



South Berwick Comprehensive Plan Update

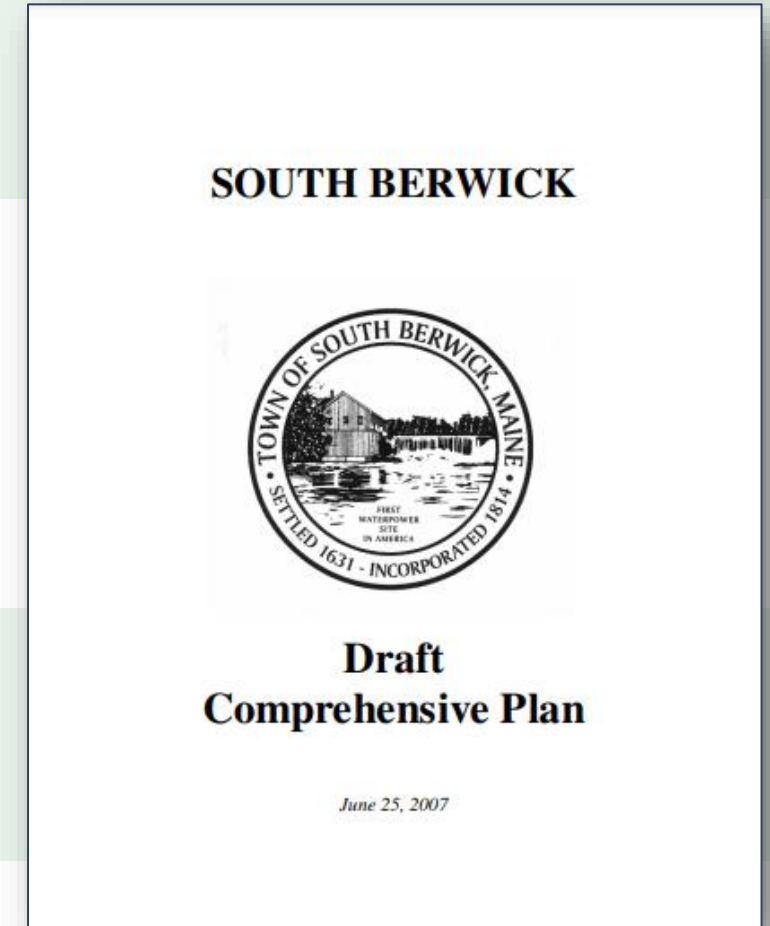
Public Information Session – April 11th 2024

What is a Comprehensive Plan?

- Master plan for the future of South Berwick, 10-15 years
- Governed by the Maine State “**Growth Management Act**”, which requires towns to plan long-term

Why do a Comprehensive Plan?

- Guides the future of all policy, land use, and other services and initiatives
- Considers current conditions and allows informed decisions with input from the community



The plan does not make law, but it is essential as the basis for future policy changes.

Overview & Status

Progress to Date

- ✓ Inventory Draft Complete
- ✓ Community Input Survey – 1100+ responses
- ✓ Hosted four Focus Group topic sessions with subject matter experts & stakeholders
- ✓ Goals, Policies & Strategies Draft Complete
- ✓ Future Land Use Plan Draft Complete

Next Steps

- Public Information Session & Feedback
- Present plan to the Town Council
- Send to the State for findings of Consistency

The plan consists of two parts:



1) Inventory uses data and local knowledge to describe current conditions



2) Implementation includes all recommendations within:



Goals, Policies and Strategies describes actionable steps to work towards the desired future

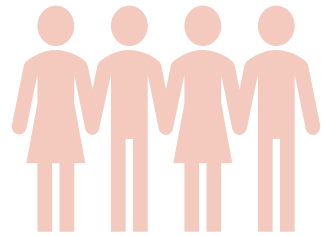


Future Land Use Plan proposes considerations for future zoning districts and uses.

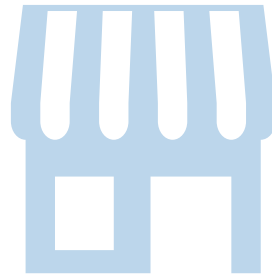
Topic Overview – Findings and Recommendations



