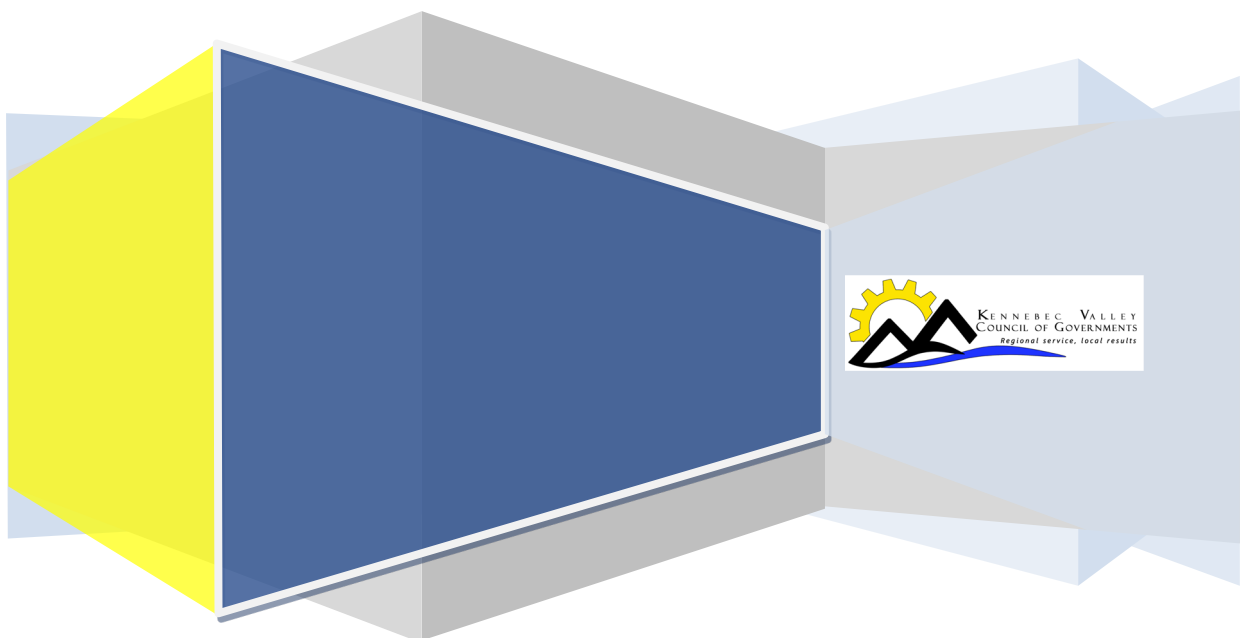


Town of **ROME**

2022 Comprehensive Plan



This Comprehensive Plan was developed by the Rome Comprehensive Plan Committee:

Paul Anderson (Liaison from the Selectboard)

Adam Clement

Gary Foss

Dick Greenan

Richard LaBelle

Joan Orr

Barbara Saxton

Sandy Shute

The committee was assisted by Kennebec Valley Council of Governments (KVCOG) in compiling and creating the document.

Why create a Comprehensive Plan?

Communities complete Comprehensive Plans for a variety of reasons. At their most basic level, communities complete Comprehensive Plans to prepare for the future. A comprehensive review of community issues and policies promotes discussion among neighbors and can help communities avoid problems that sometimes occurs when community decisions are made in a piecemeal fashion.

A comprehensive plan is a guide to the future for the town. It is not an ordinance or a set of rules, it is instead a guide for the town government to move in the direction the people want. It provides a map indicating what direction the town wants to go in over the next 10 years, and it also provides a “snapshot in time” of the town.

Good planning makes good communities.

A good Comprehensive Plan should enable a community to:

- Sustain rural living and a vibrant village center.
- Preserve a healthy landscape and a walkable community.
- Balance economic prosperity with quality of life
- Protect working waterfronts and/or community farms.
- Develop a discussion among neighbors.
- Develop a basis for sound decisions in town management.

In summary a Comprehensive Plan is there to encourage orderly growth and development in appropriate areas of the community, while protecting the towns rural character, making efficient use of public services and preventing any development sprawl.

How important it is to have broad-based participation?

Any good comprehensive plan requires a bold planning process that engages the public in a meaningful way. Without a strong public participation component, you run the risk of developing a plan that lacks broad community support, or a timid one that elicits little debate, but which is so cautious as to be ineffective.

Communities should always work for a significant level of public participation and outreach. Many communities, however, can struggle with sustaining public interest. Despite efforts to be inclusionary, comp plan committees often encounter poorly attended meetings and attrition of committee members. Often it is not until the vote on the plan at Town Meeting that a large segment of the citizenry voiced its views in support – or in opposition.

No simple formula exists for increasing the level of citizen participation in plan updates. If anything, promoting involvement gets harder as time goes by as the pace of everyday life quickens and many municipal governments struggle to fill volunteer boards. Through creativity, persistence, and strategic focus, however, the community should look to design a more effective public participation process.

Strong public participation is a must to create “buy-in” to the Plan.

People will rarely embrace change unless they think that a problem exists in the first place. Committees may be stymied in their efforts to address important local and state goals unless a strong case is made for why these goals are pertinent to the community – and important to pursue. Such early “buy in” by the general public is necessary before the community can focus squarely on any problems with a sense of common purpose.

A sense of public ownership for goals and planning concepts need to be fostered and refute the notion that the plan is state imposed. Lack of real support for the plan it can lead to poor implementation, blunting its effectiveness.

Ideally there should be a long-term process of building awareness of how planning in general and addressing particular plan goals can benefit the community. Creating public ownership of the plan and its approaches is essential if it is to be effective and worthwhile. A community should avoid the plan simply becoming a response to state requirements rather than to the community’s own needs.

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Note about Data:

Even at the time of completion there is still very limited data available from the full 2020 Census, this plan therefore uses the most up to date information at the time of writing.

I. INTRODUCTION: THE PLANNING PROCESS

History of the Comprehensive Plan:

A comprehensive plan is a mechanism for managing the future of a community. Much like a business plan for a private business, Rome's plan evaluates our assets and customer satisfaction levels, determines strategies to improve performance and profitability, and allocates resources. When it is a town doing the planning, our resources are the taxpayers' money, so even greater thought and effort must be put into spending wisely.

The Town of Rome has recognized the need for its first comprehensive plan, as there has never been a formal plan developed for the town.

Maine enacted the Growth Management Act in 1988, specifying the format and goals for local comprehensive planning and it was subsequently amended to require local comprehensive plans to undergo a new State review for consistency every 12 years, incorporating new data and findings into the planning process. Therefore, in the future, the Town will need to take a fresh look, using any new State guidelines. This led to the 2020-2022 planning process.

Responsibility for developing the plan was assigned to the newly created Comprehensive Plan Committee, with the instruction to involve all community members to the extent possible.

Community Involvement:

Rome's Comprehensive Plan Committee has taken the lead in drafting this new plan, assisted by the Town Office staff and other local volunteers. Early in the process, the Selectmen reached out to Rome's local committees and organizations (many of which are profiled in this plan), different staff of the Town and individuals in constituencies such as real estate, business, and individuals with unique knowledge of the community. The committee's monthly meetings were always open to community members to participate in the discussions.

Community involvement culminated in a public visioning session held in June, 2022. The municipal office / meeting space was the venue for a morning-long discussion of the direction of the town and attendees choose to focus on its natural and water resources, capital investment priorities and land use / development. Community members were interested in the possibilities to improve access to the lakes, recreation opportunities, and hoped to continue to work to protect water quality. In addition to this process, a detailed survey was drafted and distributed to as many taxpayers as possible, both in paper and electronic form. Thankfully, there was a very good response rate to this (surveys links were sent with tax bills), and much useful input was gathered.

Many of the comments and suggestions from Rome's "Focus on the Future" have been incorporated into the recommendations of this plan.

Rome's Focus on the Future:

The "Focus on the Future" session also worked to create a simple Vision Statement that summarizes the community's desired future community character in terms of economic development, natural and cultural resource conservation, transportation systems, land use patterns and its role in the region. Not surprisingly, a straightforward and succinct vision statement was preferred, and required only minor editing from the first draft developed by the committee. Participants in the sessions used the statement as a starting point to expand upon its ideas and the comments were used to shape policies going forward. The text of the vision statement, as it emerged from the visioning session, is as follows:

Our vision is a for rural and diverse community that values and protects its many human and natural resources. The town prioritizes conservation, provides for quality education, encourages recreational and cultural opportunities and recognizes the need for compatible development while maintaining a strong sense of community for all its residents and visitors.



The key to a successful plan is not in the number of recommendations it can generate, but how well those recommendations can be put into action. This requires an implementation plan.

The responsibility for implementation almost always falls on the leadership of the town. Rome has no earlier plans to draw experience from but these things are always a work in progress. To the town's credit, even without an official comprehensive plan it has done informal work to ensure capital improvements were matched up with grant possibilities for desired programs or purchases and some new community initiatives were begun, and others continued.

Though assembled by the Comprehensive Plan Committee (CPC), this plan contains ideas and contributions from town staff, elected officials, committees, outside organizations, and individuals. These constituents all have one thing in common: they are stakeholders in the future of Rome, and thus in this plan. It is their duty to see that the recommendations of the plan are carried forward.

While the implementation of the plan is dispersed through several individuals, boards, committees and organizations, a mechanism to monitor progress and resolve impediments is necessary. This plan recommends an annual, two-stage process:

- 1) The Comprehensive Plan Implementation Committee with broad representation from boards, committees and key partners will be tasked with review of progress on implementation of the plan. This meeting may be timed to coordinate with the annual report by the Code Enforcement Officer on residential and commercial growth for the year. The committee will maintain a checklist of action steps that have been accomplished, those in progress, and those due to be addressed. The committee will note any obstacles to implementation and suggest new or revised action steps if necessary.
- 2) The checklist will be forwarded to the Selectmen for review and direction. The review may be timed to correspond with the beginning of the annual budget process, so that any recommendations requiring a dedication of town funds or personnel may be integrated into the budget process. The chair of the Planning Board may attend this meeting to assist with interpretation of the recommendations or follow-up. The Select Board shall make a record of the actions taken to implement the plan.

This process should provide adequate oversight and feedback to ensure that this plan is not ignored or forgotten. The process should also tell us when the plan needs revision, new timeline details or is nearing its completion and will require updating.

COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

One: Historic and Archaeological Resources

Two: Demographic Profile

Three: Critical Natural Resources

Four: Water Resources

Five: Agriculture & Forestry

Six: Recreation and Culture

Seven: Land Use and Development

Eight: Business and the Economy

Nine: Local Housing Profile

Ten: The Transportation System

Eleven: Essential Services

Twelve: Fiscal Capacity

All statistical data presented in this plan needs to be viewed through the lens of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has changed many aspects of daily life. At this time, it is not possible to predict the long-term impacts of the virus on the town, but by planning for a range of possibilities, the town can be well prepared. The statistics and data presented in this plan are based primarily on information from early 2020s, and as such will not reflect the sudden changes brought on by the coronavirus; however, this data should be used as a baseline for Rome.

PART ONE: HISTORIC AND ARCHEOLOGICAL RESOURCES

A Brief History of Rome

The Town of Rome has significant frontage on Great Pond, Long Pond, North and Little North Ponds and Watson Pond in the central Maine lakes region, situated in the Kennebec Valley. The town has a total area of 31.72 square miles, of which, 25.41 square miles is land and 6.31 square miles is water. Present-day Rome is bounded on the north by Mercer, on the south by Belgrade and Mount Vernon, on the east by Smithfield and on the west by Vienna and New Sharon. Augusta, Waterville, Skowhegan and Farmington are all relatively close and equidistant being service centers for several regions.

Early Settlement:

The first settlement was commenced about 1780. Among the early inhabitants were Benjamin Furbush of Lebanon, Tripp Mosher of Dartmouth, Mass., Stephen Philbrick of New Hampshire, Starbird Turner, and Joseph Halho, who obtained their titles to their lands from Charles Vaughan, R. G. Shaw, and Reuel Williams, the proprietors.

Rome was incorporated in 1804 with the first Post Office opening 1830 until closure in 1889. Early information is also found in texts including “A history and description of New England, general and local” by Coolidge, A. J. (Austin Jacobs); Mansfield, J. B. (John Brainard), Publication date 1859:

“The surface is broken and uneven, with some high elevations of land. There are two large ponds partly located here, one of which is called Long Pond, the other Great Pond. Their waters abound in trout, perch, and pickerel. At the outlet of Great Pond, which is the line between Rome and Belgrade, there is a factory, which annually manufactures from 100,000 to 150,000 gross of spools for thread. Agriculture is the chief employment of the inhabitants. One half of the town is good tillage land, the other half is rather rocky and unproductive. The farmers, however, as a general thing, succeed in making a good living. There are two religious societies — Free-will Baptist and Christian; eight school districts, with the same number of schools; one post office; two stores, one gristmill, one saw- mill, and one shingle mill.”



From a primary industry of agriculture, Rome's economy has evolved into a very efficient lake and tourism-based economy.

Prehistoric and Archeological Sites

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

- Habitation/workshop sites are next to canoe -navigable waters.
- Lithic quarries are places where stone raw materials are gathered. They occur at localized quartz, rhyolite and chert resources.
- Cemeteries are found on well-drained sandy or gravelly sand soils usually near a river or lake.
- Rock art sites are found immediately next to canoe-navigable waters on bedrock outcrops.

The Maine Historic Preservation Commission (MHPC) has identified just one known pre-historic site located on the shoreline of North Bay, Great Pond. The shoreline of all the nearby ponds and Rome Trout Brook are also archeologically sensitive. There is a need to conduct additional studies to determine the location of other pre-historic sites along these waterways. Since water bodies provide both travel routes and valuable food sources it is highly likely that other sites exist. Some of these sites are afforded protection due to the set-back requirements imposed by Shoreland Zoning and some areas may be currently under water due to changes in water levels over the years.

MHPC does not disclose the exact location of pre-historic sites to reduce the likelihood of damage. The Town would have to undertake surveys to locate any other sites and should incorporate into its ordinances a requirement that any proposed development that occurs adjacent to a probable archeological site be reviewed by the Maine Historic Preservation Commission. The map on the following page shows archeologically sensitive areas in Rome.

Historic Archeological Sites

Historic archeological sites statewide include English and French trading post, forts, homesteads of the 1600s and 1700s, and nineteenth century logging camps. Since water bodies provided transportation and power, these areas are usually the location for historic archeological sites, although in the past century, dams have been created which have significantly changed the size of the lakes causing the original shoreline to be underwater. At this time, MHPC identify then historic archaeological sites have been documented for the town. These are as follows and most are shown on the accompanying map.

SiteName	Sitenum	SiteType	Periods Significance	of Location
Serrada	ME 374-001	domestic	c. 1800 +	Location Unknown
John R. Prescott farmstead	ME 374-002	farmstead	ca 1820-1940s	Location Known
David Brown farmstead	ME 374-003	farmstead	ca 1860-1894	Location Known
Marcellus Trask farmstead	ME 374-004	farmstead	ca 1860-1894	Location Known
Asa Trask farmstead	ME 374-005	farmstead	ca 1840-1880	Location Known
David B. Welts Farmstead	ME 374-006	farmstead	ca 1850-1894	Location Known
Clapp Ward Farmstead	ME 374-007	farmstead	ca 1879 to before 1943	Location Known
Elias Farnham farmstead	ME 374-008	farmstead	ca. 1865-2000	Location Known
Unidentified cellar hole	ME 374-009	domestic	ca 1800 to before 1856	Location Known
John Rogers	ME 374-010	farmstead	Site settled 1780	Location Known

Listed Historic Buildings and Structures:

The National Register of Historic Places provides a repository of historically significant structures and landscapes, submitted voluntarily by local citizens. Rome currently does not have any structure included or even eligible for inclusion on the National Register.

There are nine properties that are considered not eligible but of note that are located on the map. One of these is the Mt Phillip Grange.

Local Historic Sites and Places:

The following is a list of significant places within the Town that are not on the National Register. Additional research could reveal other locations and may show that some sites are eligible to be listed:

- The John Rogers Farm, on Watson Pond Road was settled in 1780. There is still a private residence on the site.
- The Ezekiel Wentworth House is believed to be one of the oldest houses in Rome. It has since been moved to the end of Drury Lane.
- The Mosher Farm on Jamaica Point was settled in 1810 by George Washington Mosher and has been handed down to a present Mosher descendent.
- Land for the Starbird Turner homestead was cleared in 1779 with the homestead built in 1810. The homestead became the birthplace of his great grandson, Everett T. Goodrich, born in 1855.
- The White Fawn was one of two early taverns built in the early to mid-1800's on present day Rt 27.
- Present day Bear Springs Camp was opened for business in 1910.
- The Old Rome Town Hall, located at Rome Corner, was built around 1918. It ceased to be used as a Town Hall in 1988.
- The Maine Chance Farms, previously known as the Elizabeth Arden's (of Cosmetic fame) Estate, presently remodeled and now known as The Travis Mills Foundation.

Early Known Businesses:

First grist mill built by Joel Richardson circa 1820.

First sawmill built by Thomas Whittier on outlet of Whittier Pond circa 1840.

First shingle mill built by Thomas Whittier below his sawmill circa 1846.

First and only in town post office opened 1830 with Stephen Morrell as postmaster.

First store built by Charles Whittier circa 1840.

Cemeteries:

Cemeteries are another critical link with our heritage. The town has an obligation to protect and maintain some cemeteries, while others are private or family cemeteries. There is a full listing of known cemeteries in Rome included in the [Public Facilities Section](#)

Local History groups:

Rome has no formal historical society or committee and its best resources in this capacity come from interested and knowledgeable residents.

Scenic Areas:

Although scenic areas might not be considered historic resources, they nevertheless can be highly valued by citizens as a part of our community heritage. Often, these scenic views are a cherished attribute that many people identify about their community. The following scenic areas include those that can be seen from both public places and private lands:

- Areas visible from the Eastern Side of Blueberry Hill.
- Areas visible from the Southern Side of Blueberry Hill.
- Areas visible from the Eastern Side of French Mountain.
- Areas visible from the Southeastern Side of French Mountain.
- Areas visible from The Mountain.
- Areas visible from Mount Phillip.

Protective measures for Historic Resources:

Procedures have been developed whereby the Planning Board may review new proposals to use or develop land and buildings for commercial, industrial, office, community and service uses, municipal, institutional, utility, and recreational uses. Rome's multiple ordinances balance such progress while addressing the wide range of environmental and planning issues associated with development including: noise, odors, stormwater, erosion, phosphorus, water body protection, traffic parking, light and glare, scenic resources, groundwater, historic and archaeological resources, significant wildlife and aquatic resources and other natural resources. A significant focus is to protect the water quality of all of the lakes ponds streams Brooks and wetlands within the Town of Rome. These review procedures do include preservation of known historic resources in town on a general basis with no specific regulations.

PART TWO: DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

This report contains a statistical profile of the town of Rome and its people. It contains a great deal of numerical information about the community. Data like this will often confirm our own intuitions about what is happening within the community. More importantly, it can show early signs of new patterns and trends before we can see the impacts.

Rome is changing and evolving. This will require us to respond with new ideas and strategies. The information provided here will be used throughout the plan and will help inform us about how the community has changed. Future changes are also discussed. Growth projections will help us in planning for the changing housing and public service demands that we expect over the next couple of decades.

Historical Population Trends:

Over the course of its existence, Rome has experienced a continual decline in population until the 1980's when numbers began to grow, similar to its neighbors and the region. Economic and cultural factors have influenced population changes as displayed in the following table and graphed in the figure on the following page.

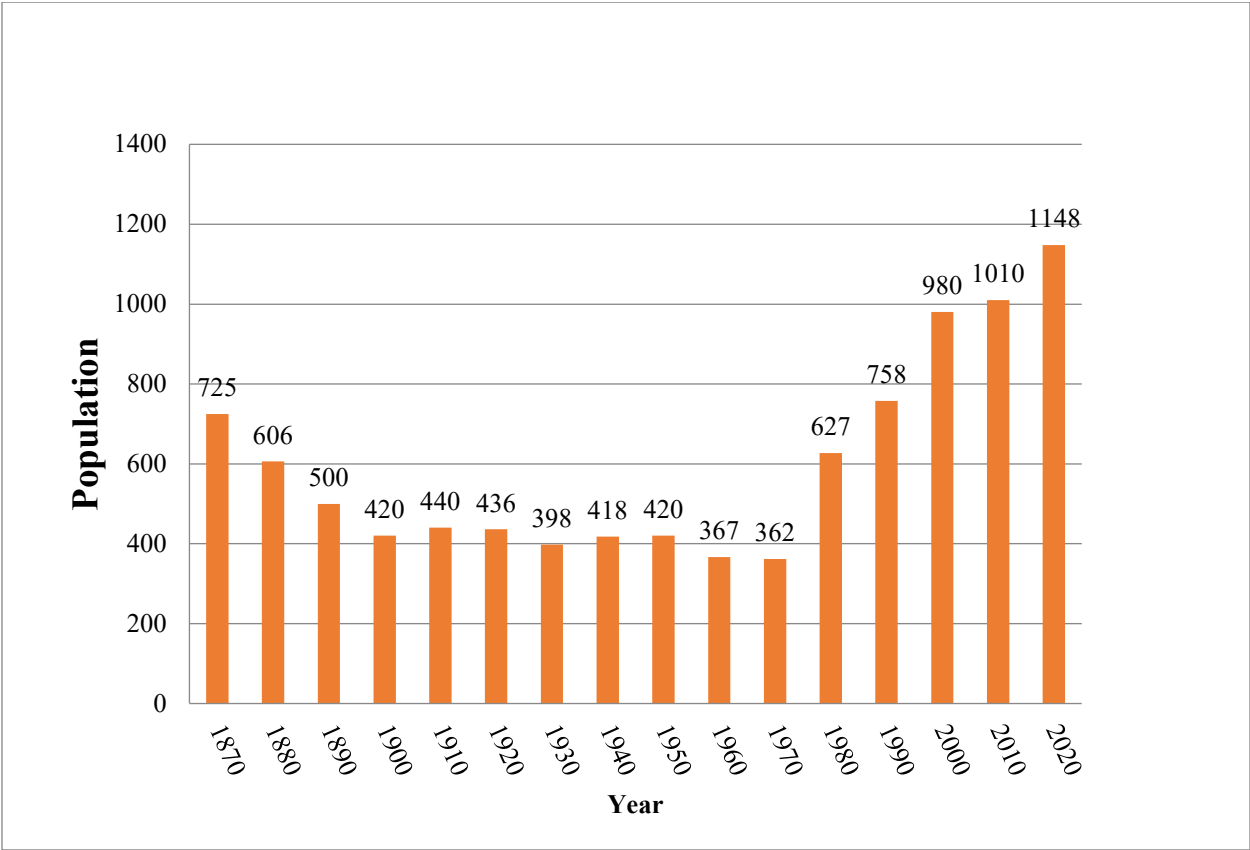
Population change: 1870 to 2020

Year	Population		Year	Population
1870	725		1950	420
1880	606		1960	376
1890	500		1970	362
1900	420		1980	627
1910	440		1990	758
1920	436		2000	980
1930	398		2010	1010
1940	418		2020	1148

Rome has experienced a relatively fast decline between 1870 and 1900, with a general plateau lasting to 1980 when the population started increasing rapidly. (Given a peak in 2020 it increased by 786 people in 50 years).

The population fell between 1870 and its low point in 1970, averaging about 3 to 4 fewer residents per year. Of course, this did not happen all at once, but we have only the census intervals as a guide. The majority of loss was in the late 1800's but stayed relatively flat since 1900 onwards with slight down ticks in 1930 and 1960. The growth was significant from 1970 to 2010 gaining an average of about 24 people per year. The latest 2020 census figure (1148) shows that the trend of population growth continues.

140 Years of Population Change in Rome



The census measures more than simply population. Other elements of the census are used in subsequent sections on housing and the local economy. Table 2 on the following page reports a breakdown of population characteristics over the past four census reports.

This table is more than just numbers. It has real meaning in terms of planning for our community. It illustrates that the average age of the residents is increasing and that, although the number of households are still just about increasing, the number of single person households is increasing faster. Except in college towns (like Waterville), single person households tend to be elderly households (in Rome about a third of households living alone are elderly). Elderly households tend to require a whole different set of public services.

