

**NOTE TO READERS:** This is a *draft* of the Kennebunk Comprehensive Plan. The Comprehensive Plan provides us with a description of the town today in a range of categories, and identifies issues and recommendations for the future. The final version will include an introduction, be professionally formatted and contain multiple photographs. As a town resident, you are encouraged to look at this draft in this early format. **We are now looking for comments and opinions on its contents**, especially the *Issues & Implications* and *Recommendations* sections at the end of each chapter.

The Town will make changes to this draft based on the comments and opinions received, and residents will vote whether or not to accept the final Plan in June 2019.

## **Chapter L: Land Use Patterns and Open Space**

### **Historical Patterns of Development in Kennebunk**

Land use patterns develop over decades of human involvement and are the sum total of factors that include topography, relationship to neighboring communities, and the establishment of early transportation networks. Other factors include coveted natural resources, including navigable water, forests, and soil. It is important to understand how and why certain land use patterns develop. Every community is different.

#### **Early Development – 1621 through 1945**

Like many coastal towns, Kennebunk's early development occurred primarily along the rivers, with four distinct villages forming by the mid-1800s. Mousam Village was the site of today's downtown area, with homes, churches and mercantile uses clustered around the junction of "the turnpike," which would later become Route 1, and the mills on the Mousam River. The Landing in the lower Summer Street area, was center of the Kennebunk River shipbuilding trade. The Plains-Alewive farming community was further west, bordering the upper Kennebunk River. Lower Village, at the mouth of Kennebunk River, was home to many wharves used by coastal shipping vessels. When the railroad came through the western part of Kennebunk, the village of Kennebunk Depot (later West Kennebunk) formed. Small farms dotted the areas between villages, and houses sprang up along an ever-expanding network of roadways that connected the villages. Thus, most of the older homes in town are clustered in these village areas and along those early roadways.

After the era of wooden shipbuilding ended in the early twentieth century, the economic void was filled by the nascent tourism industry, with many large hotels constructed along the beachfront. A train line ran for a time into Lower Village to service this industry. Large summer "cottages" were built in newly created neighborhoods along the beaches and along Great Hill, gradually displacing farms and grazing areas.

#### **Postwar Development**

Nationwide, the 1945 to 1970s postwar housing boom resulted in the construction of hundreds of thousands of ranches, Capes, Colonials and split level homes desired by young and growing families. This trend was represented in Kennebunk through infill development along early roadways, as “modern” style houses began to mix with older homes. The first subdivisions, which were generally constructed on new cul-de-sac and dead-end roadways, were built perpendicular to main roads. Examples include Fletcher Street, High Street, Cat Mousam Road, Brown Street, and Sea Road. Along the beach areas, older beachfront hotels began to disappear. Vacation homes for individual owners were constructed in new neighborhoods created between the ocean and salt marshes, with some houses built on “fill” ground to extend the limited space available.

The average size of residential homes began to increase nationally during the 1980s, with newly built homes in Kennebunk larger than those in the first wave of postwar residential housing. New subdivision growth took place in most areas of the town, off Sea Road, Port Road, between Route 1 north and Ross Road, and in West Kennebunk off Alfred Road and Alewife Road. Condo development began in earnest, with construction of a significant number of units in the Upper Square, Ross Road, Cat Mousam, Brown Street, Sea Road and Summer Street areas.

With the adoption of town zoning regulations in 1993, the placement of new homes came under more scrutiny. Minimum lot square footage was required, with lot size keyed to the density of various zones in village areas and more rural areas. Shoreland Zoning regulations began to require more protection of land adjacent to waterways, reducing the total land area available for development.

### **A Current Overview**

In today’s Kennebunk, the past is still present in many ways, but the town has stepped into the 21<sup>st</sup> century gracefully.

The agrarian nature of the Plains-Alewife district still exists, although its early distinction as a village is no longer applicable. Early homes and a few long-standing agricultural businesses still dot the historic section of Alewife Road. New home lots are large and subdivision growth is intentionally tucked away from Route 35 (Alewife Road) to maintain a rural look and feel that includes scenic vistas of rolling hills. Kennebunk Elementary school is located on Alewife Road.

