

Existing Land Use

Historical Patterns of Development in Kennebunk

Like many coastal towns, Kennebunk's early development by Europeans newly arrived in the early 1600s replaced Indigenous settlements along the rivers. By the late 1800s, five distinct "villages" existed. Travel between the villages formed the nucleus of the road system that exists today, and farmhouses, worker cottages and the grander homes of sea captains and merchants lined those roads. Early farms near the beachfront were replaced in the 1800s by large tourist accommodations, which were again replaced by single family homes as automobiles and modern work schedules changed the way families vacationed. The postwar building boom brought the first subdivisions to Kennebunk, and later the first condominium communities, with most construction occurring on the east side of the Maine Turnpike, where sewer and public water service developed in response to population clusters. Later expansion of the Town's designated "growth area" encouraged subdivision growth in part of West Kennebunk near two schools and the Maine Turnpike interchange.

(See FIG.EL1 "Kennebunk Zoning Map" at end of chapter)

Land Use Oversight in Kennebunk

The Town's Community Development Department has on staff a Town Engineer/Director of Community Development, a Deputy Director of Community Development, a Town Planner, a Code Enforcement Officer, an Assistant Code Enforcement Officer, all supported by an Administrative Assistant. The department, which is staffed weekdays, oversees building codes; sign, building, plumbing and electrical permits; development review and planning; implementation and support of social service programs; and enforcement activities. Legal support is available through a Town Attorney. The Department also provides support for the Town's Planning Board, Site Plan Review Board and Zoning Board of Appeals, and acts as a resource for several other town committees, including the Community Garden Committee, the Conservation Commission, the Energy Efficiency Committee, the Historic Preservation Commission, the Kennebunk River Committee, the Lower Village Committee, the West Kennebunk Village Committee, and ad hoc committees such as the Comprehensive Plan Update Committee, as appointed by the Select Board. A link to the department's responsibilities and contacts:

<https://www.kennebunkmaine.us/129/Community-Development-Planning-Codes>

The Planning Board meets twice monthly to review special exception applications such as docks, re-subdivisions and proposed changes to zoning ordinances. The Site Plan Review Board meets monthly to provide exterior design review of new, infill and redevelopment of projects proposed in the Suburban Commercial, York Street Mixed Use, Portland Road Mixed Use, Business Park and part of the Branch Brook Aquifer Zone. The Historic Properties Commission meets monthly to review exterior changes, new construction and landscape changes proposed in the Historic Preservation Overlay zone.

The Planning Board's policy of allowing developers to bring proposals and sketch plans forth for discussion prior to the submission of a formal application is instrumental in promoting the Town's vision of clustered growth directed to areas with sewer and public water, preservation of fragile land features, limiting growth in rural and coastal zones, and looking for affordable housing opportunities. So-called "sketch plan" submission helps to iron out issues early in the process before a developer commits to engineering costs for a project that may end up being quite different from what was originally envisioned. It fosters a more collaborative relationship between the Board and developers, and results in a final product that better fits Town goals.

An analysis of lots and dwelling units approved by the Kennebunk Planning Board between 2015 and 2020 reveals that residential growth has approximated the direction laid out in previous Comprehensive Plans, which

was neither to limit nor to encourage growth, but to incent developers to build in areas that could support increased density via road systems, presence of public sewer and water, and ability of the town to efficiently provide plowing and emergency response. Public input received during preparation of this Plan indicates residents want to maintain this direction. Strategies outlined in this Plan are designed to achieve this goal.

