

TOWN OF BENTON
2018 Comprehensive Plan
Section III
VERSION 01/01/2018

Adopted by Town Select Board, _____

Town of Benton Comprehensive Plan

Section III

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COMPREHENSIVE PLAN – SECTION III

Section III, provides background information that is the basis for the plan. It includes an in-depth discussion of thirteen topics outlined in State of Maine's Chapter 208: Comprehensive Plan Review Criteria Rule, which provides "the criteria used to review community comprehensive plans for consistency with goals and guidelines of the *Growth Management Act* (30-A M.R.S.A. §§ 4312 - 4350)". This Section III includes the analysis of town, county and state statistical information which will be used in Section I and Section II of the Comprehensive Plan.

1. HISTORIC AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESOURCES

This topic provides an overview of Benton's historic and archaeological resources and find ways to preserve these areas for the future. The task of preserving the places, buildings and memories of the past is an important legacy for the town. The remaining evidence of our ancestors whether it consists of cemeteries, old homes, records and books, and prehistoric sites all contribute to the character and identity of the community.

As appropriate for our Town's size and strategy, this topic will cover the analyses provided by the State of Maine, Comprehensive Plan Review Criteria Rule (07 105 Chapter 208). The analysis will provide an evaluation of the current conditions and trends which will support our historic and archaeological resource policy and strategies identified in Section II of this Comprehensive Plan.

Analyses

- a. Are historic patterns of settlement still evident in the community?
- b. What protective measures currently exist for historic and archaeological resources and are they effective?
- c. Do local site plan and/or subdivision regulations require applicants proposing development in areas that may contain historic or archaeological resources to conduct a survey for such resources?
- d. Have significant historic resources fallen into disrepair, and are there ways the community can provide incentives to preserve their value as an historical resource?

Conditions and Trends Evaluation

- a. The community's Comprehensive Planning Historic Preservation Data Set prepared and provided to the community by the Historic Preservation Commission, and the Office, or their designees.
- b. An outline of the community's history, including a brief description of historic settlement patterns and events contributing to the development and character of the community and its surroundings.
- c. An inventory of the location, condition, and use of any historical or archaeological resource that is of local importance.
- d. A brief description of threats to local historic resource and to those of state and national significance as identified by the Maine Historic Preservation Commission.

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BENTON HISTORICAL PRESERVATION COMMITTEE

The Historical Preservation Committee is a local group of residents interested in preserving and enhancing Benton's historic attributes and special places. The committee is interested in collecting and protecting the town's historic artifacts and working to preserve historic structures. The Benton Falls neighborhood is of special interest to the committee because of its many historic buildings. The committee will be instrumental in conducting additional historic surveys and other similar projects.

OVERVIEW OF BENTON HISTORY

Benton was originally part of the Kennebec Purchase. It was first settle by Ebenezer Heald about 1763. He met his obligation by building a cabin and clearing land to obtain a land grant from Gershom Flagg (1705 – 1771). The Kennebec and Sebasticook Rivers provided access to this territory and, years later, the power for sawmills.

Benton was known as Hancock Plantation for a brief period before becoming Clinton. In 1842, it was incorporated as Sebasticook, and in 1850, the name was finally changed to Benton. The town was named after Thomas Hart Benton, a popular Missouri U.S. senator from Missouri who served from 1820 to 1851.

The Kennebec River, named by the Indians as Canibus, forms the western line. The Sebasticook River passes through the middle of town, the name anglicized from Chebattiscook or Chebattis, meaning John Batstiste's Place. The stream known as Fifteenmile Stream crosses Benton's eastern sections and was an important waterway.

The Indians made great use of the rivers and land. The Red Paint Indians had a burying ground here on the West Side of the Sebasticook River. Indian settlements have long since vanished but along the Sebasticook River in Benton, their implements can still be found today.

The early settler's main food staple of fish could easily be had and it was not long before the fishing industry became an important source of income in Benton. Alewives and Shad were the predominant fish caught, but salmon were caught in smaller quantities due to less than adequate spawning grounds in the Sebasticook River.

In 1817, fishing privileges were auctioned off so that sections of the river were sold to individuals. The fishing was better in the Sebasticook River than the Kennebec River due to the following factors: the river could be spanned easily by weirs and the town bridge was astride the river, than the voters could control both banks of the Sebasticook for fishing, whereas Fairfield had control of the west bank of the Kennebec River.

Dams, which provided the power to the mills, conflicted with the fishing. The first dam, erected at the upper falls in Benton Falls was built before the Revolutionary War. It provided a gap for fish to continue upstream and downstream through the dam. In 1809, a second dam was built at the lower falls, with no fishway. It so hindered the fishing that six years later the selectmen had it removed. The construction of the dam in Augusta, with no provision for the passage for fish, doomed the future of fishing in town.

Water made the land accessible and provided power but it was the possession of land that gave settlers a means of attaining wealth. The great pines of the area were of prime value, the Sebasticook River area having more than the usual number of these fine trees. Many were destined for ships including the masts of the U.S. Frigate Constitution, which were cut in Unity and traveled down the Sebasticook through Benton. It took six (6) men to cut them and fit the roads; it took six (6) men and twenty (20) oxen to haul the logs out of the river. The records show that most of the men were from Benton. In addition, some of these pines were used to build the Massachusetts State House.

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The Sebec River was more important to the settlers in Benton than the Kennebec River. Between Benton Falls and the outlet in Winslow, there were only few rapids and water travel was easy. Benton Falls became the hub of the community. From 1808 to 1840, there were at least three (3) sawmills, a tannery, carding and dye mill, grist mill and shingle mill. About 1864, a brush and block-handle factory was run in the same building that wooden shoe sole shoes were manufactured. In 1872, a potato planter was invented and manufactured at the Benton Falls.

By the late 18th century, Benton saw mills provided planks, plank stock, boards and shingles, where were rafted down the Sebec and Kennebec Rivers and Fifteenmile Stream. In later years, pulp became the major harvest.

In 1772, the first frame house north of Augusta was built on the Eames Road. Other homes were soon built, and by the early 1800, additions were made to the first homes. A cluster of older homes can still be found in Benton Falls.

Three villages developed in town and each had its own stores and school. The Benton Falls had ten (10) stores, six (6) taverns, a church, library and academy. In later years, Benton had a short industrial/electrical road connecting to Fairfield owned by the Kennebec Fiber Company. It had one-car passenger accommodation that connected with the electric railway, familiar in many cities and towns in Maine as the broom stick train. The railroad came to Benton in 1955. The section of Benton referred to as Benton Station was home to Benton's railroad station and one of the many stops of the Maine Central Railroad. Benton Station is located in the town's Maine Street (Bridge Street) includes Routes 139, 100, and 11 and is just east over the Kennebec River from Fairfield. The railroad station still remains today and is now used as a home in Benton Station. The railway behind the home is location of the town's Kennebec River Walking Trail.

By 1850, Benton had many prosperous farms. Good timber was becoming scarce and cleared land was available for farming. Corn, wheat and hay were grown. Many of the farms became operating dairy farms, providing a good income for their owners. By 1900, the farms had steadily declined in numbers.

PREHISTORIC ARCHEOLOGICAL RESOURCES

Prehistoric and archeological sites reveal information about Native American inhabitants who did not leave any written records. The following four types of sites are significant:

- a. Habitation workshop sites are next to canoe navigable waters.
- b. Lithic quarries are places where stone raw materials are gathered.
- c. Cemeteries are found on well-drained sandy or gravely sandy soils usually near a river or lake.
- d. Rock Art sites are found immediately next to canoe-navigable waters on bedrock outcrops.

In Section IV – Map 1.1 titled “*Known Archaeological Sites and Areas Sensitive for Native American Archaeology in Benton*” show potential areas that may contain prehistoric sites. Locating potential sites is based upon what we have already learned from existing sites. The exact location of a sensitive archeological site is not advertised to lessen the chances that the site would not be damaged.

It is important that any proposed development along the Kennebec River, Sebec River and other areas identified on the Section IV – Map 1.1 be reviewed for possible prehistoric sites. Some areas may be protected due to shoreline setbacks imposed by Shoreland Zoning. The subdivision law also requires applicants to check for archeological and historic resources. However, it would be prudent for the town to require all development within a certain distance from waterways to ask the Maine Historic Preservation Commission to check their proposal for known archeological and historic sites.

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Prehistoric Archaeological Sites

The Maine Historic Preservation Commission has identified 20 prehistoric sites in Benton. Two (2) sites are along the Kennebec valley and eighteen (18) sites are along the Sebasticook River. Nine (9) of the sites have been determined as not significant since there are reports of sites excavated before 1940 that are now destroyed. The other twelve (12) sites may be eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

The Maine Historic Preservation Commission has recommended that the town undertake a systematic professional archeological survey has been done in Benton for the relicensing of the Benton Falls Dam, transmission and gas lines and for a river access project adjacent to River Road. The Benton Falls survey located fifteen (15) sites along 5km of the Sebasticook River. A reconnaissance survey of the shores of the Sebasticook River has been completed except for the northernmost 2km. of the river in Benton. The Kennebec River and the other areas may still contain sensitive sites and still require a survey.

HISTORIC ARCHEOLOGICAL RESOURCES

Historic archeological sites are mostly European-American and include English and French trading posts, forts, homesteads in the 1600's and 1700's. Since waterbodies, especially rivers and streams that could provide waterpower and transportation were essential; most of the historic archeological sites are near waterbodies. The Maine Historic Preservation Commission has not identified any site in Benton.

No professional surveys for historic archaeological sites have been conducted to date in Benton. Future archaeological survey should focus on the identification of potentially significant resources associated with the town's agricultural, residential, and industrial heritage, particularly those associated with the earliest Euro-American settlement of the town in the 18th and 19th centuries.

Historic Archaeological Sites

The Maine Historic Preservation Commission has identified the following two (2) historic archaeological sites.

- a. 1780 – 1830 - Gershom Flagg Homestead, Site# ME 038-001
- b. 1841 - Noah Paul Farmstead, Site# ME 038-002

No professional surveys for historic archaeological sites have been conducted to date in Benton. The Maine Historic Preservation Commission has recommended that the town undertake future archaeological survey focused on the identification of potentially significant resources associated with the town's agricultural, residential, and industrial heritage, particularly those associated with the earliest Euro-American settlement of the town in the 18th and 19th centuries.

Historic Buildings and Structures

The Maine Historic Preservation Commission has identified the following three (3) structures listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

- a. G.W. Reed Travellor's Home
- b. Benton Grange #458, Jct. River Road and School Drive

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Photo 1.1 - Benton Grange Hall #458

- c. Colcord Farmstead, 184 Unity Road



Photo 1.2 – Colcord Farmstead, 184 Unity Rd

The Maine Historic Preservation Commission has recommended that the town undertake a comprehensive survey to identify other properties which may be eligible for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places.

Local Historic Sites, Places and Artifacts

The following is a list of significant places and structures in the community. These places are special to residents and portray some significance to the history of the community.

Benton Falls

- a. 1775 – 1814 - Reed Tavern
(A private residence – Vice President Hannibal Hamlin was entertained here.)
- b. 1789 – 1830 - Asher Hinds Home
(Private residence – Home of Asher Hinds, Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives, author of “Parliamentary Precedents”, still used by the U.S. Government today.)
- c. 1820 – Issac Abbott Homes (Private Residence)
- d. 1820 – Lunts Store (Private Residence)
- e. 1820 – Congregational Church
(Home of the last “Paul Revere Bell” cast at the foundry in Canton, Mass)
- f. 1870 – Church Parish Home
(Replica of Clinton Academy built in 1830, destroyed in fire 1870).
- g. 1820 – Smiley Home (Private Residence)

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- h. 1800 – 1820 – Asher Barton Home (Private Residence)
- i. Collection of historic buildings are located in a compact area surrounding the Congregational Church

Benton Station

- a. 1800 – Brown Home
(Private Residence – Home of Isaih Brown, a soldier in the Revolutionary War)
- b. 1921 – Benton Station
(Private Residence – Benton Station home to Benton's railroad station and one of the many stops of the Maine Central Railroad.)

Benton Village

- a. 1777 – Bowman Home (Private Residence)
- b. 1800 – Brick Store (Private Residence)
- c. 1915 – Benton Grange (Grange building renovations completed 2006)

Other

- a. Old Charlie Rock
(Located in the Sebasticook River south of the dam. It is a popular fishing spot).
- b. Old Methodist Church (Located on Clinton Avenue)
- a. Old Stone Sluice Way (Located on the Sebasticook River)
- b. Seven (7) Cemeteries
- c. Haunted House is located in town according to legend.

TOWN LAND USE ORDINANCE REVIEW

A review of the Town of Benton Local Use Ordinance revised March 2017 was completed to determine what protective measures currently exist for historic and archaeological resources and the Comprehensive Planning Committee found that the document was silent on protection of these sites. As a result the committee has identified actions in [Section II](#) for the Planning Board to revise the local ordinance accordingly.

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2. WATER RESOURCES

This topic provides an analysis of Benton's water resources. As appropriate for our Town's size and strategy, this topic will cover the analyses provided by the State of Maine, Comprehensive Plan Review Criteria Rule (07 105 Chapter 208). The analysis will provide an evaluation of the current conditions and trends which will support our water resource policy and strategies identified in Section II of this Comprehensive Plan.

Analyses

- a. Are there point sources (direct discharges) of pollution in the community? If so, is the community taking steps to eliminate them?
- b. Are there non-point sources of pollution? If so, is the community taking steps to eliminate them?
- c. How are groundwater and surface water supplies and their recharge areas protected?
- d. Do public works crews and contractors use best management practices to protect water resources in their daily operations (e.g. salt/sand pile maintenance, culvert replacement street sweeping, public works garage operations)?
- e. Are there opportunities to partner with local or regional advocacy groups that promote water resource protection?


Conditions and Trends Evaluation


- a. The community's Comprehensive Planning Water Resources Data Set prepared and provided to the community by the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, the Department of Environmental Protection and the Office, or their designees.
- b. A description of each great pond, river, surface drinking water supply, and other water bodies of local interest including:
 - ecological value;
 - threats to water quality or quantity;
 - documented water quality and/or invasive species problems.
- c. A summary of past and present activities to monitor, assess, and/or improve water quality, mitigate sources of pollution, and control or prevent the spread of invasive species.
- d. A description of the location and nature of significant threats to aquifer drinking water supplies.
- e. A summary of existing lake, pond, river, stream, and drinking water protection and preservation measures, including local ordinances.

BUILDING A REGIONAL LANDSCAPE

The most significant source of information considered in this section is the regional map for Benton found in [Section IV – Map 3.0](#) titled "[Building a Regional Landscape Benton Section IV – Map 3.0](#)". This maps provides overlays for [four major topics](#), details of each overlay is taken directly from the Map legend. The analysis of Water Resources section calls for reviewing Topic 1.

TOPIC 1 – MDIFW - Water Resources and Riparian Habitats (Section IV – Map 3.1)

 **Riparian Buffer** - Ponds > 10 acres (Great Ponds), rivers, coastal waters, and wetlands >10 acres in size are surrounded by a 250 foot riparian buffer zone. Streams are surrounded by a 75 foot riparian buffer zone. (MDIFW)

 **NWI Wetlands > 10 Acres** - The National Wetlands Inventory (NWI) uses aerial photographs from the mid-1980s to identify wetlands based on visible signs of wetland vegetation, hydrology, and geography. The NWI maps are not based on field wetland delineations and given the limits of aerial photo interpretation, do not depict all wetlands that occur. Ground verification

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should be used to determine actual wetland boundaries and NWI maps should be considered as only a planning tool to determine potential wetland locations. (MDIFW)

TOPIC 1 – BENTON - Water Resources and Riparian Habitats (Section IV – Map 3.1)

Overview

Benton covers an area of 28.4 square miles and is mostly forested. The Kennebec River defines western boundary of the town and the Sebasticook River flows through the town providing an important riverine environment. The Town does not contain any lakes or ponds, however, numerous streams and both open and forested wetlands can be found throughout the community. Most development is located adjacent to existing town roads. Rear land areas provide habitat for wildlife.

Riparian Areas & Surface Water

Riparian Areas are areas adjacent to rivers, streams and wetlands that provide valuable resources for wildlife and help to protect the waterbody. The trees and other vegetation along a water body help to buffer the resources from erosion and provides a canopy to help keep the waters cool for many cold water fish species. Measures to protect water resources should also extend into the associated riparian areas.

The Kennebec and Sebasticook Rivers define the western portion of the Town. The land area between the rivers consists mostly of a level plain that contains most of the Town's development and agriculture operations. The rivers provided the town with many resources including fish, ice, waterpower, and a way to transport goods and timber. Since the passage of the Clean Water laws, the water quality in both rivers has improved significantly. Both water bodies are used for many recreational pursuits including fishing.

Dams still define the character of the Kennebec River, provide both electrical power, and flood water control for the river basin. The removal of the Edwards Dam in Augusta has greatly improved the fish population up to the head of the Falls in Waterville. Section IV, Map 3.1 reflects two classifications for the Kennebec River in Benton:

- Class B demonstrating fewer restrictions on activities but still maintain high water quality criteria, and
- Class C demonstrating least restrictions on use and the lowest (but not low) water quality criteria. Maine DEP rates Class C waters as good quality, but the margin for error before significant degradation might occur in these waters in the event of an additional stress being introduced (such as a spill or a drought) is the least.

The Sebasticook River dam in Benton provides electrical power and a fish elevator was recently installed to permit spanning fish to travel north of the dam. The town has received licensing rights for alewife harvesting from the State, which points to the renewed health of the river. Section IV, Map 3.1 reflects two classifications for the Sebasticook River in Benton:

- Class C demonstrating least restrictions on use and the lowest (but not low) water quality criteria. Maine DEP rates Class C waters as good quality, but the margin for error before significant degradation might occur in these waters in the event of an additional stress being introduced (such as a spill or a drought) is the least.

Fifteen Mile Stream flows from Clinton through Benton and then into Albion. The stream has many associated wetlands and provides a valuable habitat for waterfowl and other species. Most of the area near the stream is undeveloped. The Fifteen Mile Stream has high-quality stretches of silver maple floodplain forest, a community type that is rare statewide.

Other Streams include Fowler Brook and many smaller streams. Each of these waterbodies provides a valuable environment for wildlife, plants and carry surface waters to larger waterbodies

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including wetlands. Inappropriate development along any water body including streams does harm to water quality and damages the watershed.