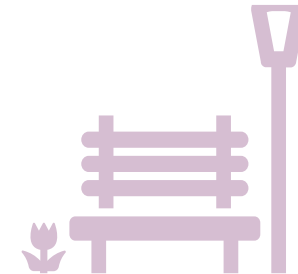
Conservation
and Natural
Resources



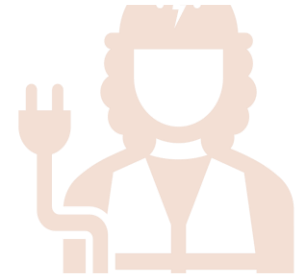
Land Use
& Housing



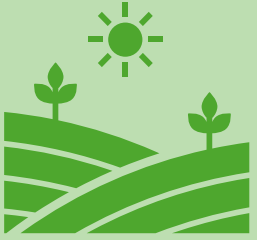
Local
Economy



Arts,
Recreation
& Downtown



Public
Facilities and
Services

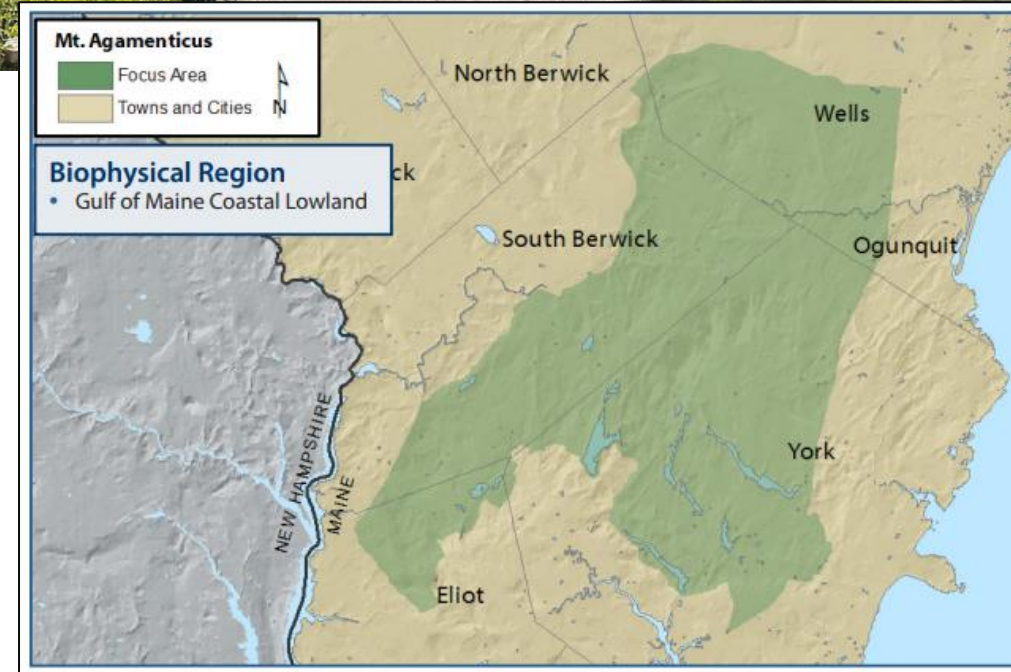
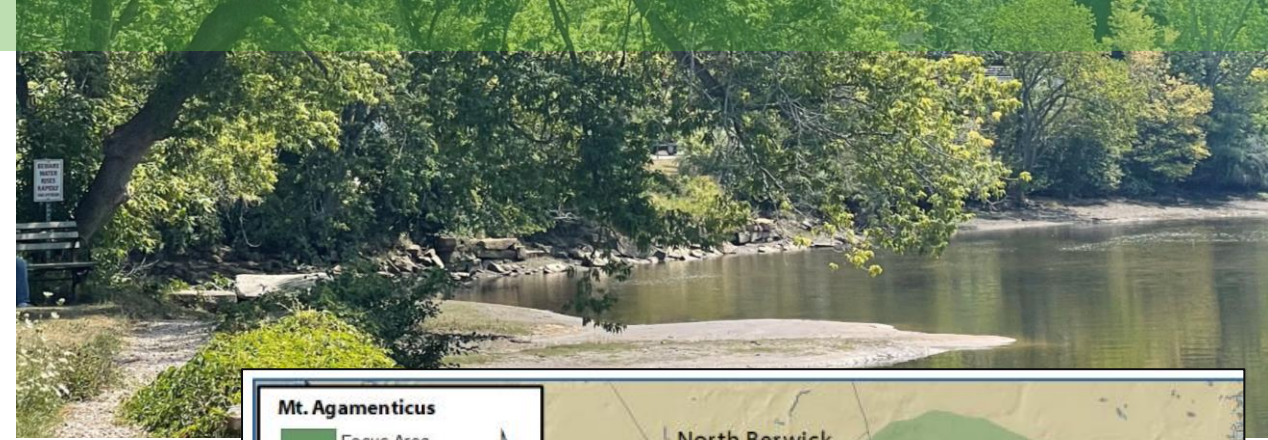


Conservation & Natural Resources - Findings

- **Conservation is a high priority for residents**
- Unique natural communities, species, including Mt. Agamenticus region.
- The town has a **significant amount of land currently in conservation** & more encompassing shoreland regulations than many other towns – this is effective at guiding growth
- Management of **ground water contamination**, and future issues related to PFAS
- **Flooding** and other impacts of climate change should be a future consideration

62 parcels totaling 2,539 acres in **Tree Growth**

10 parcels totaling 153 acres in **Farmland**



South Berwick Conserved Lands

South Berwick Comprehensive Plan

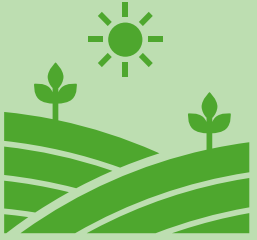
- Great Works Regional Land Trust
- Maine Bureau of Parks and Lands
- Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife
- Maine Minor Civil Division
- Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities
- South Berwick Water District
- The Nature Conservancy
- York Land Trust, Inc.

There are approximately 4,440 acres of conserved land in South Berwick, which represents about 20% of the town area.