Just as important is the overall decrease in household size. In just 20 years, Rome went from over two and a half persons per household to 2.25. This is a national trend, reflecting social changes like smaller families, lower birth rates, and elderly independent living. But it has a real impact in Rome, because if we have fewer persons in each household, we need more houses just to sustain the current population. For every 100 homes in 1980, we had 282 occupants. In 2000, 100 homes only contain 254 occupants. In fact, we needed an extra 14 homes in 2000, just to accommodate the same number of residents we had in 1980.

These figures gain importance when we project the population and housing demand for the future. If the number of people in the houses continues to drop, the community will demand not only more houses, but smaller ones.

Population and Household Characteristics: 1980-2010

General Population Characteristics	1980	1990	2000	2010
Total Population	627	758	980	1010
Male Population	307	365	475	520
Female Population	320	393	505	490
Median Age	28.7	37.4	39.3	46.2
Total Households	222	284	386	439
Family Households	164	226	290	299
Married Couple Family Households	139	198	240	234
Nonfamily Households	25	58	96	140
Nonfamily Households Living Alone	46	51	69	106
Households with children (under 18)	94	N/A	134	110
Single-Person Household 65 years +	18	26	24	32
Average Household Size	2.82	2.67	2.54	2.30

Source: 1980, 1990, 2000, 2010 Census

Components of Population Change:

Between 1990 and 2010, the town's population has increased by 252 persons. However, this is not solely a case of "immigration." Population change in a community is a result of both natural change and migration. Natural change is the difference between deaths and births in the community over a period of time. Migration accounts for people moving in and moving out. Net migration is population change not explained by births and deaths.

Between 1990 and 2010 the natural change in Rome accounted for an actual increase of 35 persons, based on Town Clerk reports of vital statistics. That means that net migration ultimately accounted for 217 persons moving into town. Net migration is the *difference* between those who move in and those who move out, so it appears this ultimately was a good amount of people deciding to move into Rome from away over 20 years.

Will this ratio of natural change and net migration continue? Considering the aging of the population, a trend toward smaller families and increasing housing values, it seems that deaths soon will begin to outpace births, resulting in a decline in natural change. Rome may already now be seeing this negative natural change. Availability of desirable land and lack of affordable housing, role as a pleasant "bedroom" community in the region, school systems, and other factors will continue to make Rome a place that many choose to live, as well as fewer choosing to move away from, meaning that in-migration is growing. This has planning implications, too. We cannot impact the rate of natural change with town policy; we can, however, affect the rate of migration – by managing land use, economic development, and public service policies.

The median age of Rome residents continues to increase substantially. How does that play out in real terms? The table below shows age trends – which age groups are gaining, which are losing. Since the overall population increased by 33 percent, any age group gaining more than 33 percent is on the increase; those gaining less are shrinking.

Age Trends 1990 to 2010

	1990 % of total	2000 % of total	2010 % of total	20 year change
Population	758	980	1010	+252 (33.2%)
Median Age	37.4	39.3	46.2	+8.8 (23.5%)
Under 5 years old	51 (6.7%)	45 (4.6%)	52 (5.1%)	+1 (2.0%)
5 - 17 years old	143 (18.9 %)	200 (20.4%)	143 (14.2%)	0 (0%)
18 years and older	564 (74.4%)	735 (75%)	815 (80.1%)	+251 (44.5%)
18 - 24 years old	54 (7.1%)	55 (5.6%)	64 (6.3%)	+10 (18.5%)
25 - 44 years old	251 (33.1%)	289 (30.4%)	232 (23%)	-19 (-7.6%)
45 - 54 years old	79 (10.4%)	173 (17.7%)	189 (18.7%)	+110 (139.2%)
55 - 59 years old	35 (4.6%)	66 (6.7%)	102 (10.1%)	+67 (191.4%)
60 - 64 years old	52 (6.8%)	34 (2.9%)	87 (8.6%)	+35 (67.3%)
65 years and older	93 (12.3%)	128 (13.1%)	141 (14%)	+48 (51.6%)

Source: 1990, 2000 & 2010 Census

Some important population changes and trends:

- The median age increase is dramatic. This aging trend is statewide, and Maine is one of the oldest states in the nation.
- The number of children (under 18 years old) has decreased significantly relatively. This has already led to lower school enrollments.
- The “family-age adults” age bracket (18 to 44) age category is also decreasing significantly. Without those adults of child-bearing age, the population of children will continue to decline. These young families are usually the primary market for the kind of suburban-style new housing that is traditionally lacking in Rome.
- The “mature adult” age bracket (45 to 64) has grown a great deal over 20 years. This is a clear indication of the baby boom generation. The post-war glut of children are now into their 60’s. As this group was the one that put enormous strain on the school system in the 60’s and 70’s, and on the housing market in the 80’s and 90’s, they are about to put the same strain on senior housing and health care services.
- The 65 and older age category was beginning to show the outliers in the baby boom in 2010. The real impact will begin in this coming decade. Using standard survival rate multipliers, we can estimate that the 2020 census will show about 190 persons aged 65 and older. The senior population will go from 14 to about 25 percent of the entire population. This will have short-term implications for housing, health care, transportation, recreation, and other services.

Seasonal Population:

The seasonal fluctuation in Rome has traditionally been a significant phenomenon; like many other central Maine communities that are “lake towns”, and host many camps, and have many summertime visitors. But as the town changes and evolves, the impact of the seasonal population will become more apparent.

The 2010 census counted 260 homes “for seasonal, recreational or occasional use.” These are primarily on the lake shores. If we assume that at the peak of the season, 90 percent of them are occupied, that adds about 234 more households to the town (a significant increase over year-round households). Since vacation homes tend to be family retreats, we probably average more persons per household. If we assume three per household, we come up with a seasonal population bump of over 700 residents.

If these figures result in more than 700 added population at the peak season, it would give Rome an over 70% population boost over the off-season. These numbers, therefore, have a great impact on the local economy and transportation system, and with each new year of seeming population reduction in the town, the seasonal bump will become even more noticeable.

Regional Perspective:

Rome's development pattern is much the same as the typical Kennebec central Maine lakes region. Traditionally, towns generally prospered as farm towns during the 1800's, went into decline during westward expansion and the urbanization period of the late-19th-early 20th centuries, and began to grow again as suburbs and green spaces. The county's largest growth period was in the 70's and 80's and has slowed since. Rome is not much different from this and it is fair to say it acts as a type of bedroom community for people to enjoy a quality of life in town but enabling most to travel to nearby service center communities for work and retail.

There is some similarity with Rome and the rest of the county, which also as a whole grew steadily up until the 1990's which saw a beginning of a slowdown in growth and eventual levelling out or even slow loss of population. By contrast, the larger City of Waterville grew much quicker until the 1960's and has then seen a steep decline in growth as people looked to more suburban living. Since 1980, no towns but Winslow have really accelerated. In thirty years between 1980 and 2010, Rome gained 33 percent (383 people). In the rest of Kennebec County towns experienced the most growth in the 90's, as sprawl is a reality even in this rural area. Towns such as Rome, Belgrade and even Norridgewock, have been popular in the past because of cheap land prices offsetting any negatives about a commute.

Other somewhat comparable towns are also generally similar in the other two high-impact population trends: median age and household size. Since 1980, Rome's median age has gone from 37 to 46, a bump of 9 years. Belgrade and Oakland's median age has increased by less but still about 8 years. Mt Vernon's was only larger than Rome's at almost 11 years and also Winslow's from 31 to 42 (11 years), and Waterville's median age has always been lowered by the presence of colleges in town.

Since 1980, the average household size in Rome has gone from 2.82 persons to 2.30, an 18 percent shrinkage. In the same period, all other nearby towns (Belgrade, Mt Vernon, Oakland and Sidney) have also reduced household size, but none ended as low as Rome's. For comparison, Waterville's went from 2.5 to 2.13 (14.8 percent). Clearly this is a regional pattern not confined to one community in particular. Additionally, despite the drop, these numbers are still indicative of more rural, owner-occupied households.

Population Projections and Impacts:

How much will Rome change in the future? Population projections provide the short and easy answer. These are mathematical extrapolations of past population growth and factors such as age distribution and household size.

The Office of the State Economist publishes a projection to the year 2038 (they prepared it in 2018). They estimate Rome's population will be 1,038, a slight increase of about 35. This is based partially on the advancing age of the residents, not necessarily a reflection of the popularity of the town. The Kennebec Valley Council of governments also does population projections. It estimates a 2035 population of approximately 1,104. This estimate is based

solely on the overall slowing trend of population growth. It should be noted that as there is no prior comprehensive plan for Rome, we cannot look how previous projections fared.

Notice that both of these projections call for an increase but at somewhat different levels. Then, what good are projections? Projections are not a crystal ball; they are based on assumptions of trends from the recent past. Rome as a community does, however have the ability to manage its own trends. The way the town manages trends today influences the population of the future. If Rome influences the local economy or housing market, it can change how the community grows or evolves.

What does the future hold for the town if it follows the path of the projections described above? Or what may happen to create a new future?

Without a previous comprehensive plan, we cannot use prior estimates to verify a “growing population scenario” wherein the population would grow in a particular way but we can look at other nearby trends and extrapolate the trends to Rome.

The regional trends show that the town is having less demand for year-round housing (a reduction in occupied housing units of 32 in the last 9 years) as well as the levelling off of population. Usually, a continued reduction of household size will account for a continued need for housing. In principle, the smaller the households get, the more houses we need to hold the same number of people. But with the relative reduction in population in Rome this is not the case, and it does not result in any new housing demand in terms of sheer numbers.

The rate of housing development is a good way to estimate population growth, but it is also a good way to manage it. Local policies can affect the rate of housing growth through their influence on the cost of development or land use restrictions. (Rome has relatively low land development costs now, so it would be difficult to accelerate growth this way.)

Local policies can also influence the style of housing and with it the character of the population. Large lots tend to add to building costs and require expensive homes to be built. Many times, these homes are 3, 4, or 5-bedroom homes suitable for large families with young children. At the other extreme, housing units can be designed exclusively for senior 1 and 2-person households. This type of development would more closely match the demand for housing types but would not add as much to the growth potential of the town.

Growth in population and households increases the demand for public services and commercial development. Unless specifically designed for senior citizens, each new household must have one or more jobs to support it. Younger, larger households will generate school children. Nearly all households require added waste management and road maintenance costs. All of these factors must be taken into account when projecting population growth.

Going back to the initial population projections (State: 1,038 by 2038; KVCOG, 1,104 by 2035) and using the assumption of needing about 3 fewer homes a year regardless of shrinking household size, we can look at the range of development possibilities.

Under the state's projection, the town will gain just 28 residents between 2010 and 2038. Even at the new, smaller household size, that population will require only 450 housing units. An increase of just 11 housing units over 28 years does not seem like a lot, but even more would have to disappear because new homes would still be built to replace ones removed. Disappeared units may be evidenced by a higher vacancy rate or the departure of mobile homes, for example. Economically, this scenario seems somewhat worrisome, as Rome will not see any foreseeable growth in tax base from residences with the needs for public services still growing. It may be offset in part by property assessment increases.

Under the KVCOG projection, the town would gain roughly 94 new residents between 2010 and 2035. That would result in a demand for about 40 housing units, that is a rate of one to two houses per year. Again, this does not mean more new houses will not be built, but they will also be built to replace reduction in the overall housing stock as well.

The statistical need for one or fewer homes per year would result in a slight relative increase in demand for jobs, assuming the new units are not for retirees. In Rome, the average is 0.89 jobs per housing unit, so gaining 11 housing units would in theory raise demand for 9-10 jobs by 2030.

While some towns can use municipal policies to impact population change, it requires a need and consensus to take strong action, which Rome has a good position to achieve. It is important, however, that the community pay attention to annual changes in housing development and other local and regional indicators. The town should continue to monitor the rate of new construction and the type of homes that are being built and should continue to discuss the implications and address them through policy changes.

PART THREE: CRITICAL NATURAL RESOURCES

Highlights:

- Rome is located in the western area of the Kennebec River valley. There are many waterbodies and several glacial features that add considerable topography that leaves a smaller amount of land suitable for agriculture or development.
- Rome does not have a concentrated, developed village area which leaves most of the town in natural open space. There are extensive areas of forest and wildlife habitat. The lakes and ponds are a regional natural resource with several complexes of habitat areas. It is not currently threatened by any major development.

Community Overview:

Rome can really be said to be defined by its access to its natural resources. The town has significant frontage on four major waterbodies: Great Pond, Long Pond, Little Pond and North Pond. Early settlers were able to take advantage of the water sources for transportation and waterpower. These continue to be the main feature of the town being known for its lakefront properties, etc. The town's topography is significant with several mountains and hills of note. Subsequently there are fewer areas where the soils are largely suitable for agriculture and/or development. Rome is located within the Kennebec River valley, within a large watershed that encompasses the majority of northern Kennebec County and parts of adjacent counties.

However natural resources must be viewed as both an asset and a constraint. Rome's many waterbodies and rugged terrain, leaves only a relatively small amount of developable land in town (just over 25 sq miles)

Topography:

Topography, along with soil characteristics, tends to dictate appropriate land uses and environmental values. Slopes exceeding 15 percent tend to make poor building sites; slopes of less than 3 percent are characteristic of wetlands, but if well-drained may be good agricultural land. The steepness of slope and soil type also determine how erodible a soil may be and how well water drains through it. Rome has many (roughly, over half) steep slopes exceeding 8%, which means there are a lot less areas suitable for development. (See Map of sloped soils). Rome via ordinance allows development on slopes up to 20% in the shoreland zone.

Rome has several summits in excess of 1,000 feet with the significant peaks being Round Top and Martin Hill which reach the highest on the western areas of town. Other significant hills and mountains include Mount Phillip, French's Mountain, Morrill Hill, Foss Hill, Mosher Hill, Blueberry Hill, Sanders Hill, Yallaly Hill, and The Mountain.

The overall contours of the landscape in town and the major mountain and hills can be seen on the Contour Map.

Surficial Geology:

Underlying soil types dictate in general terms the suitability of land for various uses. Rome, like most communities in this area, displays conditions laid down in large part by glacial activity. There are four main types of deposits, which have characteristic grain size distribution and topographic position. They are till, outwash, silts and clays, and muck/peat. A brief description of each follow.

Tills were deposited directly by glaciers which covered most of New England about 10,000 years ago. These deposits, not subjected to the action of flowing water, consist of mixtures of materials ranging in size from clay to boulders.

Outwash is also a product of glacial action; however, unlike till, it has been stratified by glacial meltwater. These deposits consist largely of sand and gravel. In Rome, outwash is found in rather limited deposits in a north-south strip along the Mercer Road area. The outwash is geologically younger than the till and may overlie it in places.

The silts and clays of Rome were deposited in bays and inlets of the sea as the glaciers retreated. These materials are restricted to places below about 300 feet elevation, and as a result are not common at all in Rome. The silts and clays, which may be several hundred feet thick, were deposited at the same time as the outwash, but generally underlie the latter where the two are in contact.

Muck and peat deposits are water saturated, highly organic sediments. There are several small areas of deposits of this type in Rome, associated with the prominent wetland areas.

Soils:

Rome generally has limited amounts of soils that have food-growing and development capability. These soils also filter and store groundwater, not to mention provide gravel needed for road-building and other development uses. Soils have been studied and classified

throughout the town. Maps depicting various features of soil types accompany this plan.

Soil characteristics are particularly important to farming, roadbuilding, and construction / septic system installation.

Certain soil types in Rome are particularly fertile, either for crops (corn) or for timber (white pine). The town has little agriculture, so good farm soils aren't a factor. But the soils most fertile for tree growth are usually the same types as those best for farming, except that more stony soils and steeper grades also qualify. In Rome, that includes much of the lakeshore and stream valleys. The following soil types are among the best for tree growth:

Bangor silt loam	Berkshire loam	Buxton silt loam
Dixmont silt loam	Hadley silt loam	Peru loam
Plaisted gravelly loam	Stetson fine sandy loam	Winooski Silt Loam
Madawaska fine sandy loam	Melrose fine sandy loam	

These soil types can be picked out (or be noted the lack of) on the soil maps included with this plan.

Soils can also be ranked for their suitability for development. For development, soils don't have to be fertile; they just have to be easy to work. The best development soils are not too wet, not too steep, and not too rocky. (Note that nearly any soil can be developed. This rating system is based on the cost of development. The highly ranked soils are the cheapest to develop, therefore, a good place to encourage population growth.)

Certain soils can be considered as the best overall for development, including septic systems, excavation, and road building. These soil types are:

Bangor silt loam	Dixmont silt loam	Plaisted loam	
Berkshire loam	Buxton silt loam	Melrose fine sandy loam	Peru loam

From this list, it's immediately apparent what common sense has said all along: that flat, well-drained land is good for both farming and development, and there is an inherent conflict between competing land uses which farming, because of relatively low economic returns, usually loses.

The State Plumbing code also has its list of soils, which are unsuitable for subsurface waste disposal. The plumbing code concentrates on those soils in which septic systems won't function: either water is too near the surface, subject to flooding, or too steep. Note that nothing is said about shallow to bedrock. Soils with water too near the surface are:

Biddeford silt loam
Leicester stony loam
Scantic silt loam

Monarda silt loam
Peat and Muck

Walpole fine sandy loam
Limerick silt loam

Soils subject to flooding (floodplain) are:

Hadley silt loam Winooski silt loam Limerick silt loam Mixed alluvial land

The plumbing code says that any soil on a slope of greater than 20 percent is too steep to build septic systems in.

Critical Natural Resources:

Rome offers a variety of valuable habitat to land and water-resident animals. The extent and quality of wildlife habitat is an indicator of not just the abundance of animals but the overall health of the ecosystem. The Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife (MDIFW) administers a program called *Beginning with Habitat* to illustrate information on wildlife habitat and critical natural areas.

The availability of high-quality habitat for plants, animals, and fish is essential to maintaining abundant and diverse populations for ecological, economic, and recreational purposes. Rome has a significant amount of land that offers quality habitat for a variety of species. Beginning with Habitat (BwH), a collaborative program of federal, state, and local agencies and non-governmental organizations, is a habitat-based approach to conserving wildlife and plant habitat on a landscape scale. The goal of the program is to maintain sufficient habitat to support all native plant and animal species currently breeding in Maine. BwH compiles habitat information from multiple sources, integrates it into one package, and makes it accessible to towns, land trusts, conservation organizations, and others to use proactively. This information can be seen on the Critical Natural Resources Map, with descriptions of essential features below.

Information on wildlife habitat and critical natural areas can be seen on the [Critical Natural Resources Map](#), with descriptions of essential features below.

Deer Wintering Areas (DWA):

Although deer are reasonably common in Rome, their existence is predicated on sufficient habitat. Summer habitat is not as limiting a factor as winter habitat is. The existence of “deer wintering areas” is the controlling factor for deer numbers.

A deer wintering area is defined as a forested area used by deer when snow depth in the open/hardwoods exceeds 12 inches, deer sinking depth in the open/hardwoods exceeds 8 inches and mean daily temperatures are below 32 degrees Fahrenheit. Non-forested wetlands, non-stocked clear-cuts, hardwood types, and stands predominated by Eastern Larch are included within the DWA only if less than 10 acres in size. Agricultural and development areas within DWAs are excluded regardless of size. A rating of “indeterminate” means that no professional survey has been done to assess the value of the habitat and at this time the MDIFW is classifying all deeryards as indeterminate and calling areas “Candidate Deer Wintering Areas” that would need verification on the ground.

Rome has eleven (11) identified significant deer wintering areas that can be seen on the [critical resources map](#). Some are quite sizable, and they are spread pretty evenly throughout the town except the eastern area south of North Pond.

There is unfortunately no way to determine the number of deer wintering areas in the past due to a lack of an older plan or data available. MDIFW does not add deeryards to those that have been mapped for decades and MDIFW is unaware of additional areas classified as DWA.

Inland Waterfowl /Wading bird Habitat (IWWH):

Five criteria are used to rate IWWHs as high, moderate, or low value: (1) wetland type composition, (2) number of different wetland types, (3) size, (4) interspersion, and (5) percent of open water. Wetlands with a rating of “High” or “Moderate” are the only ones required to be protected under Shoreland Zoning and other State Laws. These are depicted on the [Critical Natural Resources map](#) and listed in the table below:

Significant Waterfowl and Wading Bird Habitat

Location	MDIF&W#	Rating
Southern area bordering Mount Vernon, west of Watson Pond Road	030693	Moderate
Northern area near Mercer town line, east of Mercer Road	030700	Moderate
Southern area east of Round Top, west of Watson Pond Road	201092	Moderate
Northern area going over Mercer town line, east of Ladd Road	030699	Moderate

Source: Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife

Just like the deer areas, there is no way to check the change in status or number of areas from lack of past data. It should be noted, however, that all wetlands regardless of size or type are regulated by the Maine Department of Environmental Protection (MDEP).

Rare And Exemplary Natural Communities

Unpatterned Fen Ecosystem:

Fens are peatlands in which groundwater or water from adjacent uplands moves through the area. As a result, plants are exposed to more nutrients, and the vegetation is typically different and more diverse than that of bogs. Peat is moderately- to well-decomposed and of variable thickness. The vegetation consists predominantly of sedges, grasses, reeds, and Sphagnum mosses. Bog communities, dominated by heath shrubs, may be present; though fen and bog vegetation may co-occur, in a fen ecosystem the former is more extensive. (See specific notes below).

Focus Areas of Statewide Ecological Significance: Kennebec Highlands

The Maine Natural Areas Program Focus Areas are landscape scale areas that contain exceptionally rich concentrations of at-risk species and natural communities and high quality common natural communities, significant wildlife habitats, and their intersection with large blocks of undeveloped habitat.

These non-regulatory areas are intended as a planning tool for landowners, conservation entities, and towns and unlike some other habitat values, are tied to specific environmental settings and are not geographically transferable. Therefore, they warrant place-specific conservation attention through a variety of methods ranging from conservation acquisition to focused implementation of best management practices. It is hoped that the identification of these Focus Areas will help to build regional awareness and concentrate conservation initiatives in those areas of the landscape with the greatest biodiversity significance.

The Kennebec Highlands Area extends into Rome on its western border with Vienna and Mount Vernon and is significant due to its numerous remote ponds, streams, rolling uplands, and hills. It totals a 6,000-acre block of undeveloped land that provides valuable wildlife habitat and recreational opportunities.

This focus area is part of a much larger (12,000 acre) undeveloped area in Rome, increasing its significance within this densely populated part of Central Maine.

Opportunities For Conservation (both for municipalities and other groups):

- Encourage towns to improve approaches to development that may impact focus area functions.
- Minimize recreational impacts on sensitive areas through careful siting of trails, combined with education and monitoring for overuse.

- Encourage best management practices for forestry, vegetation clearing, and soil disturbance activities near significant features.
- Encourage landowners to maintain intact forested buffers along water bodies and wetlands.
- Maintain natural hydrology by avoiding drainage or impoundment of wetlands, streams or other water bodies.
- Support the restoration of stream connectivity by surveying, prioritizing, and repairing or replacing impassable culverts and dams.

The Highlands Area has an established Rare and Exemplary Natural Communities within it, an Unpatterned Fen Ecosystem, as well as the Significant Wildlife Habitats of Inland Waterfowl and Wading Bird Habitat, and Deer Wintering Areas that were already mentioned.

Overview:

The Kennebec Highlands is a 6,000-acre block of undeveloped land that features remote ponds, streams, rolling uplands, and several hills. Vienna Mountain, one of the largest hills, features a large open ridge under blueberry cultivation. The remainder of the uplands are forested with early to mid-successional growth. Most of the uplands have a relatively recent history of timber harvest or other human intervention such that undisturbed natural upland settings are scarce.

Ponds in the Kennebec Highlands include McIntire Pond, Kidder Pond, and Boody Pond in the western half of the area, and the Round Pond – Beaver Pond complex in the eastern portion. The Kennebec Highlands Focus Area borders on Watson Pond, which has camps along its east side but is otherwise undeveloped. Whittier Pond also lies along the eastern border of the project area, overlooked by French’s Mountain, a locally popular hiking spot. Long Pond, a major lake in the Belgrade Lakes chain, lies to the east.