Wetlands

Wetlands are located throughout the Town and can usually be found near waterbodies. Wetlands exist when an area is poorly drained and has a high water table at or near the surface, and can cover areas of open water, forest or fields. The soils are saturated and are lacking in oxygen that in turn provides an environment for a special group of trees, shrubs and grasses.

Wetland identification consists of looking for the following three (3) conditions:

1. The presence of hydric soils; usually dark in color, consists of silt or muck.
2. The presence of mostly wetland type vegetation; plants that live in an environment lacking oxygen, saturated in water.
3. The presence of water of a high water table; water could be at the surface only seasonally.

Wetlands are essential breeding habitat for waterfowl, amphibians, fish and some mammals. They also provide forage and protective cover for other wildlife species. Wetlands are home to many plant species that cannot be found anywhere else. They serve as a sponge retaining floodwaters and protect water quality by filtering pollutants out of aquifer recharge areas.

The Shoreland Zoning protects non-forested wetlands over 10 acres and the State regulates other wetlands from development. For the topics covered in wetlands refer to [Section IV – Map 2.1](#) titled “*Wetland Characteristics Map, Benton Section IV – Map 2.1*”. The water resource map shows wetlands greater than 10 acres. Other smaller wetlands can also be found throughout the town especially near streams.

Soils and Development Constraints

The development constraint map shows wetlands over 10 acres and hydric soils. Wetlands as their name indicates have water at or near the surface during all or most of the year. Wetlands have soils that are saturated or have very high seasonal water tables. Hydric soils are often a mucky texture with a significant organic content and very poorly drained.

Wetlands are protected resources and are not suited for development. Hydric soils are also not suitable for subsurface waste water systems and many agricultural operations. Most of the hydric soils are located near wetlands, streams and often are forested. Trees and plants growing in hydric soils are species that can survive with high water tables. Forested wetlands are often identified by the types of plants that can live in soils with low oxygen levels. Some pasture and hay fields can have consist of hydric soils, however, there are often wet during the spring and after periods of heavy rainfall.

Areas identified with hydric soils have severe development limitations. However, pockets of different soil types may be found within a hydric soil area. These pockets may be suitable for development depending upon their size and drainage characteristics.

The total land area in Benton made up of rivers, streams, and wetlands is approximately 1,600 square areas or 2.5 square miles. This accounts for 8.8% of the land area. The actual area not suited for development due to surface waters and wetlands will be larger after considering mandatory setback miles imposed by Shoreland Zoning, and State and Federal regulations. The presence of hydric soils near water bodies will also limit many forms of development.

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Aquifers

Two significant aquifers lie at least partially within Benton's limits. One crosses the Clinton line in the north on both sides of the Sebasticook River. The other lies across the Winslow Town Line, almost directly south of the first. The aquifers are shown on the watershed map. The area of both aquifers total about 170 acres. Section IV, Map 3.1 does not reflect any land use risk on high yield sand and gravel aquifers.

Groundwater

Water, which saturates the soil and bedrock, is called ground water. The rate at which water percolates into the ground depends upon the porosity of both the soil and bedrock. Groundwater levels vary depending upon the season and precipitation. Groundwater flows similar to surface water and is influenced by the type of parent soil or bedrock.

Groundwater resources are important for Benton because the majority of the Town's land area is dependent upon wells to supply portable water. Likewise, most of the town is also dependent upon subsurface wastewater disposal systems. Measures to protect the Town's groundwater resources could include some of the following:

1. Protecting the Aquifers from inappropriate development.
2. Monitoring well quantity and quality issues.
3. Replacing malfunctioning subsurface wastewater systems.
4. Protecting wetlands and other waterbodies from erosion and contamination.
5. Continue to regulate extraction operations such as sand and gravel operations.
6. Direct certain commercial operations into the parts of the town served by municipal water and sewer.

Watersheds

Regular north to south watersheds feed three major north to south water bodies, the Kennebec River, Sebasticook River and Fifteen Mile Stream. The Town is almost entirely (89%) in the watershed of the Sebasticook River. To the west, the remaining 11% of Town's surface water flows into the Kennebec River. The watershed map shows the watershed areas.

The Sebasticook watershed is broken into the following four (4) parts:

1. The area lying west of the river, including Benton Station Village Growth District, that drains easterly directly into the river.
2. The area including Benton Falls that drains westerly directly into the river.
3. The area including East Benton that drains westerly into Clinton and then into the river.
4. The eastern edge of the Town that drains into Fifteen Mile Stream.

Shoreland Zoning

The town has Shoreland Zoning Ordinance, which regulates certain waterbodies and the land surrounding these water sources. A map showing the Shoreland Zoning Districts is included in this section. This map was in effect in 2006, however, it may be revised in the future to conform in state regulations. Areas within 250 feet of the Kennebec River, Sebasticook River, Fifteen Mile Stream and non-forested wetlands greater than 10 acres are regulated. An area within 75 feet of Fowler Brook and certain other streams are also regulated. The regulations impose water body setbacks and contain rules to protect water quality and control erosion.

The Shoreland Zoning Ordinance does not regulate all waterbodies in town. Small streams, forested wetlands and wetlands under 10 acres are not covered by the ordinance. The State of

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Maine has adopted regulations for development near all waterbodies including setbacks from waterbodies.

Wastewater Treatment Facility and Infrastructure

The Town of Benton partners with the Town of Fairfield on combined wastewater treatment at the Kennebec Plant.

The Town plans upgrade and maintenance of existing sewer facility (pump station) located at the corner of Bridge and Crummett Streets for calendar year 2018. Our capital improvement plan will include major improvements and expansion of our public waste disposal systems to include the Industrial Growth District.

Salt/Sand Pile

Benton does maintain a salt/sand pile storage building located in the Industrial Growth District. Additionally the Town shares services with the Town of Fairfield for street sweeping of our main corridor into Town, Bridge Street, which is located adjacent to the Kennebec River.

BENTON KEY FOCUS AREAS FOR WATER RESOURCES

- a. Review and adopt as appropriate for the Town size and strategy, Comprehensive Plan policies and strategies as provided by the State of Maine, Comprehensive Plan Review Criteria Rule (07 105 Chapter 208).
- b. Given the size of the Town we do not have Conservation Commission. The Town will need to incorporate these duties to the Economic Development Committee.
- c. There are a number of junk violations throughout the Town, which could pose a threat to the environment.
- d. A significant part of the Town depends upon wells for potable water.
- e. The rivers can serve as an economic asset for the community.
- f. Take enforcement measures where appropriate and review our local ordinances to protect the Town's groundwater resources.
- g. Proactively, make available technical assistance / educational information to stormwater runoff in and around Benton roads, inland water resources, and critical shoreline areas.

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3. NATURAL RESOURCES

This topic provides an overview of Benton's all the significant natural resources of the town and identifies measures to protect these resources for future generations. As appropriate for our Town's size and strategy, this topic will cover the analyses provided by the State of Maine, Comprehensive Plan Review Criteria Rule (07 105 Chapter 208). The analysis will provide an evaluation of the current conditions and trends which will support our natural resources policy and strategies identified in Section II of this Comprehensive Plan.

Analyses

- a. Are any of the community's critical natural resources threatened by development, overuse, or other activities?
- b. Are local shoreland zone standards consistent with state guidelines and with the standards placed on adjacent shorelands in neighboring communities?
- c. What regulatory and non-regulatory measures has the community taken or can the community take to protect critical natural resources and important natural resources?
- d. Is there current regional cooperation or planning underway to protect shared critical natural resources? Are there opportunities to partner with local or regional groups?


Conditions and Trends Evaluation

- a. The community's Comprehensive Planning Natural Resources Data Set prepared and provided to the community by the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, Department of Environmental Protection and the Office, or their designees.
- b. A map or description of scenic areas and scenic views of local importance, and regional or statewide importance, if available.


BUILDING A REGIONAL LANDSCAPE

The most significant source of information considered in this section is the regional map for Benton found in [Section IV – Map 3.0](#) titled “*Building a Regional Landscape Benton Section IV – Map 3.0*”. This maps provides overlays for four major topics, details of each overlay is taken directly from the Map legend. The analysis of Natural Resources section calls for reviewing Topics 2 – 4.

TOPIC 2 - MDIFW - High Value Plant and Animal Habitats (Section IV – Map 3.2)

 **Essential Wildlife Habitats (MDIFW)** - Maine's Department of Inland Fisheries & Wildlife (MDIFW, www.maine.gov/ifw) maps areas currently or historically providing habitat essential to the conservation of endangered or threatened species including roseate terns, piping plovers, and least terns as directed by the Maine Endangered Species Act. These regulated areas may require special management. Identification of Essential Habitat areas is based on species observations (occupancy). (MDIFW)

For more information about Essential Wildlife Habitats, go to www.maine.gov/ifw/wildlife/species/endangered_species/essential_habitat/introduction.htm. These habitat layers also may be downloaded from the Maine Office of GIS Data Catalog at <http://apollo.ogis.state.me.us/catalog> (MDIFW)

 **Significant Wildlife Habitats (MDIFW)** - Maine's Natural Resources Protection Act (NRPA, 1988) was intended to slow further degradation and loss of Maine's natural resources. This act regulates activities within and adjacent to wetlands, streams, and other natural resources, but also regulates activities that could threaten the state's Significant Wildlife Habitats. Mapped

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Significant Wildlife Habitats include tidal and inland waterfowl/wading bird habitat, deer wintering areas, seabird nesting islands, shorebird areas, and significant vernal pools. (MDIFW)

For more information about NRPA, go to: www.maine.gov/dep/blwq/docstand/nrpapage.htm (MDIFW)



Natural Heritage Network Occurrences (Plants/Animals/Communities)

Plants- Observations of plants cataloged by the Maine Natural Areas Program (MNAP) that are rare in Maine. Locations have been field-verified within the last 20 years. (MDIFW)

Animals- Observations of wildlife species that are endangered, threatened, or rare in Maine. Mapped by the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife. (MDIFW)

Communities- The MNAP has classified and distinguished 98 different natural community types that collectively cover the state's landscape. These include such habitats as floodplain forests, coastal bogs, alpine summits, and many others. Each type is assigned a rarity rank of 1 (rare) through 5 (common). Mapped rare natural communities or ecosystems, or exemplary examples of common natural communities or ecosystems, are based on field surveys and aerial photo interpretation. Consult with an MNAP ecologist to determine conservation needs of particular communities or ecosystems. (MDIFW)



High Value Habitat for Priority Trust Species (USFWS) - This data layer portrays the highest value habitat from the Gulf of Maine Watershed Habitat Analysis, a habitat suitability model developed by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) Gulf of Maine Coastal Program. The analysis evaluated existing field data and scientific literature for 91 species of fish, wildlife, and plants important to USFWS in the Gulf of Maine watershed and ranked the landscape based on potential habitat for each species. This theme shows only the most important habitat (top 25%) for all species combined and excludes areas less than 5 acres. (MDIFW)

For more information please see the 1:24,000 Map 2 "High Value Plant and Animal Habitats" and Map 8 "Valuable Habitats for USFWS Priority Trust Species." (MDIFW)

For more information about the Gulf of Maine Watershed Habitat Analysis please visit: <http://www.fws.gov/northeast/gulfofmaine> (MDIFW)

TOPIC 2 - BENTON- High Value Plant and Animal Habitats (Section IV – Map 3.2)

Benton Rare Plant, Fish and Wildlife Resources

The Town contains habitat for a diverse assortment of mammals, birds, reptiles and amphibians. The high value plant and wildlife habitat map shows important resources located in Benton. The Maine Natural Areas Program has identified rare and threatened plant species and the Department of Inland Fishers and Wildlife has identified significant and endangered wildlife habitats. Deer wintering areas and waterfowl habits are also identified.

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The following table is a list of rare plant and wildlife resource in Benton.

Rare Plant and Wildlife Species Table Source: (U.S Fish and Wildlife & MDIFW) http://www.maine.gov/ifw/fish-wildlife/wildlife/endangered-threatened-species/listed-species.html		
Name	State Rarity	State Status
Rare, Threatened, and Endangered Plants in Benton		
Barren-Strawberry	S1	Endangered
Long Leaved Bluet	S2	Special Concern
MacGregor's Rye	S2	Special Concern
Narrow Leaf Arrowhead	S2	Special Concern
Red-stemmed Gentian	S1	Endangered
Shining Ladies'-tresses	S1	Threatened
Stiff Arrowhead	S2	Threatened
Wild Coffee	S1	Endangered
Wild Garlic	S2	Special Concern
Rare, Threatened, and Endangered Animals in Benton		
Bald Eagle	S4B,S4N	Special Concern
Brook Floater	S3	Threatened
Ribbon Snake	S3	Special Concern
Sedge Wren	S1B	Endangered
Tidewater Mucket	S2	Threatened
Yellow Lampmussel	S2, S3	Threatened

State Rarity Ranks are determined by the Maine Natural Areas Program.
S1 Critically imperiled in Maine because of extreme rarity (five or fewer occurrences or very few remaining individuals or acres) or because some aspect of its biology makes it especially vulnerable to extirpation from the State of Maine.
S2 Imperiled in Maine because of rarity (6-20 occurrences or few remaining individuals or acres) or because of other factors making it vulnerable to further decline.
S3 Rare in Maine (20-100 occurrences).
S4 Apparently secure in Maine.
S5 Demonstrably secure in Maine.
SH Known historically from the state, not verified in the past 20 years.
SX Apparently extirpated from the state, loss of last known occurrence has been documented.
SU Under consideration for assigning rarity status; more information needed on threats or distribution.
S#? Current occurrence data suggests assigned rank, but lack of survey effort along with amount of potential habitat create uncertainty (e.g. S3?).

Fish species include: Alewife, American eel, Atlantic salmon.


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The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has identified migratory birds, andromous / catadromous fishers, and federal listed endangered and threatened species. The Identification Program is called the Priority Trust Species. The following species can be found in Benton.

Bird Species of Greatest Conservation Need Source: (U.S Fish and Wildlife & MDIFW) http://www.maine.gov/ifw/fish-wildlife/wildlife/endangered-threatened-species/listed-species.html		
Bird Species Name		
American Bitten	Common Nighthawk	Prairie Warbler
American Black Duck	Eastern Kingbird	Purple Finch
American Woodcock	Eastern Meadow Lark	Red Crossbill
Baltimore Oriole	Eastern Towhee	Rose-breasted Grosbeak
Bay-Breasted Warbler	Field Sparrow	Sandhill Crane
Black and White Warbler	Great Blue Heron	Scarlet Tanager
Black-throated Blue Warbler	Great-crested Flycatcher	Scarlet Tanager
Black-throated Green Warbler	Greater Yellowlegs	Veery
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	Horned Lark (breeding)	Vesper Sparrow
Boblink	Louisana Water Thrush	Willow Flycatcher
Canada Warbler	March Wren	Wood Thrush
Chestnut-sided Warbler	Northern Flicker	Yellow-bellied Sapsucker
Chimney Swift	Northern Parula	Yellow-throated Vireo
Common Loon	Pied-billed Grebe	

The town also has many other bird and fish species. The table above only list those species, which are considered, endangered and threatened by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services.

TOPIC 3 - MDIFW - Undeveloped Habitat Blocks (Section IV – Map 3.3)

 Undeveloped habitat blocks are areas with relatively little development and that provide opportunity for meaningful habitat conservation. These areas remain mostly un-fragmented and are likely to include habitat conditions of a quality that could be expected to support most terrestrial species known to occur in the given region. Undeveloped habitat blocks have been depicted on this map by removing areas within 250-500 feet, based on intensity, of all improved roads identified by the Maine Department of Transportation and all developed areas identified in the 2006 MELCD Land Use/Land Cover and 2005 Impervious Surface data. (MDIFW)

Development Buffer (MDIFW) - Areas defined by a 250-500 foot, intensity based zone of influence around all improved roads identified by the Maine Department of Transportation and all developed areas identified in the 2006 MELCD Land Use/Land Cover and 2005 Impervious Surface data. (MDIFW)

TOPIC 3 - BENTON - Undeveloped Habitat Blocks (Section IV – Map 3.3)

The Section IV, Map 3.3 highlights Benton's "undeveloped natural areas likely to provide core habitat blocks and habitat connections that facilitate species movements between blocks. Undeveloped habitat blocks provide relatively undisturbed habitat conditions required by many of

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Maine's species. Habitat connections provide necessary opportunities for wildlife to travel between preferred habitat types in search for food, water, and mates. Roads and development fragment habitat blocks and can be barriers to moving wildlife. By maintaining a network of interconnected blocks towns and land trusts can protect a wide variety of Maine's species. Maintaining a network of these large rural open spaces also protects future opportunities for forestry, agriculture, and outdoor recreation." (MDIFW)

The Town will use this map to guide growth and development towards land that has the capacity to absorb development without detrimental impacts to natural resources. With particular emphasis on Section IV, Map 3.0 Building a Regional Landscape and supporting Maps 3.2, 3.3 and 3.4. The Town will investigate incorporation of a network of interconnected blocks aimed to protect Maine's species through our local ordinances.

TOPIC 4 – MDIFW - Focus Areas



Focus Areas of Statewide Ecological Significance - Focus Areas of Statewide Ecological Significance have been designated based on an unusually rich convergence of rare plant and animal occurrences, high value habitat, and relatively intact natural landscapes (the combined elements of Beginning with Habitat Maps, [Town of Benton Comprehensive Plan Section IV Maps 3.1, 3.2, 3.3 and 3.4](#)). Focus area boundaries were drawn by MNAP and MDIFW biologists, generally following drainage divides and/or major fragmenting features such as roads. Focus Areas are intended to draw attention to these truly special places in hopes of building awareness and garnering support for land conservation by landowners, municipalities, and local land trusts. (MDIFW)

For descriptions of specific Focus Areas, consult the Beginning with Habitat notebook or the following website: <http://www.maine.gov/doc/nrimc/mnap/focusarea/index.htm> (MDIFW)

TOPIC 4 – BENTON - Focus Areas

Benton has a number of key conservation focus areas which are detailed below. The Town will need to review its shore-land zoning requirements to ensure these areas are protected to support the water quality necessary for rare, threatened and endangered animals, plants, aquatic and riparian species. In addition, conservation measures in this area will help protect traditional public access for hunting, fishing, recreation and educational opportunities.

Kennebec and Sebasticook Rivers

The Kennebec and Sebasticook Rivers are the best habitats for two rare mussels, the yellow lampmussel and the tidewater mussel, these rivers are also home to many plants and animals. Sebasticook River and its tributaries provide spawning and rearing habitat for Atlantic Salmon.