Current Lot and Dimensional Standards

District	Minimum Net Lot Area	Maximum Lot Coverage	Purpose of District
Resource Protection (RP)	40,000 sq ft	20%	Protect fragile shorelines and other lands of unique geologic and natural features
Branch Brook Aquifer Protection (BB)	3 acres	15%	Protect the quality and quantity of present and future groundwater resources which recharge Branch Brook
Rural Conservation (RC)	3 acres	15%	Allow a level of development and activity consistent with the conservation of the natural features of these lands
Rural Residential (RR)	3 acres	15%	Allow residential development that is compatible with the character and traditional use of rural lands and that does not impose an undue burden on the provision of municipal services
Coastal Residential (CR)	20,000 sq ft	25%	Preserve the character, architectural scale, and quality of the residential neighborhoods and surrounding natural resources.
Suburban Residential (SR)	40,000 sq ft	25%	Maintain a relatively low density of development as a break between the more intensely developed Kennebunk Village and Lower Village
Village Residential (VR) & West Kennebunk Village Residential (WKVR)	10,000 sq ft (sewer) 20,000 sq ft (no sewer)	25%	Maintain the highly livable neighborhoods near the Town's traditional village centers
Downtown Business (DB)	2500 sq ft	None	Allow a complementary mix of activities that support a vital, community retail center, and to preserve the character as a walkable, livable, historic center
Upper Square (US)	2500 sq ft	None	Provide for a compact, transitional area between Downtown Kennebunk and surrounding residential neighborhoods
York Street Mixed Residential and Commercial Use (MRCU)	Varies by use	25%	Provide areas which contain a mixture of small scale businesses, such as retail shops, professional offices, and restaurants, as well as residential uses
Lower Village Residential (LVB)	10,000 sq ft	30%	Provide for and enhance the commerce that serves both harbor- and tourist-oriented trade and the day-to-day needs of residents of the area
West Kennebunk Mixed Use (WKMU)	20,000 sq ft	25%	Recognize and enhance the long-time, small-scale commerce and services provided by West Kennebunk village to the residents of the outlying areas of Town
Suburban Commercial (SC)	Varies by use	25%	Allow the district to evolve with a mixture of uses, including retail, services, offices, and light industrial, close to commercial services
Business Park (BP)	40,000 sq ft	33%	A mix of manufacturing, offices, and commercial activities that do not generate high volumes of traffic moving on and off Route 1
Industrial (I)	40,000 sq ft	75%	Provide areas near transportation arteries and municipal services that can support a range of nonpolluting

			manufacturing and distribution and other activities compatible with manufacturing and distribution
Shoreland Overlay (SZ)	See underlying zone	See underlying zone	Provide for the protection of the Town's water bodies and assure the Town's compliance with the State's mandatory Shoreland Zoning Act through performance standards for land uses within the shoreland area
Historic Preservation Overlay (HP)	See underlying zone	See underlying zone	Promote, encourage and assist the preservation and protection of qualifying sites, buildings, and districts

Shoreland Overlay District

The Shoreland Overlay District encompasses lands lying within 250 of several water bodies: great ponds off Old Falls Road and Alewife Pond; Branch Brook, Mousam River and Kennebunk River; Atlantic Ocean; portions of Priority 1 wetlands not identified on the 2009 Shoreland Zoning map showing locations in the Resource Protection District; perennial portions of Cold Water Brook, Slab Brook, Fernald Brook, Day Brook, Sucker Brook, Ward Brook, Gooch's Creek, Wonder Brook, Lake Brook, and part of Scotsman's Brook. The Overlay District also encompasses lands lying within 125 feet of Priority 2 wetlands, and lands lying within 25 feet of Priority 3 wetlands more than 1 acre in size, and the downtown portion of Scotsman's Brook.

(See FIG.EL2 "Shoreland Zoning" Map at end of chapter)

Floodplain Management

Floodplains are important to Kennebunk because they act as flood buffers, water filters and centers of biological life in the river ecosystem, and maintain the health of rivers by preserving water quality. The Town has a comprehensive Floodplain Management Ordinance available on the town's website at <https://www.kennebunkmaine.us/381/Town-Ordinances-Charter-Policies>. Last updated 1/31/09, and consistent with State and Federal standards, the ordinance covers such items as permitting, review and development standards, review of subdivision and development proposals, appeals and variances, enforcement and penalties, and definitions. The Town participates in the National Flood Insurance Program, which benefits homeowners purchasing flood insurance.

Current and Future Categories of Land Use

Kennebunk's 43.87 square miles are comprised of 35.05 square miles of land, and 8.82 square miles of water. Of all non-conserved properties in Kennebunk, 4.8% are commercial, .45% are industrial, 8.3% are vacant/undeveloped, 4.05% mixed use/exempt, and 81.3% residential.