Map prepared by SMPDC in Sept. 2022. Data is not authoritative and should be used for planning purposes only.
Source: State of Maine



**4,440 acres in
conservation,
about 20% of
the total town
area.**



Conservation & Natural Resources - *Actions*

It is the policy of the town to participate in, incentivize, and plan for the conservation of land for the protection of water resources, critical natural resources, and agricultural lands.

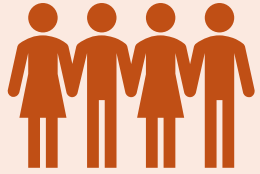
- **Update the Open Space Plan** and implement recommendations, including the development of a **Conservation Checklist** for use by the Planning Board in review.
- **Create a municipal fund or trust** which reserves resources for the purchase of land for conservation, funded through impact fees, current use taxation withdrawal fees, etc.

It is the policy of the town to prioritize the protection of undeveloped blocks, biodiversity, and critical wildlife habitat.

- **Include spatial data of wetlands on GIS tools**, and refer to most current National Wetlands Inventory
- Consider amending ordinances to require a **wetland values and functions assessment** for certain new developments, to better understand the full impact of a project.
- **Afford appropriate protections to vernal pools** in the Greater Mt. Ag area as significant breeding habitat, such as shoreland zoning.

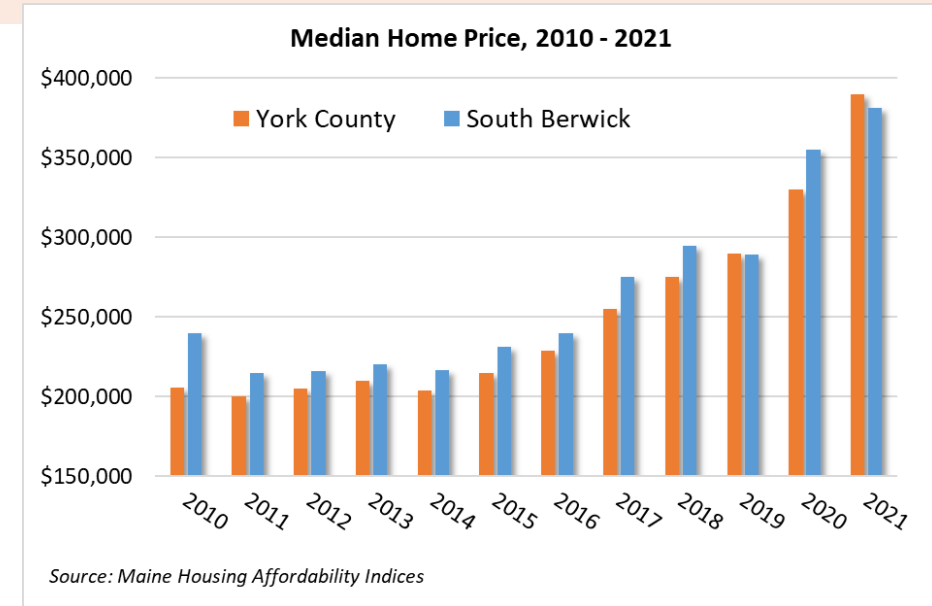
Full List of Strategies also addresses:

- Actions to assess climate vulnerability and begin climate change planning
- Initiatives to support agriculture & forestry industries



Land Use & Housing - *Findings*

- South Berwick's **median home price has increased 30%** between 2010-2021
 - In 2021 the median home price was lower than the York County average for the first time since 2010.
- **Housing Need** – depending on population growth, 300-450 housing units needed by 2040.
 - For rental units, the town lacks low-income as well as higher value options.
- **Most vacant developable land remaining is in the rural zoning districts.**
 - This means that development has been concentrated in the village areas, but considerations should be made for future planning of the rural zones.



~50 unit deficit in rental options for households **<50% area median income.**

~150 unit deficit for households with **>125% area median income.**



Land Use & Housing - *Actions*

It is the policy of the town to encourage and promote adequate workforce housing to support the community's and region's economic development and ensure diverse housing options for all residents.

- Consider town-led programs such as developing housing on tax foreclosed property, creating a housing trust fund, or create a designated committee.
- Participate in regional programs and take advantage of available technical assistance.

