

TOWN OF BENTON
2018 Comprehensive Plan
SECTION I
VERSION 03/10/2018

Plan Approved by Town at the Annual Town Meeting, March 10, 2018

Plan Adopted by Town Select Board, April 3, 2018

**Town of Benton Comprehensive Plan
Section I**

[Table of Contents](#)

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN – SECTION I 3

INTRODUCTION 3

COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING..... 3

VISION STATEMENT 4

FUTURE LAND USE PLAN 5

REGIONAL COORDINATION PROGRAM 16

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT STRATEGY..... 18

Town of Benton Comprehensive Plan

Section I

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN – SECTION I

Section I, is the actual plan which discusses four (4) key topics; future land use, regional coordination, open space and recreational activity, and capital investment. For each topic, Section I provides recommended goals and policies, and specific actions for implementation.

The plan recommends:

1. Increasing the share of growth in the designated growth area to two thirds of all new residential growth.
2. States a preference for the Town making more of its growth area accessible for public sewer and water services.
3. Expand and manage open space and recreational opportunities, including Town-owned parcels.
4. Allocation of any new municipal infrastructure capital investments into the designated growth areas.

INTRODUCTION

The Benton community enjoys a town which offers a rural, small town character. A town which prides itself on fiscally-responsible and transparent government, quality of academic and outside programs, its preservation of open space and access to outdoor recreation opportunities, and a town which respects and builds upon its natural beauty through conservation of its woodlands, farmlands, river and streams.

This 2018 Comprehensive Plan provides a basis for sound decisions in municipal management as well as the legal underpinning of a community's zoning ordinance. The planning provides an opportunity to review our accomplishments, offering strategies in policies, goals, and recommended actions that might connect us better as neighbors, balance our tax base, provide for changing life stages among our residents, focus commercial and residential growth, commitment to open space and recreational activity including Town-owned parcels and protection and preservation of our natural resources.

This plan intends to make Benton's ongoing improvement efforts even more intentional, mutually reinforcing, and effective. The plan will help Benton meet its constantly evolving needs and demands of the future, and allow it to continue to be a dynamic, aware, and forward-looking community - a smart town with great neighborhoods.

COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING

Towns and cities in Maine have been making comprehensive plans since the first half of the 20th century. They did so because they wanted to adopt zoning ordinances to help direct growth and protect neighborhoods. Benton is no exception. It adopted its first Zoning Ordinance in 1991 and established a Planning Board.

The 1988 Comprehensive Planning and Land Use Act brought a new dimension to municipal comprehensive plans in Maine - preventing development sprawl. To achieve that goal, comprehensive plans were asked to direct most of the anticipated growth to areas of town designated as "growth" areas, and away from "rural" areas. In response, Benton prepared a comprehensive plan in 1991. The current plan stems from 1991.

This plan will be the second comprehensive plan on record and will build on a long tradition of planning in Benton. The core of the 2018 plan follows the basic tenets of the 1988 Maine Comprehensive Planning and Land Use Act. Its key recommendation is to direct most of the anticipated growth to areas of Benton designated as "growth" areas, and away from "rural" areas. The committee believes that Benton needs to continue to find practical, effective, consensus-driven ways to build neighborhoods and commercial areas

Town of Benton Comprehensive Plan

Section I

where they make the most sense in order to accommodate and stimulate economic growth, while, at the same time, conserve large rural land tracts as working landscapes and natural gems.

VISION STATEMENT

According to the 2003 Community Visioning Handbook by the former Maine State Planning Office, a community vision is a “mental picture of what residents want their community to look and feel like in 20 years.” It describes the desired future community character.

Based on community input obtained through the comprehensive planning process through multiple surveys, meetings, and interviews, the committee developed the following vision to help guide this plan.

Benton in the early 2020’s....a smart town, with great neighborhoods

Imagine... It is 2028. Ten years have passed since the Comprehensive Plan was approved. The Town has visibly come together in the direction residents and businesses desired.

