

TOWN OF MOUNT VERNON

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Draft

2019



“So we had a large assortment of folks in our town, and although all towns have their characters, no town ever had as many as we did, or such fine ones. With the perspective of later years, I know now that everybody in our town was a character - and that the town was what made character, and I know the town made mine. Whatever it may be, the town made it. All I am or ever hope to be I owe to my mother's bringing me up in that small Maine town, because growing to a man there gave me the priceless things that universities don't sell, and other people don't know.”

Excerpt from **And One to Grow On** by John Gould
Published by William Morrow and Company, 1949

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LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL

Dear Mount Vernon friends and neighbors-

Many people have contributed to this comprehensive plan. Some contributed data, while others contributed opinions. Some attended our meetings, while others were accosted in their barns or yards as we sought information and ideas. We thank each and every one. This is your plan.

This has been a very difficult task. While most of the facts in the plan's inventory are indisputable, projections for the future were openly debated and remain debatable.

Wisdom of a much greater magnitude than ours would be required to solve all of the problems identified during the planning process, but we have tried to steer our community in the direction of solutions – even if the actual solutions are not always readily apparent.

Some policies present our dreams; others are anchored in reality. We believe a comprehensive plan should include some dreams, and we have done so.

One thing is very clear to us: it will take the collective effort of each one of you to achieve the goals and policies of this comprehensive plan.

Yes, we mean you. There is much that you, as an individual, can do to help Mount Vernon achieve its future. And that future can be so much brighter with your help. So as you read this plan, check off the policies that you wish to help achieve. And let us know of your interest.

Join us in pestering town officials to work together to achieve the goals set out in this plan. Don't let this plan gather dust on the shelf. We've got you this far. The rest is up to you.

Sincerely,

Paul Crockett
Clyde Dyar
Trish Jackson
David Fuller
Sue Herman
Lucas Rumler
George Smith

BACKGROUND & INTRODUCTION

What is a Comprehensive Plan?

Mount Vernon's comprehensive plan is a blueprint for the town's future, a tool for providing coordinated guidance and direction to meet such challenges as growth, demand and financing for public services, and protection of our environment and rural characteristics. It is a plan in the sense that it provides a detailed program of action which will enable the community to grow and meet the challenges before us while maintaining the rural character of Mount Vernon.

The term “rural” conjures up images of a visual landscape of farms, stone walls, winding tree lined roads running up and down over hillsides, and a diversity of architecture and people. Important rural characteristics include a lot of open space and forest, wildlife, clean water, large homesteads, and a diverse development pattern with homes spread throughout the land base.

However, comprehensive planning is much more than a written plan. It is a process, and a process that must continue into the future. Every year, each and every goal and policy should be reviewed, progress evaluated, and revisions and new policies proposed to meet changing circumstances and new challenges. Legally, the plan provides a base and justification for Town ordinances, and it must be kept up-to-date in the future.

This plan presents our community's values and a set of principles within which to operate. Although it charts our course, other roads will diverge along the way and we'll have ample opportunity to evaluate and change course, as needed.

Long range planning is a compelling need in Mount Vernon and we must have a plan to form the basis of our land use and other ordinances. It must be recognized that planning is an excellent idea that should be encouraged and supported. This plan has been prepared in good faith, with our eyes firmly on our future.

How Was the Plan Prepared?

The Comprehensive Planning Committee was instituted at a meeting at the Town Office on August 14, 2017 with all three Selectmen present. The Committee originally consisted of the following individuals: Dave Fuller, Lucas Rumler, George Smith, Brad Jackson, Susan Herman, and selectmen Paul Crockett, Clyde Dyar, and Trish Jackson.

Other interested citizens participated during the planning process, including Gilman Coryell, Carol Fuller, Chuck Wright, and Tom Ward. Committees were formed to look at specific topics and included dozens of Mount Vernon residents.

A survey was sent to all residents of Mount Vernon near the end of October 2017. Responses to the survey were obtained by the end of that year.

Two public hearings were held at the Mount Vernon Community Center during 2018 to inform residents about the development of the plan and to obtain their input. The plan was then adapted to reflect input and concerns discussed at those

hearings.

How Will We Execute the Plan?

We understand this plan is ambitious, and it will take consistent management to ensure its goals are achieved. So we've tasked the Select Board to oversee its implementation. They will set up official town committees to work on specific topics. (The Age-Friendly and Economic Development Committees are already in place.) Each committee will report to the Select Board twice a year to set priorities and discuss progress, and the process will be documented in the Town's Annual Report.

How is The Plan Organized?

A table of contents preceding this section directs readers to sections of interest. There are three distinct sections of this Comprehensive Plan:

1. The Growth Management Plan
2. Goals and Policies for Key Resources
3. Inventory & Analysis of Key Resources

In an appendix are results of the survey, maps and photographs.

THE GROWTH MANAGEMENT PLAN

Overarching Goals

- Protect Mount Vernon's Rural Character
- Conserve Our Natural Resources
- Encourage Farming and Forestry
- Protect Wildlife Habitat and Water Bodies

Key Principles

- Protect the rural characteristics and quality of life of Mount Vernon.
- Conserve important natural resources, especially bodies of water.
- Encourage small and home-based businesses that are consistent with the town's rural character.
- Strive to maintain or enhance the property values of all landowners.
- Protect private property rights and preserve freedom of choice for individual property owners.
- Treat all property owners equitably.

Vision

Recent years have brought significant investment in Mount Vernon's older homes, numerous new building projects and generally beneficial growth. Many rural characteristics have been preserved. Our rolling hills and plentiful lakes, ponds, and meandering streams, provide the most striking and pleasing characteristics that are appreciated by all residents.

With no major industry and a great deal of undeveloped land, Mount Vernon's growth has been limited largely to residential development, home-based businesses, and small businesses primarily located along existing roads. Most citizens like the current diversity of homes, open space and forest. Much of Mount Vernon is forested, and logging has accelerated in the last decade, stripping some parcels of marketable timber. The number of larger farms has diminished but there has been growth in the number of smaller farms and younger farms.

Most residents would like to wake up ten or twenty years from now in a community which has maintained its rural character and community atmosphere. Such a town would include both active farms and a forestry industry, varied home-based and small businesses, a lot of undeveloped land in both field and forest, no major industry, no high density development, homes spread out along existing roads, as well as uncrowded ponds and lakes with clean water and lots of fish.

This Mount Vernon of the future would not be appreciably larger in population, but would provide more housing options for senior citizens and young families consistent with protecting rural characteristics. This vision emphasizes a small community with a large land base and plenty of room to roam and grow, in population, number of houses, home-based and small businesses, consistent with this plan.

Regulatory Climate

Mount Vernon's Land Use Ordinance attempts to balance the importance of preserving the rural character and community atmosphere in Mount Vernon, with the rights of landowners and neighbors. Mount Vernon's Land Use Ordinances include town-wide zoning and provisions relating to shoreland zoning. Mount Vernon has a minimum lot size of 2 acres, 200 feet of road frontage, setbacks of 75 feet from the road centerline (for most public and private roads), and standards for new roads.

Mount Vernon's Shoreland Zoning Districts protect more wetlands and streams than the state mandate prescribes, based on local knowledge of the importance of those areas. All wetland of ten acres or more are in either shoreland or resource protection areas and buffered.

The subdivision ordinance regulates all developments of three or more lots. The site plan review ordinance governs all commercial development (except agriculture and home-based businesses), imposing a variety of performance

standards that must be met by new commercial development. The minimum lot size applies throughout the town, except in the village district. In order to encourage revitalization of the village district, reduced setbacks and lot sizes are allowed.

It is generally felt that these Town ordinances have been effective. The Town will continue to analyze new technology and develop land use ordinances designed to improve communications, provide energy efficiency, and further environmental protection.

This new comprehensive plan encompasses any unachieved goals and adds many new goals, including state-mandated goals.

The Town of Mount Vernon relies on a part-time professional code enforcement officer, the Planning Board, and the Board of Appeals (both volunteer boards) to manage the application and enforcement of Mount Vernon's Land Use Ordinances with respect to growth management. The Town should devote additional resources to code enforcement and education regarding Mount Vernon Town ordinances.

Zoning & Challenges

Maine's Growth Management Act requires that every Maine town enact town-wide zoning with a minimum of two zones. Land areas must be designated "growth" or "rural". The designation of growth areas is intended to ensure that planned growth and development is directed to areas most suitable for such growth and development and away from areas in which growth and development would be incompatible with the protection of rural resources and residential uses.

The land use plan must designate as rural those land areas within the town with the town intends to protect agricultural, forest, scenic, and other open space land areas from incompatible development. The designation of rural areas is intended to provide for the long term protection of resource production and open space and scenic lands from incompatible development.

Zoning is supposed to protect landowners from adverse impacts of adjoining land uses. Mount Vernon's Land Use Ordinance has six zoning districts consisting of Resource Protection, Limited Residential, Stream Protection, Village District, Rural District, and Limited Commercial District (Growth Zone). Each district has its own permissible land uses.

With a common vision for the future and a shared understanding of the important rural characteristics of Mount Vernon, the Comprehensive Planning Committee nevertheless faced the challenging task of balancing our desire to maintain the rural characteristics and community atmosphere we value while allowing for continued diverse development of compatible uses throughout the town.

The Town should study ways our Land Use Ordinance could be modified to permit reasonable access to housing for senior citizens and young families.

Specific Goals & Policies

Mount Vernon's Comprehensive Planning Committee believes that the following growth management plan will achieve both state and local growth management goals, which are as follows on the next page.

1. Encourage orderly growth and development in appropriate areas while protecting Mount Vernon's rural character, making efficient use of public services, preventing development sprawl, preventing incompatible uses in rural areas, and assuring that all landowners are treated equitably and fairly.
2. Protect the quality and manage the quantity of Mount Vernon's water resources, including lakes, ponds, streams and aquifers.
3. Protect other critical natural resources, including without limitation, wetlands, wildlife and fisheries habitat, shorelands, and unique natural areas.
4. Preserve historic and archaeological resources.
5. Safeguard agricultural and forest resources from development that threatens those resources.
6. Encourage revitalization of the downtown area of Mount Vernon by allowing for change of use on smaller lot sizes and reduced road setbacks on existing lots.
7. Create opportunities for more affordable and/or manageable housing for senior citizens and young families while preserving the town's rural character.

To achieve these goals, we propose a partnership of local and state growth management and protective measures:

1. Mount Vernon's strengthened shoreland zoning ordinance will protect water bodies and other important resources such as wetlands.
2. Maine's Natural Resources Protection Act is expected to protect significant wildlife habitats, including high and moderate value deer wintering areas when they are identified.
3. Maine's Forest Practices Act is expected to protect important forest resources and encourage a viable forestry industry.
4. Mount Vernon's policies established in the following section titled "Farm and Forest Resources" will strengthen and enhance state laws, regulations, and programs with local initiatives to achieve our goals.
5. Mount Vernon's site plan review ordinance will continue to manage and limit the impact of commercial development, including without limitation, new technologies and enterprises such as wind power, personal wireless service facilities, and medical marijuana.
6. Mount Vernon's subdivision ordinance will continue to manage and limit the impact of large-scale residential development. Proposed new open space

options for developers will offer an enticement to preserve open space within subdivisions.

7. Mount Vernon's other ordinances will assist in achieving these goals. Mt. Vernon has established two Limited Commercial (Growth Areas), one at the north end and one on the south end of State Highway Route 41 through Mt. Vernon. Large-scale commercial development and new mobile home parks are limited to this area. The Town does not plan to change these growth areas. Sufficient opportunity exists for the growth of recreational, home-based and small business compatible with residential use in the Rural District, Limited Commercial and Village Districts.

We believe our current ordinances, with improvements recommended in this plan, are adequate to achieve our goals and to define our community's values for anyone seeking to develop property here. Although change is inevitable, our controls are adequate to avoid the wrenching high impact changes that would dramatically alter our landscape and rural characteristics.

In the following sections we present specific strategies for growth management, along with a timetable and implementation plan for each policy.

Implementation Strategies

Goal 1

Protect the town's rural characteristics and natural resources, while providing property owners with choices which encourage the continuation of a diverse pattern of land use and development and treating all landowners equitably.

Policies

- 1-1) Growth areas have been established for land in the northern and southern ends of State Highway 41.
 - a) All large scale commercial development will be limited to this area;
 - b) Home-based businesses, agricultural, forestry, and small micro business compatible with rural areas will continue to be encouraged in the Rural District.
 - c) A study will be undertaken to determine if more flexibility is needed to provide areas in the town that would provide increased housing options for senior citizens and young families.
- 1-2) In the remaining Rural Areas of town, current standards should continue to apply: a two acre minimum lot size with 200 feet of road frontage and a 75 foot setback, with the exception of certain minor public roads and private roads.

1-3) The Subdivision Ordinance provides a clustering option that allows higher densities when buildable land is set aside as permanently undeveloped space. A special clustering option allowing very high densities should be provided when land is set aside permanently to be managed for agriculture or forest harvesting (see Policies 11-6 and 11-13).

1-4) The subdivision ordinance allows no more than 10 lots to be developed over a five-year period on any single parcel of land. This limitation should be waived for developments which set aside at least 50% of the buildable land as prescribed in policy 2-3 above.

1-5) The subdivision ordinance restriction limiting lots to a three to one ratio of lot length to width should be reviewed, to allow back land to be included with any lot which already meets the standards specified above.

1-6) The Town has enacted performance standards for mobile homes, including safety criteria.

1-7) The town should work with Maine's Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife (IF&W) and other government agencies and conservation organizations to identify and protect significant wildlife habitat and enhance enforcement of laws that achieve this goal.

This policy should include the recruitment of volunteers to assist in identification of these areas, provide information for wildlife research projects, and work with local landowners who wish to manage their land for wildlife habitat. Town officials should encourage local conservation groups to participate in achieving this policy.

1-8) The Town should work with IF&W, DEP, and other government agencies and conservation groups to protect and enhance the quality of our water bodies and fisheries resources.

This policy should include recruitment of volunteers to assist IF&W regional fisheries biologists and others to monitor water quality, provide information for fisheries research projects, improve and maintain public access points, and assist with any other such programs. Town officials should encourage lake associations and other conservation groups to participate in achieving this policy.

1-9) The Town should study phosphorous control methods and regulations that would enhance our water quality protection measures.

1-10) The Board of Selectmen should annually review new technologies and enterprises to determine whether Mount Vernon's ordinances need to be updated in order to address the impact of such new technologies and enterprises on our community consistent with the goals of this Plan. If

appropriate, the issue should be referred to the Ordinance Review Committee for further study and recommendations.

Implementation: 2019 and ongoing.

We recommend the Board of Selectmen request the Ordinance Review Committee to prepare proposed ordinances and submit them to townspeople in 2020 and also work to implement the other policies.

Goal 2

Protect the town's groundwater and identified aquifers.