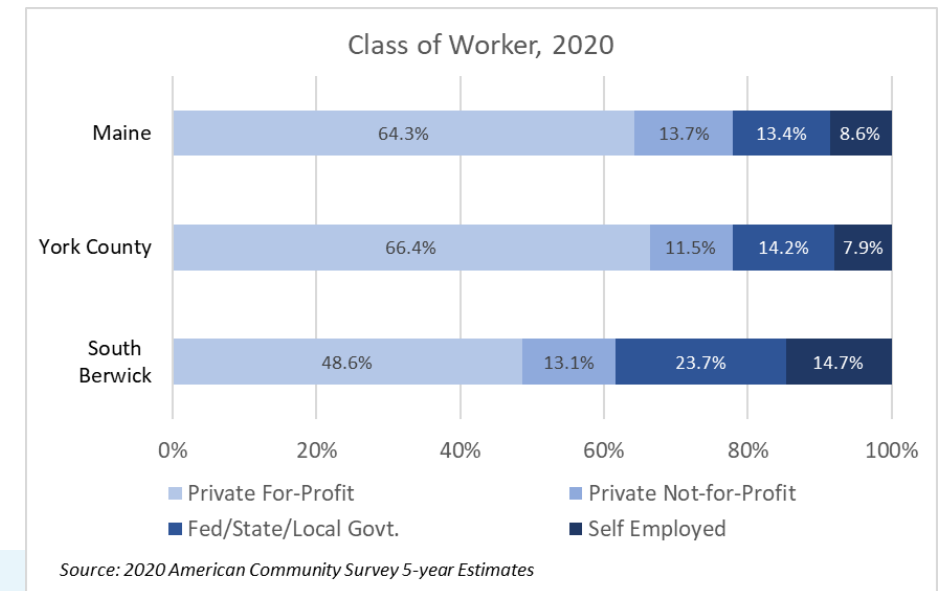
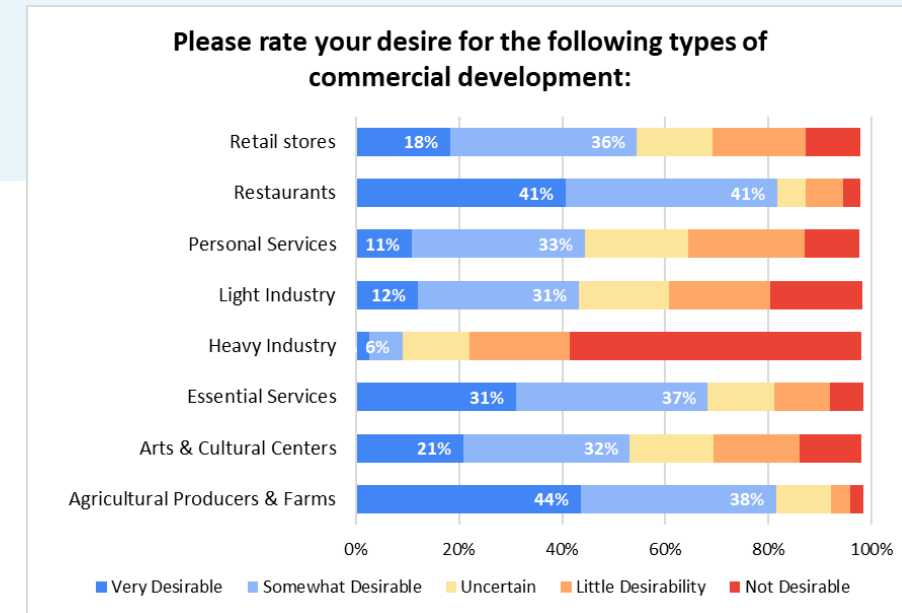
It is the policy of the town to ensure that land use controls encourage the development of quality affordable housing, including rental housing.

- Review ordinances for barriers to housing creation and consider incentives for affordable/workforce housing.
- Require that subdivisions over a certain size must include a percentage of affordable units.
- Explore regulations that use the creation of open space conservation to incentivize housing development.



Local Economy - *Findings*

- Most of South Berwick's residents are employed in Education, Health, and Social Services (31.1%) or Manufacturing (11.9%).
- As of 2022, the town had the **4th highest concentration of Portsmouth Naval Shipyard workers**, approximately 363 total.
- Number of **establishments continues to grow**, but rate as slowed.
- South Berwick residents are **open to more commercial activity**
- **Opportunity lies in retail industry gap, grocery, restaurants**— no new construction of retail space in 12 years.





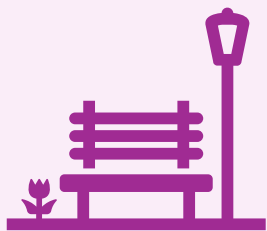
Local Economy - *Actions*

It is the policy of the town to support a thriving downtown business community, including diverse commercial activity and adequate infrastructure

- **Complete a Downtown Revitalization Plan** that engages property owners and creates specific recommendations for infrastructure and façade improvements.
- **Create a downtown business network** to engage business owners as needed on new town policies, programs & connect to funding.
- Pursue funding for **downtown beautification & accessibility**, landscaping and façade improvements, or public art.

It is the policy of the town to support commercial development and growth in suitable areas, such as Route 236, Punkintown, and lower Main Street.