Although the Landing area is likewise no longer categorized as a village, it features a number of well-preserved homes from the shipbuilding era. Vestigial evidence of the district’s historical importance includes The Landing Store, Jim’s Service Station, the Landing Chapel, the Waldo Emerson House B&B and the architecturally unique Wedding Cake house, a private home that draws considerable visitor interest. Recent residential development along the Summer Street/Port Road corridor has consisted largely of infill homes, with a small amount of minor subdivision growth.

West Kennebunk Village was categorized in previous incarnations of the Comprehensive Plan as both a village center and a Growth Area, and these designations have resulted in the recent construction of several cluster subdivisions as well as the addition of infrastructure

improvements, including sidewalks and street lighting to support a condensed business area featuring eateries and service businesses. The district has a robust inventory of older homes that date back to its heyday as a producer of lumber and grains, as well as infill homes of newer vintage. The Animal Welfare Society, Middle School of the Kennebunks, Dorothy Stevens Community Center, a fire substation, two seasonal campgrounds and a portion of the Eastern Trail add to the village's fabric. Commercial and business facilities are located adjacent to the Alfred Road/Alewive Road junction at Maine Turnpike's Exit 25. The exit itself includes a rest stop offering traveler conveniences.

Lower Village's continuing role as a tourist-centric destination has resulted in its evolution as a mixed use village of shops, hotels, art galleries, restaurants and homes. Other notable points of interest include the Franciscan Monastery on Beach Avenue and Kennebunk town beaches. The shipbuilding industry has been replaced by a thriving maritime trade of working marinas, lobster boats, and a variety of commercial whale watch, charter fishing, scenic and schooner cruises, which co-exist with private use of the river recreational use of the river in the form of kayaks, sailboats, and motorboats. Recent infrastructure improvements include new sidewalks, plantings, benches, street lighting and the recent replacement of the bridge over the Kennebunk River, incorporating pedestrian overlooks. Residential subdivision growth is occurring outside the core area of the Village, off Western Avenue (Route 9), Port Road (Route 35) and Boothby Road. Long established residential subdivisions on both sides of Sea Road have seen recent infill activity.

The former Mousam Village is now known as Downtown Kennebunk. Along busy Route 1 (Main Street), a half-mile-long traditional linear downtown attracts visitors as well as serving everyday needs for residents, with shops, restaurants, service businesses, community churches, Town Hall and the Kennebunk Free Library, enhanced with new sidewalks, extensive plantings and other streetscape improvements. Also in the district is the Police Department and EMS center, the Brick Store Museum and the Waterhouse Center. The neighborhoods on either side of Main Street are predominantly comprised of homes from the 17<sup>th</sup> through early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, and include two 1920s-era brick schools that have been enlarged and transformed into housing. The Amtrak Downeaster passes within walking distance of the downtown using the old B&M rail corridor, and at the time of this writing, the town is exploring the re-establishment of a long-discontinued passenger stop at Depot Street to augment stops in the neighboring towns of Wells and Saco. Growth in the long-established residential neighborhoods within the district has consisted solely of infill construction.

On either end of the downtown exists what is known as Route 1 North and Route 1 South. Route 1 North is a traditional commercial center already densely developed with a varied mix of service-oriented businesses, including health, government, banking, legal, home and personal products, recreational activities, eateries and a large supermarket. Recently adopted design standards will provide a framework for increased enhancement of the corridor. This corridor is the next area slated for infrastructure improvements including pedestrian and streetscape enhancement to further promote walkability. It is adjacent to established residential neighborhoods, including elderly housing.

Route 1 South, considered a gateway to Kennebunk from neighboring Wells, is a mixture of small scale retail, manufacturing and service activity. It has recently become known as the

“home improvement mile,” where many conveniences for the home can be purchased without leaving the community. Although wetlands constraints have historically limited the scale of development in this area, recent expansion of public sewer to a portion of Route 1 South has encouraged some redevelopment, expansion and new development. It is one of the last sectors of the community that is in need of infrastructure improvements, including drainage improvements, streetscape and other amenities.