Five (5) major motivations helped to focus this direction.

1. Benton’s long passion and commitment to our rural, small town character.
2. Benton’s tradition of fiscal and management prudence.
3. Benton’s desire to move the local economy forward, encouraging business development and expansion to the benefit of all residents.
4. Benton’s commitment to open space and recreational activity, including Town-owned parcels.
5. Recognition that demographics are changing and there is need for broadening of residential opportunities.

Four (4) themes give shape to this plan’s vision for Benton:

1. Increase overall communications and coordination to ensure accountability and transparency of municipal operations.
2. Encourage business development and overall economic well-being consistent with Benton’s rural, small town character.
3. Conservation and protection of our natural, historical and archeological resources.
4. Broadening of residential opportunities and commitment to open space and recreational.

Benton has kept a balanced tax base by funding further investments through effective economic development. We improved the overall business environment and attracted businesses, which have provided more local opportunity for our local residents. The business areas are welcoming, with green spaces for gathering, relaxing and enhancing our sense of community.

Trails and access along our two major rivers are in keeping with the Open Space vision. Extensive Town open spaces retain and protect Benton’s small town rural character and natural resources, and ensure the availability of outdoor recreation by preserving large tracts of undeveloped land that provide wildlife habitat with connectivity between open space areas, as well as actively manage open space to benefit all citizens of Benton. Where possible the spaces will be connected to surrounding communities. Paths and trails give residents access to parks, fields, and places of solace and natural beauty.

Residents enjoy numerous housing opportunities which can fit changing life circumstances; housing that affords easy maintenance with cost and energy efficiencies. There are neighborhoods that offer convenient and walkable access to services and entertainment, and others that offer privacy and quiet in a rural environment. Our geographic location provides residents easy connections to businesses, entertainment, and the arts in surrounding areas.

Town of Benton Comprehensive Plan

Section I

Collaboration among, and coordination between, Town officials, schools, and our local businesses, and clear rules and permit process enable the community to grow; keeping Benton lively and sustainable year-round.

FUTURE LAND USE PLAN

The analysis of conditions and trend data provided in Section III in conjunction with the vision statement, form the foundation of this Future Land Use Plan.

The following provides a more detail description of the five (5) major motivations to focus the direction of our Future Land Use Plan supported by the four (4) themes in the comprehensive plan. One theme in particular, theme #1, is fundamental to the success of the motivators.

Theme #1 - Increase overall communications and coordination to ensure accountability and transparency of municipal operations.

The Town Select Board made communication a top goal for 2017-2018. Similarly communication emerged as a top priority in our strategic planning process. This universal focus on communication, both internally and externally, produced some significant accomplishments. The Town's website has a new look, including a community bulletin page which provides a list of activities in Benton and our surrounding communities. The Select Board has committed each quarter to provide updates on budget, infrastructure (roads and public utilities) and economic planning. The resulting information will be made available on our Town's website for easy access. Finally, we expanded our communication methods using the Town's Facebook page and our new Town Office sign to provide updates on upcoming events and key information.

The Town continues to pursue regional coordination opportunities with other communities to share services. The Town participates in the following shared service opportunities; Town of Fairfield (public safety and library), Town of Clinton (transfer station), KVCOC (code enforcement), Kennebec Sewer District (wastewater treatment), MSAD #49 (school consolidation), Regional Trail Planning (Kennebec Trail), and Food Pantry.

We feel that the success of the Future Land Use Plan is predicated on our success with implementation of our continued focus on theme #1.

Motivator #1 - Benton's long passion and commitment to our rural, small town character.

The Benton community enjoys a town which offers a rural, small town character. As part of the mid-Maine (Greater Waterville) service area, Benton has an important role in bringing together communities for the purpose of enhancing economic development, managing government resources, and protecting natural resources.

Our residents overwhelmingly prefer we continue to develop Benton as a classic New England town. A town focused on "smart growth" covering a range of development and conservation strategies to help protect our health and natural environment and make our communities more attractive, economically stronger, and more socially diverse.