The wetlands surrounding Beaver and Round Ponds form a good example of an unpatterned fen ecosystem. Unpatterned fens are peatlands that form where drainage is impeded such that peat can accumulate, but where water still flows into and out of the system. These fens are well distributed throughout the state; however, the Round Pond-Beaver Pond fen provides a good example of the smaller-size expression of this type of peatland. The peatland ecosystem is comprised of at least four vegetation types, which occur in different portions of the wetland and provide habitat diversity. The vegetation types are: mixed tall sedge fen, sweetgale mixed shrub fen, leatherleaf boggy fen, and mixed graminoid-shrub marsh. In addition, the wetland is of interest because it represents the northern range limit of poison sumac (*Toxicodendron vernix*), a plant of southern affinities that is uncommon in Maine. There is also open-water

aquatic vegetation in Beaver Pond and its inlet, including water-lily – macrophyte aquatic bed vegetation and pickerelweed – macrophyte aquatic bed vegetation. These are all common vegetation types statewide but form a high-quality mosaic here.

A large portion of the Kennebec Highlands Focus Area has been conserved by the 7 Lakes Alliance (formerly, Belgrade Regional Conservation Alliance), Kennebec Land Trust and Maine Bureau of Public Lands.

Conservation Considerations for the Focus Area:

- Buffers should be maintained around all wetlands and ponds. While different species can have different buffering requirements, wider buffers provide better protection for riparian and wetland-dependent species. Better protection will be afforded to the wetlands and ponds if as little alteration as possible occurs within 250' of the wetland/upland border. Any timber harvesting within and adjacent to wetlands or adjacent to ponds should be implemented with strict adherence to Shoreland Zoning guidelines and Maine Forest Service Best Management Practices.
- Improperly sized culverts and other stream crossing structures can impede movement of fish and aquatic invertebrates effectively fragmenting local aquatic ecosystems and ultimately leading to local extirpation of some species. Future management should maintain or restore the sites' natural hydrology.
- Conservation planning for upland features should include setting some areas aside from timber harvests to allow for the development of some unmanaged forests.
- Existing roads and trails should be reviewed with particular recreation and access needs in mind, and trails closed if they run counter to protection needs. One of the prime values of Kennebec Highlands is the comparative lack of permanent roads (although the new logging road through the center of the property approaches a permanent road in size), and fragmenting features should be minimized where possible.
- This area includes Significant Wildlife Habitat for wintering deer and wading birds and waterfowl. Land managers should follow best management practices with respect to forestry and building activities in and around wetlands, shoreland areas, and Significant Wildlife Habitat. Vegetation removal, soil disturbance and construction activities may require a permit under the Natural Resources Protection Act.
- With expected changes in climate over the next century, plant and wildlife species will shift their ranges. Maintaining landscape connections between undeveloped habitats will provide an important safety net for biodiversity as species adjust their ranges to future climate conditions.

With only a small area in Rome itself being included a coordinated approach with neighboring communities or regional organizations should be considered.

Ecological Services of the Focus Area

- Provides high quality habitat for waterfowl, wading birds, deer, moose, and other wildlife.
- Provides an important component of regional biodiversity.
- Protects water quality.

Economic Contributions of the Focus Area

- Attracts tourism for hiking, biking, skiing, snowshoeing, wildlife observation, and hunting.
- Provides wildlife habitat for a number of game species that are seasonally important to Maine's rural economy.
- Serves as a valuable recreational resource for local residents.

Rare, Threatened, and Endangered Species and Habitats

There are several noteworthy, endangered general habitat species that occur in the Town. Rome is home to an *upland hardwood to mixed forest habitat* in The Mountain preserved land on the Great Pond peninsula. It also has an *unpatterned fen ecosystem* that is detailed above.

Bald eagles (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) nest on the spur separating Little and North Ponds. These famous birds generally nest along sea coasts, inland lakes and major rivers. Breeding habitat includes large trees, primarily old white pines, in close proximity (less than one mile) to water where food is abundant and human disturbance is minimal. Once abundant in Maine, Bald Eagles were nearly extirpated throughout their range because of widespread use of environmental contaminants. With bans on the use of these contaminants and habitat protection measures, bald eagles have made a tremendous recovery. In 2009 they were removed from the state Endangered Species list. They remain listed as Special Concern. Bald eagles and their nests are protected by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service under the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act.

There are also locally observed nesting sites in North Bay, Great Pond in the vicinity between Eagle Crest Lane and the mouth of Great Meadow Stream.

In the far southern part of town bordering Belgrade by the Castle Island Road are **Eastern Ribbon Snakes** (*Thamnophis sauritus*) which are not endangered but a species of special concern (A species of special concern is any species of fish or wildlife that does not meet the criteria of an endangered or threatened species but is particularly vulnerable, and could easily

become an endangered, threatened, or extirpated species due to restricted distribution, low or declining numbers, specialized habitat needs or limits, or other factors. Special concern species are established by policy, not by regulation, and are used for planning and informational purposes; they do not have the legal weight of endangered and threatened species.)

The eastern ribbon snake is a slender, semi-aquatic snake often observed near the edges of emergent marshes, wet meadows, scrub-shrub wetlands, beaver impoundments, bogs, river and stream floodplains, and vegetated shorelines of ponds and lakes. Ribbon snakes generally avoid deep water but will swim readily along the surface. Juveniles and gravid females may use uplands, but the extent of use is not well established.

In this habitat area ribbon snakes were likely found within 5m of water during May to September. From September to mid-October, snakes moved up to much further away from the shoreline. Most ribbon snakes documented in New England have been found below 305m (1,000ft) elevation. Possible hibernacula include muskrat bank burrows and lodges, ant mounds, mammal tunnels, and rock crevices). Though ribbon snakes eat primarily amphibians, they will also consume lesser amounts of mice, spiders, small fish, and insects.

Finally, another species of special concern is the **Great Blue Heron** (*Ardea Herodias*). These are recorded at one of the IWWH sites in the north of Rome (030700). This is confirmed by local accounts of seeing the birds on Rome's ponds and lakes. Great Blue Herons are prevalent among Rome waterbodies and are often seen flying overhead from lake to lake.

Widespread and familiar (though often mistakenly labeled a "crane"), they are the largest heron in North America. Often seen standing silently along inland rivers or lakeshores, or flying high overhead, with slow wingbeats, its head hunched back onto its shoulders. Highly adaptable, it thrives around all kinds of waters from subtropical mangrove swamps to desert rivers to the coastline of southern Alaska. With its variable diet it is able to spend the winter farther north than most herons, even in areas where most waters freeze.

Great Blue Herons are important predators that feed near the top of the food chain on a wide variety of fish and aquatic invertebrates, but also frogs, salamanders, turtles, snakes, insects, rodents, and birds. They have been seen stalking voles and gophers in fields, capturing rails at the edge of marshes, and eating many species of small water birds. They are also relatively long-lived, which makes them good indicators of environmental quality, including wetland health, levels of toxic substances, and levels of human disturbance.

Great Blue Herons nest in colonies, which may contain a few pairs to several hundred, often with multiple nests occupying the same tree. Their platform stick nests are in trees 8-100 feet

or more above the ground. A newly built nest can be rather small (~20 inches) and flimsy, whereas one that has been reused and rebuilt for many years can appear quite bulky and be 45 inches in diameter and 40 in depth.

Inland colonies show variability in habitat setting and can include habitats such as beaver flowages with nests in snags, live trees on islands in waterbodies, and in live and dead trees in upland habitat along waterbodies or not. Great Blue Heron colonies are most often within 2.5 miles of several important feeding wetlands, often in large areas with fewer roads and less human disturbance. Nesting in colonies helps in terms of predator avoidance, but it also makes these birds especially vulnerable to habitat loss. A large nesting area has been documented in the north-central portion of town, in the vicinity of the northernmost area of Rome Trout Brook.

Great Blue Herons have a sensitive nesting period from April 1 through August 15, during which time they are extremely sensitive to disturbances caused by human intrusion, noise, and predators, and may even abandon a colony as a result of such disturbances during this period. Their sensitivity level varies relative to breeding stage, site characteristics (buffers, topography), pre-existing uses on adjacent lands, and intensity, duration, and setback of a new activity. Colonies are most sensitive prior to onset of incubation (early May), after the young are 4-6 weeks old (late June) and when the young near fledging (late July).

Wetlands:

Rome has a few major large wetland areas (the most prominent along Great Meadow Stream, connecting North Pond to Great Pond) and many smaller wetlands, both forested and non-forested, are scattered throughout the town. These wetlands and other surface water features may be viewed on the *Critical Natural Resources Map*.

Development activity in any wetland area is strictly regulated by state and federal governments. Non-forested wetlands of ten acres in extent or greater are protected from development under Shoreland Zoning Regulations. The surrounding 250 feet of shoreland is governed under the Resource Protection District in the Town's Shoreland Zoning Ordinance. Development and timber harvesting are restricted in these areas, providing maximum protection to the wetland and wildlife dependent thereon.

Undeveloped Forest Blocks:

There is a direct relationship between the number and variety of wildlife, and the size of their habitat. We are used to urban wildlife, such as skunks and chickadees, which do not need much open land to thrive. But other types of animals are much less seen, because they thrive

in unbroken patches of forest. As roads, farms, and houses intrude on the landscape, the large habitat blocks break up and the wildlife that relies on them disappear.

The *Critical Natural Resources Map* illustrates the distribution of undeveloped blocks within Rome. There are many sizable blocks all over town as soon as you get away from major roads and these contain a variety of habitat types, including waterfowl and wading bird habitat, wetlands, and deer wintering areas, as well as special species sites. There is currently no apparent development pressure in these areas but the potential for any future kind of development pressure on these areas should be monitored.

Conserved Lands:

Rome contains numerous conserved lands: The main ones are shown in the table below:

Project	Parcel Name	Designation	Type	Interest Name	Type	Acquisition Date	Acreage
Kennebec Highlands	Wagner Forest Management or Buckfield	Public Land	Fee	Maine Bureau of Parks and Lands	State	3/22/2001	1934.9
Kennebec Highlands	BRCA - Distefano	Public Land	Fee	Maine Bureau of Parks and Lands	State	3/29/2004	316.5
The Mountain	-	-	Fee	BRCA	Private	2/4/2011	244.2
Kennebec Highlands	Bonnie Bean	Public Land	Fee	Maine Bureau of Parks and Lands	State	9/21/2001	226.9
Mount Phillip	-	-	Fee	BRCA	Private	12/6/2004	202.1
Hammond Family Forest	Hammond Family Forest	-	Fee	Maine Woodland Owners	Private	-	196.5
Kennebec Highlands	May	Public Land	Fee	Maine Bureau of Parks and Lands	State	6/30/2004	167.4
Kennebec Highlands	Thorndike	Public Land	Fee	Maine Bureau of Parks and Lands	State	6/29/2004	136.5
French Mountain	-	-	Fee	BRCA	Private	6/13/1990	114.6
Blueberry Hill	Edmund W Hill	Public Land	Fee	Maine Bureau of Parks and Lands	State	8/3/1972	82.5
Kennebec Highlands	Barry Dolley Trust	Public Land	Fee	Maine Bureau of Parks and Lands	State	7/3/2001	77.0
Kennebec Highlands	BRCA-Dolley Parcels	Public Land	Fee	Maine Bureau of Parks and Lands	State	3/31/2004	41.8
Kennebec Highlands	-	-	Fee	BRCA	Private	-	39.5
-	-	-	Easement	BRCA	Private	-	27.4
Kennebec Highlands	-	-	Fee	BRCA	Private	-	24.9
Long Pond	Synercap Corp	State Park Property	Fee	Maine Bureau of Parks and Lands	State	12/23/1971	22.5
-	-	-	Easement	BRCA	Private	-	15.7
Kennebec Highlands	-	-	Fee	BRCA	Private	-	12.1
Mount Phillip	-	-	Easement	BRCA	Private	-	10.1

Seven Lakes Alliance now manage the lands of the BRCA.

Visual Resources:

Rome is an attractive town, and its citizens appreciate the quality of visual resources available, from the spectacular terrain, hills and mountains to the views across Rome's lakes and other water bodies.

During the development of the towns Wind Energy Systems Ordinance, work was done to look at specific viewsheds which are detailed in Appendix A located here:

https://www.romemaine.com/sites/g/files/vyhlf6206/f/uploads/wind_energy_systems_ordinance.pdf

Planning Board is already considering visual resources in their decisions and have developed visual / viewshed standards within all other applicable town ordinances.

The current entrances, or gateways, at the Town boundaries and as one enters the community, may not fully meet the community's expectations for itself; there needs to be a common design theme that might be utilized to solidify a positive image for Rome. Signage and landscaping utilizing the design could then be installed at these critical locations to welcome visitors to a friendly, well-kept community, and residents to their hometown. Although all entrances to the town should be addressed, priority locations are the town line on Route 27 (Augusta Rd.) at Belgrade Lakes and New Sharon, as well as Route 225 (Rome Rd.) at Smithfield.

Maintaining Rome's built environment is also a critical component in community attractiveness. Rome should perhaps look into community development programs to attract public dollars to stimulate neighborhood / village revitalization as well as developing methods to minimize poor looking private housing etc.

PART FOUR: WATER RESOURCES

Brooks and Streams:

Rome has extensive surface water resources. Due to the number of connected ponds, the town's topography and several significant hills, there are different drainage basins contributing water to the Kennebec River. This drainage runs from the more significant bodies of water, primarily to the southeast via connecting tributaries to Messalonskee Lake and Messalonskee Stream. Finally, from Messalonskee Stream, flow enters the Kennebec River and eventually the Gulf of Maine.

Most streams in town are classified as Class B waters which are defined as general-purpose and are managed to attain good quality water. These streams have an aquatic life use goal of approximately Tier 3 on the Biological Condition Gradient. Well-treated discharges with ample dilution are allowed and these shall not cause adverse impacts to the aquatic life, so because of that the discharge waters shall be of sufficient quality to support all aquatic species indigenous to the receiving water without detrimental changes to the resident biological community. Whilst this might suggest that these streams are not highly sensitive ecologically, they should still be protected where possible. All streams, especially within lake watersheds, are critically important to protect from further loss of riparian buffers and from non-point source pollution. Even small headwater streams provide important water quality and ecological functions and should be considered vulnerable to land use changes. There are major threats known to the streams and their quality, especially Meadow Stream (Great Pond Watershed) suffering from algae blooms.

A drainage area in the North of town bordering Mercer, the main stream being Rome Trout Brook that drains into Great Pond, is classified as Class A waters which is managed for high quality with limited human disturbance allowed. The Brook and Pond have an aquatic life use goal approximately Tier 1-2 on the Biological Condition Gradient. Direct discharges are allowed but highly restricted. There are currently problems with beaver damns blocking the culverts of this stream causing low flow and other associated problems.

There are no DEP biological monitoring stations located in Rome.

General Protection and Enhancement of Fisheries and Fisheries Habitat:

Fish habitat is vulnerable to a host of land-based activities, which often leads to a loss of riparian habitat. It is good general policy to require 100-foot undisturbed buffers along both

sides of any lake, stream or stream-associated wetlands. The buffers should be measured from the upland wetland edge of stream-associated wetlands. Protection of these riparian areas diminishes erosion/sedimentation problems; reduces thermal impacts; maintains water quality; and supplies leaf litter/woody debris (energy & habitat) for the system. Protection of these important riparian functions ensures that the overall health of the stream habitat is maintained. In addition, smaller headwater and lower order streams are often affected the greatest by development and these systems benefit the most from adequately sized, vegetated buffers.

It is also generally recommended that any in-stream work be limited to between July 15 and October 1 to prevent unintended impacts to these fisheries resources.

The major waterbodies in Rome are comprised of both warm-water and cold-water fisheries. Long Pond's cold-water fishery management continue to emphasize salmon, whereas despite Great Pond's large size it provides limited amount of habitat for cold water sportfish. Great Pond used to be managed for salmon, but because of the significant decline in smelt population, which led to a decline in salmon growth rates, it was decided that the management of Brook Trout would be more promising.

Great Pond:

Great Pond is the undeniable main hydrological feature of Rome and maybe the biggest feature of the town. It is an 8533-acre Pond located in both Rome & neighboring Belgrade. The direct watershed is located within a regional chain of Lakes and Ponds, which includes a set of seven hydrologically connected lakes that form a valuable resource in the State of Maine.

Great Pond receives water from North Pond and East Pond (via Great Meadow Stream) to the north, and from McGrath Pond and Salmon Lake to the east. There are five major tributaries that flow into Great Pond (Great Meadow Stream, Robbins Mill Stream, Rome Trout Brook, Bog Brook, and the Salmon Lake outlet stream), and numerous other seasonal drainages that contribute water in the spring and fall. Including the major streams listed above, the direct watershed contains 46 miles of perennial streams and 136 miles of intermittent streams. All lakes hydrologically connected to Great Pond are either impaired, or on the DEP's NPS Priority Watersheds list.

A total of 237 NPS sites were documented in the Great Pond watershed across 11 different land-use types. Residential homes with the highest number of sites with 147 sites, driveways have 20 sites, trail/path have 19 sites, private roads have 15 sites, commercial has 10, boat access has 7 sites, town roads have 5 sites, beach accesses, municipal/public and state roads

have 4 sites each and construction having the least of just 2 sites.

Great Pond's direct watershed is expansive, covering 32 square miles or 20,480 acres. Adding the drainage area of North Pond (~22 square miles), East Pond (~7 square miles), and McGrath Pond/Salmon Lake (~9 square miles) increases this total to 70 square miles or 44,800 acres. However, despite being large, the watershed to lake area ratio is 5.4:1. Lakes with ratios of <10:1 generally have lower flushing rates and higher watershed pollutant loads. This does not protect them from eutrophication over time which can be accelerated by human activity and watershed alternations. This is an important metric that suggests proper watershed management can improve the water quality in Great Pond. The watershed includes four municipalities, with the largest land area in the towns of Belgrade (54%) and Rome (35%). There are 866 lots in the shoreland zone (within 250 feet) of Great Pond, and 2,226 lots within the entire direct watershed

A recent land-cover analysis for Great Pond indicates that the majority of Great Pond's direct watershed is forested (70%), followed by freshwater wetlands (16%). Large wetlands flank the north and south ends of the lake. Developed land (residential, commercial, roads) accounts for 10% of the watershed area, while agricultural land is estimated at 4%.

In addition to development on the shoreline, there are one large summer youth camp, two private marinas, a public boat launch, a golf course, multiple commercial properties in Belgrade Lakes Village, and several gravel pits in the watershed. Because the area provides excellent year-round recreational opportunities and is a popular summer vacation destination, the population of the Town of Rome is approximately 1335 when seasonal residents arrive.

The 7 Lakes Alliance is a non-profit organization; their vision statement is to:

“Support land and water conservation in the Belgrade Lakes Region by engaging with the whole community to achieve clean water, well stewarded lands, and a vibrant economy. Their work will combine contemporary scientific knowledge, respect for the area's natural heritage and local traditions, inclusive priority setting and collaborative problem solving, with ongoing dialogue and widespread resource sharing to create a culture of conservation that serves all.”

The 7 Lakes Alliance works with researchers at the State level, Colby College, the Kennebec County Soil & Water Conservation District, among other organizations to conduct scientific research and implement plans to reduce impacts to the watershed as a whole.

Habitat:

The Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife (IFW) reports that Great Pond provides marginal habitat for cold water fish but productive habitat for warm water fish such as those listed below:

American Eel *Anguilla Rostrata*
Banded Killifish *Fundulus Diaphanus*
Black Crappie *Pomoxis Nigromaculatus*
Brook Trout *Salvelinus Fontinalis*
Brown Bullhead *Ameiurus Nebulosus*
Brown Trout *Salmo Trutta*
Chain Pickerel *Esox Niger*
Emerald Shiner *Notropis Atheinoides*
Fallfish *Semotilus Corporalis*
Golden Shiner *Notemigonus Crysoleucas*
Landlocked Alewife *Alosa Pseudoharengus*

Largemouth Bass *Micropterus Salmoides*
Ninespine Stickleback *Pungitius Pungitius*
Northern Pike *Esox Lucius*
Pumpkinseed *Lepomis Gibbosus*
Rainbow Smelt *Osmerus Mordax*
Redbreast Sunfish *Lepomis Auritus*
Smallmouth Bass *Micropterus Dolomieu*
White Perch *Morone Americana*
White Sucker *Catostomus Commersoni*
Yellow Perch *Perca Flavescens*

In 2021 Great Pond was stocked with 3,150 12-inch Brown Trout by IFW. Along with aquatic animals the watershed is also home to a wide range of plant life including the following notable species:

Aquatic Moss Spp. *Aquatic Moss Spp.*
Arrowhead, Spp. *Sagittaria Spp.*
Bladderwort, Common *Utricularia Vulgaris*
Bladderwort, Large Purple *Utricularia Purpurea*
Bladderwort, Spp. *Utricularia Spp.*
Bur-Reed, Spp. (Emergent) *Sparganium Spp.*
Coontail *Ceratophyllum Demersum*
Little Floating Heart *Nymphoides Cordata*
Metaphyton (Colonial Algae "Clouds")
Naiad, Slender *Najas Flexilis*
Pickerel Weed *Pontedaria Cordata*
Pipewort *Eriocaulon Aquaticum*
Pondweed, Clasping-Leaf *Potamogeton Perfoliatus*
Pondweed, Fern *Potamogeton Robbinsii*

Pondweed, Large-Leaf *Potamogeton Amplifolius*
Pondweed, Spp. *Potamogeton Spp.*
Pondweed, Variable *Potamogeton Gramineus*
Rush, Bayonet *Juncus Militaris*
Spatterdock *Nuphar Variegata*
Water Crowfoot, White *Ranunculus Aquatilis Var. Diffusus*
Water Lily, Fragrant *Nymphaea Odorata*
Water Marigold *Bidens Beckii*
Watermilfoil, Farwell's *Myriophyllum Farwellii*
Watermilfoil, Low *Myriophyllum Humile*
Watershield *Brasenia Schreberi*
Waterweed, Common *Elodea Canadensis*
Waterweed, Slender *Elodea Nutallii*

Wild Celery (Eel Grass) *Vallisneria Americana*

Great Pond is noted by Maine IF&W as a Wild Brook Trout Priority area. There are also a few wetland areas identified as Inland Wading Bird and Waterfowl Habitat.

Loons:

Loon counts on the pond take place regularly and the loon population seems to have initially grown in the late 90s then maintained well until booming in the mid-2010's and again in recent years.

Loon Count over time – Great Pond

Year	Adults	Chicks
1983	20	1
1993	20	2
2003	42	0
2013	44	9
2014	81	5
2015	47	1
2016	47	3
2017	43	3
2018	79	2
2019	61	2
2020	53	0
2021	73	5

Freshwater Mussels and Crayfish:

Rusty crayfish *Orconectes rusticus*

Virile crayfish *Orconectes virilis*

Eastern elliptio *Elliptio complanata*

Eastern floater *Pyganodon cataracta*

Possible threats to water quality in the watershed include the following:

- Septic systems
- Sedimentation from main and camp roads, driveways, Route 27 & 225 drainage ditches
- Clearing for development, gardening, etc.
- Commercial/Industrial businesses. (Timber harvesting/salt sheds/etc.)

- Agricultural runoff (Including PFAS)

Other issues in the watershed are invasive species threats such as Milfoil and Curly Leaf Pondweed. As is usual, this is aimed to be minimized by courtesy boat inspections, education about the problem and increasing awareness, as well as regular inspections of the watershed itself. The latest watershed report can be found here:

<https://www.maine.gov/dep/water/grants/Great%20Pond%20WBMP%20March%202021.pdf>

Other Water Bodies

Long Pond (North Part):

Located in Kennebec County, in the central Maine towns of Belgrade, Mount Vernon, and Rome. A dual basin pond with the North Basin separated by the narrows at Castle Island Road in Belgrade. Long pond is located in the southwest region of the larger Belgrade lakes watershed and is sixth in the chain of 7 Belgrade Lakes. Long Pond's direct watershed covers 2557 acres, which includes the watersheds of Great Pond (27,900 acres), North Pond, East Pond and Salmon-McGrath Pond Lake.

The Long Pond watershed is the area of land from which water flows into Long Pond or its tributaries. The direct watershed spans approximately 16,275 acres in the towns of Mount Vernon, Rome, Belgrade, and Vienna, and is sixth in the seven lake Belgrade Chain. The entire watershed area, which includes its upstream or indirect watersheds, covers 88 square miles (56,826 acres).

Approximately 85% of the water that flows into Long Pond annually comes from Great Pond to the northeast, which accounts for more than 70% of the indirect watershed area draining to Long Pond and approximately 53% of the phosphorus load. Water flows into the north basin of Long Pond from Whittier Pond through Whittier Brook, and from Beaver Pond through Beaver Brook.