### **Residential Development Trends since 1990**

The 1991 Comprehensive Plan sought to promote a land use pattern that would neither encourage nor discourage growth but would attempt to direct growth toward the Village area(s) where public services and infrastructure are more concentrated. In furtherance of this goal, the 1993 Zoning Ordinance expanded the Village growth areas by allowing more growth to occur in and around the three villages and attempted to discourage growth in the rural areas by increasing the minimum lot size and providing for mandatory clustering of lots within new subdivisions. The 2003 updated Comprehensive Plan expanded the growth area around West Kennebunk Village Residential (WKVR) district by identifying two areas, A and B, as expansion areas; a subsequent Comprehensive Plan update and zoning amendments added growth area B to the WKVR district. As noted earlier, this change has resulted in new development of single-family homes.

The success of these Comprehensive Plan goals has been mixed. While formally approved subdivision activity has almost entirely been located in or near the intended growth areas, there has been a notable increase in the number of newly created lots that are exempt from public review standards; construction of homes on “lots of record” that were approved before the introduction of more stringent Shoreland Zoning regulations and had previously gone unbuilt due to environmental constraints; and development of lots utilizing Maine’s Family Subdivision exemption statute, which permits owners of larger lots to parcel off sections for use by family members. Some of this new construction is occurring in the rural areas.

### **Commercial and Industrial Development Trends**

Previous Comprehensive Planning efforts sought to support and expand (where possible) the existing commercial and industrial districts in Kennebunk. Due to changing economic conditions toward service-based business versus industrial uses, a significant portion of the expanded Turnpike industrial area was changed via Contract Zone designation to create an area for mixed industrial base and commercial development. Current use of this area includes a medical treatment facility, convenience store/gas station, a child care provider and a new Hampton Inn. Previous commercial expansion at the Alfred Road/Alewive Road junction included the Corning-Costar plant and the former William Arthur facility, now Kennebunk Savings Bank’s operations center. The former William Arthur parcel still offers a significant area of land with development potential.

Kennebunk’s Downtown and Lower Village continue to be important elements of the Town’s traditional business development pattern. Due to consistent Town maintenance and

improvements to the infrastructure and aesthetics of these areas, private business investment has increased, resulting in re-adaption of existing buildings as well as complete replacement of other buildings.

In addition, several businesses along both Route 1 North and Route 1 South have enlarged, upgraded and visually improved their facilities.

## **Open Space Trends**

Open space can be broadly defined as land that is protected from development by virtue of its ownership or by deeded easements, for example: Federal, state or town land; land trusts and conservation organizations; deeded open space in cluster subdivisions; water districts and certain other utilities.

Recreational open spaces include existing and proposed spaces used for passive (hiking, biking, walking, etc.) and active (baseball, soccer, etc.) recreational purposes as well as access to water resources for canoeing and kayaking. Kennebunk has an array of town-owned parks, athletic fields on school properties, public access points to rivers and waterbodies and other publicly accessible lands within its boundaries.

With concerns about loss of open space becoming evident in 2001, the Planning Board recommended that a committee be set up to investigate the issue of open space and develop an open space plan. Open space trends should include the opportunity to protect lands, as well as encourage sound planning and growth. In December 2001, the Kennebunk Board of Selectmen appointed a 12-member Open Space Planning Committee to develop a plan and policy for preserving and protecting open space lands in the Town.

This committee was merged with the Conservation Commission and renamed the Conservation and Open Space Planning Commission (KCOSPC).

The Committee's first task was to develop a working definition of open space. After much discussion among the committee's diverse membership, the following definition was agreed upon:

*Underdeveloped land areas that have important ecological functions, natural resources, or cultural resources that are worthy of conservation and protection.*

Kennebunk's open spaces are ecologically diverse. They include wildlife and plant habitats, spaces for active and passive recreation, waterbodies, streams and riparian areas, cultural/historic sites and scenic vistas. The KCOSPC reviewed a complete set of natural resource map coverages and prioritized the various resource areas based upon their vulnerability to development and permanent open space value in the Open Space Plan.

By adding up all the open space areas in the Town, including Town-owned parks, Water

District owned, etc., there are approximately 5,215 acres, or about 22.68% of Kennebunk’s total land area, that is considered protected open space in some way. This number is up from 19.66% in 2003, as shown in the comparative table below.