The description Motivators 2 – 5 provide a picture of what this looks like to our residents. In providing this description it enables potential new residents with similar values will find a home in Benton. Businesses can use this description to determine their best fit and location in our community.

Town of Benton Comprehensive Plan

Section I

Motivator #2 - Benton's tradition of fiscal and management prudence.

In 2018 the Town's overall fiscal health included a surplus as of 1/1/2018 of \$1,327,092. The all-important property tax rate was kept to a modest increase due to lack of State funding for our school system. We have since received a school rebate to reduce the tax rate for the upcoming year. All trends point in a positive direction for the future.

This 2018 Comprehensive Plan provides a basis for sound decisions in municipal management as well as the legal underpinning of a community's zoning ordinance. The planning provides an opportunity to review our accomplishments, offering strategies in policies, goals, and recommended actions that might connect us better as neighbors, balance our tax base, provide for changing life stages among our residents, focus commercial and residential growth, commitment to open space and recreational activity including Town-owned parcels and protection and preservation of our natural resources.

This plan intends to make Benton's ongoing improvement efforts even more intentional, mutually reinforcing, and effective. The plan will help Benton meet its constantly evolving needs and demands of the future, and allow it to continue to be a dynamic, aware, and forward-looking community - a smart town with great neighborhoods.

As of the adoption of this Comprehensive Plan. The Town of Benton Select Board established the Town's first Economic Development Committee. The planning committee is appointed by the Select Board as a six to eight member committee and will be comprised of; Selectperson(s), one which will serve as Chair, two planning board members, and Town residents. The Town's Code Enforcement Officer, Road Commissioner, Kennebec Sewer District Trustee, and Kennebec Water District Trustee will serve as subject matter experts on the team, who will be called on to participate as their expertise is required.

The committee will be responsible for moving the Comprehensive Plan from planning stage to design, implementation and maintenance. This will include the development of the Economic Development Plan, which will include section for future land use and capital improvement plans. The committee will provide a status report and related planning documents to the Select Board quarterly. Planning documents will require approval by the Select Board and as required the Town residents. Where required by the Select Board or Town of Benton Policy, the committee will seek ongoing input from the residents to include; community sessions to gather input, resident surveys and/or Town presentations.

Motivator #3 - Benton's desire to move the local economy forward, encouraging business development and expansion to the benefit of all residents.

Benton recognizes the potential and reality of market-based incentives to steer growth away from valuable rural areas towards existing built-up areas. Historically, both residents and businesses have been attracted to the availability of public services, utilities, and amenities in Benton's growth districts. In particular, water and sewer service (for commercial and multi-family development), park, sidewalks, and our two rivers have proven strong attractions for continued development in the growth area.

The concepts in our Capital Improvement Plan will contribute to this trend by increasing the Town's investment in our infrastructure its focus is on "smart growth". Although not ignored, rural areas of town have not been targeted for capital improvements outside of transportation infrastructure. All schools, public buildings, water and sewer service, and active recreation facilities are located within growth areas.

The following summary by district focus provides a picture of what this looks like to our residents.

Non-Industrial Growth Districts

In our non-industrial growth districts, Benton Station Village Growth District, Benton Proper Growth District and Benton Falls Growth District, the focus is on residential neighborhoods containing options for families,

Town of Benton Comprehensive Plan Section I

condominiums, town houses, seniors and more forward thinking housing, such as, accessory apartments (in-law), adult family care homes and congregate housing, multi-leased apartment units featuring common kitchen and living room areas with private bedrooms and bath, etc.

In these same districts we would like to see small business tailored to bring services to our neighborhoods; bakeries, coffee and sandwich shops, cafes, small town pharmacies, home care services, auto care garages, small grocery or convenience stores, farm fresh vegetable and fruit stands, green houses, flower shops, bicycle shops, small business offices (i.e. real estate, law, family medical practices), small town hardware and building material stores, and other businesses of this nature. What residents do not want to see are 'Big Box' stores located within these districts.