Long Pond is on the Maine DEP's Priority Watersheds list of lakes and is considered part of the 'Impaired' lakes due to hydraulic reasons, such as a major dam. While there are 148 NPS sites documented for Long Pond, only 16 rank as high-impact compared to the 61 medium, and 71 low-impact sites. Residential NPS sites make up the greatest number of high, medium and low impact sites, accounting for 43% of all sites, and 55% of the low impact sites. Private roads account for 2 high impact sites and 11 medium impact sites, town roads and driveways with 1 high impact site and 8 medium impact sites each, state roads have 2 high impact sites and 8 medium impact sites, trail or path with 2 high impact sites and 2 medium impact sites, while beach access, commercial, construction sites, and boat accesses have only a few medium impact sites don't have high impact sites they have a few medium and low impact sites.

Habitat:

Long Pond having the maximum depth of 106 feet, allows for warm-water and cold-water fisheries. The list of fish that are present in the Pond are listed below.

American Eel <i>Anguilla Rostrata</i>	
Black Crappie <i>Pomoxis Nigromaculatus</i>	Northern Pike <i>Esox Lucius</i>
Brook Trout <i>Salvelinus Fontinalis</i>	Pumpkinseed <i>Lepomis Gibbosus</i>
Brown Bullhead <i>Ameiurus Nebulosus</i>	Rainbow Smelt <i>Omerus Mordax</i>
Brown Trout <i>Salmo Trutta</i>	Rainbow Trout <i>Oncorhynchus mykiss</i>
Chain Pickerel <i>Esox Niger</i>	Redbreast Sunfish <i>Lepomis Auritus</i>
Golden Shiner <i>Notemigonus Crysoleucas</i>	Slimy Sculpin <i>Cottus Cognatus</i>
Landlocked Alewife <i>Alosa</i>	Smallmouth Bass <i>Micropterus Dolomieu</i>
Pseudoharengus	Splake <i>Salvelinus Hybrid</i>
Landlocked Salmon <i>Salmo Salar</i>	White Perch <i>Morone Americana</i>
Largemouth Bass <i>Micropterus Salmoides</i>	White Sucker <i>Catostomus Commersoni</i>
	Yellow Perch <i>Perca Flavescens</i>

Along with aquatic animals the watershed is also home to a wide range of plant life which are listed below.

Aquatic Moss Spp. <i>Aquatic Moss Spp.</i>	<i>Natans</i>
Arrowhead, Spp. <i>Sagittaria Spp.</i>	Pondweed, Large-Leaf <i>Potamogeton Amplifolius</i>
Bladderwort, Common <i>Utricularia Vulgaris</i>	Pondweed, Ribbon-Leaf <i>Potamogeton Epihydrous</i>
Bladderwort, Large Purple <i>Utricularia Purpurea</i>	Pondweed, Spp. <i>Potamogeton Spp.</i>
Cattail, Common <i>Typha Latifolia</i>	Spatterdock <i>Nuphar Variegata</i>
Coontail <i>Ceratophyllum Demersum</i>	Sponge, Freshwater Spp <i>Sponges</i>
Metaphyton (Colonial Algae "Clouds")	Water Lily, Fragrant <i>Nymphaea Odorata</i>
Naiad, Slender <i>Najas Flexilis</i>	Water Marigold <i>Bidens Beckii</i>
Pickerel Weed <i>Pontedaria Cordata</i>	Watershield <i>Brasenia Schreberi</i>
Pipewort <i>Eriocaulon Aquaticum</i>	Waterweed, Common <i>Elodea Canadensis</i>
Pondweed, Clasping-Leaf <i>Potamogeton Perfoliatus</i>	Waterweed, Slender <i>Elodea Nutallii</i>
Pondweed, Fern <i>Potamogeton Robbinsii</i>	Wild Celery (Eel Grass) <i>Vallisneria Americana</i>
Pondweed, Floating-Leaf <i>Potamogeton</i>	

The latest watershed report can be found here:

<https://belgradelakesassociation.org/Portals/0/LongPondWBMP%20March22FINAL.pdf>

Little Pond and North Pond

North Pond, connected to Little Pond is the second lake in the Belgrade Chain of Lakes. It receives inflow from East Pond through Serpentine Stream in Smithfield Village, then it flows into the Great Meadow Stream, eventually flowing into Great Pond. The North Pond and Little Pond watershed is approximately 5,139 acres, it is threatened by development and is on the watchlist for Maine NPS Priority watershed list. It is used extensively for swimming, fishing, and boating, and is accessible through a public boat launch on the north end.

North Pond is at a high risk, had a major bloom in 2022 significantly effecting Great Meadow Stream and is likely to bloom again. Water quality has been collected since the 1970s, and based on the data, the potential for algal blooms and internal loading is moderate. However, total phosphorous has been increasing over the past 10 years. Agricultural land use has been historically the most significant contributor to the loading of nutrients. But currently land uses connected with roads, residential and commercial development are the greater threat to the Pond. Geographically, the majority of NPS (Nonpoint Source) Sites in the North Pond watershed are located near the shoreline on the north end of the lake, with a handful of sites connected with roads and stream crossings in the outer watershed.

135 NPS Sites were documented through a locally funded watershed survey in 2017 across ten different land-use types, where residential homes had 82 sites, beach access being the second NPS with 13 sites, State roads had 10 sites, town road with 8 sites, driveway with 6 sites, commercial with 6 sites, boat access with 4 sites, private road with 3 sites, construction with 2 sites, and trail/path with 1 site.

Water from North Pond flows into the Great Pond, which is impaired as a result of excess nutrients (phosphorus), so reducing phosphorus inputs into North Pond benefits Great Pond.

Habitat:

This warmwater pond provides a good habitat for warmwater fish which are listed below.

American Eel *Anguilla Rostrata*
Banded Killifish *Fundulus Diaphanus*
Brown Bullhead *Ameiurus Nebulosus*
Brown Trout *Salmo Trutta*
Chain Pickerel *Esox Niger*
Fallfish *Semotilus Corporalis*
Golden Shiner *Notemigonus Crysoleucas*
Largemouth Bass *Micropterus Salmoides*
Northern Pike *Esox Lucius*
Pumpkinseed *Lepomis Gibbosus*
Smallmouth Bass *Micropterus Dolomieu*
White Perch *Morone Americana*
White Sucker *Catostomus Commersoni*
Yellow Perch *Perca Flavescens*

North Pond occasionally has Brown Trout dropped down from the East Pond, where they have been routinely stocked. The lake is also home to 45 adult Loons.

The latest watershed report can be found here: [https://www.smithfieldmaine.us/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Final-2016-North-Pond WatershedSurveyReport_31Jan17.pdf](https://www.smithfieldmaine.us/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Final-2016-North-Pond-WatershedSurveyReport_31Jan17.pdf)

Watson Pond:

Watson Pond has an area of 69 acres, a perimeter of 1.9 miles and has a maximum depth of 24 feet. Watson Pond has no public access; the general angler has limited opportunity to fish Watson Pond. The winter white perch fishery historically has maintained the most interest in anglers.

Habitat:

Watson Pond is a warmwater pond with the following species of fish:

American Eel *Anguilla Rostrata*
Brook Trout *Salvelinus Fontinalis*
Brown Bullhead *Ameiurus Nebulosus*
Chain Pickerel *Esox Niger*
Golden Shiner *Notemigonus Crysoleucas*
Pumpkinseed *Lepomis Gibbosus*
Smallmouth Bass *Micropterus Dolomieu*
White Perch *Morone Americana*

Whittier Pond:

Whittier Pond is relatively small and shallow, but it still provides good habitat for brook trout. However large populations of warm water fish species compete heavily with trout thereby compromising growth and survival. It lies south of the Watson Pond.

Habitat:

Whittier Pond is a warmwater pond with the following species of fish:

American Eel *Anguilla Rostrata*
Brook Trout *Salvelinus Fontinalis*
Chain Pickerel *Esox Niger*
Golden Shiner *Notemigonus Crysoleucas*
Northern Pike *Esox Lucius*
Pumpkinseed *Lepomis Gibbosus*
Rainbow Smelt *Omerus Mordax*
Smallmouth Bass *Micropterus Dolomieu*

White Perch *Morone Americana*
White Sucker *Catostomus Commersoni*
Yellow Perch *Perca Flavescens*

Beaver Pond:

Beaver Pond has an area of 15 acres with a perimeter of 1.2 miles. Being a smaller body of water, there is a no more specific information and data available form State sources.

Round Pond:

Round Pond has an area of 10 acres, and a perimeter of 1.1 miles. Similarly, as with Beaver Pond, being a smaller body of water, there is a no more specific information and data available form State sources.

Current Protection Efforts

Several grant-funded projects have been completed over the years in the Rome watershed to reduce non-point source pollutant loading to these waterbodies. These projects were funded by EPA through section 319 of the Clean Water Act and administered by Maine DEP. A growing number of projects is being completed in the area with this funding, as the result of each lake association working to finalize the watershed-based management plans and increasing access to Federal funds.

North Pond currently has a watershed study ongoing.

Rome participates in Watershed surveys via the MDEP to detail issues that affect water quality.

Flood Hazard Areas:

Climate Change is showing an increase in the frequency and severity of flooding in Maine and Rome will be no exception. The town should be proactive in addressing this issue and utilize new tools that are being developed and implemented regionally and statewide (such as the Maine Flooding Resiliency Checklist)

Groundwater:

There are basically two types of groundwater sources for drinking water in Rome: bedrock aquifers and sand and gravel aquifers (an aquifer being a saturated geological formation containing usable quantities of water). It has been estimated that 70% of homes with private wells in Maine rely on bedrock aquifers for their drinking water. It is safe to assume that the majority of homes in Rome that rely on private water supplies are tapped into bedrock aquifers. A Maine DEP study found that bedrock aquifers are vulnerable to contamination by such things as fuel storage tanks or failing septic systems.

That is not to say that sand and gravel aquifers are not as much of a concern for contamination. This geological formation functions as an area of groundwater recharge, that is, precipitation filters through it to supply the aquifer with water. One source of contamination can ruin an entire sand and gravel aquifer; an aquifer which often serves many households and businesses.

Both types of groundwater sources can be contaminated by several activities including sand and gravel mining, salt storage, waste disposal, underground storage tanks, industrial/commercial activity, junkyards, agriculture, and failing septic systems.

Rome has two aquifers present which lead to the Great Pond, the larger of the two is located along the Rome Trout Brook while the smaller one is located off 225 around Crystal Spring Lane and Hillside Lane.

Salt Storage - Rome's salt shed is located at Hillside Lane. The town is aware of this risk to groundwater quality and considering alternative locations.

Industrial/Commercial Activity - lumber yards, sawmills, cement production, and the like can be potential threats to groundwater.

Junkyards - all the fluids associated with motor vehicles can create groundwater pollution over time.

Agriculture - a main concern with agriculture is animal waste, leaching nitrates into the ground. A secondary concern is pesticides, PFAS or other toxic materials in use.

Failing Septic Systems - septic system effluent contains high concentrations of nitrates. Over 10 milligrams per liter of water causes health problems in children. A faulty system can discharge large concentrations of nitrates rapidly, though even a functioning system under the wrong conditions will contribute to elevated nitrates. These conditions are most likely to occur on

soils which are severely limited in permeability.

Public Water and Sewer:

The town does not have municipal water or sewer facilities. Private or community wells and subsurface wastewater disposal facilities are used throughout the community. There are currently 19 public water systems licensed by the State. These systems provide water to commercial or larger users such as schools and mobile home parks.

The state has an active program of planning assistance to protect the sources of public drinking water supply. Town-wide, the long-term prospect is for the continued use of private water and subsurface wastewater disposal systems. Short of discovering widespread contamination, there is nowhere in town with the density of development causing a shortage of water that would warrant a new public water supply.

Public Water Systems in Rome

PWS NAME	PWS TYPE	Comments
PWS TYPE KEY: C=Community NC=Non-Community NTNC=Non-Transient, Non-Community		
Pine Tree Camp	NC	Well
Bear Spring Camp #1	NC	Well
Bear Spring Camp #2	NC	Well
Travis Mills Foundation	NC	Well

Notes on definitions:

Non-Transient, Non-Community System is A non-community public water system that serves at least 25 of the same persons for six months or more per year. Examples include schools, office buildings, factories.

Community Public Water System is A public water system which serves at least fifteen service connections used by year-round residents or regularly serves at least 25 year-round residents. (Year-round is defined as permanent residence greater than six months.) Examples include water utilities, mobile home parks, apartment buildings, nursing homes.

Transient Public Water System is A non-community public water system that serves at least 25 persons, but not necessarily the same persons, for at least 60 days per year. Examples include restaurants, camps and campgrounds, motels and hotels, and golf courses.

Protection Efforts for Natural Resources:

Rome has long acknowledged the regional nature of the natural resource base of the Town.

The Town does not currently have a main Land Use Ordinance containing development standards to protect natural resources, but they do have some other ordinances to help protect them:

- The Shoreland Zoning Ordinance – this should be updated regularly in line with State and Federal Standards.
- The CEO would work with residents to apply the standards of the ordinance as well as the necessary state environmental regulations and those that apply from the National Resource Protection Act

Another item that could be considered as a protection for open space and natural resources is inclusion in the town's subdivision regulations of cluster or conservation incentives that will leave more land protected from development.

PART FIVE: AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY

Agriculture and forestry were the original engines of Maine's economy, therefore they made up the original strategy for Rome as well. Though its importance as economic drivers has decreased over the years, farm and forest land also provide open space critical to our community's character and it provides protection of the environment, including wildlife habitat.

Farm and forest land also provides a buffer against high taxes. Tax studies have demonstrated that farm and forest land have a higher ratio of tax revenue to service demands than any other form of commercial or residential development. That means farm and forest landowners subsidize the tax base of developed properties.

This chapter profiles the current condition of farming and forestry, and how we can better support these activities in Rome.

Agriculture in the Community:

Commercial farmland is land which is being used in the cultivation and production of food and/or fiber. Rome's farmland is small compared to some, but still provides many benefits to the community.

The capacity to produce food locally is a tremendous asset for a community, too often taken for granted. Reliance on imported food sources is a fact of modern life in Maine, and as a result, our food supply could be interrupted or threatened for any number of reasons. Production from local farms can make a substantial contribution to food security in the community.

Local farms also contribute to general economic stability. Farms generate local revenue; jobs are created to work the farm as well as process the crops or livestock at harvest time. On average, each dollar spent on farming becomes seven dollars in its impact on the local economy. As far as taxes, farms on average pay six dollars in property taxes for every dollar of government services they use. This is a significant contribution to the economic well-being of a community.

Finally, local farms contribute to the quality of life in the community. By keeping farmland as farmland rather than developing it, scenic vistas and open space are preserved, enhancing the aesthetic qualities of the town.

Local Farms

We often think of farming as a way of life that is immutable and unchanging. But, like many other economic sectors, agriculture has re-invented itself over the past few decades to become nimble and more viable.

Principal farming enterprises in Rome have historically been limited. Recent trends in Maine and elsewhere indicate that small, specialty farms are growing and replacing large, commodity-based farms. Large farms require prime farmland, hired labor, transportation infrastructure and support services. Small farms require only a local market for their products and can be managed part-time on small parcels of land. Specializing in niche products or value-added items are flexible strategies and attract market attention.

The US Department of Agriculture conducts a county-by-county census of farms every five years. In 2017 (most recent data available), there were 642 farms in Kennebec County, an increase of 6% since 2012. Even though the average size of a farm went down 1% during that time, the number of farmers rose from 998 to 1,136 and the gross income from farms has held steady around \$49 million. That does not include value-added products, such as jams, cider, and maple sugar that many modern farms offer.

The recent ongoing emphasis on locally sourced products is an effort to highlight the importance of small farms. Examples of small farms are local vegetable stands, Christmas trees, pick-your-own strawberries, maple syrup producers, and nursery operations. They market their goods direct from the farm or through farmers markets, which have also seen explosive growth in recent years.

The table below lists most of the farming operations in Rome.

Notable Farm Operations in Rome (2022)

<u>Farm Name</u>	<u>Activity</u>	<u>Location</u>
Stoney End Farm	Vegetables, Fruits, other small homemade offerings.	Mercer Road
Harvest Thyme	Christmas trees, Eggs, Seasonal Produce	Augusta Road
Trees to Please (growing)	Christmas Trees, plants	Mercer Road (retail off-site in Norridgewock)

Farm Support Efforts

The Maine Legislature declared in the Farm and Open Space Tax Law (36 MRSA, s.1101 et. seq.) that “it is in the public interest to encourage the preservation of farmland and open space land in order to maintain a readily available source of food and farm products close to the metropolitan areas of the state.” Farmland is eligible for this valuation-reduction program if

it consists of at least five contiguous acres in a single town and has shown gross earnings from agricultural production of at least \$2,000 during one of the last two years, or three of the last five years.

This program enables farmers to operate without the additional burden of market-based property taxes. The land is not taxed based on its fair market value, but its production value, a significantly lower value in desirable towns like Rome.

As of 2020, there was only one parcel in Rome registered in the Farmland Program. This included 4 acres of farmland and another 20 acres of woodlot, for almost a minute amount of total land area.

Number of Parcels	Acres First Classified	Acres Farmland Acres	Total Acreage Woodland	Total Valuation Farmland	Total Valuation Woodland	Parcels Withdrawn	Acres Withdrawn	Penalties Assessed
1	24	4	20	\$1,376	\$7,305	0	0	\$0

There are many other publicly sponsored programs to support local agriculture, from the Sustainable Agriculture Program at the University of Maine, to the Farmlink Program of the Maine Farmland Trust (headquartered in Unity), which matches prospective farmers in search of land with retiring farmers in search of successors. The Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association certifies organic farms and assists with marketing and technical support. Recently, MOFGA has announced a grant program to support the testing for PFAS contamination on Maine Farms.

The Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry (DACF) has over past several years, put a great deal of effort into marketing local food, from promotions like Maine Maple Sunday and Open Farm Days, to support for farmers markets and farm-to-table for schools and institutions.

Prime Farmlands

Prime farmland is that land which is superior for the production of food, feed, forage, and other crops. Prime farmland has the soil quality, growing season, and moisture supply needed to produce a sustained high yield of crops while using acceptable farming methods. Prime farmland produces the highest yields and farming it results in less damage to the environment. *It is not necessarily farmland currently in production.*

One component of prime farmland is the soil type. The [*Prime Farmland Map*](#) in this plan shows prime farm soils. Certain soils have qualities that result in higher fertility and growth rates. However, due to the decline of traditional farming operations and methods, prime soils are no longer a principal factor in preserving agriculture. The new farming paradigm depends much less on the intrinsic fertility of the soil, and more on access to markets.

The Forest Resource in Rome

Forest lands are defined by the State as land used primarily for the growth of trees and forest products. About three-quarters of Kennebec County, and about two-thirds of Rome, is wooded. This vast area, intermittently broken by farmsteads, recreational and residential areas, provides a base for employment in the transportation and forest products industry. The forest that covers two-thirds of the town also provides taxation, environmental, and recreational benefits to the community.

According to reports on the forest resource in Kennebec County, about 24 percent of the wooded area is in the white pine/hemlock forest type. The spruce and balsam fir forest type is predominant in the northern area and in low-lying areas of organic soils – it covers about 40 percent of forest land area. Northern hardwood, consisting mainly of birch, beech and maple, is also an important forest type and covers approximately 10 percent. Other hardwoods in the elm/ash/red maple and the aspen/birch forest type cover approximately 26 percent.

Some harvesting of timber does occur in Rome, though these operations are generally limited to small wood lots – no industrial forest holdings. Statistics provided to Rome from the Maine Forest Service indicate that in the 10-year period from 2008-2018 an average of 284 acres per year was cut.

YEAR	Selection harvest, acres	Shelterwood harvest, acres	Clearcut harvest, acres	Total Harvest, acres	Change of land use, acres	Number of active Notifications
2008	233	0	0	233	10	22
2009	113	20	0	133	0	15
2010	148	10	0	158	0	9
2011	326.5	65	0	391.5	4	15
2012	122	128	0	250	15	17
2013	209.5	30	0	239.5	0	14
2014	131	130	2	263	0	14
2015	683	10	0	693	0	21
2016	410	1	0	411	0	19
2017	290	0	0	290	0	14
2018	63	0	0	63	4.5	10
Total	2729	394	2	3125	33.5	170
Average	248	36	0	284	3	15

Tree Growth Program

The Maine Legislature declared, in the Tree Growth Tax Law, that the public interest would be best served by encouraging forest landowners to retain and improve their holdings of forest lands upon the tax rolls of the state and to promote better forest management by appropriate tax measures in order to protect this unique economic and recreational resource. The Tree Growth designation includes all parcels of forest land over 500 acres in size and, at the discretion and application of the owners, to parcels less than 500 acres but more than 10 acres in size. It permits valuation of forest land on the basis of its potential for wood production as opposed to market value.

Enrollment in Tree Growth is an effective way of lowering your taxes, some landowners choose not to enroll their forest land because of the program rules or other reasons. Land enrolled in the Tree Growth program is also a very small percentage of Rome's land area, which means that the majority of wooded land in Rome is not enrolled in the program.

MUNICIPALITY	Number of Parcels	Softwood Acres	Mixed wood Acres	Hardwood Acres	Total Acres	Total Value	Acres First Classified	# Parcels Withdrawn	Acres Withdrawn	Penalties Assessed
ROME	34	127	1,086	1,272	2,484	\$735,228	0	0	0	\$0

Issues Affecting Farm and Forest Lands

The greatest threat to farmland and productive woodlands is sprawl. As the population increases, more residential areas will be needed. The best farmland and level woodland are typically very suitable for building; these areas are considered prime areas for residential and commercial development. The forest harvesting statistics cited earlier indicate that an average of 16 ½ acres per year are being taken out of forest into some other land use.

In order to remain productive and continue to be an environmental asset, farm and forest lands must also be managed sustainably. This means following management practices that have been proven to conserve the growing capacity of the land. Organic certification, for farm practices, and sustainable forestry certification from Maine Sustainable Forestry Initiative, are two examples of ways that landowners can achieve this.

Governmental Protection Measures

1. The Farm and Open Space and the Tree Growth Tax Laws are two very good ways to protect these economically and environmentally important areas by lessening taxes and the incentive to sell land for development.
2. The Shoreland Zoning Law and Subdivision Law provide communities a means to review development plans and have them modified if necessary to limit the impacts on farm and forest land. The subdivision law actually has provisions to discourage liquidation harvesting of parcels prior to subdivision.

3. Other state laws support continued efficient operation of these businesses, such as the Right to Farm Law and the Forest Practices Act.
4. Rome adopted guidelines for Timber Harvesting in the Shoreland Zoning Ordinance which primarily limits erosion and impacts on the streams. Prior to harvesting the landowner is required to fill out a Notice of Intent when cutting more than 10 cords per year.

PART SIX: RECREATION AND CULTURE

Recreation Committee:

The Town of Rome has a recreation committee appointed by Town Meeting that provides planning and oversight for programs and coordinates with other recreational groups and organizations. It has five members and meets on an as-needed basis. This committee oversees hiking trails, the town beach, and works with the Seven Lakes Alliance and Belgrade Lakes Association to monitor and improve water recreation for Rome residents.

The Seven Lakes Alliance is committed to a mission of conserving the lands and waters of the Belgrade Lakes region for all. The Belgrade Lakes Association pledges to protect and improve the waters, fisheries, and navigation of Great Pond and Long Pond and the activities involving these waterbodies. Both groups place a significant focus on the health and beauty of the lakes, ponds and streams throughout the region.

Table of Facilities

Name of the Facility	Brief Description
K-12 School – Rome is a member of RSU18 as are the neighboring towns of Belgrade, Sidney, Oakland, and Rome.	K-5 Belgrade Central School in Belgrade 6-8 Messalonskee Middle School in Oakland 9-12 Messalonskee High School in Oakland
Kennebec Highlands	6,000-acre public reserved land, 4000 acres of which are in Rome, with hiking trails with scenic views of the Highlands and area lakes and ponds.
Seven Lakes Alliance	Maintains trails in the region and protects/conserves the lakes
Rome Community Center / Town Offices	Built in 1958 as K-8 school. Became community center/town office in 1986.
Public Roads – The town provides year-round maintenance on 23 miles of town road. Route 225 is a state aid road, the state does the summer maintenance on it and the town does the plowing and sanding.	From 2015 -2021 Rome invested \$1.5 Million on improvements to town roads. In addition, the state made major improvements to route 225, Rome Road, in 2020. This has placed our roads in the best shape they have ever been in.