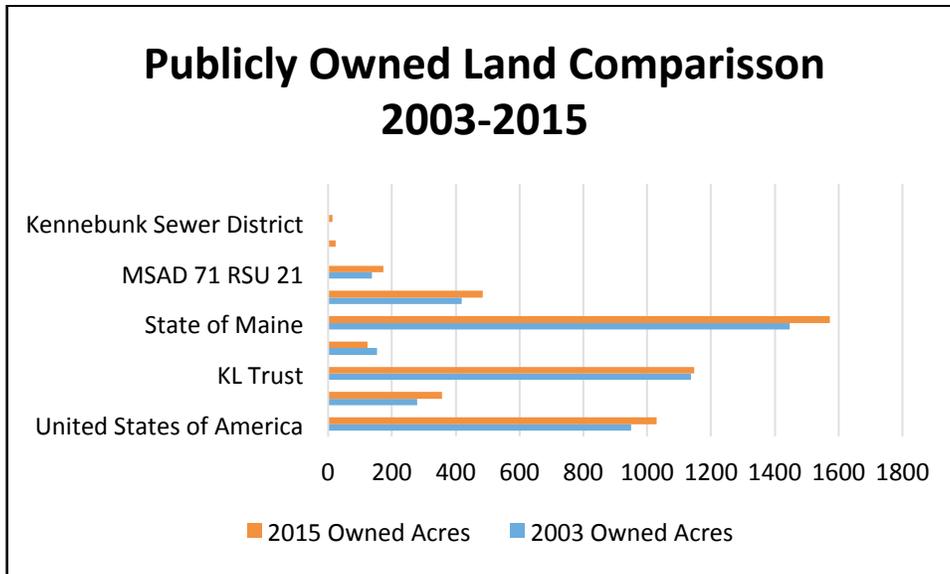
The table shows the breakdown of these open space lands by owner. Since 2003 there has been a slight increase in land ownership under the categories below. Note that the 2003 numbers did not include Kennebunk Light & Power or the Kennebunk Sewer District land; however, those are small pieces in comparison to the overall amount of land. It should be noted that in addition to land that the Kennebunk Land Trust owns in fee, the Trust holds conservation easements on an additional 342 privately owned acres which permanently protects those lands from development.

**2003/2015 Conservation/ Gov’t./ Utility Parcels  
Town of Kennebunk Comparison**  
(number of acres rounded)

	2003 Owned Acres	2015 Owned Acres
United States of America	949	1030
Town of Kennebunk	280	347
Kennebunk Land Trust	1136	1364
Nature Conservancy	154	123
State of Maine	1447	1642
KK&W Water District	420	500
RSU 21	137	173
Kennebunk Light & Power		24
Kennebunk Sewer District		13
Other		
<b>Total</b>	<b>4522</b>	<b>5215</b>
Total Town Acreage (23,000)		
	19.66%	22.68%

Source: Kennebunk Tax Assessor

The table below shows a comparison of land ownership between 2003 and 2015 and who has added or decreased land holdings in the town.



Source: Kennebunk Tax Assessor

As part of the Open Space plan, a one-mile radius was drawn around the public parks and recreation areas as a start in determining how accessible the recreation spaces are by pedestrian and bike travel from the village neighborhoods and whether there are underserved areas where additional sidewalk extensions might aid accessibility to parks. In addition, consideration would be given to identifying neighborhood areas where no open space(s) exists and which could benefit from the development of such open spaces.

The Open Space Plan sets six goals and offers policies and strategies for reaching those goals. In addition, the Plan identifies and prioritizes Environmental Priority Areas based on resource value in relation to the level of protection (if any) and the potential vulnerability from development or use. The Plan also identifies or prioritizes Town Character Priority Areas based on the degree to which the landscapes and facilities provide opportunities for daily cultural exchange, the degree to which these open spaces foster a sense of place and community and whether the resource needs further protection and/or greater accessibility.

The Open Space Plan was adopted to be a companion document to the Comprehensive Plan and its updates to assist in goal, policy and strategy making. This chapter, when combined with the Open Space Plan, can provide a solid platform for comprehensive planning.