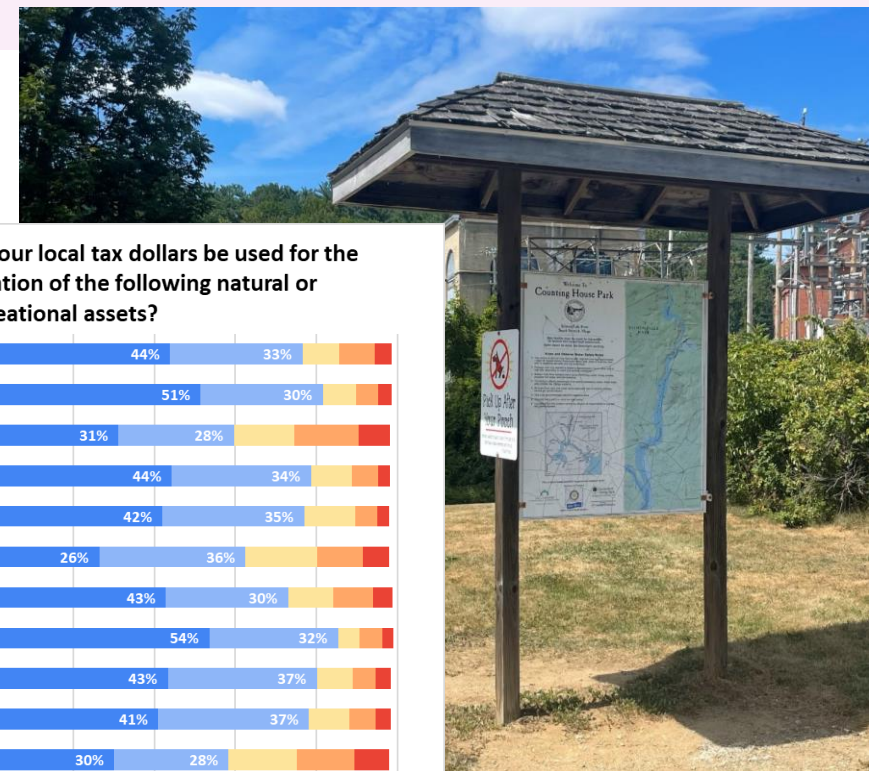
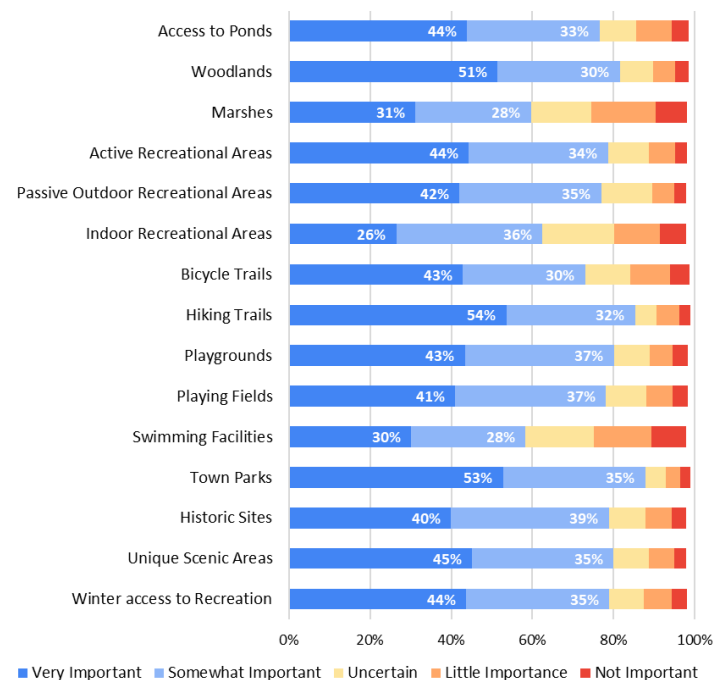
- Review zoning to **ensure desired forms of development are allowed** and have limited barriers, including mixed-use development, commercial and industrial uses.
- Develop a **corridor infrastructure plan to address lack of water and sewer** in priority development areas

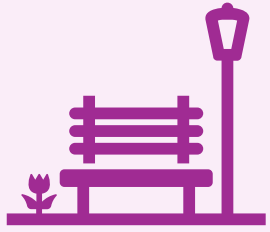


Arts, Recreation & Downtown - *Findings*

- **Active community of volunteers and non-profit organizations** which provide ample opportunities – town coordination is sometimes weak
- **Traffic**, both through and local, frequently **congests the downtown core**, limiting accessibility and efficiency - opportunities for improved bike/ped infrastructure
- Strong interest in preserving the building style and layout of downtown, which includes a **historic district and several properties listed on the National Register of Historic Places.**
- **The village is consistently named a strength and jewel of town**, but access and opportunities are a challenge at times

How important is that your local tax dollars be used for the preservation or creation of the following natural or recreational assets?





Arts, Recreation & Downtown - *Actions*

It is the policy of the town to invest in the creation of new and improvement of existing recreation facilities & cultural activities to meet community needs and provide a variety of opportunities.

- **Evaluate capital needs for municipal parks and recreation staff** and regional recreation non-profits to consider the feasibility of a combined community center.
- **Create a list of recreation needs or develop a recreation plan to meet current and future needs.**
- **Develop a Town green or outdoor meeting area** and venue through the purchase or reuse of land around the Town Hall, Central School, Powderhouse, or other town owned property.

It is the policy of the town to create a downtown with character and sense of place, that supports walkability, recreation, youth, and civic activities.

- Identify specific opportunities for **connecting downtown public spaces**, including off-street walking paths and sidewalks
- Consider development of consistent signage, maps and brochures for **wayfinding throughout downtown** for public areas, parks, municipal facilities, school facilities, etc.

Bonus! - Historic Resources Actions

It is the policy of the town to ensure our treasured resources benefit future residents by encouraging the preservation and maintenance of areas of historic and archaeological significance.

- **Explore expanding the downtown South Berwick Historic District** as a means of discouraging the loss of historic features downtown.
- Develop a **heritage tourism program** to attract visitors, benefit residents and bolster local businesses- include events, guided tours, signage for self-led walking tours, and open houses.
- Create attractive and interesting **signs and/or plaques around town** with dates, names and pertinent information to enrich the experience of visitors and residents alike.