Unity Wetlands

The 42,000 acre Unity Wetlands Focus Area that spans several Maine towns including Benton. The area is noted for significance due to its diverse natural features; wetland and riparian-associated species and habitats. It is home to many threatened and rare plants, animals and natural communities, as well as to more wide-ranging creatures like black bear, moose and bobcat. Benton is one of five towns which encircle the site.

Specific details concerning this area is available in [Section IV – Map and Narrative 3.4](#) titled “*Focus Areas of Statewide Ecological Significance, Section IV – Map 3.4*”. The map and narrative provides details of the focus areas in Benton which have ecological significance.

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Fifteen Mile Stream

Fifteen mile Stream, a tributary of the Sebasticook, hosts high-quality stretches of Silver Maple Floodplain Forest, a type that is rare statewide. Loss of high-quality Silver Maple Forests and associated species, is a threat to decreased water quality. The Fifteen Mile Stream is also home to two rare mussels, the yellow lampmussel and the tidewater mussel.

The Nature Conservancy and the Natural Resources Conservation Service published draft document of conservation goals for period of (2006 – 2016), specifically to ensure the stream maintains their 'A' rating from DEP and continue to attain water quality status.

Fowler Bog

Fowler Bog is one of the two largest wetlands containing 700 acres. The bog is home to red maple wooded fen, shrubby fens and wet meadows. The overall concern is the potential for pollutants to enter the wetland from nearby roads and their associated development (primarily Routes 139 and 202).

The Nature Conservancy and the Natural Resources Conservation Service published draft document of conservation goals for period of (2006 – 2016), specifically to increase upland buffer to 75 feet along Fowler Bog at Benton Division to increase water quality.

Sunkhaze Meadows

Sunkhaze Meadows is a 355 acre federal preserve located on a former farm. The preserve protects significant bird habitat and trails allow public access into portions of the preserve. The meadows are home to many bird species and are a favorite for place for bird watchers.

The Nature Conservancy and the Natural Resources Conservation Service published draft document of conservation goals for period of (2006 – 2016). Specifically to encourage the implementation of Sunkhaze Meadows NWR Habitat Management Plan, specifically the plan's goals to increase forest buffer to 100 feet along Sandy Stream to protect water quality and freshwater mussels, and to increase upland buffer to 75 feet along Fowler Brook at Benton Division to protect water quality.



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SCENIC AREAS

Residents and commuters passing through the community often cherish scenic areas. A scenic area will be defined as a location that can be viewed from a public road or other public place. A view accessible only from private property while noteworthy will not be considered. The following is a list of some of the scenic views in Benton:

- a. Views of the Kennebec River from multiple points especially crossing the new bridge and on the Kennebec River Walking Trail.
- b. Views of the Sebasticook River from multiple points especially at the Dam and crossing the bridge.
- c. A view of the Kennebec River Dam from the River Road.
- d. Views along the Benton Falls Road.
- e. Views along the Pines Road.
- f. The Church located at the intersection of the East Benton Road and the Richards Road.
- g. The Dam along the Sebasticook River.
- h. The Grange Hall #458.
- i. The Congregational Church along the Benton Falls Road.
- j. Views of open fields along the Falls Road.
- k. Views of farms along the River Road.
- l. Views of farms along the Bangor Road.
- m. Riverview Park and Trail
- n. Kennebec River Walking Trail
- o. Sunkhaze Meadows National Wildlife Refuge

ALEWIFE PROGRAM

Benton hosts an annual Alewife Festival a celebration of Benton's annual Alewife harvest and successful fish ladder program. Festival attendees enjoy free activities (past events include; Alewife harvesting tours, "North Woods Law", Wind Over Wings live bird of prey demonstrations, K-9 Dog Demonstration, firetruck, bounce house, face painting, horse carriage rides, fun park access (miniature golf, batting cages), educational booths and children's activities, special guests including Lawrence High Schools' Larry the Bulldog, Frozen) while learning about the importance of the Alewife to the Maine ecosystem.



Photo, Kennebec Land Trust



Photo by Pat Turlo - Alewife Fish Ladder

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BENTON KEY FOCUS AREAS FOR NATURAL RESOURCES

- a. Review and adopt as appropriate for the Town size and strategy, Comprehensive Plan policies and strategies as provided by the State of Maine, Comprehensive Plan Review Criteria Rule (07 105 Chapter 208).
- b. Recreational opportunities along the river should be expanded.
- c. Rear land areas serve as wildlife habitats since most development occurs along existing road frontage.
- d. Most new development is scattered in the rural parts of the community.
- e. Open space design subdivisions in the rural parts of the Town could help to preserve our rural character.
- f. Active Code Enforcement is essential to protect our natural resources.
- g. There are a number of junk violations throughout the Town, which could pose a threat to the environment.
- h. The rivers can serve as an economic asset for the community.
- i. Continue to grow Alewife Program.
- j. Benton's local ordinances currently do not:
 - provide a network of interconnected blocks aimed to protect Maine's species,
 - designate preservation districts prohibiting development in key natural resource areas,
 - designate critical natural resources with particular emphasis on Section IV – Map 3.0-Building a Regional Landscape and supporting Maps 3.1, 3.2, 3.3 and 3.4.
- k. Encourage and support citizen and regional efforts to decrease nonpoint source pollution flowing into Benton's bodies of water, including inland water resources and habitats.
- l. Protect soils and groundwater from older and poorly working septic systems by exploring ways to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of Benton's sewer system ensuring wastewater meets all applicable environmental standards for the Kennebec and the Sebasticook Rivers, as well as, key focus areas identified.
- m. Consult with surrounding municipalities to develop and maintain an all-hazard emergency response plan.
- n. Encourage communication & coordination with the State & private organizations in the preservation & enhancement of fish & wildlife resources in Benton
- o. Evaluate the potential for the acquisition of property for the preservation of significant local natural resources
- p. Benton will follow and support any outcomes from the Sunhaze Meadows NWR Habitat Management Plan, specifically the plan's goals to increase forest buffer to 100 feet along Sandy Stream to protect water quality and freshwater mussels, and to increase upland buffer to 75 feet along Fowler Brook at Benton Division to protect water quality. Support will include adjustments to the local ordinances for modifications to increase upland buffers.
- q. Benton will follow and support the Nature Conservancy and the Natural Resources Conservation Service published draft document of conservation goals for period of (2006 – 2016), specifically to ensure the Fifteen Mile stream maintains their 'A' rating from DEP and continue to attain water quality status. Support will include adjustments to the local ordinances for modifications to increase upland buffers.
- r. Benton will work with the Nature Conservancy and the Natural Resources Conservation Service to identify all key parcels and provide information on special qualities and vulnerabilities for riparian zone.

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4. AGRICULTURAL AND FOREST RESOURCES

This topic provides an analysis of Benton's agricultural and forest resources. As appropriate for our Town's size and strategy, this topic will cover the analyses provided by the State of Maine, Comprehensive Plan Review Criteria Rule (07 105 Chapter 208). The analysis will provide an evaluation of the current conditions and trends which will support our agricultural and forest resources policy and strategies identified in Section II of this Comprehensive Plan.

Analyses

- a. How important is agriculture and/or forestry and are these activities growing, stable, or declining?
- b. Is the community currently taking regulatory and/or non-regulatory steps to protect productive farming and forestry lands? Are there local or regional land trusts actively working to protect farms or forest lands in the community?
- c. Are farm and forest land owners taking advantage of the state's current use tax laws?
- d. Has proximity of new homes or other incompatible uses affected the normal farming and logging operations?
- e. Are there large tracts of agricultural or industrial forest land that have been or may be sold for development in the foreseeable future? If so, what impact would this have on the community?

Conditions and Trends Evaluation

- a. The community's Comprehensive Planning Agriculture and Forestry Data Set prepared and provided to the community by the Department of Agriculture, the Maine Forest Service, and the Office, or their designees.
- b. A map and/or description of the community's farms, farmland, and managed forest lands and a brief description of any that are under threat.
- c. Information on the number of parcels and acres of farmland, tree growth, and open space enrolled in the state's farm, tree growth, and open space law taxation programs, including changes in enrollment over the past 10 years.
- d. A description of any community farming and forestry activities (e.g. community garden, farmer's market, or community forest).

OVERVIEW

Benton covers an area of 28.4 square miles and is mostly forested. The Kennebec River defines western boundary of the town and the Sebasticook River flows through the town providing an important riverine environment. The Town does not contain any lakes or ponds, however, numerous streams and both open and forested wetlands can be found throughout the community. Most development is located adjacent to existing town roads. Rear land areas provide habitat for wildlife.

A. Land Cover

The developed portion of the town consists of the three districts and areas adjacent the town roadways. The remaining land area consists of farmland, open fields, wetlands, rivers, streams and forests.

The land area between the Kennebec and Sebasticook Rivers is made up mostly of fields and farms. A large forest area does extend south from the Clinton town line to the Neck Road.

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The area of the town east of the Sebasticook River consists mostly of forest, which includes forested wetland areas. Pockets of open fields and farmland can be found along the Unity and Gogan Roads. A significant portion of the eastern part of town is undeveloped forest which lacks road access.

B. Topography

Almost the entire town lies between elevation 100 - 240 feet above mean sea level along gently sloping topography. The extreme low point occurs at the southern end of the Sebasticook River at elevation 50 feet. The highest location occurs in the southeast corner of town near the top of Shores Hill at elevation 360 feet.

The rivers and Fifteenmile Stream lie within channels having embankments as high as 60 -100 feet. The most level portion of the town lies between the Kennebec and Sebasticook Rivers and varies less than 100 feet between extremes. The north central quarter of town undulates with low relief. Also less than 100 feet between extremes. The eastern and southeastern areas, totaling about half of the town, rise and fall more sharply. Elevations vary more here where the highest and lowest is about 200 feet.

C. Soils

Soil types determine the capacity of the land to support various land use activities. The carrying capacity of the land is the ability of that land to support a particular kind of activity without substantial degradation of the resource. Complete soil data for the town is located in the "Soil Survey of Kennebec County", published by the United States of Agriculture Soil Conversation Service. The survey identifies and maps soil types in Benton and provides data about the suitability of soils for different activities such as farming, forest, development and septic systems. A summary of the major soil types found in Benton is as follows:

Hollis-Paxton-Charlton-Woodbridge Association

This soil type was formed from glacial till and can be shallow and deep, somewhat excessively drained to moderately well drained, gently sloping, moderately to steep, moderately coarse textured soils. It is usually found on hills and ridges. These soils are mainly in woodland areas, however, many areas are farmed and used for other purposes. The well-drained Paxton and Charlton soils are suited to cultivate corps, orchards, and other intensive uses such as dairy farms. The Woodbridge soils have limitations for both farm and non-farm uses.

Buxton-Scio-Scanti Association

This soil type was formed from marine and lacustrine sediment and is deep, moderately well drained to poorly drained nearly level to sloping, medium textured soil. The till is found as flat areas and near waterways. The soils in this association are used mainly for hay, pasture and woodland. Wetness and permeability are the major limitations to use for cultivated crops and septic systems. Supplemental drainage and erosion control are the major concerns in this soil type.

Scanti-Rdidgebury-Buxton Association

This soil type formed in marine and lacustrine sediments, as well as, in glacial soil. These soils are deep, poorly drained to moderately drained, nearly level to sloping. Medium textured soils are found in valleys and moderately coarse textured soils are found in flat areas or depressions. Some areas of this type are grassland, but most are in woodland.

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Prime Farmland Soils

Prime farmland soils have the best potential for productive agricultural operations. These soils are identified as prime agricultural soils and farmland soils and of statewide significance. Prime agricultural soils cover approximately 1,250 acres or 6.7% of the town land area while farmland soils of statewide significance cover 2,600 acres or about 14% of land area.

The prime agricultural soils include the following soil types:

- Woodbridge, fine sandy lam deep moderately well drained, suitable for hay, pasture, woodland and some annual crops.
- Paxton-Charlton, fine sandy loam, deep, well drained suitable for woodland, hay, pasture, crops and orchards.
- Winooski, silt loam, very small areas located next to rivers.

Farmland soils of statewide significance include the following soil types:

- Woodbridge, very stony, fine sandy loam.
- Scio, very sandy loam, deep, mostly well drained, suitable for woodland, hay, paster and is wet in the spring.
- Paxton-Charlton, very stony fine sandy loam.

Specific details concerning the prime farmland soils is available in [Section IV – Agricultural Resources Map 4.1](#) titled “*Agricultural Resources Map, Section IV – Map 4.1*”. The map provides details on farmland of statewide importance and prime farmland in Benton. Most of the soils are located east of the Seabasticook River.

FARMLAND

Agriculture played an important role in Benton's history and it still has a strong presence in the community. Most farms are located between the Kennebec and Seabasticook Rivers and on land near the East Side of the Seabasticook River. Dairy farms and hay production are the most common agriculture operations. In 2013 the Town has 87 land parcels covering 1,747 acres listed under the farmland tax program. This includes forested lands, which are part of the farm.

Agriculture has undergone many changes in the past years and many large dairy operations have closed throughout the region. Despite these changes, many smaller farming enterprises have begun which are involved in niche markets, and direct sales to consumers. Some examples include alpaca farm, horse boarding, rice farm, etc.

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FORESTRY

At least 70% of the Town's land cover consist of woodlands. Most of the woodland is located east of the Seabasticook River. In 2013 the Town has 52 land parcels covering 2,617 acres enrolled in the tree growth tax program. Local timber harvesting activities are regulated by the State.

The following table provides a summary of timber harvest information for the Town of Benton:

YEAR	Selection harvest, acres	Shelter-wood harvest, acres	Clear-cut harvest, acres	Total Harvest, acres	Change of land use, acres	Number of active Notifications
1991	103	20	35	158	0	7
1992	80	0	82	162	0	7
1993	250	0	89	339	15	11
1994	316	40	2	358	2	8
1995	92	6	0	98	0	4
1996	110	6	3	119	0	5
1997	135	50	5	190	5	8
1998	279	107	7	393	0	13
1999	572	79	0	651	0	29
2000	4392	95	0	4487	2	28
2001	408	0	0	408	3	26
2002	286	0	0	286	0	14
2003	236	40	0	276	0	19
2004	188	0	0	188	0	13
2005	309	21	0	330	2	13
2006	221	2	0	223	0	20
2007	260	0	0	260	0	14
2008	181	49	0	230	0	18
2009	209	0	0	209	3	17
2010	263	0	0	263	36	19
2011	55	0	0	55	0	13
2012	110	30	0	140	0	12
2013	77	0	0	77	0	10
Total	9132	545	223	9900	68	328
Average	397	24	10	430	3	14

** To protect confidential landowner information, data is reported only where three or more landowner reports reported harvesting in the town.*

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BENTON KEY FOCUS AREAS FOR AGRICULTURAL AND FOREST RESOURCES

- a. Review and adopt as appropriate for the Town size and strategy, Comprehensive Plan policies and strategies as provided by the State of Maine, Comprehensive Plan Review Criteria Rule (07 105 Chapter 208).
- b. The Town still has a considerable amount of land in undeveloped forest, especially in the eastern portions of the Town. Consult with Maine Forest Service district forester to help develop management practices.
- c. Farming plays an important role in the community. The Town should promote local foods and value-added industry through support of the farmers market and incentives for related businesses.
- d. Most new development is scattered in the rural parts of the community. Examine amendment to 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.
- e. Limit non-residential development in critical rural areas (if the town designates critical rural areas) to natural resource-based businesses and services, nature tourism/outdoor recreation businesses, farmers' markets, and home occupations.
- f. Active Code Enforcement is essential to protect our agriculture and forest resources.
- g. The Town will provide land owners with information regarding the state's current use tax laws.

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5. MARINE RESOURCES

Intentionally left blank. The Town of Benton does not have any Marine Resource considerations.

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6. POPULATION AND DEMOGRAPHICS

This topic provides an analysis of Benton's population and demographics. The State of Maine Comprehensive Plan Review Criteria Rule does not state a goal for the Population and Demographics section of a Comprehensive Plan. This section serves as a source of information to clarify conditions and trends that might affect other sections of the Town of Benton Comprehensive Plan.

Population and demographic changes play significant roles in our future. Among other factors, these changes can influence Benton's character, available open space, school size, commercial development, and level or type of municipal services.

Analyses

- a. Is the rate of population change expected to continue as in the past, or to slow down or speed up? What are the implications of this change?
- b. What will be the likely demand for housing and municipal and school services to accommodate the change in population and demographics, both as a result of overall change and as a result of change among different age groups?
- c. Does your community have a significant seasonal population, is the nature of that population changing? What is the community's dependence on seasonal visitors?
- d. If your community is a service center or has a major employer, are additional efforts required to serve a daytime population that is larger than its resident population?

Conditions and Trends Evaluation

- a. The community's Comprehensive Planning Population and Demographic Data Set (including relevant local, regional, and statewide data) prepared and provided to the community by the Office or its designee.

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YEAR ROUND POPULATION CHANGE

Between 1920 and 1960, Benton's population grew on the average of 100 persons per decade. During the 1960's, the town grew by 208 persons. Population growth peaked during the 1970's with an increase of 459 persons. Growth slowed during the 1980's and again increased significantly between 1990 and 2000 with an increase of 245 persons. The following table details the historical population figures for Benton, Kennebec County and the State of Maine. The town has exceeded the county and state growth rates between 1960 and 2010. Consistent with state and county growth decreases, Benton reflects a decrease in growth between 2010 and 2015.

TABLE 6.1

Historical Population Trends (Source: US Census Bureau, Census)			
Year	Benton	Kennebec County	State of Maine
1920	1,108	63,844	768,014
1930	1,156	70,691	797,423
1940	1,290	77,231	847,226
1950	1,421	83,881	914,950
1960	1,521	89,150	970,689
1970	1,729	95,247	992,048
1980	2,188	109,889	1,124,660
1990	2,312	115,904	1,227,928
2000	2,557	117,114	1,274,923
2010	2,732	122,151	1,328,361
2015	2,654	119,980	1,329,453
1970-1980 Change	26.5%	15.4%	13.4%
1980-1990 Change	5.7%	5.5%	9.2%
1990-2000 Change	10.6%	1.0%	3.8%
2000-2010 Change	6.8%	4.3%	4.2%
2010-2015 Change	-2.9%	-1.8%	0.1%

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COMPARATIVE POPULATION TRENDS

The Comparative Population Trends contains a summary of population changes over the past 35 years for Benton and a number of nearby communities, Kennebec County and the State. A shift occurred in 2010-2015 reflecting the rural towns reviewed in Table 3.5 are losing population, this is consistent with the trend for Kennebec County overall.