Public Facilities:

Rome Town Beach

The Town of Rome owns 4.2 acres with 500 feet of frontage on Great Pond. This area, the Friedrich's Property, was donated to Rome in 1978 for the benefit of residents and especially residents who do not have direct access to Great Pond waterfront. The Town goal is to conserve this land for the long-term benefit of its residents while assisting in improving Great and Long Pond's water quality and enhancing the natural heritage of this small portion of the Belgrade Lakes Watershed.

Recent upgrades to the area include the smoothing of the access road and construction of a dry toilet, similar to the type provided in state rest and picnic areas, for those utilizing the Town Beach. Additionally, the Town always looks for ways to monitor the beach for sanitation, picking up trash, keeping the outhouse clean and monitoring numbers using the beach, either via volunteers or with small grant funds etc. Other work has included the clearing of brush away from the entrance to the Beach to improve the visibility of drivers leaving the Beach turning onto Rt 225. A larger crew of volunteers also installed additional rip rap at the shoreline and erosion control measures at the waterfront and a short nature walk. The good news is the town is seeing a lot of regular use by residents.

Future options for the town beach include potentially expanding the trails, removing some trees and adding canoe/kayak racks for residents to store boats for use on the Pond. There exists a fixed dock and boats stored on the shore, not authorized by the town, appearing as overflow from an abutting property. A recent land survey of the property has confirmed docks and boats encroaching on town property.

Community Center / Town Office

The town office / community center has outside facilities including a pavilion, baseball field, pickleball / basketball court which recently was restriped by the recreation committee.

The building contains a large room which is used for weekly, monthly and annual town meetings and functions such as public suppers. Residents can reserve the room for family functions at a nominal fee on a first come basis. A resident recently volunteered to startup community meetings on Wednesday afternoons. Planned activities include card games, board games, book swap, and discussion groups. It also serves as the community food cupboard which is hosted once a month. The building has a kitchen, basement, office and storage space and shares the property with the fire department who has use of a separate building on the site.

Water-Based Recreation

Lakes have long shaped the character and development of Rome. Early settlers utilized the outlets for power generation and water supply. Furthermore, many streams and smaller ponds are located within Rome and provide many more outlets for recreation. When the waterways are frozen, residents enjoy snowmobiling, ice-fishing, skating, and cross-country

skiing/snowshoeing. During the majority of the year, residents participate in fishing, sailing, swimming, canoeing, boating, and kayaking.

While there aren't any public access boat launches within Rome, neighboring towns (Smithfield and Belgrade) do have public boat launches providing easy access to Great, Long, North, East, Snow, and McGrath / Salmon ponds.

Private Facilities:

Outdoor Recreational Opportunities:

Hiking

As part of the Belgrade Lakes Region – a region known for large hills and lakes – Rome residents can easily access a wide variety of scenic hiking trails in the surrounding area. Rome itself is home to five incredible trails including the Mount Phillip Trail, The Mountain Trail, French's Mountain Trail, the Kennebec Highlands Round Top Trail, and the Kennebec Highlands Sanders Hill Trail. Within 30 miles of Rome, there are over 30 identified trails for residents and visitors to enjoy.

- **Mount Phillip Trail** – Part of the Seven Lakes Alliance Trail system; moderate loop trail possessing several scenic lake overlooks on the way to the top of Mount Phillip (~1.3-mile loop)
- **The Mountain Trail** – Part of the Seven Lakes Alliance Trail system that climbs The Mountain, found between Long Pond and Great Pond, offers great scenic lake views with a moderate hiking experience (~1.5-mile loop)
- **French's Mountain Trail** - Part of the Seven Lakes Alliance Trail system which is an easy climb up French's Mountain. At the top you are overlooking sheer cliffs with Whitter Pond laying out before you. Whitter is one of the smaller lesser-known ponds in the Belgrade chain of ponds and remains in an undeveloped pristine state. Parts of Great and long ponds are also seen in the distance (~ 0.4 miles each way)
- **Kennebec Highlands Round Top** – As part of the Kennebec Highlands Public Reserved Land, the Round Top trail offers several spectacular views of the surrounding landscape of lakes and mountains (~3.3-mile network)
- **Kennebec Highlands Sanders Hill** – The Sanders Hill Trail, also part of the Kennebec Highlands Reserved Land, offers moderate hiking along the ridgeline of Sanders Hill. Views include granite slabs, boulders, and rock fields demonstrating the glacial history of the area (~3.0-mile loop).

The Kennebec Highlands is an approximately 6,000-acre public reserved land unit, with 4000 of those acres in Rome, managed by the Maine Bureau of Parks and Lands. Located in northwest Kennebec County and southeastern Franklin County, the Kennebec Highlands includes Kennebec County's highest elevations including McGaffey and Vienna mountains, numerous streams and wetlands, and five undeveloped ponds. The entire reserve contains a

wide variety of Natural Resources and offers visitors a diverse selection of recreational opportunities depending on the season.

The Seven Lakes Alliance maintains a trail system, with additional trails planned, aimed at promoting conservation and accessibility to people of all ages. Beyond the Mount Phillip and Mountain Trail, the Seven Lakes Alliance Trail System maintains the Round Top and Sanders Hill Kennebec Highlands trails, the “A” trail on McGaffey Mountain, and the Fogg Island Trail.

Snowmobiling

The Maine Snowmobile Association and the statewide Interconnected Trail System have a club sponsored and maintained trail network that helps oversee some of Maine’s 14,000 miles of snowmobile trails. Rome contains 27 miles of snowmobiling trail connecting users of the Rome trails with 5 neighboring towns and a section of the Interconnected Trail System 87. The Rome Ruff Riders meet monthly and maintain the Rome trails throughout the year. The Ruff Riders work to keep the trail system open, marked, and groomed for the enjoyment of all riders. These trails can also be used for cross country skiing.

Hunting/Fishing

The Belgrade Lakes region provides a variety of excellent fishing opportunities. Species include Brook Trout, Splake, Togue (Lake Trout), Landlocked Salmon, Brown Trout, Rainbow Trout, Smallmouth Bass, Largemouth Bass, Lake Whitefish, and Arctic Charr.

While much of the privately owned land in Rome is posted the public reserve lands are open to hunting with deer and turkeys in the area. Rome is in the State’s any deer permit area 16. The lakes and brooks in the area provide excellent duck hunting opportunity as well.

Cycling and Walking

There are no designated bike paths or bike lanes in Rome. Furthermore, pedestrian infrastructure, like sidewalks, is also nonexistent. While walking and hiking trails are available in Rome, cycling infrastructure is limited in scope. Route 27 has a lined shoulder which is minimally safer for bicycle use and some of the camp roads can be used for cycling also with permission.

Others

There is a Disc Golf facility in Rome on the Mercer Road.

For the less active nature seeker

One of the best overlooks in the area can be driven to. It is Blueberry Hill accessible from Watson Pond Road. This overlook provides an excellent view of Long Pond and the village of Belgrade Lakes. Great Pond is also seen in the distance.

Perhaps the best view in the entire area is from the Belgrade Lakes Golf Course parking lot. This high point provides breathtaking views of the lakes and highpoints in the surrounding area.

A significant portion of Maine is accessible by easy day trips from the Belgrade Lakes area. This includes the coastal towns from Bar Harbor all the way to Portland, white water rafting on the Kennebec River and even a ride on the old Log Drive working boat Katahdin now providing scenic trips on Moosehead Lake.

Planning Concerns and Issues:

ADA Accessible Hiking Trail

The area is lacking a fully ADA accessible, easily traveled hiking trail. This would be a trail free of roots and rocks and other tripping sources, being wide, firm, and flat.. This trail should be wide enough to be fully accessible to all ages and abilities. If the area has accessible trails, it would be attractive to many new users and for uses such as small bicycles, tricycles, strollers walkers, wheelchairs and general exercise for the less able-bodied, as well as veterans visiting the Travis Mills Foundation.

Rome is also investigating the possibility of developing a park for its residents. One of the functions being proposed for the park is a simple accessible walking trail as described above. This was one of the most proposed functions requested by residents completing a questionnaire on the topic of a Rome park in 2021. Which can be found in the Appendix [HERE](#).

Mountain Bike Trails

The hilly terrain of the Rome reserved lands is ideal for development of off-road Mountain Bike trails. Any opportunities should be considered in the future to potentially develop this as recreation resource for the town and the region.

PART SEVEN: LAND USE AND DEVELOPMENT

Community Overview:

Rome is very much a rural town between the larger regional service centers of Skowhegan, Waterville, Farmington and Augusta. As such, it contains very few elements of institutional, commercial and industrial development, and is principally residential and rural land uses. The town consists of a few very sparse village areas but otherwise it is waterfront residential development that makes the majority of development in the town around the three major ponds. Most other development is lightly scattered on the main road corridors through the town.

Rome has always been a predominately agricultural community with some early industry during the 19th Century into the 20th, with sawmills and tanneries that utilized waterpower where it was available. This history meant there was never a concentrated urban core but a few very small village centers.

By having a small but reasonably stable population up until the 1970's, Rome has managed to avoid much of the sprawl and strip development characterized in much of central Maine. Population growth of the last 50 years has been concentrated on waterfront residential development. The distance away from I-95 has meant there are no commercial clusters that are often associated with interchanges in a town.

The [Existing Land Use Map](#) (See Map Appendix) shows the way the land is developed in a general sense with the red area showing “denser” development that are generally residential and commercial or nonresidential clusters. This shows how undeveloped the town really is with the vast majority being forested land.

The town does not have any formal land use regulations except for the traditional State mandated Shoreland Zones but with some tougher conditions on development to help maintain water quality in the ponds. Other regulations include the Minimum Lot Size Ordinance, Commercial Development Review, Floodplain management and Subdivision Ordinances.

As there are no formal land use zones / districts the following are general descriptions of the current land use layout of the town:

Residential Development:

This is generally clustered in the village areas but also mainly follows along the main routes and roads of town as well as being most prevalent on the Lake and Pond shorelines. There are no particular areas of dense development outside the village areas that are a threat to the rural area or natural resources.

Industrial and Commercial Development:

Rome, like many colonial towns, developed some water-powered industrial locations surrounded by farm and forestland. Over the years, since World War II, Rome has seen any real industry ebb away and has not replaced it with the retail trade or service businesses. It has become somewhat of a "bedroom" community of the region. The town has no real competitive advantage in transportation to attract business development.

In the case of commercial growth, the few major businesses tend to locate with easy access to Route 27. Many smaller enterprises, such as home occupations and single-person businesses, can also be found along all main rural roads.

Looking ahead, it seems logical that if there are any development opportunities, they will be on the 27 corridor, especially the southwest area of town, the junction with route 225 to the north is another area that is more likely for development. The only other area may be at the northeast area of town on 225 near Rome Town Beach area and Fire Station.

There is very little-known opportunity for water dependent uses such as public and private boat launches, boat and other watercraft rentals/marinas, visitor centers for commerce and/or educational purposes. Almost all the Lake and Pond frontage is accounted for with hardly any suitable lots for sale.

The Institutional and Service Sector:

There are very few businesses within Rome that provide services to people throughout the town and region. There is also little in the way of healthcare, insurance, or financial services available in Rome. There is no pressure on educational use as there are none of the district's schools located in town. If the town is so inclined it should be noted that economic development and an attractive, thriving community work hand-in-hand. Having access to an educated workforce looking for work when leaving education is attractive to companies looking to relocate.

Retail Development Patterns:

Like many small rural towns in the region, Rome has experienced a gradual but steady decline in its retail sector since the interstate was built. Numerous highway-oriented businesses, particularly fast food and retail chains have chosen to locate in larger communities, closer to the interstate where they have increased traffic numbers. The competition has not really affected Rome in so much as there was always little in the way of retail to begin with, but it means there are no options within town.

Rome is of course, not a town comprised of fast-food chains and may have a chance to try and develop some unique retail options with a specific appeal. There is an opportunity to consciously formulate the future character and direction of the village areas, and to develop even more attractive entrances to Rome. The Town is faced with a challenge and opportunity -- to find a way to reconfigure its denser areas to take advantage of the link between needed goods and services and the number of consumers within Rome's market area, particularly those many who pass through town or are coming to visit the lakes and ponds in town. The village centers can be the hubs of the community, as well as critical contributors to the minimal retail sector.

The Village Areas:

In Rome the term village area still does not mean much in the way of dense development, but more area with a noticeable feel of a cluster of housing etc. As such there are a few candidate areas that could be loosely termed as village that have potential to act as little core areas:

Area

1. The area at the junction of Mercer Road and 225 where Municipal Offices are located.
2. The area on Rt 225 where the speed limit is reduced around the east side Fire Station, Church, and Town Beach .
3. The area close to the town line with Belgrade on the Route 27 Peninsular.

All village areas are shown on the Existing Land Use Map.

Rome's minor villages are vestiges of an earlier development pattern, albeit fairly healthy ones. Each village is characterized by a mix of cultural, commercial, and residential buildings. Some have greater potential for new development than others, based on available land.

Area 1 is likely to remain an active area of the community with the Community Center / Town Offices and recreation area. The municipal building could be improved and expanded here as well as a potential for a new or expanded west side Fire Station complex.

Area 2 is a pleasant area with an old church, fire station and access to the Rome Town Beach on Great Pond. There may be some opportunity for housing development. This village area is likely the busiest in terms of developed space and economic vitality and presents the best opportunity for potential growth.

Area 3 is a more highly trafficked route in and out of town and its proximity to the lake and Belgrade Village means there is some opportunity for commercial development but there is also not much land due to the water of the pond surrounding the area.

Rome's Rural-Urban Balance:

Unsurprisingly, according to the 2010 Census, 100 percent of Rome's population lives in a rural area. Considering that the urban area is considered “densely developed residential, commercial and other nonresidential areas” that does not seem out of line. Traditionally this would be a way to try and track the balance of people who live on town services such as the water and sewer district, but this is not applicable to Rome with its lack of such service.

The only strain that might be noticeable is on the remaining major public facility -- and the one with the greatest public investment -- the transportation system. The further people move from the centers of commerce and activity, the more miles they put on public roads.

Public sewer and water service would also be affected if Rome was to have a publicly run system, but this seems far from likely at this point in time.

Open Space:

Any growth in housing in the rural area, while significant, is usually limited to road frontage and diminished by the sheer size of the town itself. If we assume an average of 1.5 acres per home, the total area of rural Rome devoted to housing would amount to about 2.4 square miles, out of a total rural area of about 30. The remaining land is undeveloped.

Undeveloped Land Acreage

Tree Growth	2,484
Farm & Open Space	968
Conserved Lands	3,475

Above is the major portion of undeveloped land in Rome. It does not include several tracts of forest or farmland but does indicate a general pattern (see [Existing Land Use Map](#)). Tree Growth accounts for 8% of the rural land base whilst about 18% is in conserved land.

There is a good deal of officially conserved land in Rome which can be said to be permanently undeveloped. Tree Growth and Farm/open space land is preserved by tax policy and could be developed if tax policy or development values change significantly. As seen on the map,

there is only development along the roadways in town and by the lake/pond shores, so open space does not seem to be in any short supply whatsoever. The only pressure seems to be for residential development on the shore of the ponds as this is a finite resource that is almost fully used.

Subdivision Development:

New subdivisions tend to reflect patterns in development. Subdivisions are regulated in Rome by its Subdivision ordinance. There were no subdivisions recently, the last being Foss Hill in 2018.

Like some communities there are some existing amounts of subdivided house lots that still have not been built upon.

This shows that there has been little interest or need in concentrated residential development using subdivisions to create residential lots. This may have been due to the housing market crash making it a poor choice at the beginning of the decade and no real demand for these types of developments growing as the economy improved.

Patterns of Recent Development:

Town officials and residents could not characterize any real patterns of development where there were particular types concentrated in particular areas. The majority was residential and small commercial operations that are spread throughout town with no real identifiable areas. This is common in Rome where development seems to slowly appear in at a small scale throughout town, not in particular village areas for example. The waterfront areas see the most activity as residents look to improve their properties on the pond shores.

Current Land Use Regulations:

Rome has very little in the way of formal Land Use Regulation as a town.

There is a minimum lot size ordinance which mandates the following:

- Minimum lot size of one acre
- Minimum road frontage of 200 linear feet on either a public or private road
- Minimum shore frontage, if any, of 200 feet.
- The ratio of lot depth to lot width shall not be more than three to one (3 to 1)
- There shall not be more than one single family dwelling per lot. Multiple family dwellings shall have a minimum lot size of one acre per dwelling unit.
- Structure Setback Requirements: The minimum structure setback from front, side, and rear property boundary lines is 15 feet. Structure shall mean anything built for the

support, shelter or enclosure of persons, animals, goods or property of any kind, together with anything constructed or erected with a fixed location on or in the ground, exclusive of fences, utility poles, signs, parking lots, landscaping, mailboxes and similar items.

- No building permit shall be issued for a structure located on slopes greater than 20% unless the following conditions are met:
 - The structure is located outside the Shoreland Zone
 - A septic system capable of serving the structure can be installed on the lot
 - The applicant will take steps to minimize erosion and sediment runoff from the site through grading and construction methods.
 - The structure is setback an additional 15' from the down-slope property line for each 5% of grade above 20%

Rome's Shoreland Zoning Ordinance is based on simple State mandated shoreland zoning but adds some additional regulations to try and help protect the water quality of the ponds.

Lot requirements include lot size or area [principal structures (residential): 40,000 square feet; principal structures (commercial) 60,000 square feet] and shore frontage (200 feet-residential and 300 feet-commercial), in the Resource Protection, Stream Protection, and Shoreland Districts.

New commercial/industrial development and expansions require a Conditional Use permit that carries additional requirements.

Rome's Subdivision ordinance follows the standard State guidelines as well as having a Commercial Development Review Ordinance for regulating larger scale developments that are non-residential.

All of these regulations combined do little in the way of targeting certain types of growth to certain areas so the town as it stands has next to no real direct influence over Land Use Development in a spatial sense.

Threats to Land Use:

Solar Development is a Statewide issue that could potentially threaten open and conserved space, as well prime agricultural land and negatively effecting the desired rural character of Rome.

PART EIGHT:

BUSINESS AND THE ECONOMY

Highlights of the Economic Profile:

- The town of Rome is not a well-recognized employment center for the area, due to many other larger communities nearby. The majority of Rome's workers commute to out-of-town jobs, while around 150 non-residents commute into town to work. Very few of the jobs in the labor market area are in Rome.
- In 2020, Rome had a labor force of 478 workers, with essentially a 50/50 women to men ratio. It averages out to 1.16 workers per household.
- Rome's unemployment rate during most of the 2000's averaged around four to five percent. The rate grew to a high of 8.1 percent during the national recession in 2009-2010, but has been slowly dropping back since then, standing at about 2.9 percent in 2018, effectively full employment. The recent effects of the pandemic have seen rates rise again.
- Rome has a small mix of commercial employers and no real industrial employers, with the numerous Camps (Bear spring, Travis Mills, Pine Tree) being the largest. Health care and education industries are by far the town's residents' largest employers. About 70 percent of workers are in the private sector, either self-employed (6.4 percent) or working for wages (70 percent). Almost 25 percent work in the public sector.
- The town faces challenges familiar to the region of maintaining an economic base for its residents and prevent any more decline in jobs and serve the continued growing population.

Introduction:

As with many central Maine communities in recent times, Rome has had a challenge with regard to economic development, in most industry sectors. The Historic Profile outlines the active role that community leaders and citizens in general have played in purposefully attracting employment and tax base to Rome throughout its history. These efforts continue to this day, as the Town must try to keep up with shifts in economic activity that has shifted from manufacturing and agriculture to a more service-oriented economy, as well as changes in retail consumption patterns.

This chapter seeks to describe current conditions, outline Rome's role in the regional economy, identify the town's economic development assets, examine visible trends and areas of need, incorporate public sentiment and lay out a direction and strategy to guide the Town's economic development efforts for the foreseeable future.

Education: The Foundation of Economic Growth:

The contemporary job market is competitive and demands a high skill level from each worker. The loss of unskilled manufacturing jobs, the growing importance of the global economy, and rapid advances in technology have made education a necessity for today's workforce. The level of educational attainment is a measure of the ability of the community to sustain economic growth.

Educational Attainment: 2000 to 2020

	Rome 2000	Rome 2020	Kennebec County 2000	Kennebec County 2020	Maine 2020
Total adults 25 and older	682	816	79,362	90,553	1,015,078
Less than 9 th grade	26 (3.8%)	44 (5.4%)	4,528 (5.7%)	2,477 (2.7%)	19,053 (1.9%)
9 th to 12 th grade no diploma	45 (6.6%)	26 (3.2%)	7,183 (9.1%)	3,193 (3.5%)	36,492 (3.6%)
High school graduate	230 (33.7%)	275 (33.7%)	29,882 (37.7%)	31,621 (34.9%)	300,595 (29.6%)
Some college, no degree	146 (21.4%)	139 (17%)	15,143 (19.1%)	17,667 (19.5%)	186,486 (18.4%)
Associate degree	78 (11.4%)	77 (9.4%)	6,224 (7.8%)	7,269 (8%)	107,147 (10.6%)
Bachelor's degree	103 (15.1%)	142 (17.4%)	10,397 (13.1%)	18,844 (20.8%)	224,987 (22.2%)
Graduate/professional degree	54 (7.9%)	113 (13.8%)	6,005 (7.6%)	9,482 (10.5%)	140,318 (13.8%)

Source: 2000 Census, 2020 ACS

According to the table above, the town has generally improved its educational level in the past 20 years. The number of persons with a college degree increased to 142, showing a growing percentage of the population. Compared with Kennebec County, the town is ahead, with relatively more 4-year college graduates and a generally lower percentage with high school or less education.

On a larger scale view, the number of persons with post-secondary degrees both in Kennebec County and Rome are lower than most of the New England States. Taken together with the declining number of young persons in the state, that creates problems for new enterprises especially in the high-tech fields. The shortage of younger workers with advanced degrees will make it difficult to attract new high wage jobs. Strategies to retain young people and attract them back into the state are necessary along with strategies to increase the educational attainment of the existing labor force whenever possible. Much of the task of increasing educational levels falls on the state or the school systems, but some – such as increasing the availability of affordable housing for young people – can be affected at the municipal level.

Income as a Measure of Economic Stability:

Building a good economy is all about raising the standard of living of the community. Income levels are a good standard of measurement. The table below compares Rome's income profile over the recent past to that of Kennebec County on average. The next table shows how Rome's median household income compares to our neighbor towns.

General Income Data for Kennebec County and Rome

	Rome 2000	Rome 2019	Kennebec 2000	Kennebec 2019
Per capita income	\$21,355	\$32,749	\$18,520	\$32,418
Median household income	\$42,344	\$59,583	\$36,498	\$55,389
Median family income	\$46,635	\$73,500	\$43,814	\$76,956
Percentage below poverty level	11.0%	16.9%	11.1%	11.8%
Persons under 18 below poverty level	9.9%	27%	13.5%	13.2%
Persons 65 and older below poverty level	13.3%	7.1%	10.2%	9.5%
Families below poverty level	7.0%	13.4%	8.5%	6.4%

Source: 2000 Census, 2019 ACS

Rome's median household income has risen by over \$17,000 since 2000. However, that comes to 2.14 percent per year, just the rate of inflation over that period (2.11%). Kennebec County's income rose 2.72 percent per year. Rome's median family income rose 3.03 percent over the period, meaning family incomes grew substantially faster than non-families. Since most non-families are elderly people, the increase in that age group has probably accounted

for much of the reduction in income growth. However, even though the poverty level among children has risen greatly in 19 years, the poverty level among elderly has actually dropped.

Median household income is the basic measure of income levels. It measures the revenue, from all sources, for all members of a household, with the “median” being the point at which half of all households make more, half make less.

2019 Median Household Income Comparison

Location	Median Income	Location	Median Income
State of Maine	\$58,924	Kennebec County	\$55,389
Rome	\$59,583	Waterville	\$38,862
Belgrade	\$87,500	Augusta	\$43,796
Mount Vernon	\$60,938	Smithfield	\$70,924
Vienna	\$60,069	Mercer	\$51,190

Source: 2019 ACS

In the Rome Region, only Mercer has household income under the statewide average. Waterville and Augusta have substantially lower incomes, but that can be inferred by the ratio of smaller and rental housing units and different demographics.