Policies

- 2-1) Prohibit storage of potentially toxic or hazardous materials over aquifers except for normal residential use, and prohibit the installation of underground tanks over aquifers.
- 2-2) The Town's salt and sand pile has been moved and is enclosed in a Salt and Sand building.
- 2-3) The Town's original transfer station has been closed and moved to an environmentally safe site.
- 2-4) Provide all residents with information about proper disposal of hazardous materials which could pollute groundwater and aquifers. When state disposal sites and programs are developed, make sure residents are aware of these sites and systems.
- 2-5) Cooperate with the Maine Geological Survey to compile data on town wells and water supplies.

Implementation

The Planning Board should work to achieve policies 3-1, 3-4, and 3-5.

Goal 3

Assure code enforcement for all local ordinances and regulations, as well as of state laws and regulations.

Policies

- 3-1) The Board of Selectmen should work with the Town's Code Enforcement Officer (CEO) on a continuing basis to make adjustment as needed to assure adequate time and resources are available for the CEO to carry out his/her mission in Mount Vernon.
- 3-2) The current CEO works on a part-time basis for the Town of Mount Vernon, and is shared with neighboring towns. The Board of Selectmen should work with other towns and the State to improve enforcement and reduce the cost of new state regulations regarding code enforcement officers.
- 3-3) The Board of Selectmen should monitor impact fees for the commercial and large-scale residential development, to fund improved code enforcement and to offset increased costs of public services.
- 3-4) Provide educational opportunities to better familiarize citizens with Town ordinances and policies that support them.

Implementation: Ongoing

The Board of Selectmen has specific responsibility to implement these policies but may assign to other boards and/or committees to assist in their execution of this policy with volunteers.

GOALS & POLICIES FOR KEY RESOURCES

Natural Resources & Recreation

Water Resources

1. Preserve and protect lake, pond and stream water quality.
 - Encourage all lake associations to conduct at least basic water quality testing of their lake, either independently or in conjunction with the 30 Mile River Watershed Association (30MRWA).
 - Encourage all lake associations to conduct a Watershed Survey at least every ten years to identify potential sources of runoff pollution and propose mitigations to land owners. Communicate the findings to town officials if public roadways are found to have inadequate drainage.
 - Encourage the Board of Selectmen to give high priority to addressing identified runoff problems associated with public roads such as Desert Pond Road's inadequate drainage impacting Torsey Pond and the persistent issues with run-off from the Belgrade, North and Pond Roads adversely affecting Minnehonk Lake.
 - Require the Code Enforcement Officer (CEO), the Planning Board, and the Appeals Board to comply strictly with the Shoreland Zoning requirements of the Mount Vernon Land Use Ordinances, as mandated by the Maine Department of Environmental Protection (DEP).
 - Encourage all landowners who own waterfront property to participate in the Maine Lakes Society's "LakeSmart" program, in which trained volunteers inspect properties and make recommendations to improve drainage and mitigate runoff impacts.
 - Consider incorporating the pertinent recommendations found in the Maine DEP's Phosphorus Control Manual into Mount Vernon's Land Use Ordinances.
 - As closely as possible, monitor how conditions improve or deteriorate in the four bodies of water in Mount Vernon that Maine DEP placed on the "threatened" list as of February of 2018: Echo Lake, Long Pond, Parker Pond and Torsey Pond.
2. Prevent the introduction and spread of invasive aquatic plants, fish and other fauna into bodies of water currently free from them, and attempt to limit their further spread where invasive plants are already present in the Belgrade Stream below Wings Mill.
 - Encourage all lake associations whose lakes have boat launches to perform Courtesy Boat Inspections (CBI) at least every Saturday, Sunday and holiday, at least from Memorial Day through Labor Day, at least from 7:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

- Encourage all lake associations to conduct a thorough Invasive Plant Patrol (IPP) of the entire littoral zone of each body of water annually.
 - Promote “Clean, Drain, Dry” by handing out brochures with boat registrations and placing information posters at each boat launch.
 - Support the on-going efforts by the Mount Vernon Fire Department to discharge water sourced from the Belgrade Lakes and Cobbossee Watersheds from fire-fighting trucks before traveling back to the Fire Station in the 30 Mile River Watershed so that it remains free of invasive species (unlike the other watersheds).
3. Enact a shoreland zone septic system ordinance to allow regular inspections of septic systems in shoreland zones, and provide assistance to malfunctioning and failing systems.
 4. Consider expanding Resource Protection adjacent to great ponds within the first 100 feet.

Vernal Pools & Wetlands

1. Identify and protect vernal pools and wetlands by:
 - Creating and improving maps of Mount Vernon’s vernal pools and wetlands.
 - Assure that the town is properly protecting these identified vernal pools and wetlands as required by law.
2. Consider expanding protections to wetlands smaller than 10 acres.
3. Support efforts by the Mount Vernon Community Partnership Corporation (CPC) to restore wetlands in the Town.

Wildlife

1. Create a wildlife habitat group to:
 - Educate residents about protected wildlife habitat areas and rules.
 - Encourage and work with landowners to protect and enhance wildlife habitat, including deer yards.
 - Seek funding to assist landowners in efforts to protect wildlife, land and water quality.

- Work to strengthen rules that protect wildlife habitat.
2. Identify and mitigate structures that prevent fish passage.
 3. Encourage and work with Maine IF&W to rid our waters of invasive fish.

Recreation

1. Develop and publicize a network of trails for public use.
 - Create a Trails Committee (similar to what the Town of Readfield has done) and/or a more broadly directed Recreation Committee that incorporates the Town-paid coordinator of sports programs up at the playing fields by the Elementary School.
 - Work with the Minnehonk Ridge Riders Club, the Mountain View ATV Club, and Pure Country Stables to inventory, preserve and better maintain their existing network of trails as a community resource.
 - Identify one or more abandoned Town roads to be developed and maintained as new trails, ideally ones that can be linked into the existing system.
 - Support the efforts of the Kennebec Land Trust (KLT) to develop trails on existing and newly acquired properties, such as the Ezra Smith Conservation Area.
 - Support the CPC and Greater Minnehonk Lake Association (GMLA) in promoting and conducting the annual 5k “Loon Lap” and look to add similar events utilizing existing and new trails elsewhere in Town that would showcase the beauty of Mount Vernon as well as provide healthful recreation.
2. Support plans by the 30MRWA for public instruction in canoeing and kayaking, as well as easier, shorter versions of its annual 15-mile “Paddle Trek” that would feature just lakes, ponds and streams inside Mount Vernon.
3. Work with lake associations to ensure that boat speeds and resulting wakes on lakes are controlled and not too destructive, including reposting of warning signs at the boat launch on the Town Beach and perhaps asking CBIs at all launches to remind boaters of speed restrictions.
4. Support greater use of the Community Center for appropriate recreational programs such as dance, kickboxing and yoga, perhaps with a special focus on age-friendly programs for senior citizens.
5. Support the efforts of the Town Events Committee to conduct skating and sledding parties for children and their parents in winter, as well as recreational events in other seasons.

6. Consider acquiring the 82-acre Maine Bureau of Parks & Lands (BPL)-owned parcel abutting Taylor Pond and developing it as a Town recreation site. Alternatively, work in conjunction with BPL to achieve the same goal.
7. Work with Maine DOT to incorporate sidewalks in the Village and wider paved shoulders elsewhere whenever an upgrade to Rt. 41 (Pond Road) is contemplated.

Scenic Vistas

1. Explore with the Town and/or CPC marking at least a few of the scenic viewpoints and vistas listed in the “Inventory & Analysis” section so that both residents and visitors to Mount Vernon can fully appreciate what they are seeing as they drive or walk by.
2. Explore with the Maine Department of Transportation (DOT) and/or Town Road Department the possibility of widening the shoulders near marked lookouts as spots for bicyclists to stop and admire the views.

Historical, Archaeological and Cultural Resources

1. Preserve, protect, and publicize town historical resources
 - Support ongoing efforts to restore and repair town cemeteries
 - Create informational programs, maps, and brochures that highlight Mount Vernon’s history, cemeteries, and places of interest
 - Endorse broader cooperation with the Vienna Historical Society
 - Educate town officials on identifying and preserving historical and archaeological resources
2. Encourage community events and activities
 - Empower town committees to sponsor programs that appeal to a varied demographic
 - Coordinate with neighboring towns to sponsor and promote events
3. Support and utilize the Dr. Shaw Memorial Library and Mount Vernon Community Center
 - Continue to provide town support for library and community center functions
 - Seek additional contributions from neighboring towns with residents who use the facilities
 - Encourage residents, guests and community groups to take advantage of the library and community center

Agriculture & Forestry

Farms

1. New landowners should be given a packet with up to date information on the following, and information should also be updated on the town's website and through brochures at the Town Office:
 - Current information on programs such as open space tax programs, farming resources and information, or other such programming, including programs of the Soil and Water Conservation Agency.
 - Lists of farmers and others who will lease land, mow fields, or provide other resources towards maintaining open land.
2. Maintain a list of farms on the Town website with available produce and where/how to purchase these locally grown items.
3. The Town should, on a regular basis, inform citizens of the Open Space Tax program, by providing factual information about the program, including any benefits and penalties.
4. All policies should conform with Maine's Right to Farm Act.
 - The Town should inform aggrieved parties of the Act and its conforming policies.
5. As a result of changes in State law allowing the growing of medical marijuana, in June of 2019, the town enacted changes to the Land Use Ordinance to require certain existing medical marijuana home occupations and medical marijuana production facilities to provide an Odor Control Plan to the town. New medical marijuana home occupations and medical marijuana production facilities will be subject to the same requirement in addition to Site Plan Review. These requirements should be maintained."
6. The Town should continue to exempt agricultural land management practices from the town's Site Plan Review Ordinance, except as provided in paragraph 5, above, the town should continue to exempt agricultural land management practices from the town's Site Plan Review Ordinance.

Agricultural land management practices means "those devices and procedures utilized in the cultivation of land in order to further crops and livestock production and conservation of related soil and water resources."

7. The Town should encourage interested local farmers and gardeners to establish a farmers market on town owned land.

8. The Town should encourage the formation of a licensed kitchen for the use of local farms and other small local businesses.
9. The Town should look into the feasibility of creating a licensed kitchen to be rented out to allow micro-enterprises and upstart farms to create value added goods.

Forests

1. New landowners should be given a packet with up to date information on the following and information should also be updated on the town website and through brochures at the Town Office:
 - Current information on forest management programs, tax credits, and available state and federal resources to help them manage their land.
 - Lists of foresters and wood harvesters willing to work in managing and harvesting small parcels (check off for a certain small amount?).
 - Provide information about best practices for timber harvest i.e. (suspend harvest during mud season, no more than 10 acres, selective foresting).
 - All relevant local ordinances that help and support their ability to utilize their land in a sustainable way.
 - The “Forestry Rules of Maine.”
2. The Town should maintain a list of providers of wood and other forest products and services, and provide that list to all townspeople on a regular basis (in the “Annual Report of the Municipal Officers,” the Town newsletter, etc.).
3. All Town ordinances and policies will conform with state forestry laws and regulations.
4. The Town should inform citizens about the Tree Growth program and provide information about benefits and penalties.
5. Invite State Foresters out for a yearly walk and talk to help inform and educate landowners about available programming and best practices.
6. The Town should provide local code enforcement for these policies, as well as for state laws concerning forest harvesting.
7. The Town should work with landowners to resolve problems caused by littering, trespassing, misuse by RVs, or other problems and:

- Encourage clean up days with local students and/or civic groups such as the 30MRWA, lake associations and the CPC.

Economic Development & Housing

Business & Economic Activity

1. The hamlet or village center of Mt Vernon should continue to be an important focal point for life in the community. The strengths and opportunities, and the weaknesses and challenges, associated with this suggest the following considerations:
 - The hamlet's development would coincide with the promotion of the arts. With an artisan furniture maker on one end, an artisanal cheese maker on the other and an eclectic scene in between, the arts are fairly presented within the hamlet. As the community's commercial and social center, the hamlet presents significant potential for cultural projects that enjoy public support (i.e. community center, library, post office, beach/parks, etc.).
 - We must address infrastructure needs. Immediate concerns are parking limitations and the development of wastewater treatment solutions to support a greater land use density provided such development is consistent with current Land Use Ordinances.
 - Growth corridor plans (along Route 41) should not negatively impact the village vibe. State Department of Transportation enhancements (i.e. road widening/right of way takings) are to be discouraged if they detract from the historic charm of the center. We should consider historic designation or other measures to protect the area limited setbacks.
 - Determine a direction for growth in the village consistent with this vision and prepare municipal plans in this direction. Hydrology and topography limitations suggest a direction for development.
2. The town shall encourage micro-enterprise development. The business catalog published every four or five years by the CPC attests to the strong micro-enterprise and professional community present in Mount Vernon. The Town should market itself to families and professionals who seek such a live-work balance. This promotes the town's best development option – increasing residential development throughout the municipality. Specific steps to encourage this include building regional capacity and developing organizational capacity.
3. We must address affordable housing. We will prioritize creating opportunities for more affordable and manageable housing for senior citizens and young families, while continuing to preserve the rural character of the town.
4. Mt Vernon should work to build infrastructure to support business in the following

ways:

- High speed Internet should be available to everyone and citizens should be encouraged to bring this capability into their homes. This will change commuting patterns, and facilitate the community transition from a bedroom community to a community where many citizens can both live and work in town. This will then encourage greater residential development, and improve the municipality's tax revenue and fiscal strength. This supports the committee vision of Mt Vernon as a live-work community.
- Community-based solar power structures should be developed when this proves to be market-feasible. These projects could be either publicly or privately owned/operated.
- Conversion of existing buildings and facilities into business incubators, including co-work spaces for professional use, and industry-specific facilities for micro-enterprise opportunities.
- Joint efforts with other communities and agencies when capacity and the means to develop capacity may be lacking in the town.
- The availability of reliable and affordable high speed internet has become an important objective throughout the State of Maine. Mt Vernon has appointed a Broadband Committee to monitor events, study options, and recommend solutions that best meet the needs of the town. . The committee is charged to measure cost and assess funding options needed in order to implement an infrastructure. In addition, the committee will do the following: Measure success of internet strategy as it pertains to creating business opportunities. Coordinate necessary citizen education as needed through Anchor Institutions. Assure citizen knowledge of opportunities to connect with Health Care Providers. Coordinate with Aging In Place committee to capitalize on Broadband for seniors. Identify solutions to assist low income citizens to afford high speed internet. Determine and monitor best practices with Internet Service Provider(s).
- Mt Vernon has joined a coalition of five other towns in our region(as of July 2019) who share our vision to expand improved internet service for all of our citizens.

5. The town will build organizational capacity to achieve live-work outcomes.

- We would establish a study group to determine the feasibility of a Tax Increment Financing (TIF) District. These districts provide the community an opportunity to strengthen its share of state aid while dedicating funds for economic development. The state allows municipalities to utilize TIFs to create new employment, broaden the tax base and improve the general economy.
- The town will establish a standing committee for economic development to advise

and assist the select board and other community groups and individuals on municipal development planning. Such planning could include identifying areas and encouraging growth of enterprises where particular locations best insure their success.