Regarding technology the residents are open to natural gas and telecommunications which do not impact the visual and small town nature of these districts, examples of technology which do not meet the desired look and feel are, telecommunication towers, large wind turbines, etc.

Rural District

In our rural district, the vision is more focused on the preservation of open space. Residential housing requirements include larger lot size and setback requirements, with a preference for rural cluster subdivisions with common green and engagement spaces.

Here we prefer to see limited commercial and business uses. Business use here are more focused on agricultural and forestry uses; farms, greenhouses, orchards, tree farms, lumber mills, farm fresh vegetable and fruit stands, and other businesses of this nature. What residents do not want to see are 'Big Box' stores located within this district.

Regarding technology the rural district is not well suited for development where the provision of essential services and utilities would be inefficient and costly.

Industrial Growth District

In our industrial district, we expect a mixture of commercial and industrial uses adjacent to acceptable infrastructure and facilities. This district currently contains residential homes, however future expansion of this nature will be discouraged. Ideally the businesses that locate here are of the same nature as what is noted in the non-industrial growth districts, albeit residents understand that the businesses may be larger in size and employ more individuals. Our current business examples, which are in keeping with our vision include; excavation and general contracting, machine shops, small business auto sales, landscaping and lawn care, remodeling and repair companies, self-storage, small mini-malls, small local restaurants and entertainment venues.

Regarding technology the residents are open to natural gas and telecommunications. We recognize and are planning capital investments be made in this district to provide public water and waste and telecommunication (fiber) services, to attract more interest for small businesses in this district.

Motivator #4 - Benton's commitment to open space and recreational activity, including Town-owned parcels.

Benton is a town which prides itself on its preservation of open space and access to outdoor recreation opportunities, and a town which respects and builds upon its natural beauty through conservation of its woodlands, farmlands, rivers and streams.

In keeping with this our Town leadership and residents have a strong desire to provide expanded access and use of our two rivers. This would include providing access for fishing, boating, removable docks, to

Town of Benton Comprehensive Plan Section I

name a few. This access would be done in a manner which ensures protection and preservation of our natural, water, historical and archeological resources.

Another key initiative is to provide parking access to the Kennebec Walking Trail, located either on Crummett or Pleasant Street. Ideally we would like to incorporate the need of expanding our waste pumping station with the creation of a parking area if at all possible.

Both of these initiatives will likely require the purchase of Town-owned parcels to support providing the access.

In Section III of the Comprehensive Plan the analysis provides a description of the historical and archeological sites in Benton. Our desire is to work with the Benton 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.

Motivator #5 - Recognition that demographics are changing and there is need for broadening of residential opportunities.

Section IV of the 2018 Comprehensive Plan provides an analysis of the Town's population trends. Overall the trends suggest the Town will see an increased demand for housing and we will need to respond to the needs of an aging population.

- The median age increased by 42.5% since 2010. The baby boom generation is aging and heading into retirement.
- Household size has dropped significantly in the last few decades. While in 1980 it was 3.05 persons per household, in 2000 it was 2.52 persons per household and finally 2.47 in 2010.
- The number of persons living alone grew 49% between 1980 and 2010.

Section IV further provides population projections for the Town of Benton are based upon the following assumptions:

- A rural lifestyle will continue to be popular for many households.
- Benton has land available for development.
- The town's location near Waterville, Winslow and Fairfield make it attractive as a bedroom community.
- The town has maintained a reasonable property tax rate.
- The town offers a rural quality of life.
- The Kennebec and Sebasticook Rivers are important environmental and recreational resources.
- New housing will average between 18 to 20 units per year.
- The annual rate of population growth will be 1%.

As we consider the impact of smaller households, this will likely mean more (and different) housing units are needed to accommodate. In this Section, under the Motivator #1 description, insight was provided into the type of housing changes we are proposing for each land use district. This will require changes to the Land Use Ordinances which are supported in the action plan outlined in Section III.