For more detailed information on Kennebunk’s wildlife and plant habitats and marine environments, please see Chapter D: Natural Resources, Chapter I: Marine Resources and Chapter K: Sea-Level Rise, while further information on the Town’s cultural and historic sites can be found in Chapter H: Cultural, Historic and Archeological Resources.

### Recreational Resources

Following is a table of Town-maintained recreation resources.

## Recreational Facilities Maintained by the Town of Kennebunk

Source: Town of Kennebunk

	FACILITIES	ACREAGE	AMENITIES
1.	<i>Parsons Field</i> 14 Park Street	7.3	2 tennis courts, 2-baseball fields, multi-purpose field, basketball court, 2 volleyball courts, Harbor Playground, Youth Community Center, and picnic area.
2.	<i>West Kennebunk Field</i> Holland Road	4.9	2 tennis courts, basketball court, playground, baseball, softball, multi-purpose fields, and picnic area.
3.	<i>Lloyd G. Nedeau Park</i> Clear Brook Crossing	9.13	Basketball court, playground, baseball, multi-purpose field, picnic area.
4.	<i>Lower Village Park</i> School House Lane	2.7	Basketball court, playground, baseball field, whiffle ball field, multi-purpose field and picnic area
5.	<i>Rogers Pond</i> Water Street	3.9	Picnic area, grills, pond, and fishing with small boat access to the river.
6.	<i>Rotary Park</i> Water Street	.35	Picnic area, open field, and gazebo.
7.	<i>Lafayette Park</i> Storer Street	.87	Picnic area and open field.
8.	<i>Wonderbrook Park</i> Plummer Street	37.2	Nature trails & waterway.
9.	<i>Skateboard Park</i> Factory Pasture lane	2	Multiple skateboard ramps and obstacles.
10.	<i>Wiggins Pond</i> Wood Pond Lane	13.37	Pond and nature trails.
11.	<i>Memorial (or Cannon) Park</i> Corner Fletcher St./Rt. 1	.24	Park benches, World War I Memorial, World War I Cannon.
12.	<i>Washington Park</i> Corner Summer St./Rt. 1	.18	Park benches, War Memorial.
13.	<b>Police Station</b>	1.3	
14.	<b>Town Hall</b>	.62	Auditorium
15.	<i>Dot Stevens Center</i> Thompson Road	1.8	Various community and senior activities, withhas kitchen facilities
16.	<i>Highway Department</i> 36 Sea Road	.32	Facility entrance.
17.	<i>Dog Park</i> 36 Sea Road		Fenced, gazebo (located on Public Works Department property)
18.	<b>Ethelyn Stuart Marthia Park</b> Beach Avenue		Beach, benches, Memorial Park
19.	<b>Waterhouse Center</b> Main Street		Pavilion with craft fairs in the summer, ice skating rink in season, and pickleball.
20.	<b>Downtown Plaza</b> Main Street		Benches, tables and chairs (weather permitting)

	FACILITIES	ACREAGE	AMENITIES
21.	<b>Intervale Road Mousam River Boat Launch</b> Intervale Road		Carry-in boat access with some parking
22.	<b>Route 9 Mousam River Boat Landing</b> Western Avenue		Carry-in boat access with some parking
23.	<b>Sea Grass Lane Boat Launch</b> Sea Grass Lane		Carry-in boat access with 4 parking spaces (by permit only)
24.	<b>Miscellaneous Locations</b>		Town Welcome signs, traffic islands

The next table shows the recreational facilities operated by the Town’s school system, RSU 21, that lie within the Town of Kennebunk.

### RSU #21 Recreational Facilities in Kennebunk

	Facility	Amenities
A.	<u>High School</u> Fletcher Street	1 practice field, 1 football field, 2 softball fields, 2 baseball fields, 1 soccer field, 4 tennis courts, track, basketball, goals outdoor
B.	<u>Sea Road School</u> Sea Road	1 open field, 1 football field, 2 basketball courts, 1 playground
C.	<u>Middle School of the Kennebunks</u> Thompson Road	1 softball field, 1 soccer field, 1 baseball/field hockey field
D.	<u>Kennebunk Elementary School</u> Alewife Road	2 multipurpose ball fields

Note: RSU 21 has additional facilities outside the Town of Kennebunk

The Town also has two trail systems that follow former right rights-of-way: the Bridle Path which runs from the Sea Road School to Sea Road near the Webhannet Golf Course, and the Eastern Trail, which begins in West Kennebunk and runs northerly to Arundel. Completion of the Eastern Trail section running south to the Town of Wells is in the design stage. Southern Maine Planning and Development Commission, through funding from various grants, is in the process of identifying and expanding linkages to existing trails throughout York County.