- Help build the CPC's organizational strength. As a 501c3, this Local Development Corporation contains unique bonding powers and currently serves as the fiscal agent for many (small scale) projects and initiatives. Strengthening the organization's finances over the next 5-10 years will be instrumental in achieving some of the outlined objectives.
- Mt Vernon will change the municipal branded message away from "Life in a small town, USA" and incorporate a live-work theme. Use this to market the community to households that seek a life-work balance.
- The 1991 comprehensive plan placed much of the effort on the town Planning Board to achieve development objectives. This was not a practical way to achieve the town's ends as the planning board lacked the means to proceed and had other priorities more consistent with its mission. Since the original plan, additional resources have materialized to assist with community and economic development objectives. The committee strongly recommends Mt Vernon build its organizational capacity in the realm of housing and economic development.

Infrastructure

1. The Town should work closely with the Maine Department of Transportation (DOT) to ensure that the design of bridges, culverts and roads being repaired or reconstructed meets the needs of residents, including more provision for pedestrians, runners and walkers along the shoulders and more room for water to flow under and alongside roadways without scouring out the ground and carrying sediments into nearby lakes, ponds and streams.
2. The Town needs to find a solution for the increasing number of homes being built off of unpaved, seasonal roads that now must be maintained and plowed, sometimes at taxpayer expense.
3. The Town should address the problem of faulty, leaking holding tanks and septic systems and revisit plans for a Village Sewage System.
4. The Town should continue to explore locating a Solar Farm on the "brownfield" site of the former dump.
5. The Town should investigate better ways to recycle materials at the transfer system and reduce the amount of solid waste being hauled away.

6. The Town should develop a plan for an Emergency Shelter to accommodate local residents during future major, extended power outages.
7. The Town should address the problems with humidity, mold and standing water in the basement of that facility.
8. The Town Office needs to be repaired and better maintained, such that it continue to serve residents unless and until a new facility is afforded.
9. The Town should make plans for possible future alternative arrangements for the Mount Vernon Elementary School, given increasing economic pressures that may lead to consolidation plans by the Maranacook RSU #38 that would discontinue current usage of the building.

Education

1. Strive for a high-quality public education for Mount Vernon's children by continuing to support RSU#38 activities and programs, and encouraging greater town participation in the larger school community.
 - Invite residents to school activities.
 - Advertise school events in town newsletter.
 - Request some adult education classes be held in Mount Vernon.
2. Promote fiscal prudence on the RSU#38 board through greater cooperation with the town select board and budget committee.
 - Schedule meetings between the town and RSU prior to budget creation.
 - Regularly send representatives of the town and school boards to each other's meetings.
 - Invite community members to budget meetings.
3. Teach children about local government and participatory democracy.
 - Request town officials are invited to school events.
 - Offer to instruct children on the workings of the local government.
 - Provide opportunities for students to become involved in local projects.
 - Lower voting age for education-related voting.
4. Foster a better connection between residents of all ages by better utilizing the town property surrounding the elementary school.
 - Build a nature trail, dog park, exercise trail, and/or toddler playground.
 - Invite residents to youth sports activities.

5. Prepare for possible school closure and consolidation discussion.
 - Establish a committee to monitor school board activity.
 - Create a response plan that anticipates multiple outcomes.

Town Governance

1. Revisit town organization
 - Mobilize town governance committee
 - Request the committee review town job descriptions, salaries and structure, including elected vs. appointed positions
 - Consider cooperation and consolidation of services and positions with neighboring towns
2. Improve communication
 - Schedule regular meetings with town committees and boards
 - Update the town website and social media presence
 - Better utilize the town newsletter to disseminate information
 - Conduct regular “ask your officials” opportunities
3. Encourage broader participation on town boards and committees
 - * Compile a list of citizens interested in serving
 - * Diversify meeting times to accommodate different populations

Age-Friendly Mount Vernon

1. Develop as an “Age-Friendly Community,” working with the American Association of Retired People (AARP) and other AARP-certified communities in Maine, including Readfield and Wayne.

(On May 4th, 2018, the Board of Selectmen established a Town “Aging-In-Place” Committee. The mission of the committee is to ensure that work continues both short and long term on completing the goals set forth in this plan.)

- Short-term: Meet with AARP to begin applying their Aging In Place framework to Mount Vernon.
- Long-term. Analyze data from 2020 Census when available to verify assumption that our elder population will continue to increase.

2. In conjunction with the CPC and the Town of Vienna, build a volunteer network to assist older residents with household chores, stacking firewood, delivering winter sand, outdoor maintenance etc.
 - Short-term: Establish a framework for Helping Neighbors and determine what types of assistance will be provided; Survey the 55+ population to find out which types of assistance are needed by our older residents.
 - Mid-term: Recruit volunteers.
 - Long-term: Advertise the service; Seek funding for tools and supplies, possibly from the AARP (the Town of Readfield recently received funding for an elder-friendly program in this way).
3. Improve awareness of, and access to, local state and federal programs that provide services and support to the elderly. Incorporate all potential sources of winter fuel assistance.
 - Short-term: Design and distribute a resource guide.
 - Mid-term: Train community navigators and provide educational programs.
4. Working with Mount Vernon Rescue, develop a daily check-in program for our elders.
 - Short-term. Recruit volunteers who are willing to make regular contact with one town elder, daily, weekly or at whatever interval the pair agrees on.
 - Mid-term. Advertise the service to senior residents.
5. Expand daytime community wellness and recreation opportunities; possibly offer a free weekly lunch.
 - Short-term: Survey the 55+ population as to the activities they would like to see available in town.
 - Mid-term:
 - Work with the community center, Dr. Shaw Memorial Library and others to schedule activities.
 - Working with Franklin Memorial Hospital and others, establish an annual (or more frequent) mobile health check in town.

6. Increase safe, affordable housing options for older residents.

- Short-term: Land Use Ordinance allows for home sharing in all districts; Ensure that Mount Vernon's Land Use Ordinance allows one Senior Accessory Dwelling Unit in all districts provided the lot in question meets all requirements of the current ordinance and that at least one senior will reside in either unit
- Mid-term: Work with the Mount Vernon Fire Department and the State Fire Marshall's office to develop a home safety check for interested elders, which would include installing/replacing smoke alarms.
- Long-term. Locate a site near Mount Vernon Village for a senior housing complex or work with adjacent communities to locate a site for a regional senior housing complex.

INVENTORY & ANALYSIS OF KEY RESOURCES

Population & Demographics

Mount Vernon's population grew rapidly in the 1970s and 1980s, albeit from a very small base. New residents were drawn to Mount Vernon by its lakes and ponds, its rural character and close-knit community spirit, and by its proximity to Augusta, the state capital. It is no coincidence that the Town's period of rapid growth corresponded to rapid growth in state government employment.

More recently Mount Vernon's growth rate has declined, though it still exceeds that of Kennebec County and the state. The last census data available are from 2010. It is likely that 2020 census data will show continued slow but steady growth, driven in part by the conversion of seasonal homes into year-round dwellings. Mount Vernon's seasonal population continues to be robust, as part-time residents flock to their camps on the town's pristine lakes and ponds. Mount Vernon is fortunate to have these folks. They add to the town's character, participate in many volunteer activities, and pay a large share of the town's real estate taxes.

TABLE 1
MOUNT VERNON POPULATION
(from U.S. Census)

1850	1,479 (pre-1990s peak)
1968	596
1980	1,021 (71.3% increase from 1968)
1990	1,325 (29.8% increase from 1980)
2000	1,524 (15.0% increase from 1990)
2010	1,640 (7.6% increase from 2000)

Demographic data show that Mount Vernon's population is aging, along with the state. Maine has the dubious distinction of having the oldest median age population of all the states, and Mount Vernon's (45.5 years) is even higher than the state's (42.7 years). In 1987, 68.1% of Mount Vernon residents were in "young families" (age 44 or younger). In 2010, that figure was 48.7%. In 1987, 14.4% of Mount Vernon residents were over 65. In 2010, that figure was 15.4%, not a huge increase, but there was a much larger number in the 45-64 age group knocking at the door!

TABLE 2
MOUNT VERNON POPULATION BY AGE GROUP IN 2010
(from U. S. Census)

AGES	NUMBER	PERCENT	MAINE PERCENT
0-4	88	5.4	5.2
5-19	275	16.8	18.1
20-44	435	26.5	29.9
45-64	590	36.0	30.9
65+	252	15.4	15.9

The average size of a Mount Vernon household was estimated to be 2.63 in 1980 and 1990. By 2010 it had shrunk to 2.37. This reflects a trend towards a reduction in the number of households with children, which coincides with the aging population. It also reflects a trend toward smaller family sizes.

The number of Mount Vernon children enrolled in public schools (RSU 38) has been trending downward, as has the other towns in the RSU. This is putting increasing pressure on school budgets, which continue to rise, and may result in consolidation of classrooms and/or elementary schools within the district. Mount Vernon has 243 students enrolled in RSU 38, or 20.7% of the total. Mount Vernon's share of the 2018-2019 RSU 38 local contribution budget is 24.1%, or \$12,911 per student. The total RSU 38 2018-2019, including state and federal revenues, amounts to \$15,225 per student.

TABLE 3

2018 – 2019 RSU 38 ENROLLMENT
(from May 2019 RSU 38 newsletter)

GRADE	MOUNT VERNON	TOTAL RSU 38	PERCENT MT. VERNON
Pre-K	20	66	30.3
K	12	88	13.6
1	12	86	14.0
2	12	86	14.0
3	18	83	21.7
4	25	89	28.1
5	14	83	16.9
6	21	85	24.7
7	18	92	19.6
8	23	86	27.7
9	18	86	20.9
10	19	81	23.5
11	17	79	21.5
12	14	87	16.1
TOTAL	243	1,177	20.7

Clearly, while Mount Vernon's year-round population continues to grow, it is shifting in character. There are an increasing number of senior citizens and older adults whose children have grown, and a decreasing number of school-age children. Issues addressing these demographic changes are discussed elsewhere in the Comprehensive Plan.

Natural Resources & Recreation

Water Resources

Mount Vernon's water resources – its lakes, ponds, streams, wetlands and vernal pools – are among the Town's most valuable assets. Results of the Community Survey show that protecting water bodies and wildlife habitats is considered extremely important to residents. Mount Vernon's lakes and natural environment, along with its rural character, are what people most like about living in the Town.

Ponds, Lakes and Streams

For over a century, Mount Vernon's lakes and ponds have attracted visitors and seasonal residents to spend a few days, weeks or months of the year here. Summer camps, Bearnstow and Laurel, still host hundreds of adults and children annually.

Boaters and fishermen enjoy public access to the larger lakes, ponds and streams. The annual 15-mile "Paddle Trek" organized by the 30 Mile River Watershed Association (30MRWA) launches from the Town Beach. Similarly, the annual 5K "Loon Lap" organized by the Community Partnership Corporation (CPC) and Greater Minnehonk Lake Association (GMLA) takes runners, walkers and wheel chairs around Hopkins Pond and Minnehonk Lake.

Lakes and ponds are also a financial and fiscal resource. The visitors they attract spend money to stay in town at the Lakeside Loft and vacation rental properties. Summer residents with homes on or near the water likewise stimulate the local economy. They also shoulder a significant portion of the municipal property tax burden, given much higher valuations placed on lakeside and pondside residences. These properties pay a large share of the Town's real estate taxes.

A glance at a map shows that Mount Vernon is blessed with an abundance of water resources. Mount Vernon occupies parts of three different watersheds. To the east is the Belgrade Lakes Watershed. Its waters ultimately flow into the Kennebec River via Messalonskee Stream. Western Mount Vernon is part of the 30 Mile River Watershed, which ultimately flows into the Androscoggin River through the Dead River. Southern Mount Vernon is part of the Cobbossee Watershed, which has the Cobbosseecontee Stream as its ultimate outlet to the Kennebec.

TABLE 4
WATER BODIES IN MOUNT VERNON
(from DEP)

Water Body	Surface Area (acres)	Direct Drainage Area (acres)	Percent within Mt. Vernon	Water Quality
<i>Belgrade Lakes Watershed</i>				

Long Pond	2,714	5,318	64%	Impaired
Moose Pond	64	712	100%	Moderate/Sensitive
Ingham Pond	50	4,280	100%	Moderate/Sensitive
<i>30 Mile River Watershed</i>				
Flying Pond	385	1,022	28%	Moderate/Sensitive
Minnehonk Lake	99	657	100%	Moderate/Sensitive
Hopkins Pond	25	405	100%	Moderate/Sensitive
Parker Pond	1,551	605	15%	At Risk
Taylor Pond	59	1,937	100%	Moderate/Sensitive
Echo Lake	1,037	385	29%	At Risk
<i>Cobbossee Watershed</i>				
Torsey Lake	568	2,162	66%	At Risk
Desert Pond	23	484	100%	Moderate/Sensitive

While the water quality of Mount Vernon's lakes and ponds is generally quite good, all are to some degree threatened. The primary threat to lake water quality is phosphorus, a nutrient that, if allowed to increase beyond a safe level, can lead to algal blooms, which in turn can deplete oxygen, increase opacity and render the water less conducive to recreational use. The main sources of phosphorus are poorly managed storm water runoff, use of phosphate-rich fertilizers, and runoff from agricultural lands.

Maine's Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) in conjunction with the federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has developed phosphorous loading limits for most of Mount Vernon's lakes. In its 2018 Integrated Water Quality Report to the EPA, DEP placed Echo Lake and Parker Pond on the list of bodies of water at some risk of exceeding Total Daily Maximum Load limits set by the EPA. Additional studies and possible programs may be needed to ensure water quality.

Another threat comes from invasive aquatic plants, fish and other fauna. While there have been no invasive aquatic plants found in any of Mount Vernon's lake and ponds, variable leaf milfoil (VLM) is found inside the Town along the Belgrade Stream below the Wings Mill Dam parallel to the Bartlett Road. VLM is also found not far away in the Belgrade Lakes Watershed, in Great Pond, Great Meadow Stream, Messalonskee Lake and Messalonskee Stream. Annabessacook Lake in Winthrop and other locations in the lower Cobbossee Watershed have infestations of VLM.

VLM as well as other invasives are found in more than two dozen bodies of water across Maine. Some of these organisms are quite large, such as the Chinese mystery snail infesting Clearwater Lake in Franklin County and Little Sebago Lake in Cumberland County. Invasives can choke a water body, rendering it both unfit for many types of recreation including boating and swimming and disrupting natural ecosystems. The primary source of invasive aquatic plant infestation is motorboats and trailers that carry bits of plants from one water body to another. Reminders of the danger come from Courtesy Boat Inspectors (CBIs) who work at boat launches in Mount Vernon during the summer. CBIs working for the 30MRWA have twice found bits of invasive plants on

boats that were just about to be launched. In one case, the plant detected was on a boat coming from Lake Champlain in Vermont.