The next table below shows a breakdown by income cohort. A little under one in ten Rome households have incomes less than \$15,000 per year, which is a concern. Another nine percent or so make less than \$25,000. On the high end, about one quarter of households have total income over \$100,000 per year. The majority lie in the \$50 to \$100K range.

2019 Household Income Ranges

Income Range	Households	Income Range	Households
Less than \$10,000	12 (2.9%)	\$50,000 to \$74,999	91 (22.4%)
\$10,000 to \$14,999	27 (6.6%)	\$75,000 to \$99,999	47 (11.5%)
\$15,000 to \$24,999	36 (8.8%)	\$100,000 to \$149,999	57 (14.0%)
\$25,000 to \$34,999	50 (12.3%)	\$150,000 to \$199,999	35 (8.6%)
\$35,000 to \$49,999	33 (8.1%)	\$200,000 and over	19 (4.7%)

Source: 2019 ACS

Rome's Role as Regional Employment Center:

Rome is not a particularly good source of labor for the region, with an estimated 455 townspeople working (employed in 2020 by State Records). As one can see from the table below, about 15% of Rome workers hold jobs in town, with the next largest number of workers coming from Mount Vernon, Lewiston and Augusta, that only represent a tiny amount of their total labor force. The majority come from numerous assorted towns combined. In total there are an estimated only 156 people working jobs within the town.

ROME'S ROLE AS A REGIONAL EMPLOYMENT CENTER				
Town of Residence	Employed Workers in 2018	Working in Rome in 2018	Percent Employed in Rome	2018 Unemployment Rate
Rome	471	70	14.9%	2.9 %
Mount Vernon	846	10	1.2%	2.9%
Lewiston	16,505	2	0.0%	3.3 %
Augusta	8,681	2	0.0%	3.0%
SOURCE: 2018 Civilian Labor Force Estimates, (Maine Department of Labor), 2018 U.S. Census ACS				

Where the vast majority of Rome residents go to work is illustrated below. The largest destination for work is, unsurprisingly, nearby Augusta with the other larger towns/cities picking up the majority of the rest. This supports the idea of Rome mainly as a “bedroom community” rather than an employment center itself, although it does quite well in terms of employing a reasonable percentage of its own workforce, being only below the large cities nearby.

Town of Employment	Coming from Rome in 2018	% of total workers commuting outside town
Augusta	81	18.6%
Waterville	33	7.6%
Farmington	25	5.7%
Mount Vernon	19	4.4%
Belgrade	18	4.1%
Oakland	18	4.1%
Portland	15	3.4%
Employing 10-13: Lewiston, Readfield, Winthrop, Skowhegan		
SOURCE: 2018 Civilian Labor Force Estimates,"; (Maine Department of Labor), 2018 U.S. Census		

The average commute took 35.4 minutes in 2010 and has stayed essentially the same 35.0 minutes in 2019, suggesting that no more residents may work in Rome now, or that commuting distances have not really changed as more employment opportunities are created within of the region.

Rome is part of the Augusta Labor Market Area (LMA), which is how most Department of Labor (DOL) statistics are organized. The Augusta Micropolitan LMA currently encompasses 22 towns, including the following though boundaries can change every ten years:

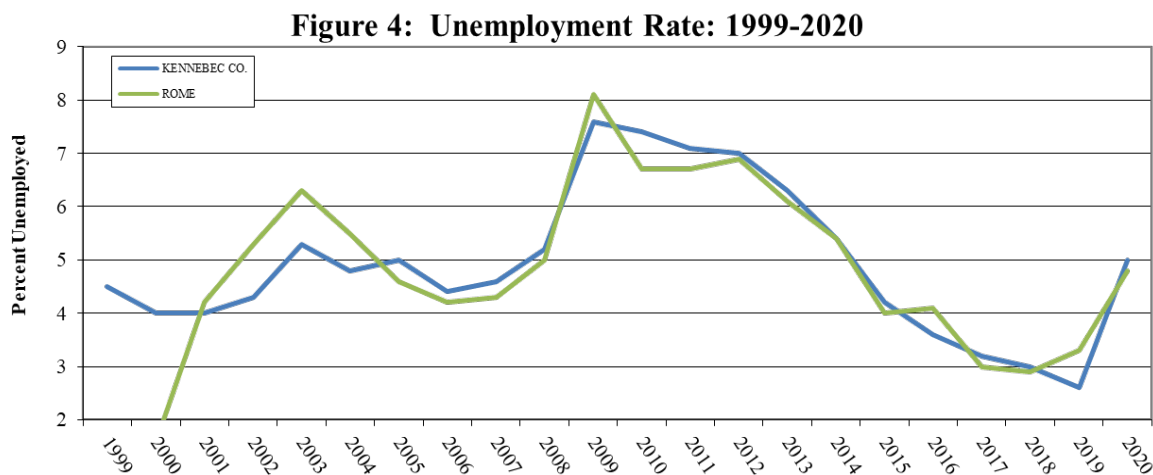
Augusta	Randolph
Belgrade	Readfield
Chelsea	Rome
Rome	Sidney
Farmingdale	Somerville
Gardiner	Vassalboro
Hallowell	Wayne
Manchester	West Gardiner
Mount Vernon	Whitefield
Palermo	Windsor
Pittston	Winthrop

The total labor force in the LMA, as of 2020, was 40,021, with Rome comprising only about 1.2 percent of the workers and even less of the employment. With Rome technically providing less than its fair share of employment in the LMA, it is perhaps surprising that the unemployment rate for the town and LMA are essentially the same at 4.8 - 4.9%.

Local Labor Force and Employment:

In 2019, Rome had a labor force of 474, according to the census. Census numbers are based on a statistical estimate; Department of Labor numbers are considered more accurate and its estimate for 2020 was 478. The total working age population (over 16) is 774. The census provided that those in the labor force contains an estimated 240 males and 234 females. That is 61.2 percent of all working-age males and females. (The census defines “working-age” as everyone over 16 years of age, regardless of whether they are retired.) That is an average of 1.16 workers for every household. In 79 percent of households with children, both parents worked.

The recent history of the unemployment rate in Rome and in Kennebec County is illustrated in the graph below. Both lines follow the statewide and, indeed, national trends in the economy. The recession beginning in 2008 interrupted what was a reasonable stable trend. Rome’s unemployment rate has been slightly above that of Kennebec County through the recent past. Rome’s unemployment rate climbed to 8.1 percent in 2009 but fell back to 2.9 percent in 2018. Both rates have started to rise in 2020 due to the effects of the global pandemic.



The census categorizes workers by the type of industry they work in (table below) and their occupation (table overleaf). “Industry” refers to the type of business they are employed in and is a good measure of the strength of various industrial sectors. “Occupation” refers to the type of job a worker does, and may indicate trends in education, salary levels, and opportunities for future growth.

INDUSTRIAL CLASSIFICATION OF ROME WORKERS IN 2019		
Industrial Sector	Number of Workers	Percent of Workforce
Agriculture, forestry and fisheries	7	1.5%
Construction	45	9.9%
Manufacturing	35	7.7%
Transportation, Warehousing & Utilities	29	6.4%
Wholesale trade	20	4.4%
Retail trade	41	9.0%
Information Services	7	1.5%
Insurance, Real Estate, Finance	11	2.4%
Professional, Scientific, Management	19	4.2%
Education and Health care	201	44.1%
Entertainment and recreation services	11	2.4%
Other services	4	0.9%
Public Administration	26	5.7%
Source: American Community Survey (2019)		

A diversity of employment opportunities available to area residents is reasonable for the community. In 2019, employment in the education and health care industries led the way by a large margin; two other sectors – construction and, retail – were the next largest groups. This is quite consistent with national trends, where any form of service-based economy is on the rise. With local schools and hospitals in the area, an increasing number of jobs in education and health-related occupations are likely to remain available. Employment in the construction sector is also a good sign as there is currently a good demand for such work.

Almost half of Rome's workers are in an Education or Healthcare occupation assuming they work in the local school system or nearby hospitals and health systems. There is a similar significant amount employed in management and professional positions which are usually the higher salaried jobs. It would be useful to determine which of occupational categories is changing over time, but the census bureau shuffles them every few years to account for new occupations arising.

OCCUPATION OF ROME WORKERS IN 2019		
OCCUPATION	No. of Workers	Percent of Workforce
Managerial and Professional	221	48.5%
Sales and Administrative	95	20.8%
Service Occupations	52	11.4%
Natural Resources or Construction	45	9.9%
Production, Transportation	43	9.4%
Source: American Community Survey (2019)		

One notable figure is the manufacturing jobs which have decreased by 22 jobs over the last 19 years, following regional and national trends.

Among Rome workers, 69 percent are employed in the private sector as wage or salary workers, and another

6.4 percent are self-employed. A substantial 24.6 percent work in the public sector.

Local Business:

The town has created this informal directory of local businesses. It may be useful to residents to make it available on the town website. The current list is as follows:

Business Name	Business Address
Auto Service/Maintenance	
DiPietro Antique Auto & Restoration	Augusta Rd., Rome
Accommodations (A) and Public Dining (D)	
Bear Spring Camps (A)	60 Jamaica Point Rd., Rome
Taconnet on Great Pond (A)	Joyce Island, Rome
The Village Inn & Tavern* (A,D)	157 Main St., Belgrade Lakes
Childcare	
Country Kids Daycare	52 Ladd Rd., Rome
Cleaning Services & Supply	
B's Home Service	

Cinderella Cleaning Service	Drury Ln., Rome
Maine Paper Solutions	256 Watson Pond Rd., Rome
Positively Clean (Paula Giguere)	Crystal Spring Ln., Rome
Construction/Building Contractor	
Integrity Builders	Augusta Rd., Rome
Jr's Drywall	Rome Rd., Rome
Kevin Hawes Excavation, Logging & Firewood	652 Manchester Rd., Belgrade
Mike Long Builder	37 Watson Pond Rd., Rome
Rick Labbe Construction	Village Rd., Smithfield
Farmer Market/ Arts/ Artisan	

Designs by Sparrow Studio	28 Augusta Rd., Rome
Harvest Thyme at Rome Farm	87 Augusta Rd., Rome
Mary's Gemstone Jewelry	455 Wooster Hill Rd., Rome
Mum G's Soap Box	3 Wentworth Pl., Rome
Stoney End Farm	441 Mercer Rd., Rome
Trees to Please*	111 Smithfield Rd., Norridgewock
Marijuana Retail	
Sticky Diamond, LLC	55 Rome Rd., Rome
Marine – Repair & Storage	
Belgrade Boat Shop*	769 Oakland Rd., Belgrade
Carter's Marine & Storage*	15 Sahagian Rd., Belgrade Lakes
Plumbing & Heating	
LaBelle Plumbing, Inc.	256 Jamaica Point Rd., Rome
Jay Salisbury Plumbing & Heating	539 Rome Rd., Rome
Real Estate	
F.A. Rizzo Appraisal	151 Augusta Rd., Rome
Lakepoint Real Estate*	221 Main St., Belgrade Lakes
Recreation	
Belgrade Lakes Disc Golf	311 Mercer Rd., Rome
Self-Storage	
Stony End Self Storage	441 Mercer Rd., Rome
Trash Removal	
Michael Burnham	855 Watson Pond Rd., Rome
Patriot Waste Disposal	297 North Pond Rd., Rome

Tree Service/Removal	
Arbormore Tree Service	82 Mercer Rd., Rome
The Tree Man (Paul LaBonte)	36 Rome Rd., Rome
Wellness, Health & Beauty	
Belgrade Regional Health Center	4 Clement Way, Belgrade
Comeford Chiropractic Center	34 Augusta Rd., Rome
Dockside Physical Therapy*	47 Main St., Belgrade Lakes
Langston Ware Exercise Program Design & Personal Training	11 Jamaica Point Rd., Rome
Worship, Places of	
Rome Baptist Church	480 Rome Rd., Rome
St. Helena's Roman Catholic	Main St., Belgrade Lakes
Union Church of Belgrade Lakes	67 Main St., Belgrade Lakes
Miscellaneous Services	
Pine Tree Camp	114 Pine Tree Camp Rd.
Sheila Foss, Avon Sales Rep	558 Rome Rd., Rome
Travis Mills Foundation	1002 Watson Pond Rd.

The Town's businesses are eligible for membership in the Mid Maine Chamber of Commerce and there is also a Belgrade Lakes Business group.

The largest private employer is likely one of the Camps in town, for example Pine Tree Camps who, each summer hire 90 seasonal staff. The summer staff is a combination of local high school/colleges aged students and some international staff. They currently have 6 full time employees. Their goal for Pine Tree Camp has been to transition to providing year-round programming. They will be hiring at least 4 more year-round staff in 2022. Their season staff currently work from May to the end of October and then come in on a part time basis for their winter and early spring programming (15 staff). Pine Tree Camp is a program of the Pine Tree Society. Their organization has nine separate programs that serve children and adults with disabilities all over the state. The Pine Tree Society currently has 120 employees in total.

The greatest concentration of commercial activity might just be the area at the village line with Belgrade but there are no other clusters of business, and they are all dispersed throughout town.

Local Opportunities:

Opportunities for more significant growth may include agriculture, wood products, gravel pit materials, tourism and recreation services, and other similar industries. It is also expected that more people will continue to work from home, taking advantage of high-speed internet connections and new technology. As demographic trends suggest, the number of jobs in the education sector may subside or remain stable, but those in the healthcare sector are expected to increase significantly as the baby boomer generation ages.

There is a general identified need for a small general store and potentially more commercial lodging opportunities and campsites. Restaurants utilizing the lakeshore with the ability to host larger events and do catering would be a nice thing to see in town.

Business and Economic Development Issues:

Rome would like to be seen as its own sperate community with its own distinct identity, not just be considered an anonymous part of the Lakes Region. The town could market itself as the gateway to the Lakes and also be known and visited on its own merits.

Town ordinances should be reviewed to make sure they are not burdensome to new business development or expansion.

Finally, the town lacks a lot of physical infrastructure such as water and sewer service etc. that might attract more substantial development.

Regional Economic Trends:

Traditional Manufacturing

The Augusta and Waterville Labor Market Areas have both experienced the closing of traditional manufacturing facilities over the past twenty years. The Hathaway Shirt Factory (Waterville), Scott/Kimberly-Clark Paper Mill (Winslow), and the American Tissue Plant (Augusta) are examples of the decline of this sector. The demands of a global economy will continue to place pressure upon existing manufacturing operations.

The Big Box Retail Trend

The construction of WalMarts, Home Depots, and other large retail stores in the region and the state has signaled a major shift in our retail economy. The big box stores, so named for their size and exterior design, are often called category killers because they put similar retail operations out of business, so much so that even businesses in Rome are affected by Augusta stores. Typically, only small convenience stores or specialty shops seem able to maintain a presence in the face of this level of competition.

The Lure of the Service Center

Over the past thirty years, the majority of new regional commercial opportunities have located in Farmington, Augusta or Waterville. This is not limited to the big box sector or traditional manufacturing. Local services, such as medical and financial services are centralizing. This has occurred at the same time as the customer base – in the form of the general population – has moved from the urban places out into suburban and rural towns.

Full Employment

Overall, the state and the Augusta region are experiencing a low unemployment rate. Even lower unemployment rates occur along the coast and the southern portions of the state. Despite manufacturing plant closings and slow job growth, unemployment rates have varied from a low of 3 percent to a high of 7 percent in past years. Companies may not move to the area because there are a lot of people waiting for work; they are more likely to move here because they know they can outcompete existing employers on wages and lure new workers with relatively cheap housing. Recent trends have shown a labor issue with many companies struggling to find employees.

Industrial Sector Analysis:

As outlined in the History section of this Plan, Rome, like most colonial towns, grew up around the Lake and lived with some water-powered industrial activities where available surrounded by farm and forestland. Over the years, the industrial base has continued to decline, Rome has turned increasingly to some service businesses as the town became one of the "bedroom" communities of the region.

The largest industrial operations in the immediate area are Sappi Mill, Hutahmaki and Verso Paper in Jay.

Other industrial enterprises include Hammond Lumber and Gagne's Stone both located in Belgrade.

Service Sector Analysis:

The town has very little in the way of service businesses but what there is listed in the directory in this chapter.

Retail Sector Analysis:

The retail sector in the community is also minimal with options being outside of the towns boundaries. A gas station and small general convenience store would be welcomed in town as previously existed in the hollow.

Economic Development Strategy:

The town has little capacity to actively work on economic development, but it might consider a volunteer committee to work to implement any recommendations of this plan.

Prospects for New Businesses and Services:

Important questions that must be addressed are what commercial and/or services are needed or desired to serve the community and what needs are not currently being served by local and regional commercial enterprises?

These questions need to be examined with awareness of existing market realities. Rome will almost certainly remain an agricultural and residential community whose character is defined by its proximity to larger cities in the region. It does however have the popular status in the region as we see through the continued population growth that could be harnessed. The community can, however, develop economically with a mix of local and regional services in a way that respects and enhances its character, especially in terms of the environment and water quality of all the waterbodies on the region.

Economic Strengths of the Town:

- The Town is part of the Augusta Labor Market Area that benefits from the employment stability afforded by the local schools, hospitals and the State Government in Augusta.
- The Town has easy access to both the Augusta and Waterville Labor Market Areas
- Regional services are available in Augusta, Waterville, Skowhegan and Farmington.
- We have a well-educated and trained workforce.
- The town has an attractive tax rate.

- The numerous ponds and the rural countryside offer an attractive economic potential.
- Cultural opportunities are available in the region. Portland and the Coast are both about an hour away and the Western Mountains are very accessible from Rome.
- The major commercial arterial (Route 27) has a reasonable traffic count along with other State Routes, connects to several I-95 interchanges.
- The school district of RSU 18 is well regarded and could continue to attract many families into the community.
- The town has little in the way of land use regulation that enables all areas for different types of development.
- The town is pretty much equidistant from Waterville, Skowhegan, Augusta and Farmington and gives many options for working and shopping in these service centers. Each has its own health systems that are major employers.

Economic Challenges:

- The Town lacks a defined community center or local business district.
- The community is bordered by a lot of water which limits access within the community.
- Municipal water and sewer are not available as well as very little other Municipal Services.
- The Town does not have a local economic development plan. The Town was involved in the First Park regional business park project but is in the process of withdrawal.
- Many of the local roads are posted in the winter/spring which prevents truck access to potential commercial locations. The State roads are open for travel.
- No access to natural gas pipeline and partial access to three phase power.
- The town has a high financial burden from its allocated local cost sharing to the School District, based on the formula being weighted toward valuation over pupils enrolled.

Projections and Land Use Implications:

It is difficult to do commercial and industrial projections with any degree of accuracy, but it is critical for the community to be clear about the type of growth it desires and have appropriate locations available to accommodate such growth.

There is definitely enough suitable and adequately spacious areas available for any anticipated commercial and industrial development within town.

The town lacks any land use districts to identify specific commercial and/or industrial development areas.

PART NINE: LOCAL HOUSING PROFILE

Highlights of the Housing Profile:

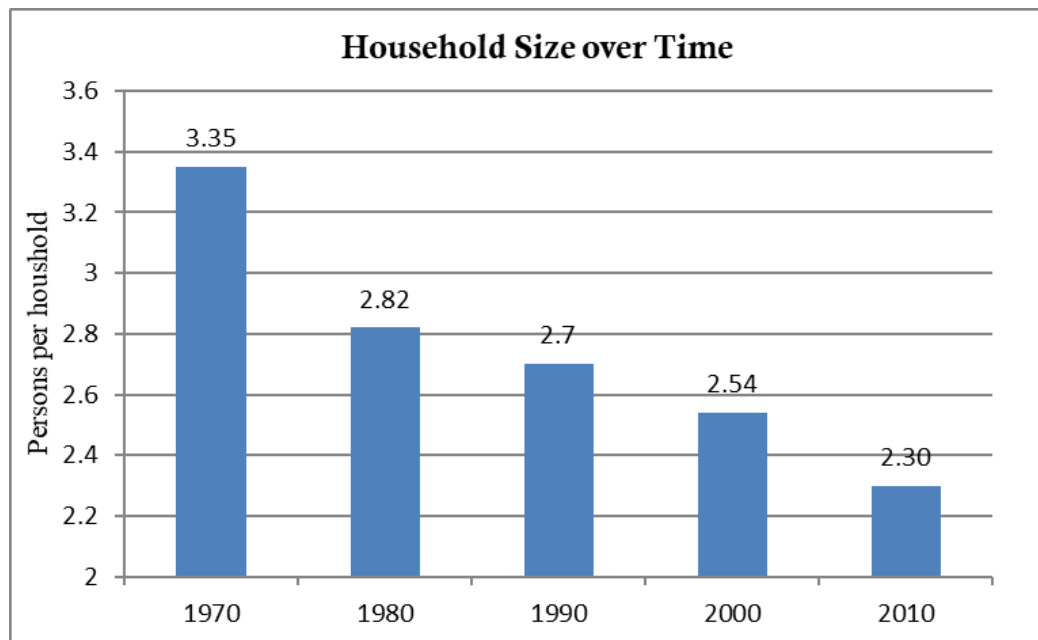
- Despite the steadily declining size of the average household, Rome's housing stock continues to grow to match population growth. The town has 406 more housing units now than in 1980, and 234 more households.
- Since 1980, the housing supply has grown by almost 70%; the vast majority of this growth as single-family units. There has been no real significant increase in multi-family units over the last 35 years.
- Around half of all the housing units in town are classified as seasonal due to the nature of housing on the shorefronts of the lakes and ponds in town. The vast majority of these seasonal homes serve as non-primary homes. The preponderance of this type of housing also means the costs of housing in the shoreland areas specifically is high and can skew the townwide averages.
- Local information via assessment records can show the distinction between shorefront property values and remaining (rural) housing unit values highlighting this is not necessarily an affordability problem but just differing areas of housing value.
- The housing stock is in generally good condition, it is newer than the average for Kennebec County.
- The value of residential property in Rome made a significant jump in the last decade of census data, from \$109,300 to \$168,800 for the median single-family home. The 2010 figure, however, was based on a sample that included some homeowners before the great price drop in 2008, so it may not be fully accurate. More recent Maine State Housing Authority (MSHA) data shows prices have increased much more to \$346,500 in 2020. As a result, homes in Rome – at least the average ones – are currently unaffordable for households' making 80 percent of median household income.
- At the same time that property values were going up, rents in Rome were also rising at a fast rate. The median monthly rent rose by only almost 50% percent, from \$475 in 2000 to \$710 in 2010. As with owner-occupied housing, rents are remaining unaffordable. According to the MSHA, approximately 50% of renter households are unable to afford the average 2-bedroom rent in the Rome Housing Market Area. This does not include seasonal rentals.
- Projections for growth in housing stock must account for continued decline in household size. Assuming a five percent smaller household in 2040, Rome will only need to add about 190 housing units, an average of 8 per year, to maintain its current population level. There

is no real housing pressure in this regard, but the types of housing (need for more single family / elderly units) may need to be considered.

- Local Records show 90 Dwelling permits issued between 2011 and 2021.

Rome's Housing: Supply and Demand

The purpose of housing is to provide residence for the population. The characteristics of the population drive the demand for housing, and vice versa. An aging population or a number of single-person households signals a demand for smaller housing units, while a surplus of large homes will naturally attract larger households. A community which does not respond to changes in housing demand is one that is likely to lose its population or change its character.



Source: US Census Bureau

“Average household size” is the number which connects the population with the demand for housing. As the chart above shows, the average number of persons in a household in Rome has been shrinking steadily. This is a national trend. Almost all social and economic factors favor smaller households – more independent living among youth and elderly, smaller families, and more single-parent families. While there are early indications that this trend may be reversing in some parts of the country, it has not yet done so in Rome.

What does this mean for housing demand? In short, fewer persons per household means more housing is needed for the same population. When the average household in Rome contained 3.35 persons in 1970, the town had only 108 occupied housing units. With the town gaining 648 residents in those 40 years since, it also shows 439 total households (331 more). Over a 40-year period, that averaged a little over 8 new homes per year. This is a household increase rate more or less matching the increase in individuals as with a household size of 2.30, 281 new housing units would have

covered the population increase. Overall, this indicates a notable decline in household size and potentially a decrease in housing vacancies as well as the large recent increase in population has required fewer new housing units to keep up with declining household size.

Of the 439 households in 2010, a little over two thirds of them (299) were families. The average family size was 2.67. A little over half were families with the traditional husband and wife. There were 18 (about 4%) being single-mother families. Another 106 households (about one-quarter) were single-person households. In 19 of these, the single occupant was over 65 years old. In 2000, 24 households were single and elderly.