TABLE 6.2

Comparative Population Trends (Source: US Census Bureau, Census 1980, 1990, 2000, 2010, 2015)									
Municipality	1980	1990	2000	2010	2015	% Change 1980- 1990	% Change 1990- 2000	% Change 2000- 2010	% Change 2010- 2015
Benton	2,188	2,312	2,557	2,732	2,654	6%	11%	7%	-3%
Clinton	2,696	3,312	3,340	3,486	3,322	23%	1%	4%	-5%
Fairfield	6,113	6,718	6,573	6,735	6,542	10%	-2%	2%	-3%
Albion	1,551	1,736	1,946	2,041	2,032	12%	12%	5%	0%
Unity	1,431	1,817	1,889	2,099	2,086	27%	4%	11%	-1%
Winslow	8,057	7,997	7,743	7,794	7,551	-1%	-3%	1%	-3%
Waterville	17,779	17,173	15,605	15,722	16,261	-3%	-9%	1%	3%
Canaan	1,189	1,636	2,017	2,275	2,241	38%	23%	13%	-1%
Burnham	951	961	1,142	1,164	1,178	1%	19%	2%	1%
Kennebec County	109,889	115,904	117,114	122,151	119,980	5%	1%	4%	-2%
State of Maine	1,124,660	1,127,928	1,274,923	1,328,361	1,329,453	0%	13%	4%	0%

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LAND AREA AND POPULATION DENSITY

Population density is an important factor in how attractive a rural town is to new residents looking for a rural quality of life. Benton has one of the highest population densities among rural towns in the area. This may indicate that some people will bypass the town for more rural environments. However, the town's close proximity to the Waterville Labor Market area will still provide an attractive incentive for some families.

TABLE 6.3

Land Area and Population Density (Source: U.S. Census)									
Municipality	Square Miles	1990	1990 Persons per sq. mile	2000	2000 Persons per sq. mile	2010	2010 Persons per sq. mile	2015	2015 Persons per sq. mile
Benton	28.4	2,312	81.4	2,557	90.0	2,732	96.2	2,654	93.5
Clinton	43.9	3,312	75.4	3,340	76.1	3,486	79.4	3,322	75.7
Fairfield	53.8	6,718	124.9	6,573	122.2	6,735	125.2	6,542	121.6
Albion	38.9	1,736	44.6	1,946	50.0	2,041	52.5	2,032	52.2
Unity	39.6	1,817	45.9	1,889	47.7	2,099	53.0	2,086	52.7
Winslow	36.9	7,997	216.7	7,743	209.8	7,794	211.2	7,551	204.6
Waterville	13.6	17,173	1,263.6	15,605	1,148.3	15,722	1,156.9	16,261	1,196.5
Canaan	41.1	1,636	39.8	2,017	49.1	2,275	55.4	2,241	54.5
Burnham	36.9	961	26.0	1,142	30.9	1,164	31.5	1,178	31.9
Kennebec County	867	115,904	133.7	117,114	135.1	122,151	140.9	122,151	140.9
State of Maine	30,864	1,127,928	36.5	1,274,923	41.3	1,328,361	43.0	1,328,361	43.0

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GENERAL POPULATION DATA

TABLE 6.4

Profile of General Population and Housing Characteristics (Source: US Census Bureau, Census 1980, 1990, 2000, 2010)								
Total Population	1980	%	1990	%	2000	%	2010	%
Total Population	2,188		2,312		2,557		2,732	
Male Population	1,096	50.1%	1,176	50.9%	1,311	51.3%	1,357	49.7%
Female Population	1,092	49.9%	1,136	49.1%	1,246	48.7%	1,375	50.3%
Median Age	29.0		35.0		38.0		42.5	
Total Households	718		854		1,013		1,104	
Family Households	591	82.3%	675	79.0%	750	74.0%	792	71.7%
Family Households with Children	N/A		N/A		333	32.9%	304	27.5%
Married Couple Family Households	520	72.4%	577	67.6%	610	60.2%	623	56.4%
Non-Family Households	153	21.3%	179	21.0%	263	26.0%	312	28.3%
Non-Family Households Living Alone	106	14.8%	135	15.8%	197	19.4%	243	22.0%
Households with Persons Under 18 Years	N/A		N/A		351	34.6%	337	30.5%
Households with Persons 65 Years & Older	136	18.9%	N/A		221	21.8%	303	27.4%
Persons in Group Quarters	0		0		0		0	
Average Household Size	3.05		2.71	-11.15%	2.52	-17.38%	2.47	-19.02%
Average Family Size	N/A		N/A		2.88		2.84	

COMPONENTS OF CHANGE

Between 1990 and 2000 the population increased by 245 persons and 2000 to 2010 by 175. Population change is the result of two factors; natural increase and net migration. Natural increase is the difference between the number of resident births and the number of resident deaths in the community. Net migration is the net change in people moving into the community and those moving out of the community. Historically, the growth in population has been driven by the net migration of new residents moving into Benton.

OVERALL TRENDS

The trends listed below are strong indicators that the Town will see an increased demand for housing and that 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.

As we consider the impact of smaller households, this will likely mean that more (and different) housing units are needed to accommodate.

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EDUCATION ATTAINMENT

Benton residents continue to be well educated. In 2015, 24.05% held an associate degree or higher and 88.36% of residents had a high school or higher. The most significant shift from 2010 to 2015 was the increase reflecting more residents the increase in degrees over high school increased by 5.61%.

TABLE 6.5

Education Status Maine, Kennebec County & Benton (Source: 2000, 2010, 2015 U.S. Census & http://econ.maine.gov/index/comprehensive)									
Educational Attainment	Benton 2000	Kennebec County 2000	Maine 2000	Benton 2010	Kennebec County 2010	Maine 2010	Benton 2015	Kennebec County 2015	Maine 2015
Less than 9th Grade	119	4,528	47,183	39	3,119	35,336	113	2,869	29,080
9th to 12th Grade, No Diploma	189	7,183	80,105	107	5,162	59,859	127	4,504	50,525
High School Graduate Only	760	29,882	314,600	890	31,724	326,777	937	30,819	316,556
Some College, No Degree	265	15,143	165,111	423	16,308	178,022	389	18,011	189,860
Associate Degree	191	6,224	63,934	150	8,174	82,580	233	8,607	90,595
Bachelor's Degree	137	10,397	129,992	133	12,919	159,601	187	13,245	178,375
Graduate or Professional Degree	109	6,005	68,968	47	7,528	87,126	76	8,403	97,786
% High School Graduate or Higher	82.60%	85.24%	85.37%	91.84%	90.25%	89.76%	88.36%	91.47%	91.64%
% Associate's Degree or Higher	24.69%	28.51%	30.22%	18.45%	33.70%	35.44%	24.05%	34.99%	38.49%

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AGE DISTRIBUTION

Benton's population appears to be moving in two different directions. On one hand, many young families are moving into the community increasing school enrollments. On the other, Benton's population has been getting older. The number of children under 5 years old has dropped over the past 20 years. Household size has also declined. The median age has increased by 21.4% and the fastest growing age category is between 55 and 64 years old.

TABLE 6.6

Population Trends by Age (Source: US Census Bureau, Census 1990, 2000, 2010)								
Total Population	1990	%	2000	%	2010	%	20 Year Change	%
Total Population	2312		2557		2732		420	18.2%
Median Age	35		38		42.5		8	21.4%
Average Household Size	2.71		2.52		2.47		0	-8.9%
18 Years & Older	1710	74.0%	1862	72.8%	2118	77.5%	408	23.9%
Under 5 Years	177	7.7%	139	5.4%	137	5.0%	-40	-22.6%
5-17 Years	425	18.4%	496	19.4%	477	17.5%	52	12.2%
18-24 Years	217	9.4%	154	6.0%	176	6.4%	-41	-18.9%
25-34 Years	763	33.0%	782	30.6%	277	10.1%	-486	-63.7%
35-44 Years	267	11.5%	408	16.0%	402	14.7%	135	50.6%
45-54 Years	112	4.8%	171	6.7%	429	15.7%	317	283.0%
55-64 Years	100	4.3%	104	4.1%	416	15.2%	316	316.0%
65 to 69 Years	101	4.4%	107	4.2%	165	6.0%	64	63.4%
70 to 74 Years	76	3.3%	7	0.3%	85	3.1%	9	11.8%
75 to 79 Years	42	1.8%	68	2.7%	94	3.4%	52	123.8%
80 to 84 Years	19	0.8%	34	1.3%	32	1.2%	13	68.4%
85 Years and Older	13	0.6%	27	1.1%	42	1.5%	29	223.1%

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The following table shows the projected changes in various age categories for the next 20 years. The population of children between 0 and 17 years and adults between 18 and 44 years old will remain stable. However, persons over the age of 45 years will increase for 48.4% of the total population in 2020 as compared to 46.2% in 2010.

TABLE 6.7

Population - by Age (Decennial) (Source: US Census Bureau, Decennial Census)				
Total Population	1990	2000	2010	2020
0 to 4 Years	177	139	137	141
5 to 17 Years	425	496	477	460
18 to 29 Years	392	318	300	331
30 to 44 Years	588	618	555	632
45 to 64 Years	479	683	845	919
65 to 79 Years	219	242	344	443
80 Years and Over	32	61	74	107
Total Population	2,312	2,557	2,732	3,033

The population projections from the Governor's Office of Policy and Management show a stable population of persons between 0 and 17 years of age through 2020. This projection should be monitored very carefully since data from MSAD #49 annual projections and data from the census and the state to maintain accurate projections.

Population Projections

Population estimates are at best your view into the future taking into account for current trends. Changes in the economy and housing market can quickly alter growth predications. Many other factors can also influence population changes including household size, median age, birth rate and mortality rate. The town should pay close attention to annual changes in housing construction and other local and regional indicators. Demographic and related data is available from the Governor's Office of Policy and Management, Census Bureau and the Maine State Housing Authority.

Keeping track of demographic data will allow the town to determine if some of the projections made in this plan are accurate and whether revisions are necessary. Population projections are important because it gives the town a way to anticipate future needs such as municipal services, and schools.

The 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%.

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TABLE 6.8

Population - Projections, City and Town from (Source: Governor's Office of Policy & Management)										
Year	2000	2010	2017	2019	2022	2024	2027	2029	2032	2034
Population Projection	2,557	2,732	2,663	2,647	2,621	2,605	2,571	2,556	2,510	2,494

The following conditions and trends may influence Benton's population projections:

- Benton has one of the higher population densities for rural community in the area. Potential new residents may decide to locate in a more sparsely settle rural town.
- Land along existing road frontage is quickly being developed. Rear land developments cost more, which may push some housing to locate in other towns.
- The population is getting older. Will older residents still want to live in rural communities?
- The future loss of manufacturing jobs such as paper mills may affect population and housing growth.

BENTON KEY FOCUS AREAS FOR POPULATION TRENDS

- a. The median age will continue to increase.
- b. What will be the impact of an aging population upon town services and programs?
- c. The town should monitor population data and trends to verify population projections.
- d. The Comprehensive Plan should be updated with the 2020 Census date by 2022.
- e. The number of school age children should be monitored closely. Governor's Office of Policy and Management projections show a stable population of persons under 17 years until 2020. This conflicts with MSAD #49 population projections, which indicate a decline of school age children.
- f. Close to half the town's population will be over 45 years old by 2020.
- g. The availability of high-wage jobs for young people will determine if they remain in the region.
- h. The economic health of the region will affect future housing and population growth.
- i. The gain or loss of paper mill jobs in the region will affect Benton and surrounding communities.
- j. People move into rural communities for some of the following reasons; low taxes, rural character, open space, a safe and crime-free environment, and school quality.
- k. MSAD #49 is perceived as a good school system, which has improved greatly over the past years.
- l. The availability of affordable housing will help to attract younger families.
- m. Identifying the reasons new people move into Benton is important to the planning process.

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7. LOCAL ECONOMY

This topic provides an overview of Benton's economic climate. While Benton is often viewed as only a residential community, economic activities play a significant role. The main challenge for our Town is to encourage commercial development in a way that helps balance the tax base.

As appropriate for our Town's size and strategy, this topic will cover the analyses provided by the State of Maine, Comprehensive Plan Review Criteria Rule (07 105 Chapter 208). The analysis will provide an evaluation of the current conditions and trends which will support our local economy policy and strategies identified in Section II of this Comprehensive Plan.

Analyses

- a. Is the economy experiencing significant change, and how does this, or might this, affect the local population, employment, and municipal tax base?
- b. Does the community have defined priorities for economic development? Are these priorities reflected in regional economic development plans?
- c. If there is a traditional downtown or village center(s) in the community? If so, are they deteriorating or thriving?
- d. Is tourism an important part of the local economy? If so, what steps has the community taken to support this industry?
- e. Do/should home occupations play a role in the community?
- f. Are there appropriate areas within the community for industrial or commercial development? If so, are performance standards necessary to assure that industrial and commercial development is compatible with the surrounding land uses and landscape?
- g. Are public facilities, including sewer, water, broadband access or three-phase power, needed to support the projected location, type, and amount of economic activity, and what are the issues involved in providing them?
- h. If there are local or regional economic development incentives such as TIF districting, do they encourage development in growth areas?
- i. How can/does the community use its unique assets such as recreational opportunities, historic architecture, civic events, etc. for economic growth?

Conditions and Trends Evaluation

- a. The community's Comprehensive Planning Economic Data Set prepared and provided to the community by the Office or its designee.
- b. A brief historical perspective on how and why the current economy of the community and region developed.
- c. A list of local and regional economic development plans developed over the past five years, which include the community.
- d. Where does the community's population work and where do employees in your community reside? A description of the major employers in the community and labor market area and their outlook for the future.
- e. A description of any economic development incentive districts, such as tax increment financing districts, in the community.

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COMMUTING PATTERNS

The following table provides the commuting patterns for area towns. Of the towns reviewed Benton residents have the second lowest travel time for residents. This may be due to number of residents working.

Travel Time to Work Source (MaineDOT 2015)						
Category	Benton	Albion	Clinton	Fairfield	Waterville	Winslow
Workers over 16 who did not work at home	1,159	849	1,455	2,870	6,140	3,613
Less than 5 minutes	73	65	29	88	610	207
5 to 9 minutes	83	30	58	478	2,053	669
10 to 14 minutes	183	31	177	683	1,021	667
15 to 19 minutes	238	130	301	571	322	636
20 to 24 minutes	173	180	253	298	593	320
25 to 29 minutes	79	61	86	142	422	126
30 to 34 minutes	112	77	249	292	382	491
35 to 39 minutes	5	44	53	49	97	83
40 to 44 minutes	18	37	44	25	157	108
45 to 59 minutes	77	126	99	63	67	109
60 to 89 minutes	74	47	74	103	319	163
90 or more minutes	44	21	32	58	97	34
Total Travel Time	2,318	1,698	2,910	5,720	12,280	7,226

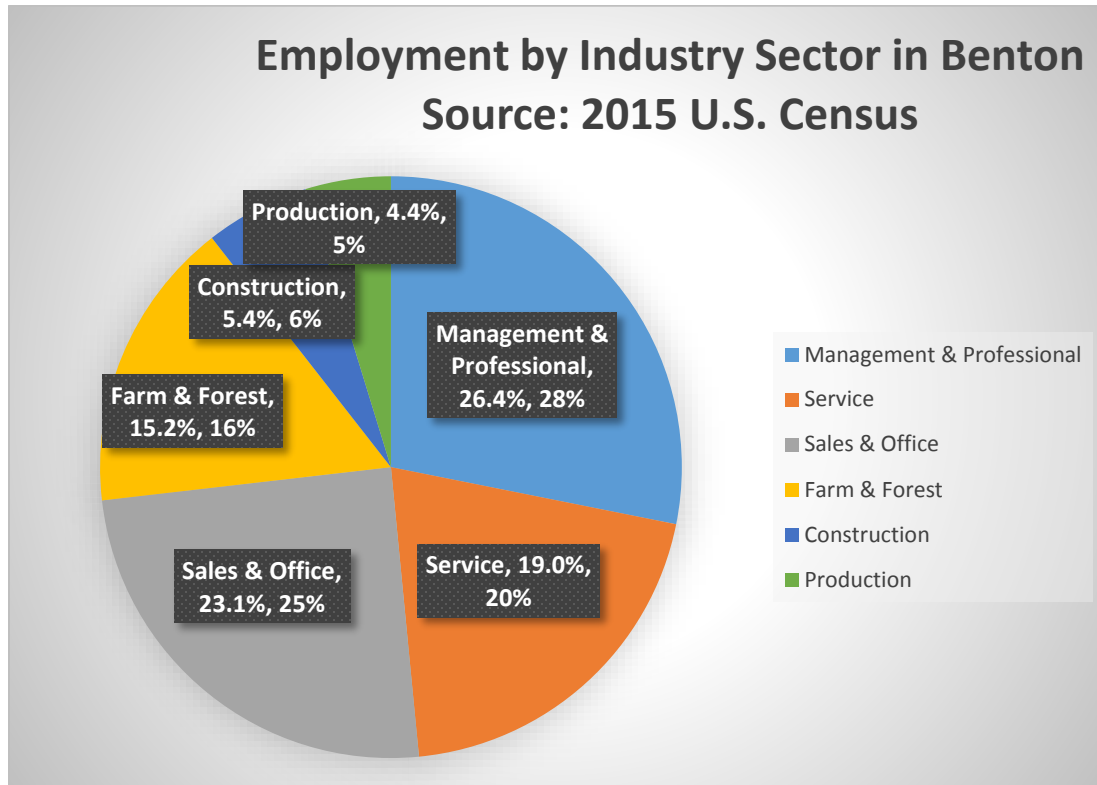
RESIDENT EMPLOYMENT BY OCCUPATION

Benton's population is increasingly employed in white collar occupations. The percent of Benton residents working in executive, managerial, and professional occupations increased from 11.1% in 1980 to more than 26.4% in 2015. This increase was offset by relative decreases in sales, office and blue collar occupations; construction and production.

Benton Occupation of Employed Persons Over 16 Years of Age (Source: 2015 U.S. Census)								
Workers	1980	% of Total	1990	% of Total	2000	% of Total	2015	% of Total
Total Workers	951		1,177		1,201		1,214	
Management & Professional	106	11.1%	207	17.6%	272	22.6%	320	26.4%
Service	119	12.5%	188	16.0%	228	19.0%	231	19.0%
Sales & Office	251	26.4%	315	26.8%	342	28.5%	281	23.1%
Farm & Forest	65	6.8%	16	1.4%	14	1.2%	185	15.2%
Construction	160	16.8%	206	17.5%	183	15.2%	66	5.4%
Production	250	26.3%	245	20.8%	162	13.5%	54	4.4%

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A more detail picture is the occupation of Benton residents by Industry Sector.