Town of Benton Comprehensive Plan

Section I

Land Use Districts

The Town of Benton consists primarily of the following six (6) Districts which are outlined in the Land Use District Matrix directly following. The matrix describes the essential characteristics of each land use district, specifically:

1. District designation;
2. Each district's purpose and relationship to the community's vision;
3. The types and intensity of proposed land uses, including residential density, in each district;
4. Each district's natural opportunities and/or constraints (Refer to matrix column - Supported By);
5. Any anticipated major municipal capital investments needed to support the proposed land uses in each district, (Refer to matrix column - Anticipated Capital Investments); and
6. The compatibility or incompatibility of proposed uses to current uses, critical natural resources and important natural resources within and around each district along with any special development considerations (e.g. need for additional buffers, conservation subdivision provisions, architectural design standards, etc.)

In community discussions, it has been clear the pattern of growth is not really an issue in Benton. There is adequate land available in Benton's existing growth districts, so that no expansion of growth districts is warranted at the creation of this document.

Town of Benton Comprehensive Plan Section I

LAND USE DISTRICT MATRIX		Supported By							Anticipated Capital Investments															
Designation	Purpose / Community Vision	Waste		Water		Other Utilities			Waste		Water		Other Utilities			Roads		Town Resp.						
		Public	Private	Public	Private	Power	Telecom Fiber	Natural Gas	Infrastructure	Public	Infrastructure	Public	Telecom Fiber	Natural Gas	Green Tech.	Major Roadway(s)	Roads Maintenance	Town Office	Schools	Newly Acquired	River Access	Improve Entrance	Bike/Ped. Access	
Benton Proper Growth District	To provide a variety of higher density land uses in a village setting where residential, public, service, commercial and retail activities are commonly mixed; where pedestrian ways and open space are encouraged and an inviting residential and shopping environment is created.																							
	To maintain and enhance the Town Office and adjacent park as the center for this district. The District is mostly developed. Any future growth is expected to fill in vacant land around existing neighborhoods and through reconsideration and amendment of Land Use Ordinances to support additional housing options (see Section II, A7 Housing and in particular POLICY – A7-TP4).		X		X	X	X		PE	PE	PE	PE	PE	R	R	R	PU	R	N	R	R	R	R	R

Town of Benton Comprehensive Plan Section I

LAND USE DISTRICT MATRIX		Supported By						Anticipated Capital Investments															
Designation	Purpose / Community Vision	Waste		Water		Other Utilities		Waste		Water		Other Utilities			Roads		Town Resp.						
		Public	Private	Public	Private	Power	Telecom Fiber	Natural Gas	Infrastructure	Public	Infrastructure	Public	Telecom Fiber	Natural Gas	Green Tech.	Major Roadway(s)	Roads Maintenance	Town Office	Schools	Newly Acquired	River Access	Improve Entrance	Bike/Ped. Access
Benton Falls Growth District	<p>To provide for variety higher density land uses in keeping with a village residential setting; where commercial, educational, institutional, public uses and outdoor resource based uses complement the existing residential character.</p> <p>The District contains some large tracts of undeveloped land. Any future growth is expected to fill in vacant land around existing neighborhoods and through reconsideration and amendment of Land Use Ordinances to support additional housing options (see Section II, A7 Housing and in particular POLICY – A7-TP4).</p>		X		X	X	X	N	N	N	N	N	R	R	R	N	R	N	R	R	R	R	R
Industrial Growth District	<p>To provide for a mixture of commercial and industrial uses in a location adjacent to acceptable infrastructure and facilities to allow a wide mixture of uses.</p> <p>The Industrial Growth District contains some large tracks of undeveloped land. Any future growth is expected to fill in vacant land and expansion of public utilities and other related business infrastructure.</p>		X		X	X	X	PE	PE	R	PE	PE	R	R	R	R	R	N	R	R	R	R	R