Maine DEP has developed a model for predicting the susceptibility of most of Mount Vernon's lakes and ponds to invasive plant infestation. The results will be published in the spring of 2018 and should be incorporated into this section of the Comprehensive Plan.

Belgrade Lakes Watershed

Long Pond is the largest lake bordering Mount Vernon, extending over 1,334 acres and directly draining a watershed of 5,318 acres. Its maximum depth is 98 feet. Long Pond is shared with Belgrade and Rome. Water flows into Long Pond primarily from Great Pond and is controlled by a dam managed by the Belgrade Area Dam Committee. The Town of Mount Vernon has recently become a voting (and paying) member of this committee, which also includes the towns of Rome, Oakland, Sidney and Belgrade.

Long Pond's water is clear and non-colored. There is some dissolved oxygen (DO) depletion at lower depths that may stress certain species of coldwater fish, and there is a moderate potential for nuisance algal blooms. Non-nuisance blooms of *Gloeotrichia*, a freshwater cyanobacterium, occur quite regularly in mid to late summer. These do not constitute a health risk. Maine DEP includes Long Pond on its "impaired" lakes list, primarily for DO depletion and trending deterioration of its trophic state.

Water quality in Long Pond is monitored by the Belgrade Lakes Association (BLA) and the 7 Lake Alliance (7LA), formerly the Belgrade Regional Conservation Alliance (BRCA). BRCA conducted a Watershed Survey for Long Pond in 2001, and Long Pond is included in 7LA's Watershed Management Plan, which encompasses all the Belgrade Lakes. 7LA oversees the Belgrade Lakes Conservation Corps, through which it assists watershed homeowners in mitigating potential erosion and storm water runoff problems.

BLA places CBIs on summer weekends at the Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry (DACF) boat launch in Mount Vernon off the Castle Island Road. BLA also conducts Invasive Plant Patrols (IPP) to monitor the lake for invasive species. To date, none have been found in Long Pond. But significant infestations of VLM are found both upstream in Great Pond and downstream in Belgrade Stream, Messalonskee Lake and Messalonskee Stream. So the danger of VLM spreading through the watershed is very real.

Moose Pond is located in central Mount Vernon off the North Road. With a maximum depth of only 17 feet, it is a shallow pond that supports a warm water fishery. No invasive aquatic plants have been reported. Water quality is considered to be below average by Maine DEP. There is no formal boat launch area. Water from Moose Pond flows through Moose Pond Stream to Ingham Stream.

Ingham Pond and Ingham Stream both lie to the southwest of Long Pond and flow into it. Access is limited and there are no boat launch sites. With a maximum depth of 19 feet, Ingham Pond is basically a wider and deeper part of Ingham Stream; there are no dams. Ingham Pond supports a warm water fishery. There are no known invasive aquatic plants.

Belgrade Stream connects Long Pond with Messalonskee Lake, passing through southeastern Mount Vernon and south Belgrade. As noted above, it has a significant infestation of invasive Variable Leaf Milfoil, but this is below the Wings Mills Dam, which should prevent direct infestation of Long Pond upstream. There is a DIFW-maintained boat launch off Rte. 27 in Belgrade near the southern end of Messalonskee Lake, which provides access to the lower reaches of Belgrade Stream.

30 Mile River Watershed

Flying Pond is shared by Vienna and Mount Vernon. The Maine Department of Transportation (DOT) maintains the boat launch located on Rte. 41 in Mount Vernon, which is marginally adequate with little parking. Water level is controlled by a dam at the outlet, and water flows from Flying Pond to Minnehonk Lake via Mill Pond. The dam is owned and maintained by the Flying Pond Improvement Association (FPIA). The dam was originally built in 1954. It was recently repaired, adding riprap and structural supports to specifications approved by DEP.

Water quality in Flying Pond is considered “average”. It is non-colored and quite clear. There is little DO depletion at lower depths. Water quality is monitored by FPIA and 30MRWA. In 2014, 30MRWA conducted a watershed survey to identify and document potential water quality threats from erosion. In all years, these organizations also place CBIs at the DOT-maintained boat launch on Route 41 and regularly undertake IPP surveys throughout the entire littoral zone. There are no known invasive plants within Flying Pond.

Minnehonk Lake is the centerpiece of the Town of Mount Vernon, being located directly adjacent to the village area. The shoreline is densely developed on the western (village) shore, where there is general grandfathered non-compliance with shore land zoning regulations. As such there are concerns about water quality impacts from runoff, erosion and septic systems. Recent infrastructure improvements such as the update of the village drainage system by the Maine DOT, the stabilization of the rope swing on Pond Road, and the ongoing projects at the town beach that have improved the boat launch and swimming areas have mitigated storm water runoff problems. The boat launch is most appropriate for non-motorized craft, although recent improvements have added a dock and parking spots suitable for powerboat trailers.

Water flows from Minnehonk Lake into the much smaller Hopkins Pond and then into Hopkins Stream. There are no dams, other than occasional beaver dams along Hopkins Stream. Water quality is considered “average” and is monitored by 30MRWA with the help of volunteers from the GMLA. The water is considered non-colored and clear.

These associations also conduct IPP surveys. No invasive aquatic plants have been found. The CPC conducted a watershed survey in 2012, after which the CPC worked with the Select Board and GMLA on the above-mentioned infrastructure improvements to reduce adverse impacts from storm water runoff.

Hopkins Pond is a small (25 acres), shallow pond situated downstream of Minnehonk Lake, leading to Hopkins Stream. DEP considers Hopkins Pond to be eutrophic, though it does support a small warm water fishery. Hopkins Pond is under the auspices of GMLA. There is no boat launch, though the pond is accessible during high water from Minnehonk Lake and from Hopkins Stream. There are no known invasive aquatic plants.

Hopkins Stream connects Minnehonk Lake and Hopkins Pond to Taylor Pond. It is a very picturesque stream passing through wetlands teeming with wildlife and a favorite canoe and kayak route. Access to Hopkins Stream from the south is via the Taylor Pond boat launch. The Kennebec Land Trust recently acquired the Ezra Smith Conservation Area in Mount Vernon, which lies within the Hopkins Stream watershed. The 125-acre parcel will eventually include hiking trails and wildlife viewing areas.

Parker Pond: Of all the bodies of water in Mount Vernon, Parker Pond is second in size only to Long Pond (Belgrade Lakes Watershed). It is shared by Mount Vernon with the adjoining Towns of Vienna, Fayette and Chesterville. Water flows into Parker Pond from David Pond and out via a short stream to Taylor Pond. The water level in Parker Pond is controlled by a dam in the southeast corner of the pond, near the outlet.

The dam is owned and maintained by the Parker Pond Association (PPA), founded in 1955. The State Dam Inspector last inspected it in 2017. The dam is 200 years old, 150 ft. long, 12.5 ft. high earthen dam with a 35 ft. wide, 4.5 ft. uncontrolled spillway. Although the dam was reconditioned in 2007, it remains classified as a “significant potential hazard dam”. The Dam Inspector outlined a number of steps to be taken by the PPA to mitigate and minimize the potential flood hazard to the dam, outlet stream and downstream properties and infrastructure.

30MRWA and PPA work collaboratively to protect the health of the lake. Water quality in Parker Pond is rated “above average”. It is a clear pond and relatively deep. It supports both warm water and coldwater fisheries. Advanced water quality monitoring is conducted from May through October 30MRWA with support from conducts courtesy boat inspections at the public launch from Memorial Day to Labor Day. PPA completes an annual invasive aquatic plant survey. To date, no invasive aquatic plants have been found. In 2012, 30MRWA conducted a Watershed Survey to identify and document erosion issues posing a threat to water quality.

Camp Bearnstow is located in Mount Vernon on the eastern shore of Parker Pond. It offers a variety of workshops for teens and adults, and a day camp for children. The Kennebec Land Trust (KLT) holds a Conservation Easement for the 65-acre Bearnstow property. While not in Mount Vernon, KLT also owns the Parker Pond Headland Preserve, a 142-acre parcel with excellent hiking trails, close by in Fayette.

Taylor Pond is a small, shallow impoundment created by the Taylor Pond dam at its southern end. The dam is owned by the DIFW and is operated by the Dam Committee of the Echo Lake Association (ELA). Water flows to Taylor Pond from Hopkins Stream and Parker Pond. The pond is so shallow, with an average depth of just 5 feet, that most of it is littoral. Water quality is “average”. The ELA conducts CBI every weekend and holiday from Memorial Day weekend to the weekend after Labor Day. The ELA also conducts an annual comprehensive IPP of the entire pond and conducted a Watershed Survey of the Taylor Pond Watershed in 2016. No invasive plants have been detected in Taylor Pond.

The State of Maine owns an 82-acre parcel along the eastern shore of Taylor Pond that is designated for conservation. It is adjacent to the Taylor Pond boat launch parcel, also owned by the State. The larger parcel is undeveloped and has significant shore frontage, as well as frontage on the Desert Pond Road.

Echo Lake is the deepest lake in Mount Vernon, with a maximum depth of 117 ft. It is shared with Readfield and Fayette. There are three residential summer camps for children on Echo Lake (Camp Laurel in Mount Vernon; Camp Vega and Camp Winnebago in Fayette). There is a boat launch, owned and maintained by the DACF, at the northern end of the lake, directly across from the Taylor Pond boat launch. Echo Lake is a very active boating lake.

Lake level is controlled by a dam in the southeastern corner of the west “lobe” of the lake. The dam is owned and operated by the ELA. It was last inspected by the State Dam Inspector in 2013 and was determined to be “non-jurisdictional” and does not require an emergency action plan. The dam is a combination earthen and concrete structure. The northerly concrete wall was reconstructed and the southerly wall repaired in 1994. There is a spillway with mechanical slide gates installed in 2016 to allow better control of lake level and discharge. Water flows to Mill Stream, Mill Pond and eventually to Lovejoy Pond in Fayette.

Echo Lake is clear and water quality is considered “above average”. A cadre of more than 50 volunteers from the ELA monitors water quality, conducts CBI at the boat launch from Memorial Day weekend to the weekend after Labor Day, and conducts an annual IPP of the entire 14.5-mile perimeter of the lake. The ELA has also conducted two Watershed Surveys, the latest in 2016.

The KLT owns the 304-acre Echo Lake Watershed Preserve in nearby Fayette and Readfield. It includes some frontage on Echo Lake and mostly informal hiking and snowshoe trails.

Cobbossee Watershed

Desert Pond: Desert Pond is a small (22 acre) pond just upstream of Torsey Lake. With a mean depth of 18 feet but a maximum depth of 36 feet, it supports a coldwater fishery.

Access for canoes and kayaks is via a walk-in primitive boat launch maintained by the DIFW. No invasive aquatic plants have been found in Desert Pond.

Torsey Lake: Torsey Lake is located in the southern part of Mount Vernon and is shared with Readfield. While it is at approximately the same latitude as Echo Lake and only about 1.5 miles separate them, Torsey is in an entirely different watershed. Water level is controlled by a short, primarily earthen dam with slide gates in a concrete control structure at the southern end of the lake. An adequate boat launch is located there. Water flows from Torsey Lake through a stream and wetlands to Maranacook Lake in Readfield.

In 2017 the Torsey Lake Association (TLA) and the Cobbossee Watershed Association (CWA) conducted a watershed survey of Torsey Lake and Desert Pond. Among its findings was that the Desert Pond Road is a “major concern” for pollutants entering Torsey Lake due to poor drainage design and a collapsing culvert. Nevertheless, water quality is considered “average” and supports warm water fisheries. The TLA conducts CBI and IPP. No invasive aquatic plants have been found to date.

While not within Mount Vernon, the KLT owns the 92-acre Torsey Pond Nature Preserve in nearby Readfield and maintains excellent hiking trails through forest and wetlands to the shore.

Wetlands

In addition to its lakes, ponds and streams, Mount Vernon has extensive wetlands. This is especially true in the eastern part of Town within the Long Pond/Belgrade Stream drainage area. Other significant wetlands include those bordering Hopkins Stream and Torsey Lake. The largest continuous wetland is that bordering Ingham Stream and Belgrade Stream.

Mount Vernon’s wetlands range from open water with floating or submerged aquatic vegetation, to emergent, to forested to shrubby. Most of Mount Vernon’s wetlands are considered valuable as runoff and sediment retention basins guarding against flooding and erosion. All provide valuable plant and animal habitat.

Groundwater

Most Mount Vernon residents obtain drinking water from groundwater sources, via either dug or drilled wells. There are essentially no public water systems in Mount Vernon. The Elementary School, the Olde Post Office Café and the Round Stone Mobile Home Park are classified by the Maine Department of Health & Human Services (DHHS), Division of Environmental Health Drinking Water Program, as having “Public Water Supplies.” However, they draw separately from groundwater sources.

Given how much residents of Mount Vernon rely on groundwater sources, it is obviously critical to protect them from contamination. Potential sources of contaminants include

malfunctioning septic systems, road salt, gasoline, and chemicals used on lawns. A number of naturally occurring contaminants in groundwater also may pose health risks to Mount Vernon residents. These include radon and arsenic. In addition, other naturally occurring elements in groundwater may be found at such high concentration that they may pose a health risk or at least a nuisance. Residents using groundwater should have it tested every few years. Treatment systems are available to eliminate or reduce all groundwater contaminants.

Some year-round and many seasonal residents of Mount Vernon draw water from lakes and ponds. It must be boiled and treated if it is to be consumed for drinking. Giardia is prevalent in many of the bodies of water in town. In 2016, water from Flying Pond was found to sicken pets that drank too much and prompted a warning to residents from the Town's Health Officer.

There is only one classified aquifer in Mount Vernon (capable of supporting an extraction of at least 10 gallons per minute). It is a small area located in a wetland about 150 yards north of the intersection of the Bean Road and the Belgrade Road. Clearly, Mount Vernon is not a potential site for extensive groundwater development.

Vernal Pools

Vernal pools are shallow depressions that usually contain water only part of the year. They are often associated with forested wetlands. The pools provide breeding habitat for salamanders, frogs, fairy shrimp, and many insects. The many species found in vernal pools provide an important food source for larger animals in the surrounding forest.

The Maine DEP has established criteria to identify significant vernal pools, in collaboration with the Maine IF&W, to identify those with the highest value to wildlife. However, these agencies must have landowner permission before surveying and protecting vernal pools.

To maintain healthy populations of vernal pool wildlife, it is important to maintain relatively undisturbed forest adjacent to the pools. The Town of Mount Vernon needs to map vernal pools and work with landowners as well as state agencies to protect them.

Wildlife

Mount Vernon is blessed by wonderful wildlife habitat, along our waterways and in our forests, full of lots of critters. We hope to maintain that habitat, without significantly impacting its use by landowners.

Amanda Shearin, Habitat Outreach Coordinator for Maine IF&W, has been a big help as we prepared this section of our plan, providing detailed maps of wildlife habitat in Mount Vernon, along with lots of advice on how to identify, manage, and protect that habitat. Amanda and others at DIFW are available to help with any wildlife habitat issue or project.