While there are limited areas to support new non-residential use for the community, there is potential for growth along Route 100. Benton's above-average income, commuting patterns, and educated residents offer an attractive base to further enable the growth of a quality and diverse business base.

BENTON KEY FOCUS AREAS FOR LOCAL ECONOMY

- a. Review and adopt as appropriate for the Town size and strategy, Comprehensive Plan policies and strategies as provided by the State of Maine, Comprehensive Plan Review Criteria Rule (07 105 Chapter 208).
- b. Support the type of economic development activity that reflects the community's role in the region.
- c. Make a financial commitment to support desired economic development, including needed public improvements.
- d. Coordinate with regional development corporations and surrounding towns to support desired economic development.
- e. Attract and retain desirable businesses to increase the town tax base and available employment.
- f. Ensure business applications find clear and predictable outcomes early in the application process.
- g. Pursue specific projects, while being frugal on maintaining low administrative operations.
- h. Continue to utilize TIF districts to enable greater economic growth.
- i. Develop a comprehensive strategy and master plan for the Town's major arteries (Bridge Street, Benton Avenue, River Road, Route 100 and 100A) including gateway signs, improved appearance.
- j. Identify appropriate grant programs to further the Town's economic development strategies in the most cost-effective manner possible.

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- k. Town should retain tax-acquired properties and purchase appropriate sites throughout town which are best suited to provide options for improving open space and recreational opportunities.
- l. Seek business community input on a regular basis to help shape the strategies and tactics of Benton economic development.

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8. HOUSING

This topic provides an analysis of Benton's housing resources. As appropriate for our Town's size and strategy, this topic will cover the analyses provided by the State of Maine, Comprehensive Plan Review Criteria Rule (07 105 Chapter 208). The analysis will provide an evaluation of the current conditions and trends which will support our housing policy and strategies identified in Section II of this Comprehensive Plan.

Analyses

- a. How many additional housing units (if any), including rental units, will be necessary to accommodate projected population and demographic changes during the planning period?
- b. Is housing, including rental housing, affordable to those earning the median income in the region? Is housing affordable to those earning 80% of the median income? If not, review local and regional efforts to address issue.
- c. Are seasonal homes being converted to year-round use or vice-versa? What impact does this have on the community?
- d. Will additional low and moderate income family, senior, or assisted living housing be necessary to meet projected needs for the community? Will these needs be met locally or regionally?
- e. Are there other major housing issues in the community, such as substandard housing?
- f. How do existing local regulations encourage or discourage the development of affordable/workforce housing?

Conditions and Trends Evaluation

- a. The community's Comprehensive Planning Housing Data Set prepared and provided to the community by the Maine State Housing Authority, and the Office, or their designees.
- b. Information on existing local and regional affordable/workforce housing coalitions or similar efforts.
- c. A summary of local regulations that affect the development of affordable/workforce housing.

Maine's Growth Management Act recommends encouraging and promoting diverse housing opportunities for all Maine citizens.

A housing stock with diverse price points plays a significant role in our community to achieve that goal. It enables a wider range of individuals and families of varying economic means an opportunity for a "home," providing security, privacy, health, community. It also provides value in non-tangible ways: culturally, demographically, economically, and educationally. For the local businesses, it may affect their ability to attract and sustain customers.

Below is a review and general inventory of the housing in Benton. It includes historical growth, the varying types of housing, and actions that the Town should consider with regard to housing.

After reviewing the information gathered in this section and discussions with residents, the Strategic Planning Committee believes that diverse housing is important to the life blood of our community as we move into the next decade and future. Given that we are an aging population, the Strategic Planning Committee urges the Town to consider the question of whether the housing stock in Benton is sufficient to serve the future needs and interests of its senior citizens.

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HOUSING GROWTH TRENDS

Benton new housing trends are declining. According to the Town's data, Benton had 154 new housing units for period 2000-2009.

For period 2010-2013, this number declined to 18 new housing units, a decrease of 12%, with similar trend for period 2014 and later; 19 new housing units. Similarly the Town's population projection trends additionally show a steady declining pattern, from 2,663 in 2017 to 2,621 in 2022. Both of these factor will need to be reviewed annually to ensure corrective adjustments as part of this plan correct the current declining trend.

NEW HOUSING TRENDS

New Housing Between 1991 - 2017 (Source: 2012-2016 American Community Survey Table B25034)		
Year Built	Number of New Homes	% of Total
2014 or Later	19	1.6%
2010 through 2013	18	1.5%
2000 through 2009	154	12.7%
1990 through 1999	169	13.9%
1980 through 1989	155	12.7%
1970 through 1979	270	22.2%
1960 through 1969	100	8.2%
1950 through 1959	48	3.9%
1940 through 1949	22	1.8%
1939 and Earlier	261	21.5%

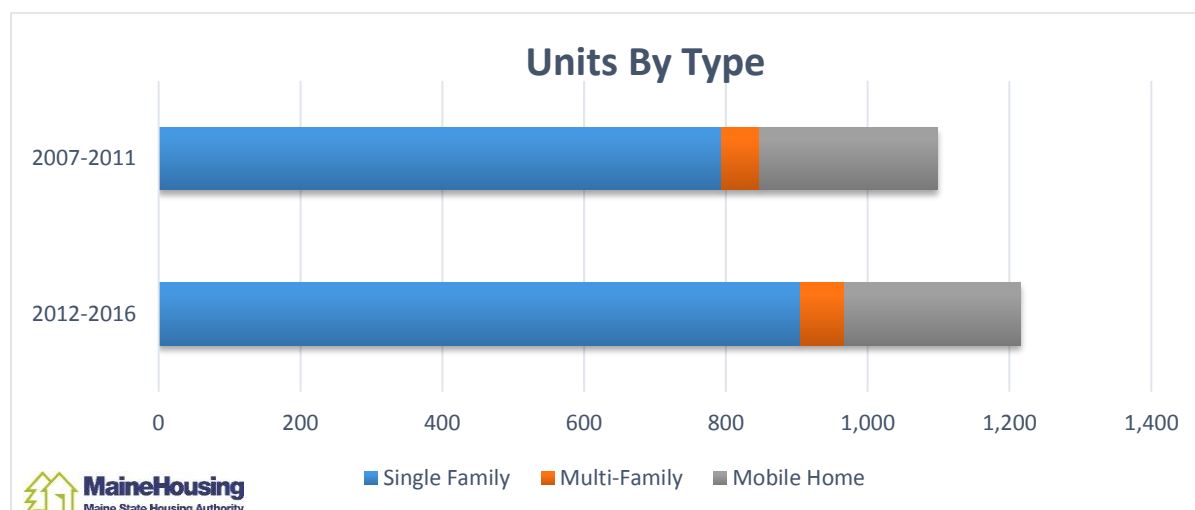
HOUSING TRENDS BETWEEN 1980 and 2010

Housing Trends Between 1980 and 2017 (Source: US Census Bureau, Census 1980, 1990, 2000 and 2010: Profile of General Population and Housing Characteristics)								
Home Type	1980	1990	2000	2010	20 Year Change		30 Year Change	
Total Housing	737	876	1,069	1,164	332	45.0%	427	57.9%
Occupied Housing	718	854	1,013	1,104	295	41.1%	386	53.8%
Seasonal Housing	2	6	15	6	13	650.0%	4	200.0%
Mobile Homes	73	159	225	NA	152	208.2%	NA	NA
Owner Occupied Homes	641	763	879	968	238	37.1%	327	51.0%
Renter Occupied Homes	77	91	134	136	57	74.0%	59	76.6%
Median Home Values	37,900	70,800	83,500	117,500	45,600	120.3%	79,600	210.0%
*NA – Data Not Available								

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HOUSING TYPES and CHARACTERISTICS

Housing Types and Characteristics (Source: 2007-2011 and 2012-2016 American Community Survey Table B25024, B25032)					
Type of Units	2007-2011	% of Total	2012-2016	% of Total	% Change
Total Housing	1,098		1,216		10.7%
Single Family Units	794	72.3%	905	74.4%	14.0%
SF Owner Occ.	733		824		12.4%
SF Renter Occ.	35		55		57.1%
Multiple Family Units	54	4.9%	62	5.1%	14.8%
MF Owner Occ.	19		15		-21.1%
MF Renter Occ.	35		16		-54.3%
Mobile Home & Other	250	22.8%	249	20.5%	-0.4%



BENTON KEY FOCUS AREAS FOR HOUSING

- a. Review and adopt as appropriate for the Town size and strategy, Comprehensive Plan policies and strategies as provided by the State of Maine, Comprehensive Plan Review Criteria Rule (07 105 Chapter 208).
- b. Benton's local land use ordinances do not provide the flexibility to encourage and support residential opportunities and commitment to open space and recreational activity. Policies and strategies must be identified in Section II of the Comprehensive Plan to address the needs here.
- c. Home stock is growing older the Town should seek grant opportunities for local homeowners to upgrade homes and make them more energy efficient.
- d. Benton's local land use ordinances will seek to preserve residential neighborhoods through enforcement of home occupation standards.
- e. Amend Land Use Ordinance amendments regarding the amount and method of required open space in the growth area including corresponding maximum densities in this area.

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- f. Amend Land Use Ordinance amendments to support the development of housing that is attractive to an age 55-and-older population, including alternative housing programs, such as home sharing programs, accessory apartments (in-law), adult family care homes and congregate housing, multi-leased apartment units featuring common kitchen and living room areas, private bedrooms and bath, accessory apartments and sliding scale development.
- g. Amend Land Use Ordinance amendments to support local Colleges to develop student housing within the community, including multi-leased apartments featuring common kitchen and living room areas, private bedrooms and bath, accessory apartments, etc
- h. Amend Land Use Ordinance amendments regarding the amount and method of required open space in the growth area including corresponding maximum densities in this area.

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9. RECREATION

This topic provides quantifies and qualifies the outdoor recreation and open space resources of Benton, and explores how they are positioned for the demands of the future. As appropriate for our Town's size and strategy, this topic will cover the analyses provided by the State of Maine, Comprehensive Plan Review Criteria Rule (07 105 Chapter 208). The analysis will provide an evaluation of the current conditions and trends which will support our recreation policy and strategies identified in Section II of this Comprehensive Plan.

Analyses

- a. Will existing recreational facilities and programs in the community and region accommodate projected growth or changes in age groups in your community?
- b. Is there a need for certain types of services or facilities or to upgrade or enlarge present facilities to either add capacity or make them more usable?
- c. Are important tracts of open space commonly used for recreation publicly-owned or otherwise permanently conserved?
- d. Does the community have a mechanism, such as an open space fund or partnership with a land trust, to acquire important open spaces and access sites, either outright or through conservation easements?
- e. Does the public have access to each of the community's significant water bodies?
- f. Are recreational trails in the community adequately maintained? Are there use conflicts on these trails?
- g. Is traditional access to private lands being restricted?

Conditions and Trends Evaluation

- a. The community's Comprehensive Planning Recreation Data Set prepared and provided to the community by the Department of Conservation, and the Office, or their designees.
- b. A description of important public and private active recreation programs, land and water recreation areas (including hunting and fishing areas), and facilities in the community and region, including regional recreational opportunities as appropriate, and identification of unmet needs.
- c. An inventory of any fresh or salt water bodies in the community determined locally to have inadequate public access.
- d. A description of local and regional trail systems, trail management organizations, and conservation organizations that provide trails for all-terrain vehicles, snowmobiling, skiing, mountain biking, or hiking.
- e. A map or list of important publicly-used open spaces and their associated facilities, such as parking and toilet facilities.

The amount and type of recreation and open space available to residents reinforces the value Benton residents place on providing opportunities for citizens to meet, play, exercise, relax, and reflect. The Town of Benton owns and/or offers public access to a multitude of natural outdoor open spaces. Benton residents and visitors routinely utilize these spaces for active/passive recreation activities such as biking, walking, kayaking, spending time with pets, mountain biking, trail running, snowmobiling, snowshoeing, horseback riding, fishing, and hunting. In addition to natural outdoor spaces, the Town provides additional spaces such as tennis and basketball courts, athletic fields, golf courses (privately-owned) ice skating ponds, and parks.

Specific details concerning the Benton Infrastructure to support this section is available in [Section IV – Benton Infrastructure Map 9.1](#) titled "[Benton Infrastructure Map, Section IV – Map 9.1](#)".

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PUBLIC RECREATIONAL FACILITIES

Facility Name	Location and Brief Description
Benton Elementary School	Facilities include a gym, inside walking program, playground, ball field and basketball courts.
Kennebec River Access	Boat launches are available in Fairfield
Kennebec River Walking Trail	A three (3) mile trail along the Kennebec River.
Local Fishing	Old Charlie Rock, Sebasticook River, Kennebec River
Riverfront Park	Park along the Sebasticook River adjacent to the Benton Town Office.
Sebasticook River Access	Boat launches are available in Benton and Clinton.
Snowmobile Trails	Benton-Good Time Riders (see club Facebook page) Benton-Free Club

YOUTH RECREATION PROGRAM

The town annually contributes to the Police Athletic League to allow children to participate in its sports program. The PAL program uses ball fields in area communities especially in Fairfield and fields located at Benton Elementary School. Sports programs are also offered through MSAD 49 during the school year.

PRIVATE RECREATIONAL FACILITIES AND EVENTS

There are numerous private recreational opportunities available in Benton and the surrounding communities. The following is a brief list of some of the major recreational offerings in this area.

- Golf Courses are available in Waterville, Vassalboro, Clinton, Albion, and Belgrade.
- Snowmobile trails are available in Benton and surrounding communities.
- The Alford Youth Center in Waterville offers a variety of youth activities.
- Indoor ice skating rink is located in Winslow.
- Bowling is available in Waterville and Skowhegan.
- Winter Romp which is private off-road event for four-wheel drive vehicles is held each year in Benton.
- Fiddler Festival is held each year on a private farm.
- Community dinners are held throughout the year at the Congregational Church.

OUTDOOR RECREATION ON PRIVATE LAND

A significant amount of outdoor recreation including recreation activities such as biking, walking, spending mountain biking, trail running, snowmobiling, snowshoeing, horseback riding and hunting occurs on private land with permission of individual landowners. Maine has a strong tradition of access to private land for recreation. A similar tradition of respect for private land is upheld by most sports participants. Access to some private lands has decreased due to increased development in rural areas and irresponsible actions of some sportsmen. The Snowmobile clubs throughout the State foster an excellent example of wise and responsible use of private land. Clubs such as the Country Cousins Club in Benton work with landowners and maintain trails by cooperating with landowners and responding to their concerns.

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PARKS AND RECREATION COMPARISON

The Bureau of Parks and Recreation provides recreation facility based upon the standards of the bureau and small town averages. The following table has been adjusted to reflect Benton's population of 2,732 persons. The comparison is only intended to inform a town about how their recreational programs and facilities compare with other communities. Each town will identify their own recreational needs based upon the interest of their citizens.

Parks and Recreation Comparison Table			
Activity	Benton	Small Town Average	Bureau Standard
Park Acreage	2 Acres	25.6 Acres	N/A
Baseball Fields	1 Field	1 Field	0.4 Field
Softball Fields		1 Field	0.8 Field
Multi-Use Fields		1 Field	0.5 Field
Basketball Courts	2 Courts	1 Court	1.2 Courts
Tennis Courts		1.5 Courts	1.2 Courts
Recreation Hall	1 Gym	.25 Hall	2.5 Halls
Play Grounds	1 Playground	1.4 Playgrounds	1.2 Playgrounds
Picnic Tables	4 Tables	6 Tables	5 Tables
Swimming Pools		2,000 Sq. Feet	2.5 Pools
Boat Ramp Parking		11 Spaces	N/A
Nature Trails	3 Miles	.77 Mile	2.5 Miles
Exercise Trails		N/A	2.5 Miles
Bike Route		N/A	N/A
X Country Ski Trail		2.7 Miles	2.5 Miles
Ice Skating		6,800 Sq. Feet	N/A
Sled Areas		N/A	N/A

Bike travel lanes are available along paved shoulders of Routes 100 and 139.

Benton lacks a number of recreational facilities according to the comparison table. Residents can find some of these facilities in neighboring towns especially the "Field of Dreams" located in Unity and ball fields at the MSAD school complex in Fairfield.

SNOWMOBILE TRAILS

Various trails in town connect with neighboring communities. A popular crossing is located along the Neck Road at Dixons Country Market which offers gasoline and other supplies for riders. The Town contributes a portion of the snowmobile fees it collects to the club for trail maintenance.

RECREATIONAL PROGRAMS FOR ADULTS AND THE ELDERLY

A variety of outdoor recreational opportunities can be found in town and the surrounding area. Organized sports and other programs are available through the Adult Education Program and Senior Spectrum located at the Muskie Center in Waterville.

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WATER ACCESS FOR RECREATION

Swimming access to the Kennebec and Sebasticook Rivers is not available in Benton. Boat access to the Kennebec River is located at Hinckley and in downtown Fairfield. Boat access to the Sebasticook River is located in Clinton and on the East Side of the river in Benton. A boat access was contemplated for the West Side of the Sebasticook River below the dam but was not approved by the town due to scale and size. The town favored a non-motorized boat launch instead of the larger facility proposed by the Department of Conservation. Boat access is also available to Fifteen Mile Stream.

WALKING TRAILS

A three (3) mile walking trail is located along the east side of the Kennebec River and can be accessed on Crummett Street. Walkers are encouraged to park their vehicles on Island Park across the bridge in Fairfield. The trail ends in Winslow but is planned to continue all the way into Waterville and link to a similar trail on the west side of the river.

The trail planned and developed in cooperation between the Town of Benton and the Kennebec Messalonskee Trail Committee.

Other popular walking spots throughout town are at the Riverview Park and along paved road shoulders. Bike riders use the paved shoulders to ride to neighboring communities and many people also use trails on private land for walking.