By 2031, the population of Kennebunk is estimated by State projections to be 12,764, a ten year increase of 7.8%, and another 260+ housing units will exist. Commercial growth will likely only increase to encompass 5% of properties. The 81.3% of land currently being used for residential will increase, to perhaps 84%, reducing the 8.3% of vacant/undeveloped land to under 6%.

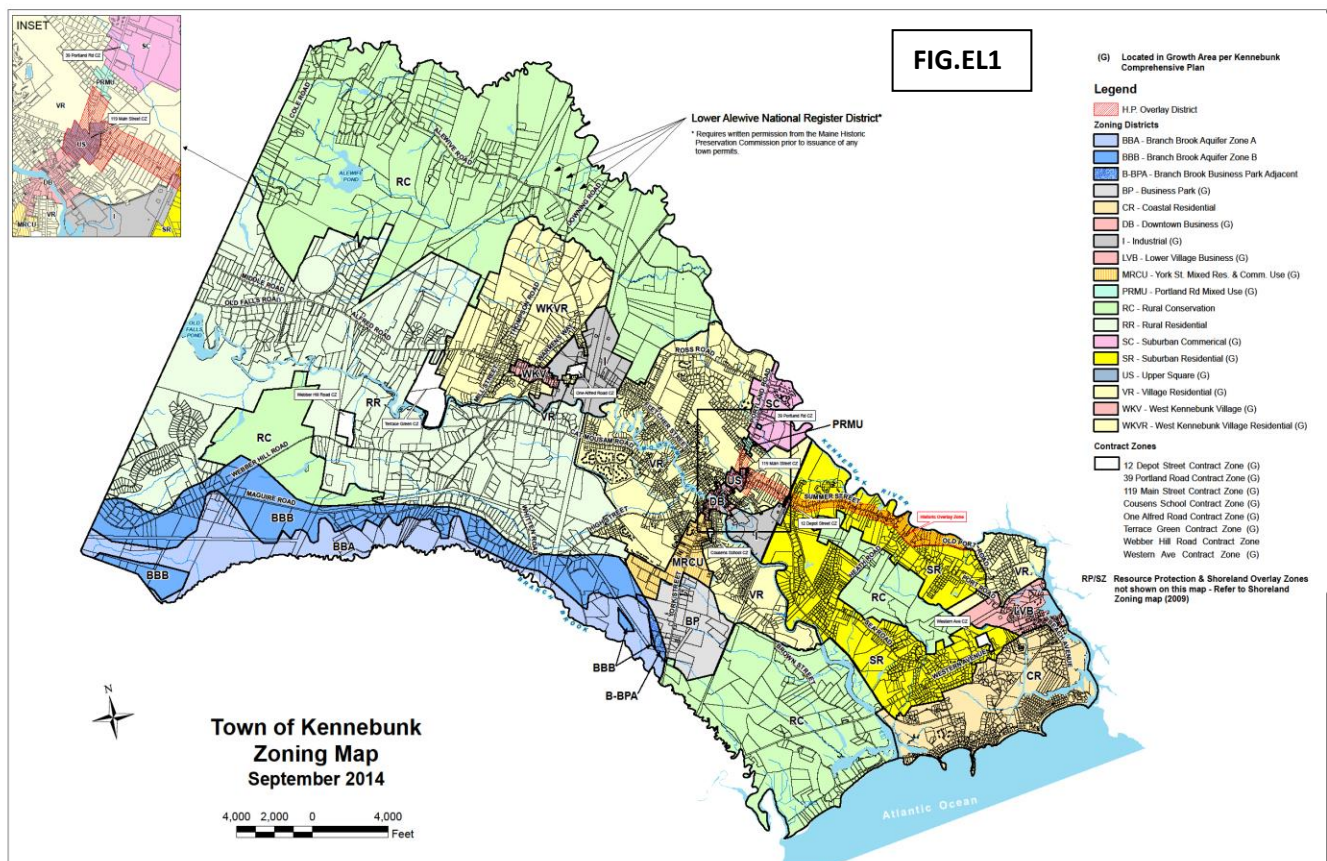
To provide the minimum amount of land needed to accommodate projected residential, institutional, commercial, or industrial development for ten years into the future, it is estimated that approximately 65 acres of land (either currently vacant, or property being redeveloped) will be required.