In addition to the maps, Amanda provided a disc full of information from habitat fact sheets to copies of the maps.

Maine's Beginning With Habitat website has lots of helpful information, and information and help are also available from the 30MRWA, lake associations, and land trusts, particularly the Kennebec Land trust (KLT) which has property in Mount Vernon.

Mandatory Shoreland zoning extends local protection to lands adjacent to various water bodies and wetlands. These rules, which are based on Maine DEP Chapter 1000 Guidelines, protect water quality and other valuable resources by limiting runoff and erosion. The Town of Mount Vernon has the authority to exceed state minimums. Maintaining and selectively increasing these protections is critical to protecting water quality and critical resources.

Towns are required by Mandatory Shoreland Zoning to regulate activities within 250 feet of the edge of a freshwater wetland of 10 or more acres in size. Further protections are required if the wetland meets the criteria of the resource protection zone.

While towns cannot have less stringent regulations than the state, they have authority to provide additional protections for resources that are important to the community.

Woodlands

Most of the Town of Mount Vernon is forested. Of the total of over 26,000 acres, approximately 18,000 acres are woodlands. Wood types range from a northern spruce-fir forest, particularly at lower elevations and areas around lakes, ponds and streams, to hardwoods, particularly along ridges. There are several areas of significant pine growth as well.

Because land ownership in Mount Vernon is so fragmented, forestry primarily takes place on individual woodlots. The typical woodlot supplies firewood to the owner; major cutting and logging activities tend to be undertaken when cash is needed. Forestry is an important way for residents to cover the costs of land ownership.

Mount Vernon's woodlands are a refuge for wildlife, as well as a commercial resource. Although the local deer herd has been reduced in recent years, it still supports hunting in season. Residents of the town are sensitive about some forestry practices, especially clear-cutting, even as they support the rights of responsible landowners.

Woodlands with distinctive forest conditions and wildlife are only beginning to be identified. The 2018 donation of the Ezra Smith Wildlife Conservation Area to the KLT represented an important step in recognizing the value of Mount Vernon's woodlands the need to conserve them.

Soils

Mount Vernon is characterized by relatively good soils. Except for two parts of the Town, the majority of soils are of the “Hollis-Paxton-Charlton-Woodbridge” association. Such soils are generally usable for most purposes. The major areas with other soil types include the western shore of Long Pond, where two wetland soils are found: “Scantic-Ridgebury-Buxton” and, to a lesser extent, “Buxton-Scio-Scantic.” The north and northwest edges of Town, near McGaffey Mountain, are where “Berkshire-Lyman-Peru” soils are dominant.

There is a sizable area of Mount Vernon, much of it along the North Road, which is considered prime agricultural land due to the dominance of Paxton-Charlton soils. Where well-drained, these soils are well-suited to cultivation of crops, development of orchards, and other intensive uses. Hollis soils tend to be shallower, excessively drained and have irregular surfaces; Woodbridge soils have some limitations for both farm and non-farm use.

By contrast, Scantic-Ridgebury soils are often deep and drain poorly. Silt loam lies over silty clay loam that is underlain by silty clay. Run-off of surface water is slow. Along with Buxton soils, these types tend to be found in forested areas and wetlands. Berkshire, Lyman and Peru soils tend to be found on hills and ridges above 1,100 feet. They drain excessively, in gently sloping to moderately steep terrain.

Recreation

Opportunities for recreation – boating, swimming, horseback riding, hiking, bicycling, ATV and snowmobile adventuring, cross country skiing and snowshoeing – are a big part of why residents like living in Mount Vernon. It is blessed by nature with an environment that allows for many different types of recreation. But the Town itself has done little to develop recreational facilities, beyond the Town Beach and Boat Launch on Minnehonk Lake.

Roads, Walkways & Trails

Public Roads

There are no sidewalks anywhere in Mount Vernon, and road shoulders are narrow or non-existent in the Village. Sidewalks and paved shoulders would enhance safe recreation opportunities for walkers and cyclists. The Town should work with Maine DOT to incorporate these facilities into any contemplated improvements to Rt. 41 (Pond Road).

Discontinued Town Roads

Many roads no longer maintained by the Town continue to be public rights of way and potentially a recreational resource. According to the former comprehensive plan, the list

of discontinued roads with the year that they ceased to be maintained by the Town includes:

- Wing's Mill spur beside stream (1915)
- Hovey (1928)
- Jackson (1928)
- George Dill to Ferrin Place (1928)
- Dunn's Corner Schoolhouse (1936)
- Cogswell (1936)
- Dyer (1936)
- Bishop's Corner to Walter Green's (1943)
- Old Cobb's Hill (1943)
- Ferrin (1947)
- Bog from Dumond's to Streeter's (1957)
- Cemetery to the Spaulding Bridge (1961)
- Carr Hill (1973) from the Espaignette Place to the Vienna Town line
- Hovey Luce from the Robinson Place to the Bean Rd. (1973)
- Whitney (1973)
- McGaffey Mountain from the Carr Hill Rd. to the Vienna Town Line (1973)
- Pettingill (1973)
- Joe Taylor (1973)
- Currier Hill (1985)
- Old Rome Rd from Robinson's to the Vienna Town Line, where it re-emerges as Wildflower Estates Rd. and links up with the Belgrade Highlands trail system (2005)

Camp Roads & Trails

In addition, private associations maintain camp roads which, if not gated, are deemed "minor public roads" by the Town and accessible to the public and commonly used by walkers and hikers. Two of the most popular circuits are approximately 3 miles in length:

- The village center up Route 41 to Russ Point Rd., down Cottage Rd to Teaberry Lane, Teaberry Lane to Seavey Corner Rd., Seavey Corner Rd. back into the village.
- The village center up Main St. and the North Rd., down the length of Minnehonk Lake Rd., and back.

The annual "5K Loon Lap," held every August and sponsored by the Community Partnership Corporation and the Greater Minnehonk Lake Association (GMLA), is a one-day only event that uses the part of the second circuit listed above but also crosses private property with the permission of the landowners. The "Loon Lap" originally served runners and walkers, but has added a wheelchair division.

Two private clubs maintain seasonal, specialized trails in the Town for use by ATVs and snowmobiles, but permit public use of those trails:

- The Minnehonk Ridge Riders Snowmobile Club maintains approximately 20 miles of marked trails for snowmobiling and cross-country skiing from November through March. It publishes a trail map, which is available at the Flying Pond Variety Store. “All marked trails are open to the public.” NB In recent years, a decline in active volunteers has presented challenges in maintaining the full network of trails. Another challenge has been negotiations with some private landowners to preserve traditional rights of way.
- The Mountain View ATV Club maintains approximately 10 miles of marked trails for use by all-terrain vehicles, dirt bikes, hikers and horseback riders from April to November. Its trails go “from the Currier Hill Rd. north to the Bean Rd., the Joe Taylor Rd., the Belgrade Rd., Route 41 and end at the Flying Pond Variety Store.” NB Some of this route goes over abandoned Town roads (see above).

Pure Country Stables, a private facility on the South Taylor Rd., not only boards horses but sends riders out on “miles of trails right out the front door,” including up and over the Cottle Hill Rd.

The KLT recently announced that plans for its newly acquired Ezra Smith Wildlife Conservation Area will include “easy public access for a future trail with interpretative signage about Maine’s wildlife and their habitats.”

Boating & Public Boat Launches

A variety of agencies maintain seven facilities for launching boats within the Town limits. Public boat launches include those at:

- Town Beach on Lake Minnehonk, newly relocated and reconstructed, with paved parking, ramp and dock, all maintained by the Town. The annual 15-mile “Paddle Trek” from Mount Vernon to Wayne, held in July and sponsored by the 30 Mile River Watershed Association (30MRWA), launches from the Town Beach.
- Belgrade Stream southern shore off of Bartlett Rd., no parking and a carry-in boat launched maintained by the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries & Wildlife (DIFW).
- Echo Lake northern end off of Rte. 41 and near “The Chimney,” with paved parking and a 20-foot wide, 42-foot long ramp maintained by the Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation & Forestry (DACF).
- Flying Pond eastern shore off of Rte. 41, with paved parking and a 10-foot wide, 48-foot long ramp maintained by the Maine Department of Transportation (DOT).

- Long Pond western shore off of Castle Island Rd., with paved parking, a 20-foot wide, 54-foot long ramp and a restroom, all maintained by Maine DACF.
- Moose Pond off of Hovey Luce Rd., no parking and a carry-in boat launch maintained by Maine DIFW.
- Taylor Pond southern end off of Rte. 41 and near “The Chimney,” with gravel parking and a 10-foot wide, 40-foot long ramp maintained by Maine DACF.

Despite the new facilities at the Town Beach, the relatively small, narrow size of Lake Minnehonk makes it inappropriate for use by large motorboats and motorized personal watercraft (i.e. jet skis). The GMLA has expressed concerns about the impact of both on the lake’s shorelines and signs have been placed at the Town Beach warning that virtually the whole lake is a low speed zone.

Similar concerns would exist for Moose Pond, but the carry-in nature of the boat launch there affords it greater protection.

Recreational Facilities, Instruction & Programs

The Town of Mount Vernon’s Beach Committee provides seasonal swimming instruction with a YMCA-certified instructor and lifeguard for 6 weeks in the summer on the Town Beach. Also planned is a new program run by the 30MRWA offering instruction in canoeing and kayaking from the Town Beach. Dates and duration have yet to be determined.

In 2017, the Select Board and the Beach Committee in partnership with the CPC and the GMLA made the Town Beach safer for children playing by combining the Fire Department’s access road and the road to public boat launch. The result is a larger play area for the children where the boat launch was and protection from non-point source pollution entering Minnehonk Lake based on a design by environmentalists and the Maine DEP.

Additional improvements for boaters at the Town Beach include:

- Parking for boat trailers (installed in 2017).
- Docks for boats near boat ramp (installed in 2018).
- Changing room and bathroom (planned for 2019 or 2020).

The Town of Mount Vernon’s Athletic Committee organizes baseball, softball, and soccer, utilizing the Mount Vernon Elementary School’s playing field and the two adjacent town fields, as well as the school’s multipurpose room when required for school-aged children. In prior years, the Town relied on a volunteer coordinator to arrange recreational sports such as baseball, softball, T-ball, soccer that utilize the playing fields

next to the Elementary School. Starting in 2018, that position will be paid and those sports programs will continue.

There are no recreational events for adults organized by the Town Athletic Committee at present. However, the Town has plans to organize such activities, perhaps with a new Adult Athletic Committee.

The Town's Aging in Place Committee is planning to organize recreational activities for senior citizens such as cribbage games, weekly or monthly lunches at the Community Center, book clubs at the library, or any activity that brings them together for social interaction. Transportation may be facilitated by Neighbors Driving Neighbors, which was created in 2013 for seniors who don't drive.

The Community Center currently hosts public classes in:

- Dance
 - For all ages and abilities, taught by staff from Camp Bearnstow, Wednesdays evening in summer
 - For adults, taught by Cindy Davidson Dance, year-round.
- Yoga
 - "All Levels Vinyasa," taught Sunday mornings.
 - Slow Yoga, taught summer Tuesday and Thursdays.

Pure Country Stables on South Taylor Rd. provides instruction in horseback riding.

Residents of Mount Vernon have historically made use of "Tunny's Meadow" for sledding in wintertime, gaining access from the parking lot at the Dr. Shaw Memorial Library. The meadow is also site of the Town's annual fireworks display.

Scenic Viewpoints & Vistas

"Long views" were listed in the 1991 Comprehensive Plan:

- Cottle Hill Rd., looking toward the Belgrades
- Fogg Rd., from Dorer's Farm
- North Rd. northbound looking toward Mount Blue,
- North Rd., northbound looking toward McGaffey Mountain
- North Rd., northbound at "Robinson's Ridge" looking toward Mount Blue
- North Rd. southbound toward Kent's Hill
- "Tunny's Meadow", toward McGaffey Mountain.
- "Wells Hill," where the North Rd. drops into the village.

Historical, Archaeological & Cultural Resources

The Town of Mount Vernon was incorporated in 1792 via a charter signed by John Hancock, then Governor of Massachusetts. The original 600 residents cleared the surrounding forest and built gristmills and sawmills, and a road over the hills to Readfield. In the 1800s most villagers were farmers or hunters and fishermen; they enjoyed a varied social life filled with barn raisings and quilting bees, often with their neighbors from Vienna.

Mount Vernon transformed from a working village into a vacation spot in the early twentieth century as the town filled with summer homes and children's camps and with the arrival of the Elizabeth Arden spa. In the 60s, Mount Vernon welcomed a new group of residents - the flower children! These young citizens helped create a thriving family culture and established the vibrant community of year-round and summer residents that remains today.

Much of our rich and varied history is preserved in the books, maps, and photographs stored at the Dr. Shaw Memorial Library. We hope this trove of information can be saved and shared with future generations. Mount Vernon does not have an historical commission, but the town often coordinates with the Vienna Historical Society, as it did last year when donating our hearse for display. We encourage broader cooperation with the Vienna Society, and hope to forge a more formal agreement to expand the Vienna group to include both towns.

According to the Maine Historic Preservation Commission, there are three types of historic and archaeological resources that should be considered in comprehensive planning:

- Prehistoric Archaeological (Native American, before European arrival)
- Historic Archaeological (mostly European-American, after written historic records)
- Historic Buildings/Structures/Objects (buildings and other above-ground structures and objects).

The town has no known prehistoric or historic archaeological sites, but there are three structures listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

TABLE 6
STRUCTURES LISTED ON NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

1.	Dr. Samuel Quimby House	North Road
2.	Spruce Point Camps	Bearnstow Road
3.	John Williams House	Church Street

We support providing education for the planning board and code enforcement officer on identifying and protecting our historic and archaeological resources, and encourage the library, historical society, and cemetery volunteers to create informational programming, maps, and brochures to help citizens understand and appreciate our heritage.

Mount Vernon's history is also found in its twenty-six cemeteries, which house the remains of citizens from the town's earliest days through today. Sexton Bob Grenier has undertaken an ambitious campaign to clean and restore the marker stones in each Mount Vernon cemetery. We hope the town will continue to support this wonderful project.