BENTON KEY FOCUS AREAS FOR RECREATION

- a. Review and adopt as appropriate for the Town size and strategy, Comprehensive Plan policies and strategies as provided by the State of Maine, Comprehensive Plan Review Criteria Rule (07 105 Chapter 208).
- b. Evaluate options for improving and promoting access to Kennebec and Sebasticook Rivers, including options for river-front park, fishing and non-motorized boat access.
- c. Investigate the feasibility of a removable dock and boat landing for Kennebec and Sebasticook Rivers.
- d. Promote public awareness of existing open space properties and the recreational opportunities they offer to Benton residents.
- e. Support snowmobile groups with trail maintenance / development.
- f. Continue to work with local trail groups for trail opportunities through town and region.
- g. Explore creating a linked community-wide pedestrian and bicycle network, where feasible, that consists mostly of trails and paved shoulders and connects all parts of town to its commercial centers.
- h. Continue the support of the PAL programs within the region.

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10. TRANSPORTATION

Maine's Growth Management Act recommends planning for the financing and development of an efficient system of public facilities and services to accommodate anticipated growth and economic development. This topic provides an analysis of Benton's transportation resources. As appropriate for our Town's size and strategy, this topic will cover the analyses provided by the State of Maine, Comprehensive Plan Review Criteria Rule (07 105 Chapter 208). The analysis will provide an evaluation of the current conditions and trends which will support our transportation policy and strategies identified in Section II of this Comprehensive Plan.

Analyses

- a. What are the transportation system concerns in the community and region? What, if any, plans exist to address these concerns?
- b. Are conflicts caused by multiple road uses, such as a major state or U.S. route that passes through the community or its downtown and serves as a local service road as well?
- c. To what extent do sidewalks connect residential areas with schools, neighborhood shopping areas, and other daily destinations?
- d. How are walking and bicycling integrated into the community's transportation network (including access to schools, parks, and other community destinations)?
- e. How do state and regional transportation plans relate to your community?
- f. What is the community's current and approximate future budget for road maintenance and improvement?
- g. Are there parking issues in the community? If so what are they?
- h. If there are parking standards, do they discourage development in village or downtown areas?
- i. Do available transit services meet the current and foreseeable needs of community residents? If transit services are not adequate, how will the community address the needs?
- j. If the community hosts a transportation terminal, such as an airport, passenger rail station, or ferry terminal, how does it connect to other transportation modes (e.g. automobile, pedestrian, bicycle, transit)?
- k. If the community hosts or abuts any public airports, what coordination has been undertaken to ensure that required airspace is protected now and in the future? How does the community coordinate with the owner(s) of private airports?
- l. If you are a coastal community are land-side or water-side transportation facilities needed? How will the community address these needs?
- m. Does the community have local access management or traffic permitting measures in place?
- n. Do the local road design standards support the community's desired land use pattern?
- o. Do the local road design standards support bicycle and pedestrian transportation?
- p. Do planned or recently built subdivision roads (residential or commercial) simply dead-end or do they allow for expansion to adjacent land and encourage the creation of a network of local streets? Where dead-ends are unavoidable, are mechanisms in place to encourage shorter dead-ends resulting in compact and efficient subdivision designs?

Conditions and Trends Evaluation

- a. The community's Comprehensive Planning Transportation Data Set prepared and provided to the community by the Department of Transportation, and the Office, or their designees.
- b. Location and overall condition of roads, bridges, sidewalks, and bicycle facilities, including any identified deficiencies or concerns.
- c. Identify potential on and off-road connections that would provide bicycle and pedestrian connections to neighborhoods, schools, waterfronts and other activity centers.
- d. Identify major traffic (including pedestrian) generators, such as schools, large businesses, public gathering areas/activities, etc. and related hours of their operations.
- e. Identify policies and standards for the design, construction and maintenance of public and private roads.

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- f. List and locate municipal parking areas including capacity, and usage.
- g. Identify airports within or adjacent to the community and describe applicable airport zoning and airspace protection ordinances your community has in place.
- h. Identify bus or van services. Identify existing and proposed marine and rail terminals within your community including potential expansions.

GENERAL TRANSPORTATION

The Town is dependent upon automobile to access work, shopping and services in Waterville and neighboring communities. Benton has been described by some as a place many people travel through to get somewhere else. Monitoring traffic on the Neck Road and the intersection of Bridge Street and Benton Avenue would confirm this perception. The 2014 average traffic count for the Neck Road indicates 8,000 vehicles and the traffic count on Bridge Street just west of Route 11/100/139 is 10,850 vehicles. Route 11/100/139 carries local traffic from Benton and vehicles from many towns east of the Kennebec River. The Waterville labor market area and access to Interstate 95 is the prime destination for most vehicles.

ROADS

There are approximately 44 miles of both state and local roads in town. The breakdown is as follows:

Road	# of Miles
Local Roads	20 miles
State Route 100	5.3 miles
State Route 100A	1.3 miles
State Route 139	6.5 miles
Benton Falls Road	1.2 miles
Albion Road	3.8 miles
River Road	4.3 miles
Gogan Road	2 miles

The north and southbound lanes of Interstate 95 extend approximately 3.5 miles in Benton. The closest interchange for Interstate 95 is located in Fairfield. The previous Comprehensive Plan envisioned a Benton interchange to promote economic growth, however, this idea has not been pursued by the town or the state.

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ROAD CONDITION AND MAINTENANCE

The 19.4 miles of State Routes and State Aid Roads are in good condition. As of 1/18/2018, the Maine Department of Transportation Construction Advertisement Plan has scheduled maintenance paving as follows:

MaineDOT Work Plan Capital and Maintenance 2018, 2019, 2020 Source: (MaineDOT)								
Work Plan Year	Town(s)	Asset(s)	Description	WIN/ID	Program Area	Scope of Work	Highway Corridor Priority	Estimated Funding
2018	Albion, Benton	Albion Road, Benton Road	Beginning at Garland Road and extending southeast 7.05 miles to Route 9.	022092.00	Highway Paving	Light Capital Paving	HCP 4	\$ 247,865
2018	Augusta, Benton, Bowdoinham, Clinton, Fairfield, Gardiner, Richmond, Waterville, West Gardiner	Interstate 95/295 Bridges	Interstate 95 bridges from Richmond to Waterville.	021763.00		Bridge Protective Coating	HCP 4, 6, 1, 3, 2	\$ 1,300,000
2018	Benton	Route 139	Beginning at Falls Road and extending northeast 4.40 miles.	022482.00	Highway Construction/ Rehabilitation	PMRAP DOT Pugmill	HCP 3	\$ 488,000
2018	Benton	Route 139	Beginning at Falls Road and extending easterly 4.40 miles.	022482.10	Highway Construction/ Rehabilitation	PMRAP Laydown/Surface HMA	HCP 3	\$ 737,000
2018	Benton	Route 139	Producing, hauling and providing additional support activities for the placement of plant mix recycled asphalt pavement (PMRAP) beginning at the Seabastcook Bridge Road and extending northeast 4.47 miles to the Fifteen Mile Stream Bridge.		PMRAP		HCP 3	\$ 500,000
2018	Benton	Route 139	Replacing four instream pipes (#93635, #103934, #93636, #93631) on Route 139 in Benton.	WR 35471	Drainage Maintenance		HCP 3	\$ 125,000
2019/20	Benton	Neck Road	Located at the intersection of Benton Avenue and the Neck Road.	022829.00	Highway Safety and Spot Improvements	Traffic Signals	HCP 3	\$ 211,500
2019/20	Benton	Interstate 95	I-95 SB/ River Road Bridge (#1455) over River Road. Located 0.53 of a mile east of the Fairfield town line.	023611.00		Bridge Strengthening	HCP 1	\$ 200,000
2018	Benton, Clinton	Route 11	Beginning at the north junction of Route 139 and extending northerly 4.23 miles.	022484.00	Highway Construction/ Rehabilitation	PMRAP DOT Pugmill	HCP 3	\$ 348,150

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2019	Benton, Clinton	River Road	Beginning at the Winslow town line and extending north 8.84 miles to Route 23.	023360.00	Highway Paving	Light Capital Paving	HCP 3, 4	\$ 323,367
2019	Benton, Clinton	Gogan Road, Pleasant Street	Beginning at Route 139 and extending north 3.00 miles to Route 11.	023360.00	Highway Paving	Light Capital Paving	HCP 4	\$ 109,740
2019	Benton, Winslow	Garland Road	Beginning at Route 137B and extending north 5.44 miles to Seabasticook Bridge Road.	023360.00	Highway Paving	Light Capital Paving	HCP 4	\$ 198,995
2018	Benton, Clinton	Route 11	Producing, hauling, and providing additional support activities for the placement of plant mix recycled asphalt pavement (PMRAP) beginning 200 feet south of Seabasticook Bridge Road and extending north 4.23 miles to the Clinton-Burnham town line.	WR 34041	PMRAP		HCP 3	\$ 336,000
2018	Benton, Clinton	River Road	Ditching and replacing a culvert (#1001146) beginning 0.05 of a mile north of Route 11 and extending north 7.83 miles, ending at the Canaan Road intersection in Clinton.	WR 34805	Drainage Maintenance		HCP 4	\$ 43,000
2018	Benton, Winslow	Route 100A	Ditching and installing multiple culverts in Winslow on Route 100A beginning at the Route 201 intersection extending north 5.16 miles to the Route 11 intersection in Benton.	WR 34795	Drainage Maintenance		HCP 3	\$ 143,000
2018	Benton, Winslow	Garland Road	Ditching on the Garland Road in Winslow beginning at the Route 137 intersection extending east for 5.67 miles to the Route 139 intersection in Benton.	WR 34803	Drainage Maintenance		HCP 4	\$ 29,100

Local roads are maintained by the town and are in good condition. The town spends between \$160,000 and \$200,000 per year for road maintenance and paving.

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The following table shows some vital information about the Benton road system:

Benton Road Table				
Road Name	Surface Type	Road Class	Condition	Planned Maintenance Date
Interstate 95	Paved	Principle Arterial	Good	
Bridge Street Route 11/100	Paved	Collector	Good	
Neck Road Route 11/100	Paved	Collector	Fair	
Bangor Road Route 11/100	Paved	Collector	Good	
Unity Road Route 139	Paved	Collector	Good	
Albion Road	Paved	Collector	Good	
Benton Road Route 100A	Paved	Minor Collector	Good	
River Road	Paved	Minor Collector	Good	
Gogan Road	Paved	Minor Collector	Good	
Falls Road	Paved	Minor Collector	Good	
Allison Lane	Paved	Local	Good	
Ames Cemetery Road	Gravel	Local	Fair	
Andrea Avenue	Paved	Local	Good	2018
Audet Lane	Paved	Local	Fair	
Averill Mobile Home Park	Paved	Private	Good	
Bellsqueeze Road	Paved	Local	Good	2018
Bessey Lane	Gravel	Private	Fair	
Blaisdell Lane	Paved	Local	Fair	
Bog Road	Gravel	Local	Fair	
Booker Avenue	Paved	Local	Fair	2018
Cedar Lane	Paved	Local	Good	
Chickadee Lane	Gravel	Private	Fair	
Clifford Lane	Paved	Private	Fair	
Copeline Lane	Paved	Private	Fair	
Crummett Street	Paved	Local	Good	
Danielle Avenue	Paved	Local	Good	2018
Denico Lane	Gravel	Local	Fair	
Dickey Drive	Gravel	Private	Fair	
Dixon Drive	Paved	Local	Good	
Dubious Lane	Gravel	Private	Poor	
Dyer Lane	Gravel	Private	Fair	
Eames Road	Paved	Local	Good	
East Street	Paved	Local	Fair	
East Benton Road	Paved	Local	Fair	2018
Ed Lane	Gravel	Private	Fair	
Foss Hill Road	Paved	Local	Good	
Foster Road	Paved	Local	Fair	
Fowler Lane	Paved	Local	Good	

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Gower Road	Paved	Local	Fair	2018
Grant Lane	Gravel	Private	Fair	
Hanscom Road	Paved	Local	Fair	
Kennebec Drive	Paved	Private	Good	2018
Kent's Way	Paved	Local	Good	
Lawrence Drive	Paved	Local	Good	
Libby Street	Paved	Local	Fair	
Lord Road	Paved	Local	Fair	
Lovejoy Lane	Gravel	Private	Fair	
McCarthy Road	Gravel	Local	Fair	
Miller Street	Paved	Local	Fair	
Monk Road	Paved	Local	Fair	
Oak Hill Lane	Gravel	Private	Fair	
Patterson Road	Gravel	Private	Fair	
Pines Road	Paved	Local	Good	
Pleasant Drive	Paved	Local	Fair	
Poor Bob's Lane	Gravel	Private	Fair	
Red Maple Lane	Gravel	Private	Fair	
Richards Road	Paved	Local	Good	
River Bend Drive	Gravel	Private	Fair	
Riverview Drive	Gravel	Private	Fair	
Robin's Street	Paved	Local	Fair	2018
School Drive	Paved	Local	Good	
Siding Street	Paved	Local	Good	
Spencer Road	Paved	Local	Fair	
Spirit Way	Gravel	Private	Fair	
Stagecoach Lane	Gravel	Local	Good	
Strohman Lane	Gravel	Private	Fair	
Trask Road	Paved	Local	Good	
Waldo Street	Paved	Local	Good	
West Street	Paved	Local	Poor	2018
Willis Road	Gravel	Local	Fair	
Wyman Road	Paved	Local	Fair	

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BRIDGES

All the following bridges are located on state roads and are in good condition:

Benton Bridge Table Source: (MaineDOT - 2018)										
Bridge #	Location	Bridge Name	Year Built	Posting Type	Substructure Condition	Superstructure Condition	Deck Condition	Channel Condition	Culvert Condition	Approach Condition
5246	2.7 MI W TOWNLINE	Bridge at Jewett Brook (Unity Road)	2004	None	N/A	N/A	N/A	G	G	VG
5994	1.7 MI N OF RTE 11 & 100	Bridge Over Bellsqueeze Road	1964	None	G	VG	G	N/A	N/A	S
5069	1.9 MI W'LY UNITY TWP TL	Bridge Over Fifteen Mile Stream (Unity Road)	1921	None	P	P	P	G	N/A	S
6000	0.2 MI NE 95 / US201	C.A. CLAUSON NB	1964	None	S	G	E	G	N/A	G
1456	1 MI NE US #201	C.A. CLAUSON SB	1964	None	S	S	P	G	N/A	G
5993	5 MI N TOWNLINE	I95 NB / River Road	1964	None	G	G	S	N/A	N/A	S
1455	5 MI N TOWNLINE	I95 SB / River Road	1964	3 Under-clearance Limit	S	S	S	N/A	N/A	S
3106	0.2 MI E OF JCT RTE 201	Kennebec River, East	2003	None	VG	VG	VG	G	N/A	G
3667	250' E OF JCT W RTE 11	Sebasticook River Bridge (Rt 139)	1986	None	G	VG	VG	VG	N/A	S
5686	0.1 MI NE JCT E BENTON RD	Stell Bridge Over Fifteen Mile Stream (Bog Road)	1956	None	F	F	S	G	N/A	F
Legend: VG = Very Good, G=Good, S=Satisfactory, F=Fair, P=Poor, N/A= Not Applicable										

SIDEWALKS

One sidewalk exists along the north side of Bridge Street extending towards the Fairfield Bridge. However, this sidewalk does not fully extend towards the four-way intersection at the top of the hill. Over the years, some residents have expressed a desire to install sidewalks connecting the Elementary School with sections of the Benton Station Village Growth District. This idea would help to provide a safe walkway for students and residents in the village. It would be prudent for the town to include adding sidewalks in portions of the Benton Station Village Growth District as part of the master trail plan envisioned for the community.

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TRAFFIC COUNT

The traffic count table shows the Average Annual Daily traffic (AADT) which is the average number of vehicles that pass by a given point on a road during a 24-hour period. The Maine Department of Transportation takes these counts typically every three (3) years.

Traffic Count Table Source: (MaineDOT)							
STA	ROAD-PN	LOCATION	GROUP	AADT 11	AADT 12	AADT 13	ADDT 14
36803	00450-4	IR 450 (ALBION RD) E/O IR 467 (FALLS RD)	I		110 S		
63002	00450-6	IR 467 (FALLS RD) SW/O IR 450(ALBION RD)	I				2090 C
00305	00467-5	IR 567 (BENTON AVE) S/O SR 11/100/139	I				4370 C
55706	00567-4	IR 567 (BENTON) SW/O IR 3745 @ WINSLOW TL	I				4030 C
00301	00567-5	IR 567 (RIVER RD) N/O SR 11/100/139	I				1500 C
36505	00567-5	IR 567(RIVER) S/O IR 1667(AMES CEMETERY)	I				1680 C
36406	0100A-4	SR 100A SW/O IR 1344 (LIBBY ST)	I	2280 C			2120 C
37002	0011X-4	SR 11/100 NE/O IR 565 (BELLSQUEEZE RD)	I				2520 C
37005	0011X-4	SR 11/100 S/O IR 565 (BELLSQUEEZE RD)	I	2910 C	3440 S		3200 C
00303	0011X-4	SR 11/100/139 E/O IR 567 (BENTON AVE)	I				8010 C
36407	0011X-4	SR 11/100/139 W/O IR 1344 (LIBBY ST)	I	6980 C			8000 C
00307	0011X-4	SR 11/100/139 W/O IR 567 (BENTON AVE)	I				10850 C
62803	0011X-4	SR 139 E/O IR 559 (MONK RD) @ BR# 5069	I	1900 C			2220 C
36802	0011X-4	SR 139 NE/O IR 467 (FALLS RD)	I	2570 C			3340 C
36807	0011X-4	SR 139 W/O IR 467 (FALLS RD) @ BR# 3667	I				7080 C
LEGEND ROAD X - Indicates a Routed Highway A - Indicates an Alternate Routed Highway PN 4 = Priority 4 Road - Major Collector Highways 5 = Priority 5 Road - Minor Collector Highways 6 = Priority 6 Road - Local Road and Streets - Municipality Responsibility LOCATION IR = Inventory Road SR = State Road N/O, NE/O, E/O, etc. = North of, Northeast of, East of, etc. GROUP I = Interstate Count AADT Annual Average Daily Traffic							

The most traveled roadway is the section of Route 11/100/139 extending from the Kennebec River Bridge onto the Neck Road and towards Route 139 near the Sebasticook River Bridge. The new Kennebec River Bridge has also made it easier to connect to Interstate 95. This route also funnels traffic from many communities east of the Kennebec River. Many people work in Waterville or take advantage of the services and retail stores in the area.

Traffic increased significantly along Benton Avenue and Route 100A and decreased along Route 139. Traffic changes in other areas were not significant. Increases in traffic should be anticipated due to population increases in rural communities, spread out housing development, competitive job opportunities and the concentration of big box retail stores in service center communities.