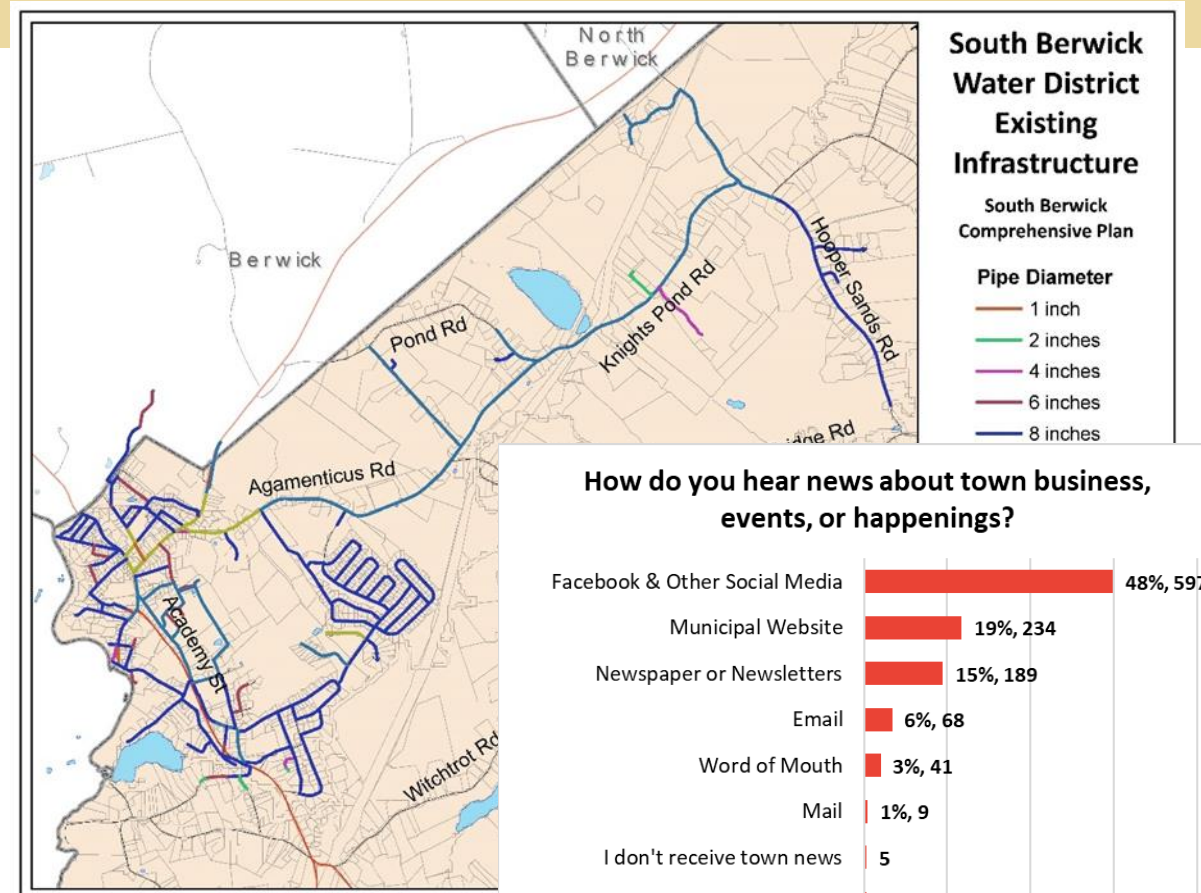


Image from Historic New England collection

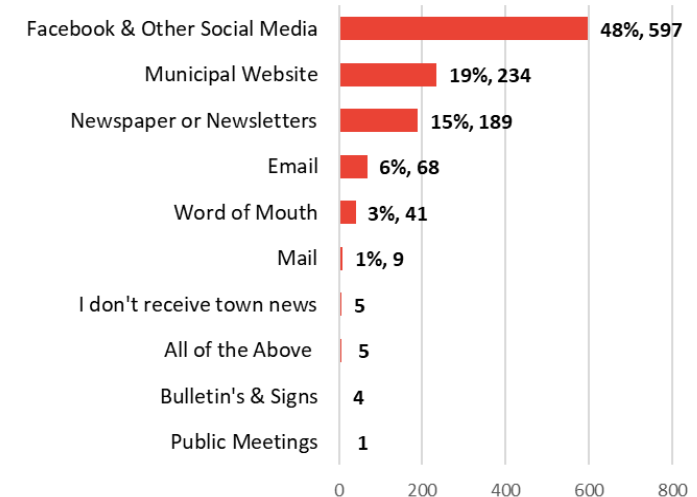


Public Facilities & Services - Findings

- Overall, public facilities and services are encompassing and have expanded as the town has grown
- **Capacity & building issues** were noted at some facilities
 - **Fire & EMS Building**– training and response demands have increased, on-call to 24/7
 - **Community Center space** – sharing with Fire & EMS
 - **Town Hall** – no improvements since 1995
 - **Transfer Station** – congestion/traffic flow
- **Staff capacity has increased**, but some gaps remain
 - Full or part-time planner?
 - Communications?
 - Facilities management?