TABLE 7
CEMETERIES

1.	Well	555 Hovey Trail
2.	Robinson	1741 North Road
3.	Butler	726 Pond Road
4.	Stevens	1155 North Road
5.	Hopkins	11 Blake Hill Road
6.	Lake Side	1175 Pond Road
7.	Wells	7 Mooar Hill Road
8.	Marston	331 Fogg Road
9.	Smith	175 Spring Hill Road
10.	Greeley	2 Ithiel Gordon Road
11.	Roger	164 Old Rome Road
12.	Anderson	1024 Pond Road
13.	Bean	351 Bean Road
14.	Dunn's Corner	284 Wings Mills Road
15.	Potash	140 Dunn's Corner Road
16.	Philbrick	299 Blake Hill Road
17.	John Robinson	1825 North Road
18.	Spring Hill Farm	124 Spring Hill Road
19.	Mooar Farm	Mooar Hill
20.	Currier Tomb	Currier Hill Road
21.	Community	1455 North Road
22.	Kent	109 Belgrade Road
23.	Locke	939 Bean Road
24.	Cogswell	Taylor Road
25.	Wiggin	Pond Road
26.	Memorial Lot	Pond Road

The history of Mount Vernon is filled with community events, from parades and fireworks to concerts and skating parties. We support efforts of Town committees to continue these traditions and to create new opportunities for residents to come together. We also advocate greater coordination with our neighboring towns to sponsor and promote events that appeal to wide audiences of varied age and background.

Mount Vernon is blessed with two exceptional locations in which to hold events: The Dr. Shaw Memorial Library and the Mount Vernon Community Center. The Library is a picture-perfect example of a small-town library. We hope the trustees will work towards opening this gorgeous building as often as possible and use for all varieties of public

functions. Likewise we support continuing efforts to update the Community Center and improve its facilities. As the Library and Community Center are frequented by many of our neighbors from other towns, we also suggest the Town request greater financial contributions from those communities as a way to forward these goals.

Mount Vernon Community Center

The Mount Vernon Community Center is a town building dedicated to the use of area residents and maintained by the efforts of the Board of Trustees. It was originally a Methodist church, built on Minnehonk lakeside property owned by the Webber family. In 1993, arrangements were made with the church and the Webbers to donate the building to the Town.

The Community Center hosts a variety of events to raise funds and to serve the community. Funds raised support capital improvements, like recent repairs to the steeple. Events include Saturday Cafes, community suppers, and seasonal arts and crafts fairs. The Community Center is also used for a range of activities, including municipal elections, Tuesday breakfasts, benefit concerts, toddler play groups, and dance & yoga classes. The building is rented regularly for private functions such as birthday parties, baby showers, and weddings.

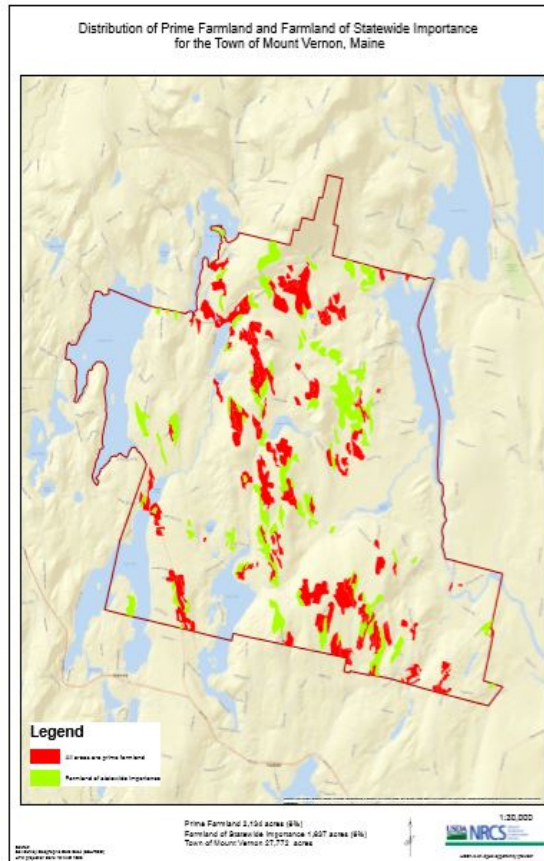
Dr. Shaw Memorial Library

The Dr. Shaw Memorial Library was originally built in 1841, and purchased in 1883 by Dr. Herbert and Ella Shaw. Dr. Shaw practiced in Mount Vernon for many years; when he died in 1939 he left his house and a trust to the Town for a library. Over the years this trust, in conjunction with additional generous donations and town support, has sustained a thriving public information center. An extensive renovation project has just concluded which modernized the building, and increased the space available for books and meetings.

The Library is overseen by a board of trustees, and managed by dedicated staff and a cadre of enthusiastic volunteers. More than 800 residents of Mount Vernon and surrounding towns hold library cards, up from 700 back in 1990. The book collection has doubled in 29 years, from 7,000 to nearly 14,000 items. The Library also offers magazines, DVDs and audio books, a printer and copier for public use, and 24-hour wifi access via the porch on the new addition. It sponsors summer reading programs, tax assistance, holiday events, bird watching and poetry get-togethers, and community meetings

Agriculture & Forestry

There are 2,134 acres of “prime farmland” and 1,637 acres of farmland of “state agricultural importance” constituting over 14% of the land mass of Mount Vernon.



The rural character of our town stems from farms and forests. To protect that rural character, we must work to sustain them. Currently much of our town is forested but we also have a wealth of small farms providing vegetables, meat, milk, pick-your-own raspberries, Christmas trees and maple syrup. Town policies must protect and strengthen these key resources and businesses.

Economic Development & Housing

The 1993 comprehensive plan defined Mt Vernon as a residential community. But since then, there have been meaningful demographic, economic and technological changes, and the committee questioned the practicality of the town being defined as a bedroom community. Thus, the committee's vision is to see the town develop as a live-work community. We recommend supporting and promoting micro-enterprises, home-based businesses and telecommuters, farms and forestry, and the value-added agri-businesses that stem from these primary industries.

This viewpoint is consistent with the preferences outlined by the citizen survey responses, as minimizing large commercial and industrial development was a prevailing theme. However, this desire sacrifices potential real property tax increases that can offset the town's budget pressures, so the economic development committee considered how the town might improve its tax revenue. Given the community's economic geography and its preferences for maintaining Mt Vernon's rural charm, the live-work theme

presents the most practical and desirable future for the town. This direction offers prospects for greater residential development that maintains Mt Vernon's open spaces.

Infrastructure

Roadways & Transportation

The road infrastructure has expanded in recent years, with some formerly unpaved and seasonal, roads being paved. But the number of miles represented by roadways in MV has remained the same as some old roads have been abandoned.

However, the road system is constantly being upgraded and more roads are being opened again or perhaps a better term is that roads open for travel with minimum maintenance are now being used by people moving into the rural parts of Mount Vernon. While this may be good for expanded tax base, it increases the cost to all taxpayers, as there is no return in taxes to pay for the upgrade of the road to make it passable and plow-able. Perhaps some thought should be given as to the best way to plan for expanded growth or look at the cost of building permits should reflect the cost of the expansion of the road.

A plan is in the process for better priority of maintaining the road system. A capital improvement fund has been set up and will help with road priorities. The Maine Department of Transportation (DOT) is entering into a cost sharing basis for work on the road system that they maintain in the town. This is going to put a further burden on the town.

Waterways

DOT has installed drainage system for the downtown to help protect Minnehonk Lake from sand infiltration and the extra deep catch basins will be a benefit for the future of the town. A problem that has existed for many years is the dwellings and businesses along the lakes, ponds and streams of the 30 Mile River. Non-point source pollution with run-off of sand and fertilizers has been a particular problem.

The formation of the Greater Minnehonk Lake Association (GMLA) was a step in helping with protecting the 30 Mile River waterway from pollution. The relocated boat launch facilities at the Town Beach will also help with prevention of non-point source pollution. The new boat launch will be an asset for the Town as well help to protect Minnehonk Lake, but will require maintenance and further upgrades as recreational use increases.

Water Supply

There is no water supply system. An external faucet at the Volunteer Fire Department provides water for those in need. In addition, there are private but traditional sources of water such as the Spring Hill spring. In addition, spring water has traditionally been

available on the Watson Pond Road in Vienna. There are also several commercial bulk water delivery services operating in the area.

Sewage Facilities

There are no public sewage water systems. Individual private holding tanks and septic systems are in various states of repairs, with leaks occurring occasionally. This is a particular threat to water quality on lakes and ponds. Private services pump out holding tanks and septic systems on a contract basis and carry the waste out of town.

The Village district is of particular concern, due to under-sized lots, proximity to Minnehonk Lake, inadequate soils for subsurface wastewater disposal, and antiquated, non-compliant septic systems. In 1979-1980, the Town contracted with A. E. Hodsdon Engineers to prepare a wastewater treatment facilities plan. This report recommended that the town construct a limited wastewater collection system and a subsurface effluent disposal facility.

At the time, the project was estimated to cost \$355,900, all of which would be eligible for 85% federal and 15% state funding. Today, the project would cost approximately \$1.3 million, and unfortunately the EPA/DEP Construction Grants Program has long ended. It is unlikely any significant grants would be available today, although the town might access low interest loans. The federal government is contemplating a major new infrastructure initiative, so if that gets enacted there may be grant money.

The town should closely monitor the funding situation and perhaps contract with A. E. Hodsdon to update the 1979-80 Facilities Plan for the latest technology and more accurate cost estimates.

Solid Waste Facilities

The Town of Mount Vernon operates a solid waste transfer station on the Mooar Hill Road. The transfer station although in good shape and maintained does not have a plan for the evolving needs of solid waste disposal.

Recycling of glass, most plastics and some metals at the transfer station has been discontinued and is contributing to an increase in solid waste. The future for recycling of aluminum, cardboard and paper is uncertain due to changing economics.

Public Safety

There are no constables or local police. The Town of Mount Vernon relies on the Kennebec County Sheriff's Department and the Maine State Police, who alternate coverage on a mutually agreed-upon basis.

A minimal number of streetlights are maintained, mostly in the village area.

There is an excellent Volunteer Fire Department and Rescue Squad, with 24-hour coverage and dispatched via the 911 system.

Electricity

An increasing number of homes in Mount Vernon generate electricity with solar panels and/or geothermal wells. There are no large-scale, commercial generating facilities in the town. Central Maine Power distributes electricity intermittently using its grid. Power outages are frequent and many residents have installed back-up generators.

Communications

A variety of private companies provide telephone, cable TV and Internet service using landlines, wireless cell phone towers, and cable and satellite systems. There is increasing competition in this area, although Internet connectivity remains poor in much of Mount Vernon.

The U.S. Postal Service maintains a post office in the village with limited office hours but 24-hour access to the lobby and post office boxes. Two rural mail routes serve much of the town. Some residents are served by post offices in Belgrade, Kents Hill, Readfield and Vienna.

Commercial delivery services regularly serve Mount Vernon, and FedEx partners with the U.S. Postal Service to make some of its deliveries.

The Town Newsletter is printed in limited quantities and made available free of charge at the Community Center, Library and Town Office. Newspapers published in nearby cities, such as Augusta, Waterville, Lewiston, Farmington and Jay, occasionally cover events in Mount Vernon.

Health Care

No health care services are provided in the town, except for screening and emergency treatment from the Rescue Squad. The nearest medical facilities are the Belgrade Health Center and the Franklin Memorial Hospital.

Town Office

Municipal buildings have been for the most part adequately maintained. The Library is being reconstructed and the upgrade will last for many years to come. The Community Center is in generally good condition but has significant issues exist with humidity, mold and standing water in the basement. By contrast, the Town Office has not been maintained at the same level and needs serious work

Salt & Sand Shed

The salt and sand shed has been fixed and maintained. The back part of the building, not being put on solid footings is slowly sinking. A plan is needed to look at the future of salt and sand usage to properly prepare for the future of the shed.

Fire Station

The Fire Station is well maintained as the recent addition of the rescue building. The dry wells are being maintained and have not been expanded. Some capital improvement funds have been set up to help as buildings need to be maintained.

Elementary School

Education infrastructure consists of a purpose-built school on the North Road, which is operated and maintained by the Maranacook RSU #38 at this time for elementary grades PreK-5 (see next section).

Education

Thirty years ago, Mount Vernon committed to providing a quality education for its children, while remaining fiscally responsible to its residents. These dual commitments remain today. In 2009, Mount Vernon aligned with Readfield, Manchester, and Wayne in order to provide a wider range of student opportunity through economies of scale, and the resulting school unit has been recognized as among the best in the state.

RSU #38 is comprised of four local elementary schools, a middle school and high school in Readfield, and an adult education program. Mount Vernon Elementary School serves 125 children in grades PreK- 5, and the town sends 62 students to the middle and 68 students to the high school. A thirteen-member school board provides oversight of district operations, in accordance with principles set forth in the original RSU organization plan. Mount Vernon's three representatives are elected by popular vote each June, and serve three-year terms. Mount Vernon Elementary School has its own three-person advisory board, also elected in June to three-year terms, as well as an active parent-teacher organization.

The town's financial obligation to RSU#38 is, by far, its greatest expenditure. The district budget climbs every year, driven by a combination of state mandates, ever-increasing payroll and infrastructure costs, and parental expectations. Our original comprehensive plan lamented the burden rising school expenses place on property taxes, and that concern remains.

In fact, the school recently passed a \$5 million bond to address needed repairs at all the schools, adding more than \$100 to local tax bills for the next 15 years. This is particularly troubling as the school board is also considering changes to elementary

school structure that may result in the closure of many of the schools affected by the bond.

Balancing the competing expectations of parents and taxpayers will remain a challenge throughout the next decade. We hope Mount Vernon voters will continue to elect school board representatives who will curb spending while maintaining stringent educational standards.

We also encourage the town select board and budget committee to work more closely with the school board, in recognition that town and school budgets are entwined. And we urge our residents to engage in the budget process, both by participating in budget creation and by voting on the finished product.

Town Governance

Mount Vernon is governed via traditional Maine participatory democracy, highlighted by the annual town meeting. The three-member select board manages the town and oversees employees and committees. The board works in cooperation with the town's elected and appointed officials, as well as with representatives of the RSU #38 board. Voters approve (or not) the budget and ordinances at town meeting.

Municipal management has become much more complex in the thirty years since our last comprehensive plan was written; state-mandated reporting, training requirements, and technological innovations have made it increasingly challenging for citizen-officials to successfully oversee town operations. Mount Vernon currently elects the following positions: select board, town clerk, town treasurer, and road commissioner. All other positions are appointed. Many small towns like ours have turned from primarily elected to appointed positions, and have hired town managers to direct municipal activities.

Mount Vernon has been managed skillfully over the past decades, and we must ensure that continues to be so. Keeping in mind the complexities of municipal management, we suggest the town mobilize the governance committee in order to consider the most efficient ways for the town to move forward. The governance committee was last in action ten years ago, and we feel that the time has come to renew and take advantage of the perspective the committee provides. We would like this group to look at salaries, job descriptions, and municipal organization, and to investigate opportunities to share services and positions with neighboring towns.

Concurrently, we would like to see the select board improve communication with residents about programs, services and activities the town now provides, and expand participation on boards and committees. While Mount Vernon is blessed with an active core of community leaders and volunteers, we would like to encourage the involvement of a wider circle of residents.

We suggest the select board employ social media to engage and educate community members, and update the town website to become a more clear and consistent source of information. We would like to see the board interact with town committees on a regular schedule in order to coordinate activities and assist in publicizing programs and events.