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Factors which may reduce traffic volumes include higher gasoline prices, Internet connected home workspaces, and older residents moving into more urban areas.

TRAFFIC AND ROAD PROBLEMS

The following is a list of local traffic and road issues. Some areas will require the cooperation of the Maine Department of Transportation.

1. High crash point identified by MaineDOT at the intersection of the River Road and School Drive.
2. High crash point identified by MaineDOT along the East Benton Road extending between Spencer Road and Richards Road.
3. A lack of paved shoulders along some roads to accommodate walkers and bike riders.
4. The Neck Road is poor condition due to problems with the road sub-base.
5. The short road section extending between the Neck Road and Clinton Avenue providing access to the Town Office is in poor condition.
6. Sight Distance problems at the intersection of the Sebasticook River Bridge Road and the Unity Road.
7. Sight distance problems at the intersection at the Falls and Albion Roads.
8. Sight distance problems at the intersection at the Foss Hill and Albion Roads.
9. Sight distance problems at the intersection at the Falls and Eames Roads.
10. Sight distance problems at the intersection at the Libby and Neck Roads.
11. Sight distance problems at the intersection at the Sebasticook Bridge and Clinton Road.
12. Traffic speeding problems along: Route 100A, River Road, Neck Road and the Clinton Road.
13. Accident-prone curve along the Unity Road.
14. Drainage problem along the Unity road near Jewett Brook.
15. Pedestrians have a difficult time crossing the four-way intersection of the Bridge, River, Neck and Benton Avenue Roads.

REGIONAL TRAFFIC PLANNING

The location of the Interstate 95, Routes 11/100/139, four (4) minor collectors and two (2) major bridges is indicative of our importance in the regional flow of traffic. The Town needs to participate in regional traffic planning with neighboring communities and the Maine Department of Transportation to make sure that our land use plan is coordinated with traffic planning in the region.

MAINE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION TRAFFIC ACCESS RULES

Traffic access rules govern the design, placement and construction of all driveways and entrances onto all State and State Aid Roads. Generally, driveways would be used by housing and other low volume activities and entrances would be used by commercial and other high volume traffic uses. All driveways, and entrances must meet basic standards for sight distance, minimum widths, drainage, distance from road corners, intersection angles, radius of edges and have a turn-around area for vehicles entering the roadway.

The traffic access rules are designed to allow vehicles to safely enter and exit the roadway and to allow for the safe flow of traffic along the road. The rules apply in varying degrees depending upon road classification and traffic volume. State arterials and collectors are covered by these rules because they carry most of the vehicle traffic. If traffic flow along these heavily used roads can be maintained and improved it will reduce or eliminate the need to build new roadways. The following roads in Benton are covered under the State rules: Interstate 95, Routes 11/100/139, Route 100A, Albion Road, River Road, Gogan Road, and Falls Road.

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The Town also has traffic access provisions included in the Land Use and Subdivision Ordinances which apply to local and state roads. Existing provision include requirements for sight distance and road entrance design and construction.

ALTERNATIVE TRANSPORTATION RESOURCES

The principal mode of transportation is the automobile, however other forms of transportation play a role in our daily lives for both commerce and recreation.

1. **Airport Service:** The Waterville and Augusta airports provide service for private and corporate planes. The rise in popularity of small private jets may signal an increase in usage at small regional airports. The Portland and Bangor airports offer a wider selection of commercial flights and connections to Boston and New York.
2. **Rail Service:** A rail line used for freight traffic travels through town extending north into Clinton. An intermodal rail site is located in Waterville which services the region's paper mills and other resource-based industries. Passenger rail service is currently offered between Portland and Boston. Plans to expand this service along the coast into Lewiston are in progress.
3. **Bus Service:** Interstate bus service is available and scheduled bus stops are located in both Waterville and Augusta.
4. **Other Public Services:** Transportation services are provided by the Kennebec Valley Action Program which offers bus service in Waterville and ridership services for people meeting certain income guidelines. Private taxi service is also available.
5. **Pedestrian Modes:** Walking is becoming a popular exercise pastime. A River trail is now available along the Kennebec River, which extends into Winslow. The trail will eventually extend in both sides of the river linking Waterville, Winslow, Benton and Fairfield. People also walk along roadways, however, travel is often unsafe due to a lack of paved shoulders.

BENTON KEY FOCUS AREAS FOR TRANSPORTATION

- a. Review and adopt as appropriate for the Town size and strategy, Comprehensive Plan policies and strategies as provided by the State of Maine, Comprehensive Plan Review Criteria Rule (07 105 Chapter 208).
- b. Appointed Officers for roads will report status and expenditures quarterly to the Select Board at the designated Select Board meeting.
- c. Explore potential outside funding sources to maximize opportunities for pedestrians, bicyclists, and outdoor recreation
- d. Are sufficient funds dedicated for road maintenance?
- e. How can the town increase the number of paved road shoulders for walkers and bike riders?
- f. How has traffic influenced local land use especially along the Bridge and Neck Roads?
- g. Should the town still advocate for a new interchange along Interstate 95?
- h. Land use planning and transportation: access, signs, setbacks, building placement, building design and parking
- i. Sidewalks would benefit pedestrians traveling between the Elementary School and the Benton Station Village Growth District.
- j. Explore potential outside funding sources to maximize opportunities for pedestrians, bicyclists, and outdoor recreation

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11. PUBLIC FACILITIES AND SERVICES

This topic provides an analysis of Benton's public facilities and services. As appropriate for our Town's size and strategy, this topic will cover the analyses provided by the State of Maine, Comprehensive Plan Review Criteria Rule (07 105 Chapter 208). The analysis will provide an evaluation of the current conditions and trends which will support our public facilities and services policy and strategies identified in Section II of this Comprehensive Plan.

Analyses

- a. Are municipal services adequate to meeting changes in population and demographics?
- b. Has the community partnered with neighboring communities to share services, reduce costs and/or improve services? In what ways?
- c. If the community has a public sewer system, what issues or concerns are there currently and/or anticipated in the future? Is the sanitary district extension policy consistent with the Future Land Use Plan as required by (38 M.R.S.A. §1163), or will it be?
- d. If the community has a public water system are any public water supply expansions anticipated? If so, have suitable sources been identified and protected? Is the water district extension policy consistent with the Future Land Use Plan?
- e. If the town does not have a public sewer or water system, is this preventing the community from accommodating current and projected growth?
- f. Is school construction or expansion anticipated during the planning period? Are there opportunities to promote new residential development around existing and proposed schools?
- g. Is the community's emergency response system adequate? Are improvements needed?
- h. Is the solid waste management system meeting current needs? Is the community reducing the reliance on waste disposal and increasing recycling opportunities? Are improvements needed to meet future demand?
- i. Are improvements needed in the telecommunications and energy infrastructure?
- j. Are local and regional health care facilities and public health and social service programs adequate to meet the needs of the community?
- k. Will other public facilities, such as town offices, libraries, and cemeteries accommodate projected growth?
- l. To what extent are investments in facility improvements directed to growth areas?
- m. Does the community have a street tree program?

Conditions and Trends Evaluation

- a. Location of facilities and service areas (mapped as appropriate);
- b. General physical condition of facilities and equipment;
- c. Capacity and anticipated demand during the planning period;
- d. Identification of who owns/manages the systems;
- e. Estimated costs of needed capital improvements to public facilities; and
- f. The following information related to each of these public facilities and services:
 - i. **Sewerage and/or Water Supply** – Identify number and types of users, and percent of households served
 - ii. **Septage** – Identify any community policies or regulations regarding septage collection and disposal.
 - iii. **Solid Waste** – Describe the community's solid waste management system. Identify types and amounts of municipal solid waste and recycled materials for the past five (5) years.

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- iv. **Stormwater Management** – Identify combined sewer overflows. For Municipal Separate Stormwater System (MS4) communities, describe plan and status of the major goals of the MS4 requirements.
- v. **Power and Communications** – Availability of 3-phase power, Internet (including broadband), and cable within the community.
- vi. **Emergency Response System** –Average call response times for fire, police, and emergency/rescue.
- vii. **Education** – Identify school administrative unit. Include primary/secondary school system enrollment for the most recent year information is available and for the ten (10) years after the anticipated adoption of plan.
- viii. **Health Care** - Describe major health care facilities (hospitals, clinics) and other providers serving the community. Identify public health and social services supported by the community through municipal subsidy.
- ix. **Municipal Government Facilities and Services** – Describe facilities and staffing for municipal administrative, enforcement, and public works operations.
- x. **Street Tree Program** - Describe the community's street tree program.

Specific details concerning the Benton Infrastructure to support this section is available in [Section IV – Benton Infrastructure Map 9.1](#) titled “*Benton Infrastructure Map, Section IV – Map 9.1*”.

TOWN GOVERNMENT

Benton has a town meeting form of government with three (3) Selectpersons. The Town meeting is in March. The Town office is located on Clinton Avenue and contains municipal offices and a small meeting room. Some of the significant municipal positions and committees include the following:

Municipal Position or Committee	Membership
Select Board	Three (3) Members
Economic Development Committee	Eight (8) Members
Senior Office Staff	One (1)
Office Staff	One (1) Full-Time & One (1) Part-Time
Treasurer	One (1)
Tax Collector	One (1)
Local Planning Board	Five (5) Members
Code Enforcement Officer	One (1)
Kennebec Water District Trustee	One (1)
Kennebec Sewer District Trustee	One (1)
Sewer Committee Members	Two (2)
Fence Viewers	Three (3) Members
Cemetery Committee	Seven (7) Members
Historic Committee	Nine (9) Members
Animal Control Officers	Two (2)

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General Government Services

The Town Office is open five (5) days per week and existing staff levels are adequate to serve the on-going needs of the Town. The Select Board provides a significant amount of time dealing with Town administration and operations. The Town also uses the services of the Maine Municipal Association and the Kennebec Valley Council of Government for consultation and assistance.

Fire Protection

The Town does not have a municipal fire department but contracts with the Town of Fairfield to provide fire protection. The annual fee for this service is currently \$180,000.

Ambulance and Rescue

The Fairfield Fire Department provides rescue services and ambulance service is provided regionally by Delta Ambulance.

Police Protection

Police protection is provided by the Kennebec County Sheriff and Maine State Police. The county sheriff police call range increased from 330 calls in 1999 to 833 calls in 2006.

E-911 System

The Town has completed the E-911 addressing for the community and is responsible for maintaining the system. The Town Clerk is currently assigned responsibility for maintaining the system and assigning new address numbers. Dispatch services for police calls are from the Kennebec County and fire and rescue calls are from Somerset County.

Library

The Town does not have a local library, however, funds are allocated each year to pay residents to obtain a library card from neighboring libraries. Each year an amount between \$1,300 and \$2,000 is placed in the library card account, this serves approximately 36 households. The Town has in the past contemplated creating its own library. A local committee was formed at the 2006 Town Meeting to explore options for a town library. The committee is currently working on the issue and will report its recommendations to the town.

Public Works

The Town road commissioner is responsible for general road maintenance. Major roadwork including paving and snow removal is contracted. The Town has a covered salt and sand shed located on the Neck Road.

Solid Waste and Recycling

The Town uses the Clinton Transfer Station for both waste and recycling. The current solid waste cost is \$90,000. Refuse from the facility is taken to the PERC facility in Orrington. The Town would like to increase recycling rates to help reduce solid waste disposal cost.

Municipal Water Supply

The Kennebec Water District supplies approximately 30% of homes with municipal water. Water service is available to Benton Station Village Growth District and Benton Proper Growth District.

Private Wells

The majority of residents obtain potable water from private wells. Well installation and placement are governed by State Rules and testing is the responsibility of property owners. There are two

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public well supplies licensed by the Maine Drinking Water Program, which are: Averill Mobile Home Park on the Falls Road and the Town and Country Ways located on the Unity Road. The owners of these wells are responsible for testing and reporting to the State.

Private Subsurface Wastewater Disposal Systems

The majority of structures are served by individual subsurface wastewater disposal systems. The State Department of Human resources has rules that govern the design and construction of these systems. The Code Enforcement Officer in Town is responsible for inspecting new systems and responding to complaints about malfunctioning systems.

Schools

Benton belongs to MSAD #49 along with Albion, Fairfield, and Clinton. Benton elementary school student's grades 1 through 6 attend the Benton Elementary School on School Drive. Students in grades 7 and 8 attend the Lawrence High Junior High School in Fairfield. High School students, grades 9 through 12, attend Lawrence High School also in Fairfield.

The following table shows Benton school enrollment at five (5) year marks and projected enrollment for selected years up to 2020.

School Enrollment and Projections Benton Residents Educate at Public Expense Source: (State Planning Office)								
Type	1990	2000	2005	2010	2015	2017	2020	2025
All Grades	414	438	441	421	439	453		
Elementary	171	185	188	195	236	256		
Middle	100	128	83	48	21	13		
High School	143	125	170	178	182	184		

The total number of students between 2005 and 2017 remains stable. However, the number of middle school students' drops and the number of elementary students increases. High school enrollment remains stable. The Benton Elementary School has the capacity to handle the anticipated projected increase in students.

BENTON KEY FOCUS AREAS FOR PUBLIC FACILITIES AND SERVICES

- Review and adopt as appropriate for the Town size and strategy, Comprehensive Plan policies and strategies as provided by the State of Maine, Comprehensive Plan Review Criteria Rule (07 105 Chapter 208).
- Should the Town create a Library?
- Municipal water and sewer serves should be expanded.
- Will private water and subsurface wastewater systems be adequate for new growth and development?
- Assess the options and means of participating in collaborative efforts with agencies and regional groups to better serve residents and businesses.
- Appointed Officers for public water and waste management, will report status and expenditures quarterly to the Select Board at the designated Select Board meeting.

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- g. Explore the feasibility of a mechanism for the Town to assist development financially with water and sewer extensions in the growth area.
- h. Establish a plan for additional public water service in the designated growth area in cooperation with the Kennebec Water District.
- i. Establish a plan for targeted sewer service expansion in the designated growth area. Assess the options and means of participating in collaborative efforts with agencies and regional groups to better serve residents and businesses.
- j. Establish a plan for telecommunication services, specifically fiber. Assess the options and means of participating in collaborative efforts with agencies and regional groups to better serve residents and businesses.
- k. Encourage present technology and investigate future carbon free green technologies. Assess the options and means of participating in collaborative efforts with agencies and regional groups to better serve residents and businesses.
- l. Review and monitor with assistance of Fairfield Fire Chief the adequacy of fire call response time and hydrant / water availability.

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12. FISCAL CAPACITY AND CAPITAL INVESTMENT PLAN

This topic provides an overview of Benton's fiscal situation and to determine whether the Town can meet future growth and development. An essential component of this analysis will be the development of a Capital Investment Plan for financing the replacement and expansion of public facilities and services required to meet projected growth and development. Other important areas to be discussed are the way citizens of the Town wish to spend their present and future tax dollars to meet anticipated needs.

As appropriate for our Town's size and strategy, this topic will cover the analyses provided by the State of Maine, Comprehensive Plan Review Criteria Rule (07 105 Chapter 208). The analysis will provide an evaluation of the current conditions and trends which will support our fiscal capacity and capital investment plan policy and strategies identified in Section II of this Comprehensive Plan.

Analysis:

- a. How will future capital investments identified in the plan be funded?
- b. If the community plans to borrow to pay for capital investments, does the community have sufficient borrowing capacity to obtain the necessary funds?
- c. Have efforts been made by the community to participate in or explore sharing capital investments with neighboring communities? If so, what efforts have been made?

Conditions and Trends:

- a. Identify community revenues and expenditures by category for the last five (5) years and explain trends.
- b. Describe means of funding capital items (reserve funds, bonding, etc.) and identify any outside funding sources.
- c. Identify local and state valuations and local mil rates.
- d. How does total municipal debt (including shares of county, school and utility) compare with the statutory and Maine Bond Bank recommended limits on such debt?

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TAX BASE

The property tax is the main source of revenue for the Town. All property and structures in the Town are assigned a value which is based as closely as possible upon current market conditions. Certain forms of personal property such as business and industrial equipment are also assigned a value for taxation.

The total value of all taxable property, including land, buildings and personal property is called the valuation. The money required to finance Town government is called the tax commitment. Outside revenues income sources such as the excise, tax and State revenue sharing monies are subtracted from the total amount of money needed to operate Town government. The amount of funds remaining after all the outside revenue income sources are subtracted is called the tax commitment. The tax commitment is then divided by the valuation to obtain the annual tax rate. The annual tax rate is expressed in mills. A mill is dollars per thousand dollars of valuation.

The annual mill rate is used to determine how much tax each property owner must pay to fund government services. For example: A person owning property valued at \$63,000 with a town mill rate of 0.01310 would pay \$825.30 in taxes. ($\$63,000 \times 0.01310 = \825.30).

Taxable Property and the Local Tax Rate Table Source: (Municipality Records)					
Taxable Year	Taxable Real Estate	Personal Property	Total Valuation	Mill Rate	Commitment
2017	\$ 183,126,340	\$ 3,000,920	\$ 186,127,260	14.40	\$ 2,680,233
2016	\$ 184,163,350	\$ 3,348,750	\$ 187,512,100	13.70	\$ 2,568,916
2015	\$ 180,225,920	\$ 2,776,810	\$ 183,002,730	13.50	\$ 2,470,537
2014	\$ 176,497,850	\$ 3,180,170	\$ 179,678,020	13.60	\$ 2,443,621
2013	\$ 164,941,450	\$ 2,557,420	\$ 167,498,870	13.10	\$ 2,194,235
2012	\$ 148,241,200	\$ 2,845,895	\$ 151,087,095	12.90	\$ 1,949,024
2011	\$ 136,284,340	\$ 2,601,545	\$ 138,885,885	11.50	\$ 1,597,191
2010	\$ 135,340,810	\$ 3,337,085	\$ 138,677,895	11.50	\$ 1,594,799
2009	\$ 129,643,430	\$ 4,296,660	\$ 133,940,090	11.00	\$ 1,473,341
2008	\$ 111,478,978	\$ 2,590,200	\$ 114,069,178	11.00	\$ 1,367,708
2007	\$ 103,450,978	\$ 1,399,578	\$ 104,850,556	12.00	\$ 1,394,057
2006	\$ 99,067,233	\$ 1,361,402	\$ 100,428,635	13.00	\$ 1,449,312
2005	\$ 97,099,683	\$ 2,301,093	\$ 99,400,776	13.50	\$ 1,488,943
2004	\$ 82,073,891	\$ 1,230,803	\$ 83,304,694	18.90	\$ 1,574,459
2003	\$ 81,945,161	\$ 1,215,123	\$ 83,160,284	18.70	\$ 1,555,098
2002	\$ 80,517,945	\$ 1,311,214	\$ 81,829,159	18.70	\$ 1,530,206
2001	\$ 82,526,106	\$ 870,411	\$ 83,396,517	16.10	\$ 1,342,684
2000	\$ 81,324,815	\$ 910,501	\$ 82,235,316	16.10	\$ 1,323,989
1999	\$ 80,160,080	\$ 815,651	\$ 80,978,731	16.10	\$ 1,303,707

The total valuation increased by \$35,040,165 (81%) between 2017 and 2012. Most of the increase occurred in building and land valuation. However, personal property also increased significantly.