Various properties open to the public that are owned by the Kennebunk Land Trust offer hiking and snowshoeing opportunities with some properties also allowing trail biking and cross country skiing. The land trust’s website also includes information on other activities, such as fishing, which are permissible on some of these properties. (INSERT LINK)

## Kennebunk Land Trust Properties with Public Access

Source: Kennebunk Land Trust

Name	Access Location	Activities
Alewive Woods Preserve	Cole Road	Hiking, Snowshoeing, XC Skiing, Biking
Butler Preserve	Old Port Road	Hiking, Snowshoeing
Clark Preserve	Emmons Road	Hiking, Snowshoeing, Biking
Kennebunk Wildlife Management Area (now a Nature Conservancy property but Kennebunk Land Trust was a partner in protecting this land)	Route 99	Hiking, Snowshoeing, XC Skiing, Biking
Madelyn Marx Preserve	Route 9 or Sea Road School	Hiking, Snowshoeing
Mousam River Wildlife Sanctuary	Water Street	Hiking, Snowshoeing, Biking
Sea Road Preserve	Sea Road School	Hiking, Snowshoeing, XC Skiing, Biking
The Secret Garden	Port Road via Evergreen Cemetery	Hiking, Snowshoeing, Biking
Wonder Brook/Murphy Preserve	Plummer Lane	Hiking, Snowshoeing

To complete the recreational inventory, the Town owns three coastal beaches which provide public access: Goochs Beach, Kennebunk (Mother’s) Beach, and Middle Beach. Parsons Beach is privately owned.

### Recommendations

#### Land Use Patterns (Residential)

- Evaluation of the town’s growth management plan indicates residential growth continues to occur in both growth areas and rural areas. To more effectively support the traditional village/rural pattern and discourage the move to make rural areas into suburban areas, the Town should continue to limit the number of homes that may be built in the rural areas, while providing adequate space for new homes in the village growth areas, which are supported by services and infrastructure.
- Demographically, Kennebunk has a high percentage of residents over age 65, the group most likely to “downsize” to homes offering one floor living; the town’s heavy stock of older multiple-story homes in the village growth areas does not meet this need. The Town should continue promoting the recognition and expanded use of “accessory units” to help to fill this need, while also encouraging appropriate infill development in village growth areas.
- The Town should address the issue of rising sea levels, which are beginning to impact the safety and structural integrity of homes and town infrastructure in areas located in the VE zone on recently revised FEMA flood plain maps. (See Climate Change Chapter)

### **Land Use Patterns (Industry)**

- The Town should continue investment in downtown and Lower Village maintenance and infrastructure improvements to encourage additional private investment in these districts
- Public parking limitations in Lower Village are a source of frustration for visitors and residents alike. The Town should investigate solutions for additional parking, including public-private partnerships, along with options for shuttle bus service.
- The Town has amended zoning regulations for commercial districts that previously permitted the development of new residential uses to prevent such mixed use. The town should reassess whether this is a positive step and determine whether or not to expand the Town's commercial tax base and/or incorporate multi-use development.
- The Town should investigate the potential and benefit of expanding the boundaries of the present business zoning districts.
- The Town should do further study and evaluation of wetlands constraints in the Route 1 South district in order to provide adequate environmental protections while allowing appropriate business expansion.

### **Land Use Patterns (Open Space)**

- The Town should work with Kennebunk citizens to determine what the long-term open space needs are for the Town, in terms of open space locations, types of open space, and the desired amount of open space needed, particularly for recreational uses.
- The Town should develop an overarching plan to connect open space in separate cluster subdivisions to maintain contiguous habitat that protects the integrity of wildlife habitat and watersheds. (See Natural Resources Chapter)
- The Town should develop ordinance amendments to reduce impervious area in order to minimize stormwater run-off into the rivers and wetlands.