The Housing Stock:

The supply, quality, and availability of housing in Rome is a factor in the overall growth and health of the town. Although town government has little control over the supply of housing, it is possible that any problems may be addressed at the municipal level. If a large proportion of housing is substandard, for example, or not energy-efficient, there are grants that the Town can use to help. If housing prices rise to the point where new houses are not affordable, that presents a whole new set of problems in getting people to move to town for the wages that are available.

The table below shows the development of housing by type since 1980. (There are some discrepancies, since the census changed its definition of seasonal unit in 1980.) The total number of housing units grew significantly between 1980 and 2020, with the biggest increase in the 80's when about 17 new houses per year were built. The 1990's saw the biggest jump in mobile homes – in fact almost a third of new homes in the 90's were mobile homes. (Since 1980, a little about 7.5 percent of all new homes have been mobile homes.) The numbers do not actually add up, with over 40% percent of the housing additions being seasonal. There could be some overlap, but the bottom line is that there were not many traditional stick-built homes built in the 2000's.

Rome Housing, by Type and Occupancy, 1970-2020

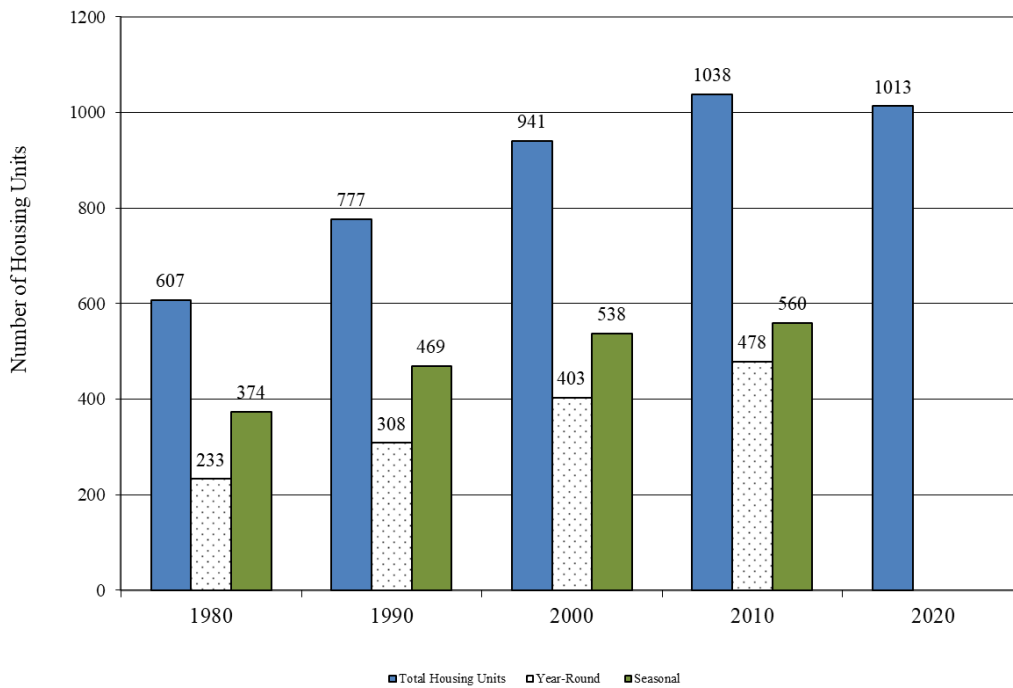
	1980	1990	2000	2010	2020
Total Housing Units	607	777	941	1,038	1,013
Occupied Housing Units	222	284	386	439	456
Vacant Housing Units	385	493	555	599	557
Seasonal Housing Units	374	469	538	560	n/a
Mobile Homes	68	49	98	101	n/a
Owner Occupied Housing	181	249	339	378	n/a
Renter Occupied Housing	41	35	47	61	n/a

Source: 1980, 1990, 2000, 2010 & 2020 Census

Unsurprisingly, Rome has a high percentage of seasonal units compared to many towns due to the lake and lots of lake frontage suitable for camps etc. This may make the seasonal population fluctuation an issue in Rome. Currently in Rome, if a property has a legal septic system, they would not need any permit to convert to year round use. However, the town has seen maybe as many as 30 requests per year for adding office space or additional bedroom which, in some, cases, could indicate a conversion to year-round use.

The number of vacant units may be a concern, although it has not increased dramatically in terms of numbers, it has been at around half of the total housing stock when accounting for seasonal vacancies. The rental vacancy rate is not available in an accurate way via census information but appears to be very low.

Housing by Type 1980-2010



There is no data directly addressing how many renters live in houses versus apartments, but there is data on how many units there are in a building. Using 2019 ACS, 400 are single-family homes (including mobile homes), which means only about 7 are units in a multifamily building. Some of those may be owner-occupied, leaving a very small number of single-family homes rented. Watson Pond Apartments (operated by Guerrette Properties) owns the largest rental property, complex of two buildings with a total of 12 units.

Very little statistical data exists on the *age and condition* of the town's housing stock. The census does ask questions such as how old a house is and whether it has modern plumbing and heating systems, but this is based on a statistical sample (formerly the "long form," now called the American Community Survey), and the samples are so small that in a town the size of Rome, the figure is little more than a guess.

The 2019 ACS indicates that 100% of Rome's occupied housing units met the standard criteria for complete plumbing facilities as well as complete kitchen facilities. In 2000 for comparison, seven of the Town's occupied housing units did not have complete plumbing facilities and nine did not have full kitchens. This is a common identifier used to determine the condition and quality of homes in a given community and good to see that it has been brought to zero.

The age of housing structures can often be used as an indicator of housing condition as well. While some old homes are structurally very sound, they may have inadequate wiring, inefficient insulation, and/or contain hazardous materials like lead paint. Homes built in the 1960's and 1970's tend to have inadequate insulation, whereas homes built more recently have mostly conformed to

modern building code requirements. In Rome via the 2019 estimates, 25 houses were built prior to the start of World War II (6.1% of all occupied housing stock). In Kennebec County, 23.9% of all homes were built before WWII. 56% of Rome's occupied housing units (228 homes) were built after 1980; in Kennebec County, that figure is 41.1%.

Age of Housing Units in Rome		
Year Structure Was Built	#	Percent of total
1939 or earlier	25	6.1%
1940-1959	28	6.9%
1960-1979	126	31%
1980-1999	126	31%
2000-2009	79	19.4%
2010-2013	16	3.9%
2014 or later	7	1.7%

2019 ACS

Price and Affordability:

The price and affordability of housing is often a significant factor in the economic life of a town. Housing prices are generally set by the open market, but if supply and demand get out of whack it can result in insufficient housing for prospective workers or residents relocating to another town because they cannot afford local housing.

The growth management goal for affordable housing states that ten percent of new housing should be affordable to households making less than 80 percent of the median household income. The goal leaves it up to towns to determine whether that ten percent should be as stick-built homes, or mobile homes or rentals or elderly apartments.

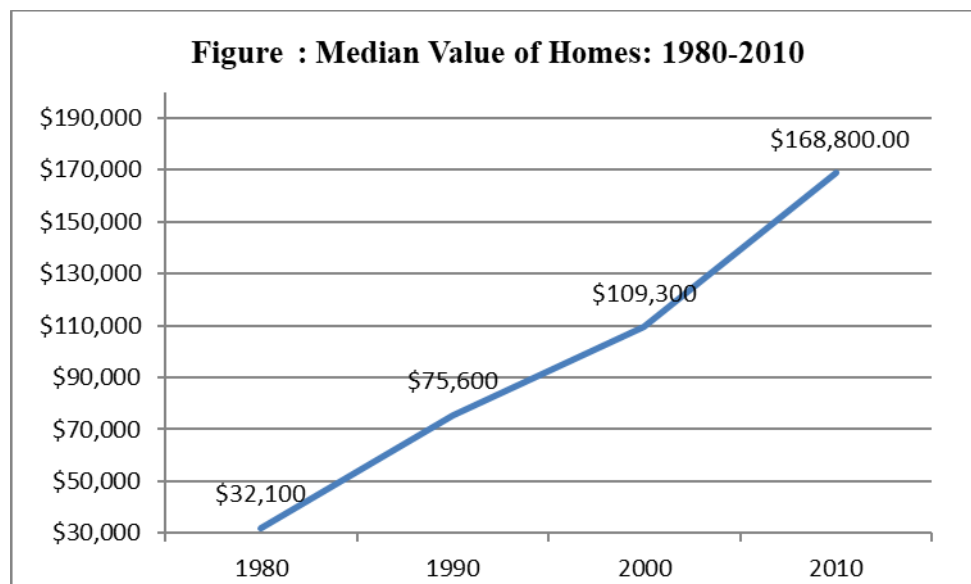
VALUE* OF OWNER-OCCUPIED HOUSING UNITS, 2000 and 2010

	2000	2010	Change
Median Value of Specified ² Housing Units	\$109,300	\$168,800	\$59,500 (54.4%)
Number of Units Valued at:			
Less Than \$50,000	18	41	23
\$50,000 - \$99,999	65	33	-32
\$100,000 - \$149,999	45	53	8
\$150,000 - \$199,999	21	64	43
\$200,000 - \$299,999	28	93	65
\$300,000 - \$499,999	7	33	26
\$500,000 - \$999,999	0	30	30
\$1mil +	2	12	10

SOURCE: U.S. Census

^{*/} "Value" is the census respondent's estimate of how much the property would sell for if it were for sale.

^{2/} "Specified" units exclude one-family houses on ten or more acres and units with a commercial establishment on the premises. In 2000, mobile homes were excluded as well, but not in 2010, accounting for the significant rise in housing counts.



The determination of whether housing is affordable begins with a discussion of cost. The census provides very good (though sample-sized) data regarding price of housing in Rome (see table below). This price is arrived at by owners' estimates of value, meaning it does not necessarily match up with actual recorded sales prices. According to the census, the median value of owner-occupied housing in 2010 was \$168,800. The rise in property values since 2000 was almost 54 percent, a substantial increase even considering the 28 percent inflation rate and the dip in home prices during the recession in this period. What is noticeable is the increase in higher priced properties (over \$200k) over these 10 years, presumably due to more growth and higher valuations of the shore front properties on waterfronts. Of course, more recent data will need to be studied as a result of the pandemic changing the housing market in Maine, increasing prices dramatically during 2020-2021. The following State data will highlight some of these recent changes:

Maine State Housing Authority (MSHA) tracks actual sales data, though it is sometimes out of date by the time it is published. According to MSHA, the median price (actual sales) of a home in 2020 was \$346,500. This represents more than a robust recovery from the slump in house prices after the 2008 recession and unprecedented recent trends due to the pandemic.

The median household income reported by the census in 2019 was \$59,583, making the threshold of 80 percent of median \$47,666. MSHA calculates an affordable home at various income levels, factoring in interest rates and other variables, and using the rule of thumb that a household should pay no more than 28 percent of its monthly income in housing costs. According to MSHA figures, an income that is at the median level (\$56,071 by their stats) should be able to afford a home priced at \$224,750. Also, the income needed to afford a median priced home is \$86,445. That means, in rough terms, anyone making the median income will in no way be able to afford a home in town. However, looking at the income distributions, it also shows that roughly three quarters of households are unable to afford the median price. Some 270 households or so fall into this category.

Rentals:

The table below shows changes over time in the cost and affordability of rental housing in Rome. The median rent charged increased by only 4.8 percent, a rate much lower than inflation and of the increase in home values. Somewhat oddly perhaps, there are now no rentals available for \$300 to \$500 a month, where there were available in 2000. Also, there are no units costing more than \$1000 plus a month whatsoever. More important are the figures on affordability. Affordable rental housing has declined, while the number of renters paying more than 30 percent of their income for rent has increased very significantly.

COST OF RENTER-OCCUPIED HOUSING UNITS, 2000 and 2010

	2000	2010	% Change
Median Monthly Rent Specified Renter-Occupied Units	\$475	\$710	49.5 %
# of Units With Cash Rent of:			
Under \$200	2	0	-100%
\$200 - \$299	2	0	-100%
\$300 - \$499	13	12	-7.7%
\$500 - \$749	10	50	400%
\$750 - \$999	4	11	175%
Rent as a Percentage of Household income:			
Less than 20 percent	7	18	157%
20 – 30 percent	9	15	66%
30 percent or more	15	40	166%
Source: US Census, American Community Survey (2000 / 2010)			

MSHA also tracks rental data. According to MSHA statistics, in 2020, the average two-bedroom rental in Rome's market area (Augusta Micropolitan Housing Area) was \$941. The income needed to afford that rent was \$37,646. By their calculations the renter's household median income is \$34,246 and able to afford a \$856 a month rent. That means that the average two-bedroom unit in Rome area is unaffordable though that data conflicts with the census data and takes into account Augusta and surrounding communities also.

Additionally, MSHA estimates that some 53.7% of renter households are unable to afford the average 2-bedroom rent in the Rome Area. Finally, according to MSHA, the average rent between 2017 and 2020 has increased by 3 percent, while the median income of renters increased by 8.1 percent. Therefore, it could be concluded that on the whole, renting is becoming a little easier in recent years.

Compared with surrounding communities and Kennebec County as a whole, Rome's housing prices appear to be lower. In 2020, median home values in neighboring communities ranged from \$199,900 in Mt Vernon to \$282,500 in Belgrade. The median value of homes in Kennebec County was \$194,000. The median rental cost in Kennebec County was \$985 per month, putting Rome's area below the average. The City of Augusta alone for comparison was \$982.

This does not include Seasonal rentals which will be a lot higher (short term rentals)

Provision of affordable housing options is assisted by MSHA programs. MSHA provides some state and federal options for buyers and renters.

There is just a few subsidized rent programs participating housing complex in Rome at present at the Watson Pond Apartments – with a small portion of the 12 units there.

Housing Location Trends:

Rome's character and identity is largely defined by its rural, agricultural countryside and waterbodies that define the landscape. This character does not currently appear threatened by large-scale development as Rome has retained much of its undeveloped land.

However, nationally and regionally, development over the past 40 years has been marked by sprawl. Large stores with large parking lots have been built on even larger lots, consuming valuable land and resources. What were once small towns on the urban periphery have blossomed into large centers of commerce. Rome has not seen any commercial sprawl, but housing sprawl could become notable especially in proximity to natural resources and potentially change the rural nature of the community.

In town there has been a real absence of Subdivisions – last major (more than 5 lots) was in 2012 – Foss Hill.

Local Building permits for new houses:

<i>2011 – 14</i>	<i>2018 – 9</i>
<i>2012 – 10</i>	<i>2019 – 6</i>
<i>2013 – 2</i>	<i>2020 – 7</i>
<i>2014 - 11</i>	<i>2021 – 11</i>
<i>2015 – 5</i>	<i>TOTAL = 90</i>
<i>2016 – 3</i>	
<i>2017 – 4</i>	

These new builds are split fairly equally between shoreland and rural areas. Most shoreland buildings are replacements on existing lots.

Projections:

Referring to the population projections in the Demographic Profile, it is difficult to anticipate any demand at all for housing – a population estimated by two outside sources (KVCOG and State Economist Office) show Rome growing to about 1,200 over the next 15 years. However, that does not take into account the decline in household size and recent 2020 data showing Rome with the second highest populations increase in the Region (13.7%). Between 1970 and 2010, the simple fact of the shrinking household drove demand for about 7 or 8 new homes per year. Between 1990 and 2020, while Rome was quickly growing in population, it added about 236 – (Census) housing units to the tax rolls, essentially covering this demand.

We cannot expect household size to continue to shrink indefinitely, but if we assume that it will shrink another five percent over the next fifteen years, the average will go to about 2.18 persons per household. In order to house the 1,200 or so residents the town would need to contain 550 households, which providing the housing stock stays stable, it can easily provide.

The town could also choose to visualize another scenario of growth: Kennebec County increased its housing stock by about 8.2 percent in the 2000's. If Rome were to increase its housing stock at the same rate, over twenty years, the town would see about 172 new homes – an increase of nearly 9 homes per year. At a household size of 2.1, that would result in a 2040 population of 1,509. This seems somewhat unlikely.

A construction rate of only 7-9 homes per year can make it difficult to establish a target of ten percent of new homes being classified as affordable. Over a ten-year period, though, 80 new homes would mean 8 would need to be affordable under the planning goal – a sale price of \$224,750 or rent of \$856 a month. Under the general growth scenario, affordable housing requirements would mean 1 unit every 1.25 years. The aging of the population also suggests that condominiums and innovative retirement community living arrangements are likely to be needed in town within the next 15 years. While not necessarily falling within the definition of affordable housing, this is a housing type that will be in demand.

The addition of housing units will require the consumption of more land for development. How much will be needed to accommodate demand? With the town wide minimum lot size of 1 acre

with 200ft of road frontage development at the 10-year projected rate would consume at least about 80 acres.

Development of the rural area is a worst-case scenario typical of sprawl. Without an existing “Village Area”, Rome cannot guarantee a high percentage of new development in any one concentrated location. Placement of 75 percent of new housing units in the town’s designated growth area is consistent with the comprehensive planning guidelines.

Current Housing Regulations:

Shoreland Zone Ordinance

Minimum Lot Size Ordinance

Life Safety Code

Subsurface Wastewater & Plumbing Codes

Subdivision Ordinance

(MUBEC will be required to be enforced in the future).

PART TEN: THE TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM

Introduction:

Residents of Rome are primarily dependent upon automobiles in order to gain access to work, shopping, recreation and education both within and beyond the Town boundary. The vast majority of Rome residents work and shop in Waterville, Skowhegan, Augusta or Farmington.

Route 27 is the principal arterial road in Rome, connecting to Augusta/I-95 to the south and the Farmington and recreation areas to the north. Route 27 is an important highway for the region, providing access to jobs and higher education in the Augusta and Farmington areas respectively. It is also a key route for tourists and outdoor recreation enthusiasts traveling to Rome and to the mountains, rivers and lakes of western Maine. Route 27 in Rome has not been resurfaced in recent years (south of 225 last treated in 2014 and north of 225 last treated in 2006). These sections have experience culvert erosion, frost heaves and a lack of usable shoulder in some areas.

An additional state highway in Rome is Route 225 (Rome Rd.), extending east into Smithfield. This important artery provides access to jobs in the greater Waterville area. Route 225/Rome Road is considered a “state aid” route and has undergone rehabilitation work completed as recently as 2020 and is in good repair. Castle Island Road is also considered one of the state aid roads and received a paving treatment in May of 2021, this road is also in good repair.

(State Aid Highways connect local roads to the State Highway System and generally serve intracounty rather than intrastate traffic movement. With the exception of compact areas, state aid roads are usually maintained by MaineDOT in the summer and by the municipalities in the winter pursuant to State Law 23 MRSA 1003. The State Aid Highway category generally corresponds with the federal ‘collector’ classification.)

The remainder of roads in Rome are either town ways, maintained entirely by the Town, or private roads, on which the Town is prohibited from spending taxpayer dollars. Many of the roads that access lakefront property fall into the latter category.

Condition and Maintenance of the Road System:

Rome’s two main roads are the responsibility of the State to maintain and improve. Route 225 is a shared responsibility, with the Town being responsible for the roadway’s winter maintenance. Route 225 (Rome Rd.) is in very good physical condition due to recent rehabilitation work. In contrast, the other State responsibility road is nowhere near as well-improved. The section of Route 27 that runs through Rome and continues north into New Sharon/Farmington area is in need of rehabilitation work.

The town Road Commissioner has done a good job maintaining and improving local roads. If the town continues to adequately invest in ongoing road improvements and maintenance, it should enjoy a well-maintained local road system.

In the table on the following pages, roads classed “local” are town ways. Route 27 is a state highway, roads classed “major collector” are secondary state highways, and roads classed “minor collector” are shared maintenance with the State and Town (as is state aid road definition above).

Rome’s Public Roads

Road Name	Road Class	Road Mileage	Surface Type
Route 27	Arterial	5.5	paved
Route 225/Rome Road	major collector	5.62	paved
Castle Island Road**	minor collector	1.02	paved
Mercer Road	Local	2.6	paved
Wooster Hill Road	Local	2.29	paved
Watson Pond Road	Local	4.98	paved
Drury Lane	Local	0.64	paved
Ladd Road	Local	1.14	unpaved
Charles Farm Trail	Local	0.17	unpaved
Crystal Spring Lane	Local	0.77	paved
Nickerson Lane	local	0.29	unpaved
Foss Hill Lane	local	0.28	unpaved
North Pond Road	local	1.67	paved
Oak Ridge	local	0.56	unpaved
Jamaica Point Road	local	1.56	paved
Wentworth Place	local	0.14	paved
Knight Court	local	0.14	paved
Dry Point Drive, Richardson Road	local	0.12	paved

Source: MDOT and Town of Rome Records

**Castle Island Road is almost all in Belgrade, and Rome does zero maintenance on it

Total Road Lengths:

Arterial Roads	5.5 miles	State maintained
Major Collector	5.62 miles	Town/State
Minor Collector	1.02 miles	Town/State
Local roads	17.35 miles	Town maintained

Total public road miles: 29.49 miles

Private Roads:

Rome has a considerable number of private roads. Most private roads are named and residences are numbered for E-911 identification. Typically, school buses will not travel on private roads and students must catch the bus at the public road intersection. Likewise, emergency vehicles traveling over private roads may be hampered from reaching residents due to poor maintenance, snow, mud, or other weather conditions. Since most of the private roads are in close proximity to the lake, there has been serious concern over the years over erosion and phosphorous runoff into the lake from these roads.

The town allows the creation of new private roads, usually as part of subdivisions. The current *Subdivision Ordinance* sets out minimum construction standards for private roads proposed to access subdivision lots and requires a maintenance agreement at the time of approval. Any road proposed for Town acceptance, including existing roads, must meet the standards in the *Subdivision Ordinance*.

Discontinued Roads:

Rome, as a town, has never discontinued any public ways. The only former public ways of concern in the past were old county roads. These old county roads represent formers extensions of Oak Ridge and Foss Hill Lane. These “old county roads” were considered abandoned roads as opposed to discontinued roads. The County “discontinued” in these “abandoned” roads in the 1960’s – State Statute 09/03/1965 – meaning there would be no maintenance responsibility or liability on the part of the towns.

Local Road Maintenance and Improvement:

Rome has a formal position of road commissioner who submits a budget and the Town votes on it at annual meeting. The maintenance and planning for Rome roads is a cooperative effort between the elected Road Commissioner and Select Board members. Customarily, the Road Commissioner proposes an annual work plan within the confines of an acceptable budget. The proposal is reviewed by the Budget Committee and considered for final approval by a vote of Town Meeting. In recent

years the annual reconstruction budget has been between \$300,000 and \$325,000 per year. Local Road Assistance Program (LRAP) funds have customarily been received by the Town and applied to offset the costs of any major reconstruction project.

In addition to reconstruction work, local road maintenance (minor work and gravel road maintenance) is allocated approximately \$30-35,000 annually. Additional expense accounts include brush cutting, roadside mowing and storm damage cleanup etc.

Winter road maintenance is generally overseen by the Select Board. The Select Board typically bids out the winter road maintenance contract and selects the salt/sand vendors. The Road Commissioner remains a day-to-day point of contact regarding road maintenance concerns. Funding for winter road maintenance is separate from the aforementioned summer roads expenses.

For the last several years, major road reconstruction has been overseen by the Road Commissioner. Earthwork has been completed by Rick Labbe Construction and paving works by Pike Industries. No competitive bidding process has been used since the Town issued a Request for Proposals in 2015 and the final work product was not satisfactory. A review of qualifications and performance should be done annually to ensure the best interests of the Town are being met. Competitive bidding for road reconstruction projects may be necessary should project performance lack or additional contractors seek work.

Recently completed projects include the rehabilitation of Rome Road (route 225) wherein the road was ground down and fully resurfaced. Culvert Replacements in some areas and additionally, Light Capital Paving (LCP) work was completed on Castle Island Road through Rome and into neighboring Mt. Vernon. Both of these projects were a part of the ongoing “State Aid” done by MDOT.

Over the last 7 years, the Town has funded the reconstruction and paving of Mercer Road, Watson Pond Road, North Pond Road, Jamaica Point Road, Drury Lane and Wooster Hill Road. Priorities for future road improvements include the reconstruction and paving of Richardson Road, and Dry Point Drive. Additionally, gravel roads should be considered for paving in order to defray long-term costs associated with gravel road maintenance.