Town of Benton Comprehensive Plan Section I

LAND USE DISTRICT MATRIX		Supported By						Anticipated Capital Investments																	
Designation	Purpose / Community Vision	Waste		Water		Other Utilities		Waste		Water		Other Utilities		Roads		Town Resp.									
		Public	Private	Public	Private	Power	Telecom Fiber	Natural Gas	Infrastructure	Public	Infrastructure	Public	Telecom Fiber	Natural Gas	Green Tech.	Major Roadway(s)	Roads Maintenance	Town Office	Schools	Newly Acquired	River Access	Improve Entrance	Bike/Ped. Access		

Town of Benton Comprehensive Plan Section I

<p>Rural District</p> <p>(The Rural District consists of all lands not encompassed within the bounds of the other Districts.)</p>	<p>To maintain the rural character of those areas of Benton not designated for high density growth; to provide for low density residential development, agricultural and forestry uses and limited commercial uses; to ensure that the type and intensity of development in this District is compatible with the goals of protecting wildlife habitat and significant natural resources; to ensure that development is supportable by on-site waste disposal and maintains a high quality ground water supply to serve the needs of rural residents and businesses</p> <p>At the same time, the purpose of this District is to discourage higher density development in those areas of the Town that are not well suited for such development and where the provision of essential services and utilities would be inefficient and costly; and to preserve the capacity of major through roads in the rural areas to serve as efficient links to regional arterial roads and other communities by discouraging strip development.</p>	X		X	X				N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	R	N
--	---	---	--	---	---	--	--	--	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---

Town of Benton Comprehensive Plan Section I

LAND USE DISTRICT MATRIX		Supported By						Anticipated Capital Investments															
Designation	Purpose / Community Vision	Waste		Water		Other Utilities		Waste		Water		Other Utilities			Roads		Town Resp.						
		Public	Private	Public	Private	Power	Telecom Fiber	Natural Gas	Infrastructure	Public	Infrastructure	Public	Telecom Fiber	Natural Gas	Green Tech.	Major Roadway(s)	Roads Maintenance	Town Office	Schools	Newly Acquired	River Access	Improve Entrance	Bike/Ped. Access
Mobile Home Overlay	<p>There five (5) geographic areas identified as a special land use activity suitable for the location of mobile home parks.</p> <p>The Overlay District for Mobile Home Parks will not expand or allow for additional mobile home parks in the Town of Benton.</p>	X	X	X	X	X			N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N

REGIONAL COORDINATION PROGRAM

Maine's Growth Management Act recommends that a regional coordination program be pursued with other communities to manage shared resources and facilities, including but not limited to lakes, rivers, aquifers, and transportation facilities.

This section identifies resources and facilities that Benton shares, describes issues pertaining to sharing these resources and facilities, summarizes regional coordination efforts, and describes what other approaches the community will take to coordinate management of shared resources and facilities.

Regional Issues

Benton shares natural resources such as Kennebec and Sebasticook Rivers with neighboring communities. It also shares major roadways such as Route 100. In addition, Benton's proximity to Waterville makes it well situated regionally for economic development in conjunction with neighboring Towns.

Regional coordination of services and efforts such as economic development can result in a more effective use of local resources. During the last decade, Benton has explored diverse avenues of regional coordination from being a strong participant in regional economic development committees to exploration of sharing services such as code enforcement, waste disposal, health and safety, and animal control.

Regionalization Participation

The Town participates in the following regional activities (this is not an exhaustive list):

1. Active participant in the Mid-Maine Chamber of Commerce and Kennebec Valley Council of Governments;
2. Services shared with Town of Fairfield:
 - Partnership with the Town of Fairfield through an inter-local agreement to provide Emergency Services, including fire, rescue, and emergency management. Fairfield and Benton jointly finance the department, which is operated by the Town of Fairfield;
 - Combined wastewater treatment at Kennebec plant
 - School consolidation with MSAD #49 (Benton, Albion, Clinton Fairfield).
 - Fairfield Interfaith Food Pantry
 - Lawrence Library
3. Services shared with Town of Clinton:
 - Combined transfer station
4. KVCOG Services shared with area towns:
 1. Code Enforcement Officer
5. Regional Trails Planning
 2. Benton is a key participant in Kennebec trail planning including potential trail development along the Kennebec River.
6. Regional Shared Services
 - Contribute to the PAL organization, which is the de facto sports and recreation program for local youth.
 - Town of Fairfield, Parks and Recreation, Boat Launch