How do you hear news about town business, events, or happenings?





Public Facilities & Services - *Actions*

It is the policy of the town to plan for the government maintenance and care of municipal facilities and buildings, and make improvements based on general staff needs and capacity.

- Create a **Municipal Buildings Master Plan** that inventories the current space and uses of facilities in town, considers future maintenance and capacity needs, plans for periodic improvements, and appoints responsible staff for these tasks.
- **Engage current staff departments on facility space, equipment and capacity** (staff) needs and incorporate findings in the Municipal Buildings Master Plan.

It is the policy of the town to maintain and continuously improve government transparency and communications with residents.

- **Consider allocating funds to communications as its own budget item** and/or providing funds to town committees to conduct outreach. Consider need/feasibility of **dedicated staff in the future**.
- **Create a welcome packet** for new South Berwick residents that includes information on meeting times & places, website resources, services, etc.

Future Land Use Plan

Growth:

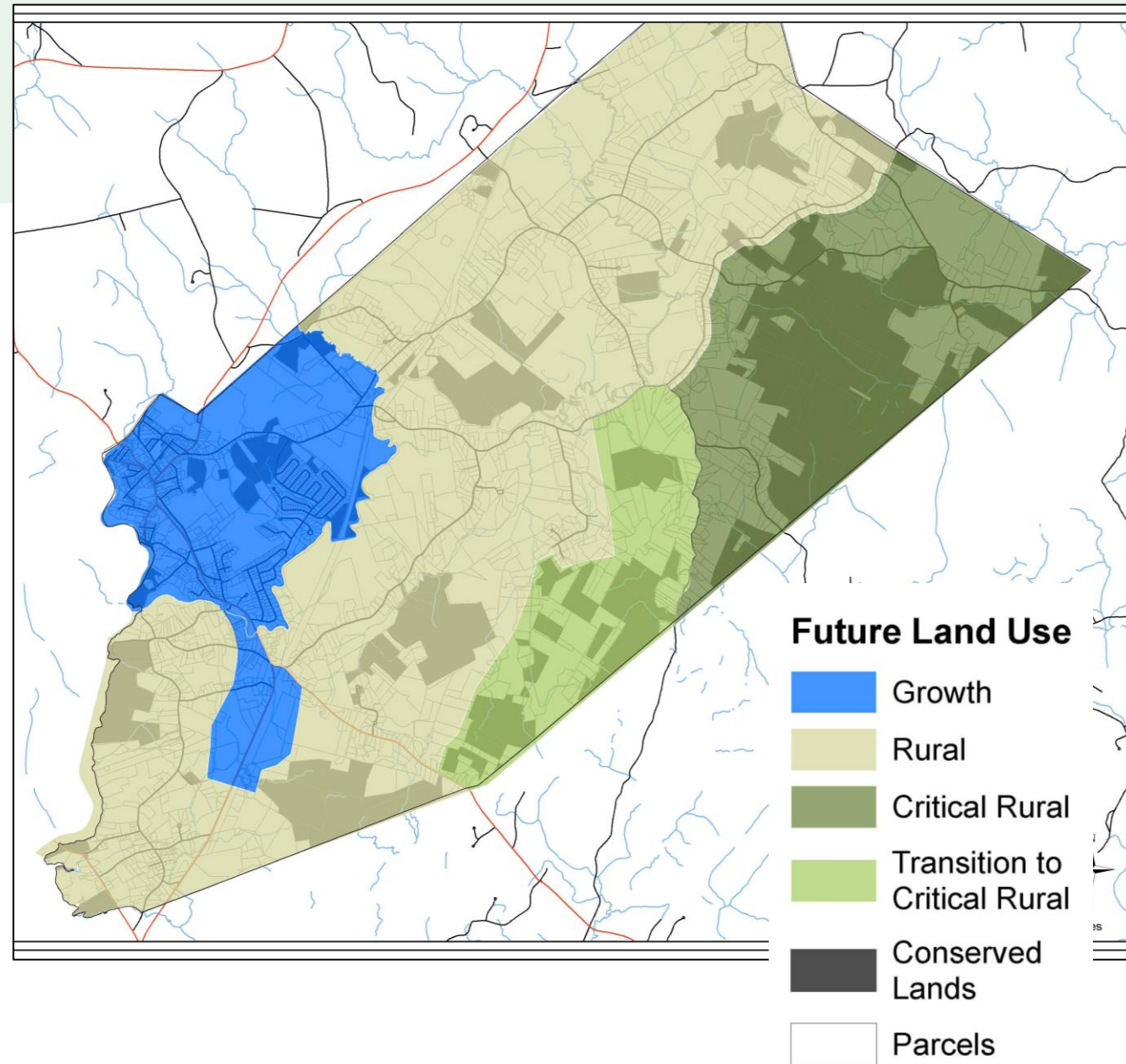
Areas where development should be focused, and land use & public investment should encourage density.

Rural:

Areas where development should be directed away from, and land use should encourage minimal new growth.