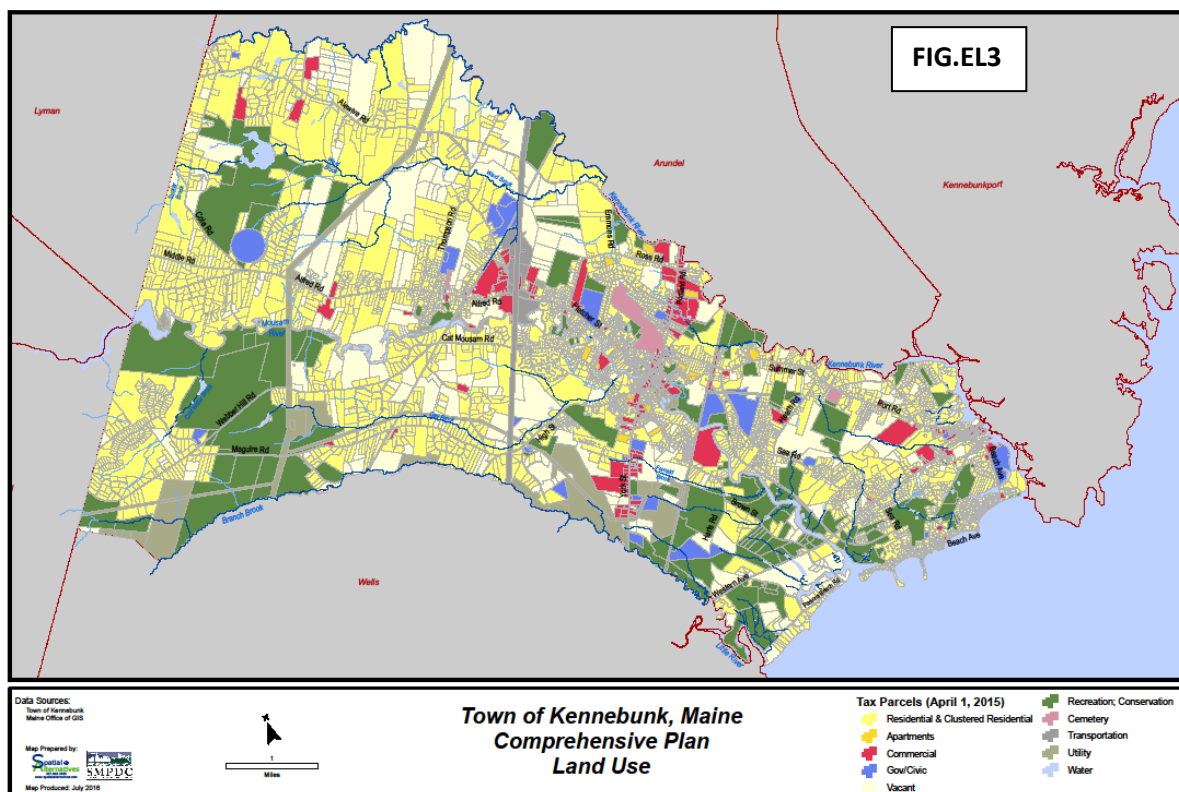
(See FIG.EL3 "Land Use" Map at end of chapter)

Conclusion

Today's Kennebunk still shows its historic past, with a large percentage of early homes and buildings still in daily use. Zoning ordinances and the Historical Preservation Overlay Zone have protected the aesthetic integrity of historic neighborhoods while allowing visually unobtrusive subdivision growth on side streets or behind older homes, woods and rolling farmland that front the Town's first (now busy) roadways. Commercial and industrial development is relatively clustered along Route 1, in Lower Village and at the turnpike interchange.

Development pressure has increased exponentially, as residential sales prices have shot up to unprecedented levels across the state. For developers, residential building has been a focus for the past few years, due to ongoing softness in the retail, commercial, and industrial markets. This trend is expected to continue.





Larger scale figures can be found in Appendix C.