We also encourage the budget committee to revisit the idea of mailing the town newsletter to all residents as a way of ensuring everyone equal access to news and information. Finally, we would like officials and board chairs, both elected and appointed, to schedule regular opportunities for resident questions and discussion in order to demystify administrative processes and clarify decisions.

In addition to the above, we suggest that all town boards and committees consider scheduling their meeting times so as to encourage participation by a broader swath of the community. Most groups currently meet exclusively on weeknight evenings, which can be difficult for young families and older residents, and thus dampens attendance. We also suggest the town curate a list of citizens interested in helping with committees, boards, or events, and work to find ways to involve everyone who would like to take part.

Age-Friendly Mount Vernon

When the current comprehensive plan was adopted in 1999, the needs of our elder population were not on the minds of the planning committee members or the town. However, following the 2010 Census when Maine was deemed the oldest state in the nation by mean age, Mainers began to stand up and take notice. Around the same time, the American Association of Retired People (AARP) developed a framework for assessing communities on how well situated they are for allowing residents to age in place in their home community.

Like many small Maine towns, Mount Vernon grew quickly from incorporation until 1850 at which time a steady decline continued for more than 100 years. Not until 1970, does the Census show an uptick in population. It was at this time that Mount Vernon experienced a back to the land movement, with many baby boomers looking at a simpler life style. And, our population has continued to increase at each Census; sometime between 1990 and 2000, Mount Vernon first exceeded its earlier population high point.

Many of the people who moved to Mount Vernon in the 60's and 70's are now seniors and hope to continue living in the town they love. This population is essential to the town's well-being; among them are many of the volunteers who keep our organizations going, the Mount Vernon Community Partnership Corporation, the Library, the food bank, Mount Vernon Rescue among others.

Based on the 2010 Census, Mount Vernon had 246 residents 65 and over or 15.1% of the population. These people, if they still live in town are now considerably older. Another important fact is that there were also 277 or 17% of the population between the ages of 55 and 65; today our senior population is considerably higher. This is definitely the time to think about making Mount Vernon friendly to our elder population.

TABLE 8
POPULATION OVER 65 YEARS OLD
(from U.S. Census)

	Mount Vernon	Maine
Population 65 years and over (%)	246 (15.1%)	211,080 (15.9%)
Median Age	45.5 years	42.7 years
# of Households w/person 65 years and over	180 (26%)	151,281 (27.1%)
# of HH w/person 65 & older living with another householder not spouse	21 (1.8%)	15,049 (1.1%)
# of People 65 years and over living alone	59 (25% of age group)	63,937 (30% of age group)

Like Mainers everywhere, Mount Vernon's older residents are hardy souls, unlikely to ask for help or admit that they are having difficulty managing, despite evidence to the contrary. There are many resources available in the area; getting the word out about these resources could make it easier for our elders to access them.

Some of Mount Vernon's senior population struggle to make ends meet. At least 9 households with one or more people 60 and above use the food bank at the First Baptist Church. In addition to fresh, frozen and shelf stable food items, the pantry has personal care items, clothing, school supplies etc. available for customers. Some residents have difficulty shopping for and preparing healthy meals; at least 3 households receive meals on wheels from Spectrum Generations Cohen Community Center.

Social isolation can be a serious issue for older people. This is especially the case in small rural communities like Mount Vernon if you are no longer able to drive or begin to limit your driving to sunny, daylight hours and only within a short distance of home. Our residents do have access to a volunteer driver program, called Neighbors Driving Neighbors (NDN), which can help alleviate isolation. This program is having success in the five towns it serves; however some of our elders undoubtedly "don't want to bother anyone." Having more activities available in town during the day, including a weekly free lunch, might help to alleviate feelings of isolation.

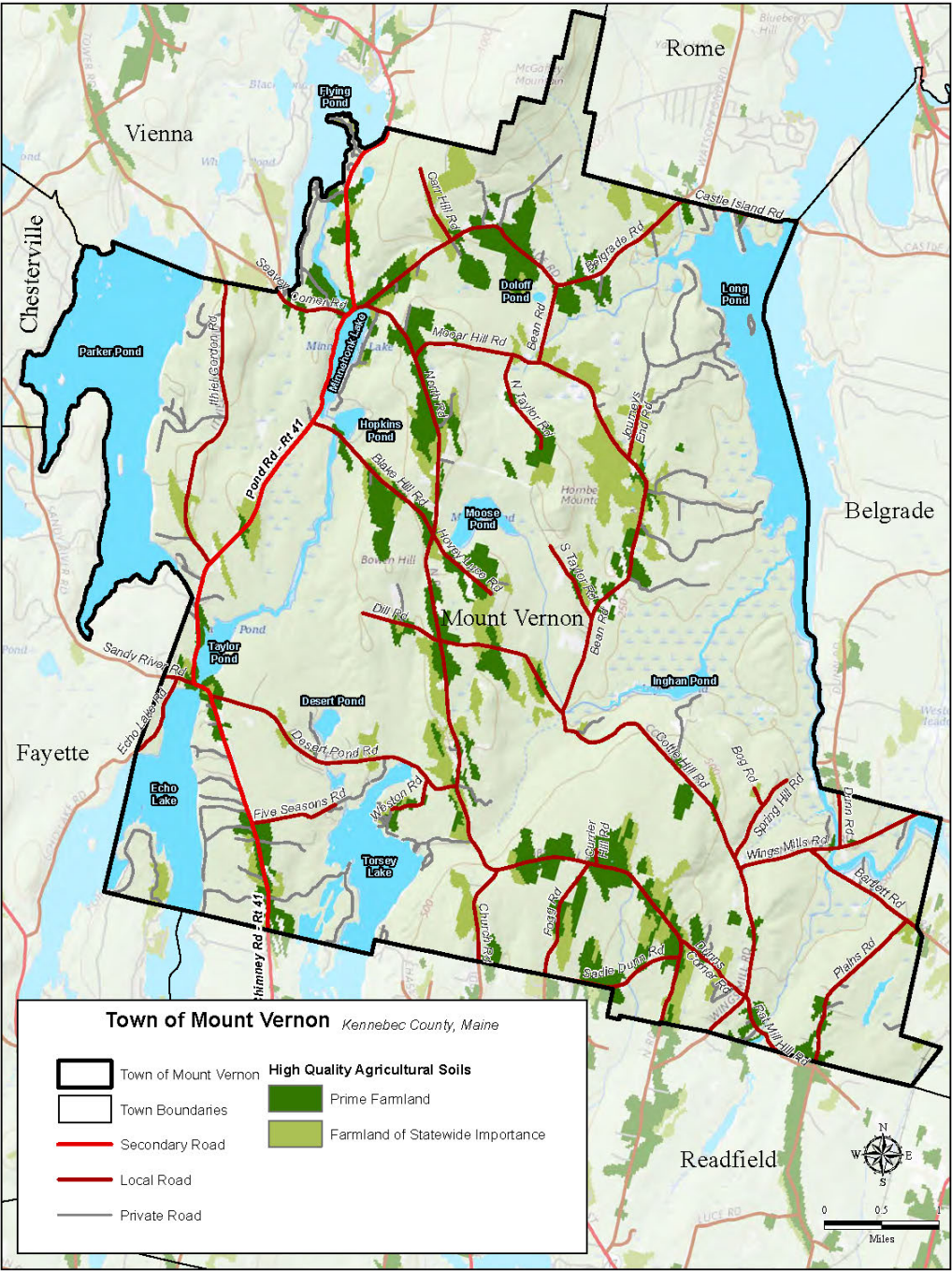
Since 88.6% of Mount Vernon's housing units are owner occupied, it can be assumed that most of our elders live in homes they own. Many tasks, such as home maintenance, snow removal, yard work, stacking wood and even cleaning the house can become more difficult, dangerous and time consuming as we age, especially with balance and/or mobility issues. And for the 25% (2/3 of them women) who live alone, it is even more challenging. It's possible that those living alone could have difficulty getting help when it is sorely needed.

Most Maine residents who are hospitalized and then often go to a rehab facility afterwards are often heard saying, "I want to go home."

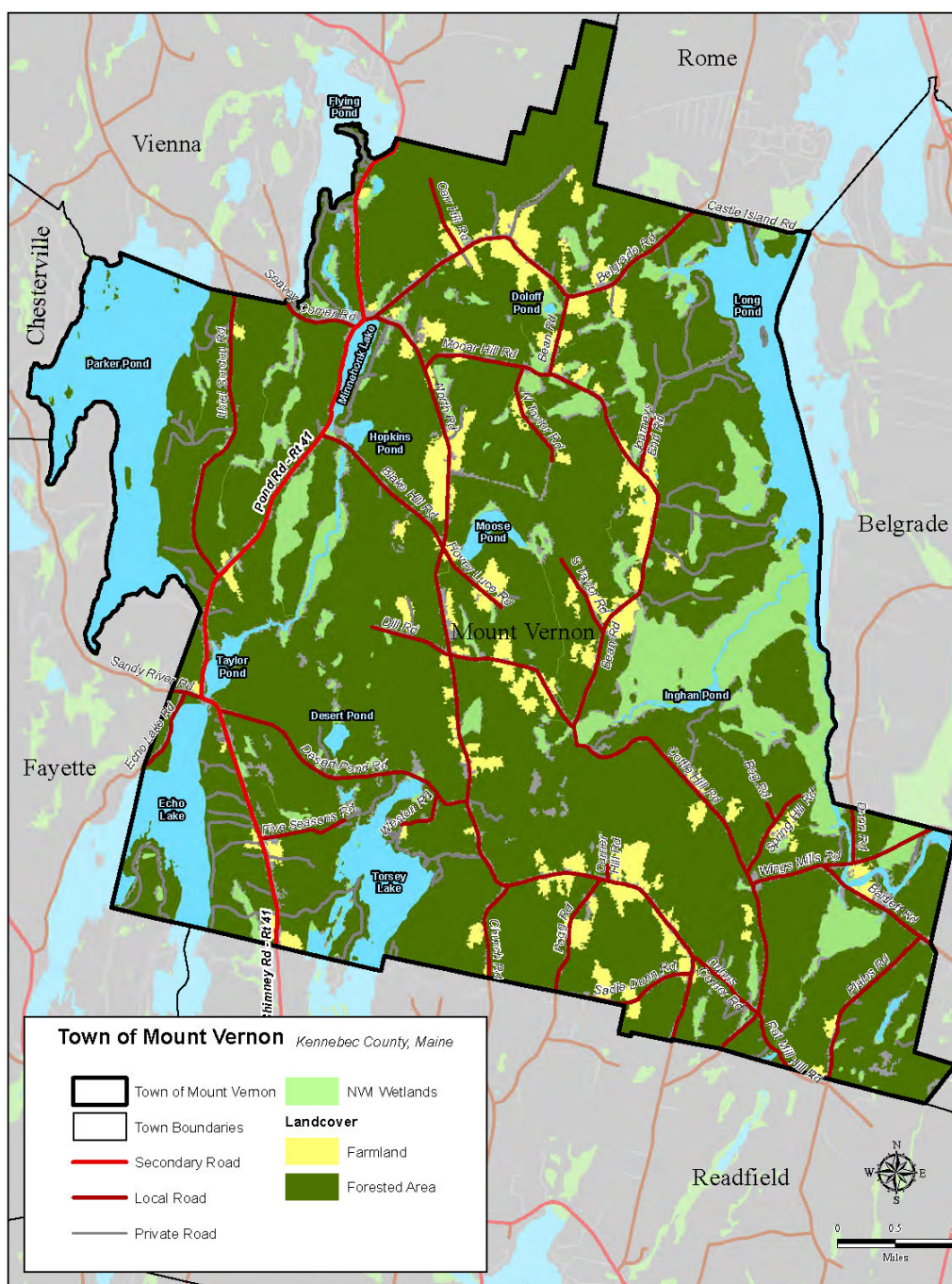
Safe and convenient housing is essential to our elders if they are going to remain in the community. Two examples are:

- Home Sharing is often done due to financial needs of one or both parties. Usually one party would be younger and able to assist with some chores. There is no separate living unit, all rooms are shared except for a private bedroom. Rent may or may not be charged, there may be shared expenses such as utilities or a service for rent agreement may be made. Sharing may offer both parties a healthier, less lonely and safer environment. Some recommend winter sharing to cut down on fuel cost and to minimize isolation, which can be more acute during the winter.
- A Senior Accessory Dwelling Unit (SADU) is within or attached to the main dwelling. These units have often been called "in-law" apartments though there is no reason to limit them to relatives. The accessory unit would be incidental or smaller than the main dwelling.