The town has undertaken a property revaluation which has attributed for some of the increase.

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Components of the Town Valuation

The valuation for the Town consists of a number of taxable categories that include land, buildings and structures, production machines and equipment, business equipment and other forms of personal property. The following table shows the valuation listed in each category for the 2013 tax year.

Valuation Category Table as of 2013 Tax Year Source: (Municipality Records)			
Category	2013 Evaluation	Totals	% of Total Valuation
Total Municipal Valuation		\$ 167,498,870	
Total Land & Building		\$ 164,941,450	98%
Land Valuation	\$ 86,085,170		51%
Building Valuation	\$ 78,856,280		47%
Total Personal Property		\$ 2,557,420	2%
Production Machinery and Equipment	\$ -		
Business Equipment	\$ 2,528,120		2%
All Other Personal Property	\$ 29,300		0.02%

Land and buildings account for 98% of the Town's total valuation and equipment and personal property accounts for remaining 2%.

Other types of property including, Federal, State, municipal and nonprofit organizations are exempt from taxation. Their property is assigned a value, but taxes are not assessed. The following is a breakdown of the non-taxable property in the community.

Miscellaneous Exemptions as of 2013 Tax Year Source: (Municipality Records)	
Property Types	2013
State and Federal	\$ 308,990
Municipal Corporations	\$ 6,721,210
Benevolent & Charitable	\$ -
Parsonages Exempt Value	\$ 20,000

Residential properties and land used for farming, forestry and open space provide the majority of the Town's tax base. The following is a list of the largest taxpayers in the community:

1. Central Maine Power
2. Bohi Energy, Inc
3. FPLE Energy Maine Hydro LLC

REVENUE AND EXPENDITURE HIGHLIGHTS (between 2017 and 2013)

The numbers that follow are under review

1. The highest score of municipal revenue is the property tax followed by intergovernmental sources such as state revenue sharing.
2. Between 2017 and 2013 revenues increased by \$596,086 (16%).
3. County taxes increased \$487,917 (15%).
4. School funding increased by \$236,927 (20%).
5. Municipal spending increased by \$642,671 (19%).
6. School and county expenditures account for 63.2% of the total.

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7. Municipal expenditures make up 36.8% of the total.
8. General government increased by \$42,035 (17%)
9. Public Safety increased by \$51,836 (18%).
10. Total spending increased by \$642,671 (19%).

MUNICIPAL REVIEW AND EXPENDITURE

Municipal Revenue Source: (Municipality Records - Actual Revenue)							
Taxable Year	Taxes	Inter-Government	Interest	Charge for Service	Licenses & Permits	Other Sources	Total
2017	\$ 3,226,795	\$ 229,373	\$ 5,405	\$ 62,716	\$ -	\$ 113,075	\$ 3,637,364
2016	\$ 3,150,761	\$ 200,390	\$ 4,447	\$ 53,332	\$ -	\$ 30,636	\$ 3,439,566
2015	\$ 3,012,273	\$ 189,612	\$ 3,201	\$ 54,245	\$ -	\$ 14,071	\$ 3,273,402
2014	\$ 2,935,538	\$ 167,983	\$ 1,745	\$ 53,999	\$ -	\$ 25,127	\$ 3,184,392
2013	\$ 2,738,878	\$ 218,067	\$ 1,270	\$ 56,404	\$ -	\$ 26,679	\$ 3,041,298
2012	\$ 2,377,882	\$ 184,611	\$ 751	\$ 59,225	\$ -	\$ 17,812	\$ 2,640,281
2011	\$ 2,046,208	\$ 206,125	\$ 1,185	\$ 68,472	\$ -	\$ 16,232	\$ 2,338,222
2010	\$ 2,022,035	\$ 183,407	\$ 7,037	\$ 55,535	\$ -	\$ 10,146	\$ 2,278,160
2009	\$ 1,894,778	\$ 245,408	\$ 2,530	\$ 51,389	\$ -	\$ 21,723	\$ 2,215,828
2008	\$ 1,799,670	\$ 294,838	\$ 23,786	\$ 59,835	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 2,178,129
2007	\$ 1,860,112	\$ 301,461	\$ 39,606	\$ 64,746	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 2,265,925
2006	\$ 1,885,332	\$ 325,931	\$ 35,088	\$ 62,136	\$ -	\$ 873	\$ 2,309,360
2005	\$ 1,952,003	\$ 406,711	\$ 18,447	\$ 64,439	\$ -	\$ 1,115	\$ 2,442,715

Municipal Expenses Source: (Municipality Records - Actual Expenses)										
Taxable Year	General Government	Public Safety	Public Works	Social Services	Leisure Services	Health & Sanitation	Special Assessments	Capital Outlay	Unclassified	Total
2017	\$ 242,358	\$ 280,208	\$ 370,625	\$ 725	\$34,656	\$ 140,936	\$ 2,305,919	\$ -	\$ 58,132	\$ 3,433,559
2016	\$ 245,190	\$ 270,435	\$ 334,664	\$ 4,386	\$22,590	\$ 169,431	\$ 2,215,791	\$ -	\$ 65,987	\$ 3,328,474
2015	\$ 222,200	\$ 241,713	\$ 365,035	\$ 4,978	\$20,565	\$ 137,830	\$ 2,092,938	\$ -	\$ 60,389	\$ 3,145,648
2014	\$ 217,676	\$ 249,694	\$ 296,174	\$ 17,415	\$23,816	\$ 144,423	\$ 1,952,679	\$ -	\$ 57,285	\$ 2,959,162
2013	\$ 200,323	\$ 228,372	\$ 286,544	\$ 11,935	\$16,963	\$ 128,777	\$ 1,852,740	\$ -	\$ 65,234	\$ 2,790,888
2012	\$ 194,214	\$ 226,100	\$ 261,656	\$ 25,710	\$15,845	\$ 131,567	\$ 1,669,922	\$ -	\$ 52,272	\$ 2,577,286
2011	\$ 197,999	\$ 205,449	\$ 260,689	\$ 18,208	\$31,765	\$ 129,746	\$ 1,505,044	\$ -	\$ 51,184	\$ 2,400,084
2010	\$ 201,947	\$ 202,603	\$ 315,263	\$ 14,597	\$ 7,784	\$ 161,133	\$ 1,513,350	\$ -	\$ 39,693	\$ 2,456,370
2009	\$ 215,280	\$ 200,415	\$ 486,955	\$ 10,876	\$38,418	\$ 141,858	\$ 1,384,716	\$ -	\$ 37,229	\$ 2,515,747
2008	\$ 207,894	\$ 184,931	\$ 344,742	\$ 13,980	\$22,066	\$ 132,735	\$ 1,319,257	\$ -	\$ 35,388	\$ 2,260,993
2007	\$ 192,758	\$ 177,577	\$ 297,083	\$ 10,662	\$30,371	\$ 116,307	\$ 1,266,861	\$ -	\$ 38,626	\$ 2,130,245
2006	\$ 146,575	\$ 168,182	\$ 327,982	\$ 8,058	\$19,242	\$ 147,843	\$ 1,279,989	\$ -	\$ 33,849	\$ 2,131,720
2005	\$ 191,894	\$ 163,812	\$ 209,238	\$ 8,460	\$76,312	\$ 137,661	\$ 1,415,826	\$ -	\$ 36,346	\$ 2,239,549

MUNICIPAL FISCAL OUTLOOK

The Town is in overall sound fiscal condition. The Town maintains a surplus account, which has a balance as of 1/1/2018 of \$1,327,092. The Town uses reserve accounts and conservative borrowing to finance capital improvements. The Town's infrastructure is currently in sound condition.

Fund Balances / Reserves

The numbers that follow are under review

The Town has maintained a surplus account that contained between \$0.00 and \$0.00 over the past 5 years. The surplus account has allowed the Town to operate without having to borrow operating funds during the year. The surplus account has also provided the Town with the opportunity to finance emergency items and reduce the property tax.

The Town has the following trust accounts: Cemetery Fund, John Barnett Library Fund, Pillsbury Scholarship Fund and the Poulin Scholarship Fund. Saving Accounts include an account for the Cemetery Fund interest and Reserve Savings which is typically used as a capital / infrastructure fund. The trust and savings funds as of 1/1/2018 have a combine balance of \$1,921,361.

Debt Service

The MSAD numbers that follow are under review

State Law limits the amount of municipal debt to exceed 15% of the State valuation of the town. The debt limitation for Benton is \$1,491,016. The Town currently does not carry any debt. However, the Town is liable for a portion of the MSAD#49 debt for \$41,059.

Town Comparison

The following table compares Benton with several towns in the region. The comparison highlights the following items: land valuation, building valuation, personal property valuation, tax commitment, and mill rate. The data was taken from the Property Tax Division, 2013 Municipal Valuation Return Statistical Summary.

Benton appears similar to other towns with the same spending and growth trends Benton had the fourth highest tax commitment as compared to the other five communities with similar fiscal trends. Compared to its neighbors only Unity and Albion have lower tax commitments.

Tax Comparison Table						
Source: (2013 Municipal Valuation Return Statistical Summary)						
Municipality	Land Value	Building Value	Personal Property	Total Valuation	Commitment	Mill Rate
Benton	\$86,085,170	\$78,856,280	\$2,557,420	\$164,900,000	\$2,194,235	0.01310
Albion	\$34,876,600	\$78,050,540	\$796,500	\$122,850,000	\$1,648,992	0.01450
Canaan*	\$44,210,300	\$58,060,900	\$102,271,200	\$175,550,000	\$1,673,604	0.01620
Chelsea*	\$53,002,488	\$88,782,824	\$141,785,312	\$155,900,000	\$2,631,770	0.01840
China	\$157,312,600	\$205,022,800	\$362,335,400	\$398,800,000	\$5,206,811	0.01410
Clinton*	\$49,569,000	\$109,704,700	\$ 3,999,700	\$175,550,000	\$2,775,647	0.01700
Fairfield*	\$104,333,700	\$233,522,100	\$337,855,800	\$187,550,000	\$7,346,027	0.02025
Pittston*	\$71,538,700	\$105,461,950	\$ 500,900	\$187,550,000	\$2,343,020	0.01320
Unity	\$49,754,200	\$77,979,400	\$127,733,600	\$121,850,000	\$1,740,359	0.01340
Vassalboro	\$ 127,829,440	\$202,659,340	\$330,488,780	\$318,400,000	\$3,745,082	0.01120
Winslow	\$ 170,682,000	\$381,257,700	\$ 36,513,600	\$575,000,000	\$9,121,026	0.01550

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Waterville	\$122,685,725	\$442,933,900	\$565,619,625	\$771,800,000	\$17,341,562	0.02740
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**Indicates a town selected for comparison due to its similar spending and growth trends.*

BENTON KEY FOCUS AREAS FOR FISCAL CAPACITY

- a. The Town should continue to take advantage of State and Federal grants to finance infrastructure and other improvements.
- b. The Town already maintains a number of regional programs including, code enforcement, fire protection, schools, trash and recycling. These affiliations provided cost-effective option for the community. New regional programs should be explored if they can provide G service and cost savings.
- c. The Town should support legislative initiatives to increase state financial support to towns and schools.
- d. The Town should work with Kennebec Water District and Sewer Department to identify expansion needs and potential for impact fee program to finance expansions.
- e. Long-term capital improvement needs should be identified and reserve accounts established.

CAPITAL INVESTMENT PLAN

The Capital investment Plan or “CIP” lists expenses that the town will incur because of future growth, infrastructure needs or improvements requested by the community. The plan anticipates future expenses and proposes a mechanism to fund these items. Some possible ways to provide funding can include general fund, reserve / capital accounts, long and short term financing and grants.

The plan is important because it alerts both municipal officials and the public about future expenses and allows the Town to find the most cost-effective way to finance the improvement. The plan must be updated on a regular basis to account for additional needs, emergencies and new funding sources. The CIP will include items identified in this plan which are called capital expenses. A capital expense will be defined as having a cost that exceeds \$5,000 and is not a maintenance or operating expense. An example would be: the cost of a new photocopier would be consider a capital expense, with the annual service fee, paper and ink would be classified as operating expenses.

The capital investment plan can serve as starting point for the Select Board to begin an annual CIP review process before establishing the next year’s budget. The plan will need to be adjusted to account for items obtained, new spending, and funding priorities.

The numbers that follow are under review

The Town has a designated saving reserve account for capital items. The fund as of January 1, 2018 has a balance of **\$0.00**. The Town also has a fund balance to use for operating expenses until property taxes and other revenues are collected. The fund balance of January 1, 2018 was **\$0.00**.

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Capital Investment Plan Source: (Municipal)				
Category	Capital Item	Estimated Cost	Funding Source	Target Date
Town Operations	Website	\$5,000	Town Funding	2018 and Ongoing
	Update & Digitize Town Maps	\$16,000	TiF, Grants	2018
Town Infrastructure	Benton Sewer Infrastructure Upgrade (corner of Bridge and Crummett Street)	\$ 135,000	TiF, Grants, Town Funding	2018
	Benton Sewer Expansion (Neck Road)	Unknown	TiF, Grants, Town Funding	2019-2020
	Planning and Collaboration Tool	Unknown	TiF, Grants, Town Funding	2018
	Water Services	Unknown	TiF, Grants, Town Funding	2021-2022
	Sidewalks in Benton Village	Unknown	TiF, Grants, Town Funding	2022
	Benton Roads Paving (Benton Road Plan)	\$235,000	TiF, Grants, Town Funding	2018 and Ongoing
	Benton Roads General Maintenance (Benton Road Plan)	\$55,000	TiF, Grants, Town Funding	2018 and Ongoing
	Internet Services	Unknown	TiF, Grants, Town Funding	Unknown
Other	Community Building	Unknown	Grants, Town Funding	Unknown
	Boat Landing(s)	\$100,000	Grants, Town Funding	Unknown

BENTON KEY FOCUS AREAS FOR CAPITAL INVESTMENT PLAN

- a. Implement and maintain a Capital Investment Plan which will:
 - Identify and summarize anticipated capital investment needs within the planning period in order to implement the comprehensive plan, including estimated costs and timing, and identifies which are municipal growth-related capital investments;
 - Establish general funding priorities among the community capital investments; and
 - Identify potential funding sources and funding mechanisms, including TIF and other grant funding options.
 - Review options for planning and collaboration tool.

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Section III

13. EXISTING LAND USE

This topic provides an analysis of Benton's existing land use. As appropriate for our Town's size and strategy, this topic will cover the analyses provided by the State of Maine, Comprehensive Plan Review Criteria Rule (07 105 Chapter 208). The analysis will provide an evaluation of the current conditions and trends which will support our existing land use policy and strategies identified in Section II of this Comprehensive Plan.

Analysis:

- a. Is most of the recent development occurring: lot by lot; in subdivisions; or in planned developments? Is recent development consistent with the community's vision?
- b. What regulatory and non-regulatory measures would help promote development of a character, and in locations that are consistent with the community's vision?
- c. Is the community's administrative capacity adequate to manage its land use regulation program, including planning board and code enforcement officer?
- d. Are floodplains adequately identified and protected? Does the community participate in the National Flood Insurance Program? If not, should it? If so, is the floodplain management ordinance up to date and consistently enforced? Is the floodplain management ordinance consistent with state and federal standards?

Conditions and Trends Evaluation

- a. An existing land use map, by land use classification (such as mixed-use, residential, commercial, institutional, industrial, agricultural, commercial forests, marine, park/recreational, conserved, and undeveloped land).
- b. A summary of current lot dimensional standards.
- c. A description or map identifying the location of lots and primary structures created within the last ten years. Include residential, institutional, commercial, and industrial development.
- d. Provide a brief description of existing land use regulations and other tools utilized to manage land use, including shoreland zoning, floodplain management, subdivision, site plan review, and zoning ordinances.
- e. Estimate the minimum amount of land needed to accommodate projected residential, institutional, commercial, or industrial development at least ten (10) years into the future.

FLOOD HAZARD AREAS

Areas defined as flood hazard are those areas, adjacent to a water source, which overflow their normal defined boundaries and inundate adjacent lands. Flood prone areas are defined by the Federal Emergency Management Agency and represented by maps, which show areas that are likely to be flooded on a statistical average of once every hundred years or once every five hundred years. The Town has adopted a Floodplain Management Ordinance, which regulates development, proposed in areas shown on flood maps. As a result of adopting a Floodplain ordinance, residents can obtain flood insurance for their properties. A map showing the floodplain areas in town is included in this section.

Flood hazard areas are located along the Kennebec River, Sebasticook River, Fowler Brook, and Fifteen Mile Stream along with associated wetlands in the eastern portion of the town. Development proposed in the flood hazard areas must follow certain standards such as raising buildings above the flood level. The Town is required to update the Floodplain Management Ordinance periodically to keep current with state and federal regulations. The Town updated and adopted its revised ordinance March 12, 2018.

Town of Benton Comprehensive Plan

Section III

BENTON KEY FOCUS AREAS FOR LAND USE

- a. Review and adopt as appropriate for the Town size and strategy, Comprehensive Plan policies and strategies as provided by the State of Maine, Comprehensive Plan Review Criteria Rule (07 105 Chapter 208).
- b. Evaluate and propose stricter Land Use Ordinance modifications to protect and enforce guidelines regarding appearance and growth type within residential areas and major town arteries. Other topics for consideration include technologies, junk yard permits, and noise and odor pollution.
- c. Select Board and MPD will work jointly to review existing ordinances for clarity from a business perspective. Prioritize, review and implement its recommendations
- d. Establish measurable goals for attracting quality business and employment opportunities.
- e. Explore opportunities to work with neighboring communities to plan for and finance shared or adjacent capital investments to increase cost savings and efficiencies