walton Court		Madison Avenue	End of street	Paved	0.05	low	low	Preventive-2	Good-2
Water Street		Island Avenue	Compact Line	Paved	1.68	high	high	Preventive-10	Good-10
Waterville Road		Main Street	Compact Line	Paved	1.58	high	high	No Maint-10	Good-10
Waye Street		North Avenue	End of street	Paved	0.36	low	low	Preventive-2	Good-2
West Front Street		Main Street	Compact Line	Paved	1.25	high	high	No Maint-10	Good-10
West Ridge Road		Malbon's Mills Rd	Town Line	Paved	2.13	med-high	med-high	Routine-8	Good-8
West Street		Gem Street	Cowette Street	Paved	0.102	low	low	No Maint-2	Good-2
Weston Avenue		Island Avenue	End of street	Paved	0.2	low	low	Preventive-2	Good-2
Willette Street		Milburn Street	Railroad Street	Paved	0.05	low	low	Rehabilitate-2	Good-2
Willow Street		Main Street	McClellan Street	Paved	0.34	low-med	low-med	No Maint-4	Good-4
Wilson Street		Locust Street	Cleveland Street	Paved	0.16	low	low	No Maint-2	Good-2
Winter Street		Madison Avenue	North Avenue	Paved	0.21	medium	medium	No Maint-6	Good-6
Wood Street		Jewett Street	End of street	Paved	0.07	low	low	Preventive-2	Good-2
Woodvale Drive		Meadowview Drive	Poulin Drive	Paved	0.12	low	low	Routine-2	Good-2
Wyman Street		Main Street	Bailey Street	Paved	0.05	low	low	No Maint-2	Good-2
York Street		Madison Avenue	Dane Avenue	Paved	0.11	low	low	Preventive-2	Good-2
					91.48				