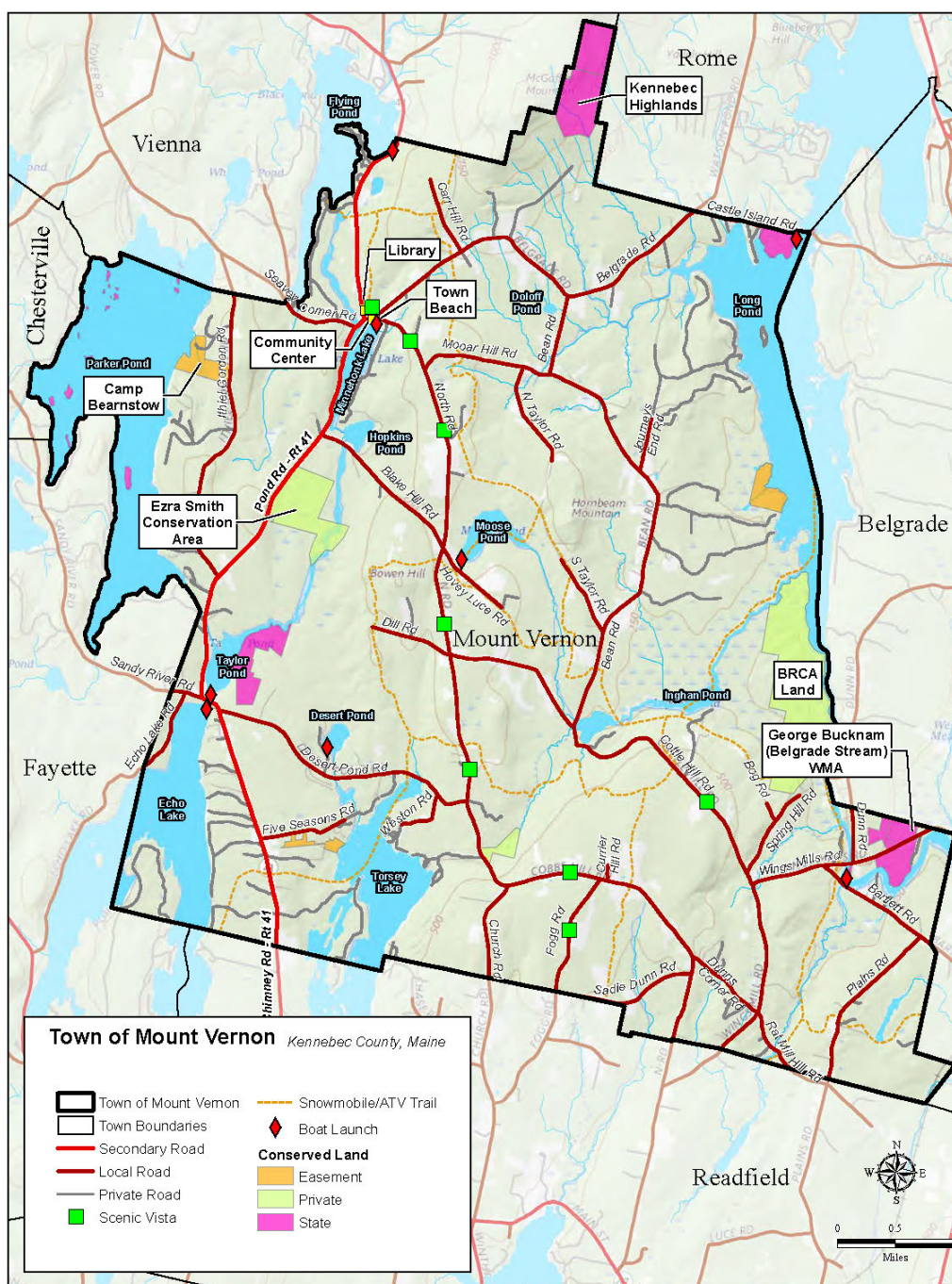
Maps Courtesy of Gil Coryell



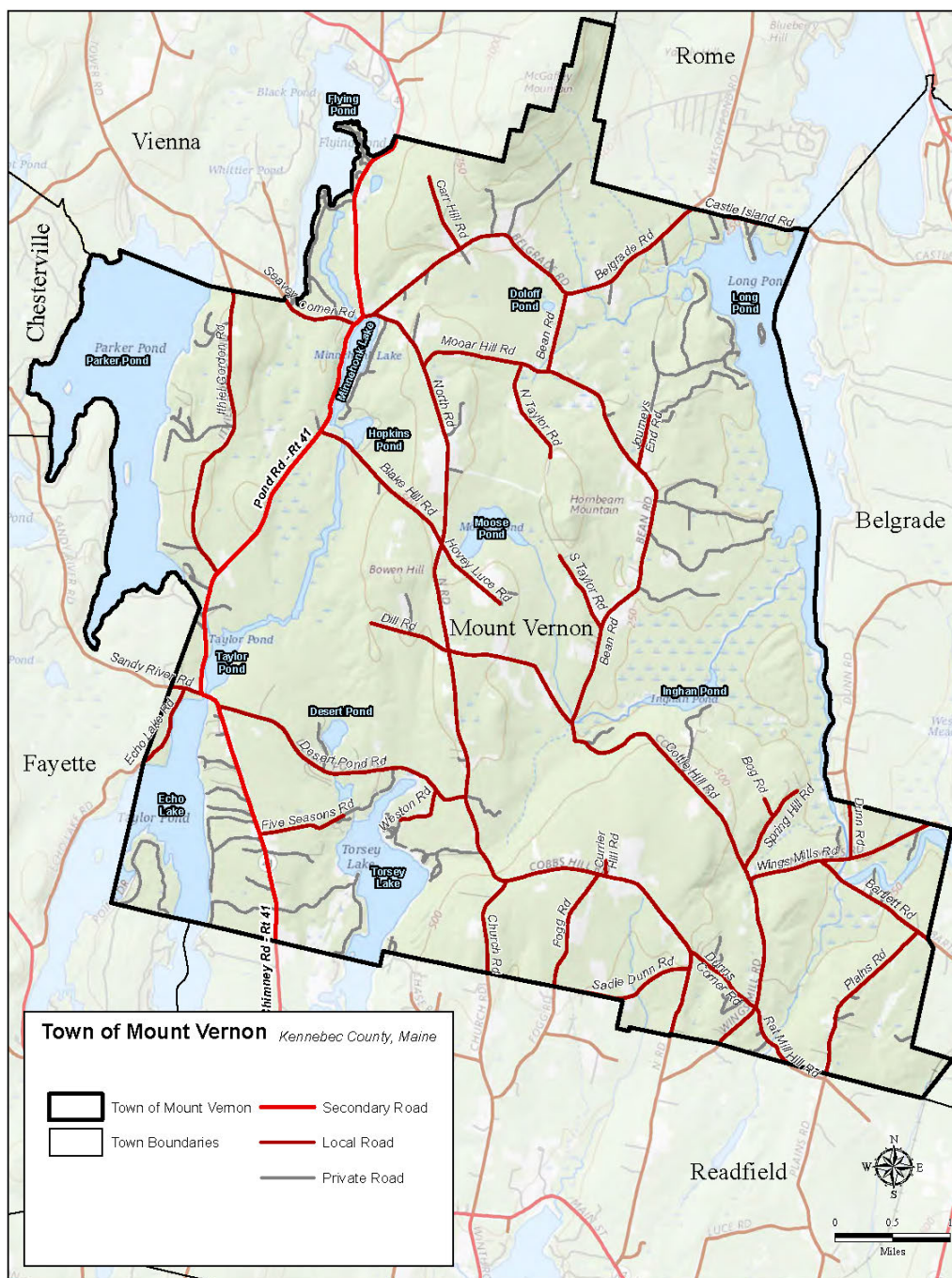
Map 1: Mt. Vernon agricultural soil.



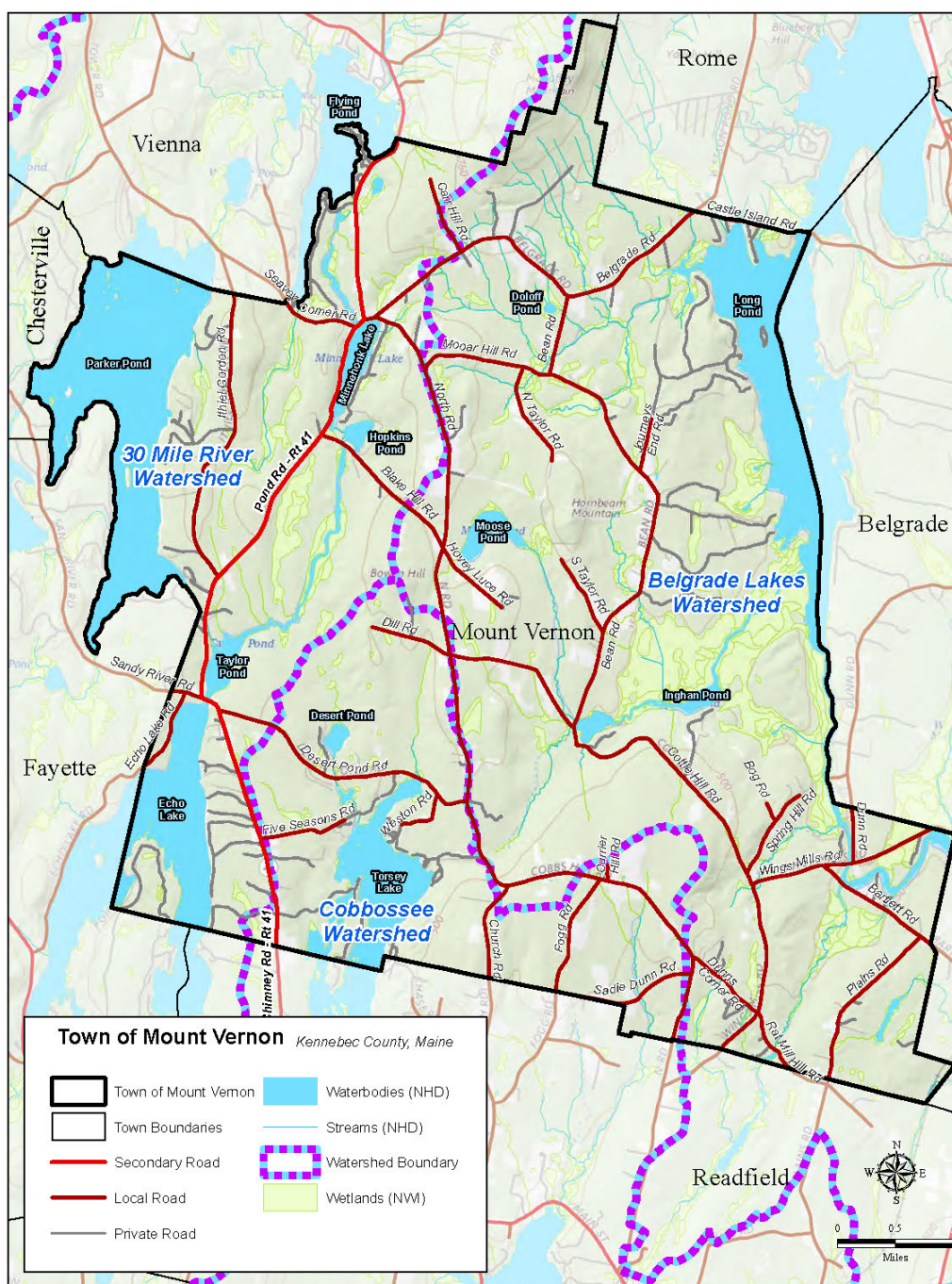
Map 2: Mt. Vernon land cover.



Map 3: Mt. Vernon land use and recreation.



Map 4: Mt. Vernon topographic map.



Map 5: Mt. Vernon wetlands and water bodies.

Drone Photos Courtesy of Carl Rogers

Downtown and Commercial Districts



Mount Vernon Village



Taylor Pond



Echo Lake Boat Landing



Limited Commercial Zone- Down East Energy and Pallet Mill



Flying Pond Variety Store





Minnehonk Lake



Long Pond Boat Landing



Long Pond





Torsey Lake



Mt Vernon Comprehensive Plan Survey Results

Question Participant Total 96

1 Our 90's Comprehensive Plan set the following major goals. How important are these goals to you today?

A. Protect Mount Vernon's rural character.	0	Not at all	1	Slightly	10	Moderately	31	Very	52	Extremely
B. Conserve Mount Vernon's natural resources.	0	Not at all	0	Slightly	6	Moderately	26	Very	61	Extremely
C. Protect wildlife habitat and water bodies.	0	Not at all	0	Slightly	7	Moderately	16	Very	72	Extremely
D. Encourage farming and forestry.	0	Not at all	0	Slightly	23	Moderately	37	Very	65	Extremely
E. Ensure all property owners are treated equitably.	0	Not at all	0	Slightly	5	Moderately	22	Very	65	Extremely
F. Preserve cultural and archaeological resources	1	Not at all	2	Slightly	17	Moderately	35	Very	38	Extremely

What do you like most about living in Mt Vernon? (Circle up to three.)

Rural Character	71.5	Low Crime Rate	16.5
Tax Level	8.5	Lakes and Environment	75.5
Town Services	4	Reasonable Housing Costs	2.5
Community Atmosphere	46	Proximity to Augusta/Farmington	25.5
Schools	3	Traditional New England Village	20
Other	2		

What would you like to improve? (Circle up to three.)

Recreation Opportunities	10	Solid Waste Disposal	9
Senior Citizen Assistance and Services	38	Cell/Internet/Cable Services	37.5
Youth Programs	18	Ordinance Enforcement	15
Quality of Roads	40	Public Access to Lakes	13.5
Fire and Rescue Services	4	Snow Plowing and Sanding	8
Library Services	8		
Other	15		

How interested are you in sharing services with neighboring towns?

4	Not at all	9	Slightly	33	Moderately	31	Very	12	Extremely
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What is your opinion of Mt Vernon's rate of residential growth?

13	Too Fast	2	Too Slow	67	About Right	4	Other	5
4	About right but not occurring in the right part of town							
Please explain _____								

What is your opinion of Mt Vernon's rate of commercial growth?

4	Too Fast	12	Too Slow	65	About Right	4	Other
5	About right but not occurring in the right part of town						

Responses

Creation of senior housing facility (apartments)	School Feasibility study for staying in regional system	Cell phone service issues and towers developed
Goals and direction of Mt Vernon wants needs to be main intent	Storm emergency response and shelter	Community comes 1st in planning, design and implementation
Revaluation	Cell phone service	Involving youth in the process
Village parking	What are the other towns doing?	Revaluation
Prioritization through consensus	This project would require a committee consensus,	Fostering a great community atmosphere
Keeping costs/taxes down	Do not over tax lake front property owners	Make the ordinance easier to make sense of the rules
Review necessary to ensure balance between development and protection	The to selectmen should support the ordinance adopted at town meeting	Extremely interested in shared services: district fire dept; CEO; Assessing, town manager.
The rights of all regardless of economic standing: lower, middle, upper	Interested in shared services if the level of services stay the same or decrease taxes	Better equitable treatment by CEO, Establish a partner village with Canadian or European community
When do we get to see a draft	Quality of Roads Rte. 41	
The plan should be realistic, affordable and reflective of both residential and summer people's opinions	No shopping malls and asphalt, I'm for maintaining the rural character; Paved roads/trash pickup/etc. Are not necessarily better; keep services low and taxes low	All hands working together - through motivation, communication, respect, and management
Consider lobbying for a rollback of some regulation that hurt development	Use of zoning to control auto repair shops - junk yards selectmen show some leadership. Planning board a waste of time	Regarding Town Beach: Issue stickers for residents and hire a monitor... don't use beach because filled with non-residents
MV Community center is vital for activities and emergencies. Center needs major improvements: generator/dehumidifier; more storage space; bathroom and kitchen improvements	How to address climate change as a community and its effects on my forests, water, animal habitats, insect infestation. The gathering of information and facts and developing a method to evaluate every member of our community	Hold residential growth to minimum because residential growth = more children = school growth = increased education costs = higher taxes
Did we meet our last goals? Please publish accomplishments, otherwise the effort is useless	We need less land use regulation from Augusta and more flexibility for our people in town	We love this quintessential New England town - its character should be protected
We need to change how we educate our children. RSU 38 does not work. Bring elementary and middle school back to Mt Vernon. Hire good teachers. Less administration	Equitable treatment is not possible - property taxes are skewed to harm those on water bodies, while we on water bodies get restricted on what we can do with our own property.	Later/longer hours on weekend to keep the dump open so residents have time to do their yard work and then take their yard waste to the dump
Thank you for the improvements to the town beach. Community center is a wonderful resource.	Vol telephone line that seniors could call to make arrangements for rides from medical procedures	Education costs are the highest component of taxes
Use of elementary school for multi-purpose uses.	No new boat landings on Minnehonk	Home upkeep assistance
Florescent road line markers	Dangerous driving when it rains	Adventure recreation for pre-teens
Impact of changes on property taxes	Kayaks at park to rent or use	Self sufficiency systems: food sovereignty and community solar
Interested in shared services if it saves money	Ways to strengthen the great community experience	Community clean energy initiatives
People and environment first	More hours at transfer station	Trails