Critical Rural:

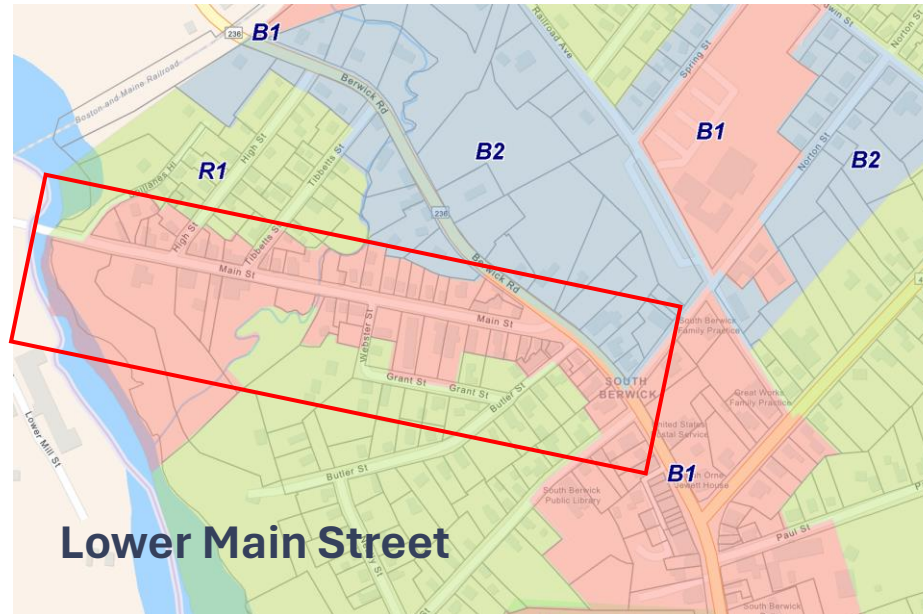
Areas where development should be discouraged entirely, and land use should protect resources.



Future Land Use Plan – Growth Focus Areas

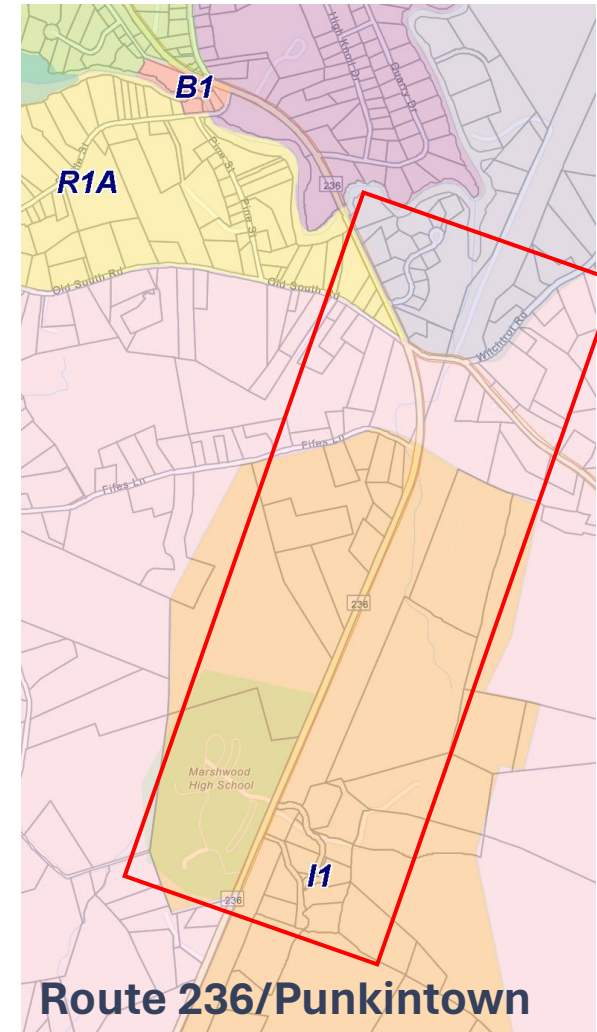
Lower Main Street:

- The neighborhood could become more of an extension of the Main Street village
- Several buildings have walkable entrances or storefronts that are underutilized, or if they are in business, feel detached from the main village
- Public parking, pocket park, beautification, could all go a long way to **encourage infill development.**



Punkintown:

- I2 and I1 zones are generally underdeveloped
- Best suited for **mixed-use residential paired with retail or commercial** on ground floors
- Prioritize **development patterns that discourage dead ends** and cul-de-sacs and allow for through traffic to collector roads



Implementation

Plan recommends that

1. The Town Council is the lead responsible party but shall appoint an Implementation Committee to meet quarterly to track progress.
2. Annually during budget season, the Town Council & Implementation Committee identify 3-5 priority actions for the year.
3. A report of progress, compiled by the Implementation Committee be included in the South Berwick Annual Report annually.



Share Your Feedback

- Feedback form is available at **southberwickmaine.org**!
- The Future Land Use Map will remain posted in Town Hall, along with copies of the fact sheets



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South Berwick Comprehensive Plan Open Feedback Form

Hello South Berwick Citizen! Thank you for providing your feedback on the current Comprehensive Plan draft documents.

Tell your friends & neighbors to visit the webpage to see materials, and fill out the form!

THANK YOU

The South Berwick Comprehensive Plan Committee

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