For the purpose of this comprehensive plan, several of the recommendations contain a regional component. The following is a listing of those strategies:

Town of Benton Comprehensive Plan Section I

1. Participate in regional economic development efforts; Kennebec Valley Council of Governments. (A0-TP1.TS6)
2. Expand cooperation with the Mid-Maine Chamber of Commerce. (A0-TP1.TS7)
3. Actively pursue opportunities with neighboring towns, regional organizations and the school district. (A0-TP1.TS8)
4. Actively seek opportunities for regionalization of fire protection services, including training sites and other opportunities. (A0-TP1.TS9)
5. Continue the support of snowmobile groups with trail maintenance / development. (A7-TP4.TS2)
6. Continue to work with local trails groups (KM Trails) for more trail opportunities through town and region. (A7-TP4.TS3)
7. Create a local or regional Bicycle/Pedestrian Plan. (A7-TP4.TS4)
8. Continue the support of the PAL programs within the region. (A7-TP4.TS5)

Town of Benton Comprehensive Plan

Section I

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT STRATEGY

Capital Improvement Strategy is important to a community in planning for facilities needed for the community's growth in a manner that manages the fiscal impacts of growth. Benton has an annual budget process includes addressing the Town's capital needs on an ongoing basis. A key recommendation of this document is for Benton to develop a Capital Improvement Plan.

The Capital Improvement Plan will provide a method of planning which combines the needs of our local government. Address the maintenance and replacement of existing assets, it will look ahead for future needs, projects, and mandates. The final product will be used to prepare the Town's annual budget. Before and after each annual budget is adopted by the Town Select Board, the plan will be revised for use in the next annual budget preparation.

Similar to the Town's land use ordinances, the Capital Improvement Plan will provide a means of implementing the objectives and policies of the Comprehensive Plan, such as directing the majority of new growth to the Town's designated growth area. Considerable benefits may be derived from a systematic approach to the programming of capital projects. These include:

1. Focusing attention on community goals, needs and capabilities.
2. Achieving optimum use of the taxpayer's dollar.
3. Guiding future growth and development.
4. Serving wider community interests over localized ones.
5. More efficient governmental administration.
6. Maintaining a sound and stable financial program.
7. Focusing attention on existing infrastructure conditions.
8. Enhancing opportunities for participation in federal and state funding programs.

Overview of the Existing Process

The Town of Benton already does some form of capital planning. The Town maintains a prioritized list of anticipated capital needs.

Over recent years, the Town of Benton has utilized capital budgeting to assist with the community's growth and infrastructure development. Budget lines are included each year to cover capital expenditure costs. Tax Increment Financing funds (TIFs), some of which are used for capital improvements, are administered separately from the Town's Budget.

The Capital Improvement Fund line has continued to be grow annually in preparation of our upcoming planning. The current amount funded is \$183,961.

This document calls for six major initiatives in the Capital Improvement Plan over the next ten years which will be funded by a combination of TIF Funds, Capital Improvement Funds and related grant funding:

1. Major road and public walk-way improvements.
2. Major improvements/expansion of public water and waste disposal systems.
3. Major infrastructure upgrades for communications.
4. Expand and manage open space and recreational opportunities, including Town-owned parcels.
5. Major allocation and improvements to shared community spaces.

Most all of the current infrastructure projects, such as sidewalk, sewer, and road improvements, communications, will be in the Town's designated growth area. The intent is to maintain that the majority share of such investments as a way to encourage new residential and commercial growth to locate in the Town's growth area.