Bridges:

Bridges are an essential part of the road system. Bridges have different design and structural features and must be maintained on a different schedule than ordinary roads. A number of years ago, the DOT assumed responsibility for the majority of bridges in the state, including some on town roads. The location and responsibility of Rome's bridges is shown on Transportation Map 1.

The following three bridges are located in Rome, together with their status, as determined by inspections by DOT.

- A bridge on Castle Island Road crossing the west side of the Long Pond Narrows. This bridge is a causeway crossing over two steel culverts. The section crossing the body of water is 34 feet in length. The causeway recently eroded and is being replaced by the DOT.
- The bridge on North Pond Road near the border with Smithfield crosses over Great Meadow Stream. This bridge crosses over an Aluminum/Iron/Cast Iron Culvert and spans 23 feet. This bridge is in safe working condition and the culvert has no noticeable deficiencies. The bank has some noticeable slumping and minor damage. This culvert bridge was built in 2006. This is a State-owned bridge.
- A bridge over Beaver Brook on Watson Pond Road. This is a Concrete bridge 38 feet long, built in 1965. The bridge is in usable condition, though the riverbank is showing signs needing repair and there is some slight section loss on the deck. This is a Town owned bridge.

The town should consider a good practice, a Road Reserve Account for future bridge repair/reconstruction

Usage of the Highway System:

The Maine DOT is responsible for monitoring usage of its roads through a system of traffic counts. Traffic counting is reported in units of Average Annual Daily Traffic – the total number of vehicles going past a given point on an average day. Traffic counts are measured annually only at one point on Route 27; elsewhere, they are recorded every 2 to 5 years.

Table 36 shows traffic count data as tabulated by the Maine DOT. A visual representation of average daily traffic volumes is presented on Transportation Map 2.

Annual Average Daily Traffic Count

	2014	2017	2019	Average % change
Route 27 north of Richardson Road	3,350	3,280	--	-2.05%
Route 27 northwest of Watson Pond Road	3,180	2,850	--	-10.38%
Route 27 south of 225/Rome Road	3,010	3,040	--	1.00%
Route 27 northwest of 225/Rome Road	3,020	3,000	--	-0.66%
225/Rome Road west of Jamaica Point Road	--	1,420	--	--
225/Rome Road east of Jamaica Point Road	--	1,640	--	--
225/Rome Road northeast of Drury Lane	--	1,380	--	--
Mercer Road north of 225/Rome Road	360	300	--	-16.67%
North Pond Road north of 225/Rome Road	--	180	--	--
North Pond Road northeast of IR 2090(Robinson)	--	200	--	--
Castle Island Road @ Bridge	1,310		--	--
Watson Pond Road @ Bridge	200	270	190	2.65%
Watson Pond Road @ Intersection	430	550	--	27.9%

Source: Maine DOT *Traffic Volume annual report, 2019*

The first observation from this table is that Route 27 clearly carries the most traffic in the town. This is not a surprise. What may be a surprise is that volumes have decreased since 2014. Part of this can be attributed to the fairly stable/stagnant economic conditions from 2015 – 2018, combined with the aging and decreasing local populations. The majority of the traffic along this road is daily commuters, combined with weekend recreation & tourism activity headed into the Belgrade lakes region and western foothills. Rome did not see a large increase in population during this time. Once data showing the impacts of the Covid-19 health crisis is available we will likely see an even more extreme decrease in usage.

Also unsurprisingly, Rome Road/225 carries the second most amount of traffic through Rome. Data is not currently available to be able to show any trend in the numbers, however we can clearly see the significance of this artery to the greater Waterville area for residents to travel to and from work and shopping areas. Since this road has been recently rehabilitated it is likely MDOT will continue their traffic counts at this site again in the future. Additional trends to be found in the data are the average increases at two separate monitoring locations on Watson Pond Road. This could potentially be reflecting residential growth in this area or reflecting increased usage of the community trail systems with access along this corridor.

The other common measure of usage of the highway system is tracking of crashes. Crashes happen for all sorts of reasons, not just traffic, but they are generally attributable to some feature of the road system. Most common is crashes at intersections, but many crashes can happen on open road segments, from deer hits to weather-related crashes.

Transportation Map 3 shows the location of highway crashes reported from 2017. There were 27 in total and the most common was cars going off the road (11), next was deer crashes (9). The more serious types of crashes were thankfully limited. Since 2015 onwards, a disproportionate amount of reported crashes in Rome have all been at the same location The intersection of Route 225/Rome Road and Mercer Road. This blind curve and intersection are also the location of the Town Office and Fire Station. This site is also the location of a significant number of unreported deer/motor vehicle accidents, which are widely attributed to the nearby feeding of deer. The Town has approached Maine Department of Transportation on a number of occasions seeking the installation of signage; however, DOT has declined to act. Emergency services and public buildings immediately adjacent to a high crash location is not an ideal situation for the town. Solutions may be to consider installing flashing light and it could be connected to other development issues and influence other plans such as a Town Park and the expansion of Town Office and/or fire house. Additionally, this location is less than a ½ mile away from the busiest intersection in town (Route 225 int. Route 27).

The Highway System and Development:

Traffic counts and problem locations are symptoms of a much deeper issue: the relationship between highways and development. Obviously, highways are designed to serve the properties within their corridors, but there comes a point at which development exceeds the capacity of a highway to serve it. This may result from development within the corridor or development in the immediate proximity of the road. Awareness of the link between transportation and land use is growing rapidly, especially among transportation system managers responsible for finding the millions of dollars it costs to expand capacity, and who would much prefer the relatively small cost of managing development instead.

The Maine DOT has established a set of regulations for new development impacting state highways. Traffic Movement Permits are required for major developments, such as shopping centers or large subdivisions. For all other development on state highways, driveway access permits are required. Permitting rules contain different standards based on road classification. Route 27 has the tightest access rules; the remaining roads have relatively moderate rules. All of the rules have some standards for sight distance, driveway width, spacing, safety, and drainage.

There are a number of other ways in which the town can influence the impact of development on transportation. They include:

- Updating local road design and construction standards to reflect current practices.
- Offering different road design options based upon anticipated use and traffic volume.
- Rear lot access options to reduce road frontage development.
- Incorporating pedestrian and bicycle travel lanes into public roads and major developments. This would be suited on Rt 225.
- Proper design and location of major land use activities.
- Implementation of the ongoing road maintenance plan.

Non-Highway Transportation Resources:

The principal mode of transportation is the automobile and its local and state road system. Nevertheless, other modes of transportation play a role in our lives. The following is a discussion of some of the more significant transportation modes that serve Rome.

Air Travel:

The Waterville and Augusta airports offer a limited number of commercial flights (passenger service from Augusta only) and provide access for private and corporate planes and small jets. Both airports are a 20–30-minute drive. The Portland International Jetport and the Bangor International Airport offer commercial passenger service to a number of different hubs, both about an hour away. The Manchester-Boston Regional Airport in New Hampshire offers a popular alternative to Boston's Logan Airport.

Railroad:

There are no rail lines in or near Rome.

The nearest active rail line (Guilford – Springfield Terminal) is located in Waterville, but without loading access is virtually useless to local commerce. The Auburn Intermodal Freight Facility an hour away allows tractor trailers to be loaded directly onto freight cars for long-distance shipment.

Passenger rail service has recently been re-established between Brunswick and North Station in Boston and reports are that it is flourishing. Plans call for eventually expanding passenger access along the coast and into central Maine via Waterville and Bangor, but this is a decade or more in the future.

Public Transit:

Interstate bus service is not available in Rome but may be accessed both in Augusta and Waterville. Local public bus service is not available for the general population.

The Kennebec Valley Community Action Program provides rides to elderly and other persons through a volunteer driver program and demand-response bus for disabled clients. Other social service agencies also provide transportation for their clients. It is expected that, with the aging population, the demand for public transportation of this type will increase dramatically over the next twenty years.

Neighbors Driving Neighbors (NDN), is a non-profit organization with a mission to enrich communities by coordinating volunteer drivers for those who do not drive, so they can more easily stay in their homes. NDN provides service to residents of Vienna, Fayette, Mount Vernon, Belgrade, and Rome. Presently, the Town does not provide any financial support for this organization.

Pedestrian Modes:

Sidewalks are non-existent in town; however, many people walk along the road edge or in the shoulder. A popular walking route despite traffic is Jamaica Point Road. With the large number of seasonal residents, in addition to Bear Spring Camps, there is significant seasonal pedestrian traffic along this road. A secondary route circles to include Rome Road to Crystal Spring Lane, to Hathaway Lane, and back to Jamaica Point Road. Obviously, there is a demand for more accessible pedestrian venues, if not for transportation, then for fitness and recreation. The Seven Lakes Alliance maintains a number of walking, hiking, mountain biking and winter trails in town.

Bicycle Lanes:

There are currently no sections of designated bike lane within Rome, however there are sections with paved shoulder along Route 27, but none exist on Route 225/Rome Road to provide a wide and safe bicycle travel way. Other local roads are used for bike traffic but are not especially safe due to unpaved shoulders and narrow roadways.

PART ELEVEN

PUBLIC SERVICES

General Government:

Rome's local government is a Selectmen form of government, with a three member Select Board who are elected annually and a legislative town meeting at least once per year.

The Selectmen are assisted by town office staff who engage in the everyday administration of the town and its services. The offices of the town are in the Town of Rome Community Center located at 8 Mercer Road. This building was built in 1958 and houses all functions of municipal government. The facilities include a meeting room, medium sized basement, a kitchen area, and a room dedicated for town records. This Town Office building also has a large meeting room for public meetings. The following are all the current committee/boards/clubs/etc. that regularly use the large room at our community center:

- Selectmen meeting every other Monday
- Planning Board 2nd Monday of the month
- Appeals Board (Fair Hearing committee) as needed
- Dams Committee usually once a month
- Every Election at least 3 times a year
- Along with each election we have offered In-person Absentee voting on a few Wednesdays before the election for a few hours (on the Presidential election there has even had a Friday)
- Comprehensive Plan Committee 2nd Wednesday of the month
- Broadband Committee as needed
- Rome Ruff Riders snowmobile club meets 2nd Tuesday from September through April
- In past (pre COVID-19) Road Associations would use the room for their annual meetings.
- The room is also rented out the Town residents usually used on Friday-Sunday timeframe.
- Daisy Troop meetings every other week.
- Recreation Committee as needed
- Food Cupboard hosting every month (4th Wednesday of the month)

Also happening at the Community Building:

Summer Meals Program through RSU #18: residents with children 18 and under can pick up free breakfast and lunch. Residents come in on Monday and are given meals for Mon-Wed, then return on Thursday for Thursday-Friday meals. The large refrigerator has come in very handy for this.

These town facilities are now over 60 years old and have an informal capacity of around 60-70 people. The condition of the building is generally good and is reasonably expected to have many

years left of good use. Updates and repairs are carried out as needed. There are basic amenities at this location such as restrooms and a small kitchen.

Cemeteries:

There are 12 cemeteries in the town and as they are managed and maintained by the town they qualify as public service. Eleven of them no longer have plots available for various reasons. Brookside Cemetery, developed in 1978, does have plots available. There are currently 104 of the original 198 plots available for sale at \$500.00 each. A plot is 8 ft X 20 ft and capable of accepting five caskets or many urns, Over the last few years there have been 2 or 3 plots sold each year. All 12 cemeteries get some level of annual maintenance. The Village cemetery and the brookside cemetery are the only ones with regular mowing and other necessary regular maintenance over the milder months. In addition, several stones in the Village Cemetery and a few in the Tuttle Cemetery have received specialized stone repair work over the last few years.

List of Cemeteries Maintained by the Town

Name	Cemetery Map Number	Number of Stones	Map/Lot
Village Cemetery	1	264	7/35
Varney Cemetery	2	1	4/9
Staples Cemetery	3	1	23/38
Chute Cemetery	4	3	5/9A
Young Cemetery	5	1	26/37
Berry Cemetery	6	1	26/3
Trask Cemetery	7	10	2/7
Tuttle Cemetery	8	12	11/17B
Robbins Cemetery	9	3	27/36B
Lord Cemetery	10	1	20/31
Goodridge Cemetery	11	1	16/24
Brookside Cemetery	12	47	7/19
Active Family Cemetery	n/a		
Holt Family Cemetery	13	10	3/8

Note: Several of the stones are family stones with several family members interned by the one stone.

Public Safety Services:

Fire, Rescue, and Emergency

The Rome Fire, Rescue, and Emergency Management Department serves as the primary public safety services in the town. The Fire/Rescue squad currently has fourteen active members serving the community of over 1,000 year-round residents and a larger summer population. The Department currently has seven pieces of vehicle equipment include a 2014 Kenworth Toyne pumper, a 2014 Dodge one-ton 4x4 rescue truck, a 2004 GMC E-One pumper truck, a Ford one-ton Rescue truck, a 1992 2,500-gallon tank truck, a two-up 4x4 all-terrain vehicle, and an Arctic Cat snowmobile.

The Department is served by a Fire & Rescue Chief as well as an Assistant Chief / EMA Director. The Rome Fire/Rescue committee consists of four members and there are plans to add a new full-time position soon. A rescue service is available for the trails in both summer and winter.

Rome also partners with the Belgrade Fire & Rescue Department to provide medical coverage to Rome for 10 hours per day, seven days per week. Rome pays half of the payroll costs of one of the two full-time positions.

The Fire and Rescue Department responds to all emergencies within the Town of Rome. They have automatic mutual aid with the towns of Smithfield, Belgrade, Oakland and Sidney. This is for the department to respond to them and for them to respond to Rome for large scale incidents or when specialty equipment is needed. Delta Ambulance responds to all medical, motor vehicle accidents and structure fires within the Town.

The following shows recent years responses from the Department:

	<u>2018</u>	<u>2019</u>	<u>2020</u>	<u>2021</u>	<u>2022</u>
<u>SUMMARY</u>					
Total Members	20	18	16	15	16
Total Members With EMS License	8	7	6	6	7
Total Calls	107	85	113	114	114
Mutual Aid Given	17	14	21	7	15
Mutual Aid Received	3	5	10	19	37
<u>CALL DETAIL</u>					
Building Fire	2	5	7	2	3
Cooking fire, Confined to Container			1	1	
Chimney fire, Contained to Chimney			1		
Mobile Property (vehicle) Fire		1	2		
Forest, Woods or Wildland Fire	5	1	7	8	4
Outside Trash, Rubbish, Trash or Waste Fire		1			
Outside Equipment Fire	2			1	
Assisted Another Medical Crew or Agency	18	4		1	7
EMS Calls, excluding vehicle accident with injury	32	34	39	64	63
Motor Vehicle Accidents With Injuries	2	2	5	2	7

Motor Vehicle Incident With No Injury	2	3	6	2	6
Extrication of Victim from Vehicle				1	
Electrocution				1	
Electrical Wiring/Equipment Problem				1	
Search for Person			1		
Water & Ice-related Rescue	2				
EMS Standby			1		
Hazardous Condition/Gas Leak			2		2
Power Line/Tree Down	9	3	7	9	8
Building or Structure Weakened or Collapsed				1	
Public Service Assistance	2	1			
Assist Police or Government Agency	8	3	8	6	1
Fire/EMS Calls Cancelled Enroute	12	11	11	9	8
Odor of Smoke	1	1	4		
Smoke or Odor Removal			2		
Fire/CO2 Alarm Activations, No Emergency	10	13	9	5	5
Citizen Complaint/Unauthorized Burn		2			

The Town of Rome is required to develop a hazard mitigation plan, consistent with federal, state, and county guidelines. This is simply done thru adoption a reference to the County Plan.

Police

Rome does not have its own police force, but rather, relies on both state and County Police for police protection. The Town does provide additional funding through a rural patrols account to pay the Kennebec County Sheriff's Office for additional patrols with a focus on Rome.

Healthcare

Ambulance service is provided by Delta Ambulance based out of their Waterville location.

While not typically a municipal function, basic medical services are an essential regional service. Rome is fortunate to have a good level of quality medical services available close by. In Augusta, the MaineGeneral Hospital provides many services and local offices. Alternatively, Waterville provides a wide variety of health-related services including Northern Light Walk-In Care and a MaineGeneral Health office.

Rome does not have any nursing homes or assisted living facilities located within town due to the operation of nursing facilities surrounding both Augusta and Waterville.

KVCAP offer transportation to medical appointments and services on an on-demand basis for residents that require it.

Needs and Concerns of Public Safety:

Extensions to both existing fire stations are needed to accommodate the increase in staffing (plan is for a gradual increase of staffing to end up with at least 2-4 new positions). A new bay that accommodates a fire truck, more equipment storage space and administrative offices are the minimum required for any new facility or expansion.

Public Works:

Road Maintenance

The Town of Rome's roads are overseen by the Road Commissioner and the Selectmen. The Road Commissioner focuses on improving the town's infrastructure through the maintenance of roads. Rome aims to take a proactive approach to road maintenance but most of the work is, by necessity and reactionary to identified problems. The primary challenges to Rome's roads include snow/ice removal and plowing, beavers blocking culverts and water passages, downed trees and powerlines as a result of storms, and the expected deterioration of roads over time.

Over the last five years, the Road Commissioner has advocated for major road reconstruction in order to promote and preserve safe travel. The road commissioner is an elected position and has a one-year term.

Dams

Rome is part of a five-town partnership to govern the maintenance and operation of dams with Belgrade, Sidney, Mount Vernon and Oakland. Each town pays a proportion of the Committee's expenses, based on the total shoreline within town limits.

In 2023 there is a major concrete remediation project at the shared Belgrade Village dam.

In recent years, the watershed of the Belgrade Lakes has experienced severe droughts which placed a burden on water level management. Lower water levels can pose serious threats as freezing temperatures approach. The Dams Committee oversees works with the other four towns to address leakages and other structural challenges to the local dams.

Solid Waste

Rome does not operate its own landfill or transfer station, but instead, has an agreement with Belgrade (Transfer Station & Recycling Center), Norridgewock (Waste Management Landfill Facility), and a private hauler (Mike Burnham, Gregory's and Patriot). There are a specific set of terms for the Inter-Local Waste Management program with Belgrade listed on the Town's website.

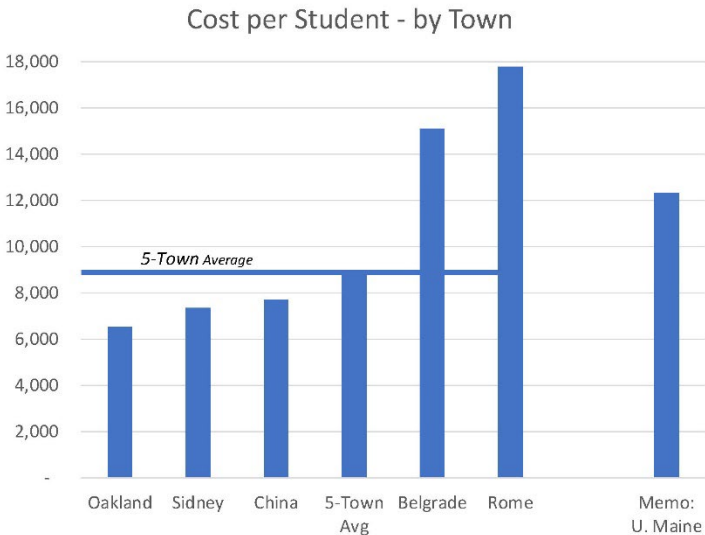
Utilities

Rome does not have a public water or sewage system. Furthermore, the future implementation of a system for either utility is unlikely as Rome mains rural and sparsely populated.

Education:

The Town of Rome is part of Regional School Unit 18 School District which includes Rome, China, Sidney, Belgrade, and Oakland. Rome sends a representative to the district School Board. Rome usually maintains between 100 and 130 students enrolled across the RSU 18 schools (out of 2700 to 3000).

Per-pupil expenditure in Rome is almost at \$18,000 per year over the 9 schools in the district. This is by far the highest of all the communities and more than yearly tuition at UMaine.



Oakland	Atwood Primary	Preschool to G2
Belgrade	Belgrade Central	Preschool to G5
China	China Middle	G5 to G8
China	China Primary	Preschool to G4
Sidney	James H. Bean	PreK to G5
Oakland	Messalonskee High	G9 to G12
Oakland	Messalonskee Middle	G6 to G8
Oakland	Williams Elementary	G3 to G5

K-5

Local students in kindergarten through grade 5 attend the Belgrade Central School located on 158 Depot Road in Belgrade. Other elementary schools in the district include James H. Bean, Rome Primary, Atwood Primary, and Williams Elementary.

As part of RSU 18, Rome sends students to Messalonskee Middle School (other middle school in the district is Rome Middle) and all students in the district attend Messalonskee High School.

Without knowing the trend in every community in the district it is not easy to predict is new residential development will drive an increased need for new or expanded school facilities.

Evolving Infrastructure:

Power Service:

Electrical service is provided to Rome by Central Maine Power. Power comes into Rome from two different directions. Three phase power comes up US Route 27 from Augusta to the Rome town line. From there all route 27 residences and Watson Pond Road residences are provided single phase service. The majority of Rome residents receive their electrical service from Oakland. Three Phase service is provided out US Route 137 and up US Route 8/137 toward Smithfield village. At the junction of Route 8 with Pine Tree Road 2 phases are fed into Rome and continue along North Pond Road to its intersection with US Route 225 (Rome Road). From here the majority of Rome residents are provided single phase service.

Although not directly a public service under control of the town, issues relating to wind and solar power developments within town are a significant issue and require the town to be prepared to regulate them accordingly.

Telecommunications / Broadband:

Broadband is a necessity for businesses, community services, students, and individuals who work from home. Slow and unreliable internet places Rome on the wrong side of the digital divide and out of contact with customers, clients, educational opportunities, and our many visitors.

Internet service in Rome is currently provided by Spectrum and TDS Telecom.

Rome has recently received a \$2,500 Phase I grant from ConnectMAINE. These funds will support the development of a plan for expanding the availability of broadband service across our community. Large telecom companies have not made significant investments in the infrastructure of rural areas with small populations like Rome. As a result, many of the more remote residents may be experiencing barriers to education, business prosperity, community growth, and expanded social interaction. The community wishes to take more control of its own future and have begun applying for funding to expand on community-driven solutions.

The Rome Broadband interconnectivity project has one goal: To get every year-round resident, every potential year-round resident camp, every business, every charitable institution, every State, local and federal employee and every governmental institution in town connected at the maximum possible internet speed within 24 months. The committee will start work on this goal through a

[community wide survey](#) followed by a professionally-led internet study as well as the completion of the economic potential of such a network – for providers identified.

Activities, include:

- Determining local broadband needs and goals;
- Inventorying the existing infrastructure assets;
- Conducting a gap analysis defining the additional broadband infrastructure necessary to meet identified needs and goals;
- Assessing relevant municipal procedures, policies, rules and ordinances that have the effect of delaying or increasing the cost of broadband infrastructure deployment; and
- Strategizing to promote digital inclusion that addresses affordable internet service and equipment, digital literacy and public computer access.

The Rome Broadband Committee has also established its own goals:

- For everyone in Rome to have access to the internet
- To secure fiber as the preferred choice for high band-width broadband connection
- To enhance the attraction of economic development for Rome
- To quantify the "take-rate" (% of potential broadband customers)

PART TWELVE: FISCAL CAPACITY

Overview:

Similar to other small towns in Maine, Rome is limited in the methods it may use to raise revenues. The property tax is an overly burdened yet generally stable source of revenues. The Town has always been in a position where it is difficult to develop and maintain a strong and diverse non-residential tax base with which to support municipal services. The lack of major employers has been an issue over time in maintaining taxpayer willingness to contribute to municipal needs and the community's quality of life.

Rome offers a level of service reflecting the needs and priorities of the community utilizing a combination of public and private resources. For example, a full-time public police department is not an affordable option, and taxpayers have not opted for waste services as well as the lack of water and sewer operation, which keeps costs down but have major drawbacks to substantial development. Rome main service is its robust fire and rescue service in addition to other core services (Code Enforcement, Public Works etc.).

The Town has a reputation in the region for having low taxes in comparison to the larger communities nearby. Rome is one of the smaller towns in the service area and has had to support older infrastructure but has thankfully had no long-term indebtedness. Rome's 2021 adjusted tax rate of **\$10.95** per thousand dollars of valuation is certified as 90 percent ratio. RSU 18 and Kennebec County assessments together constitute about 64 percent of the total tax burden for Rome residents and businesses. Rome's municipal officials have no direct involvement in the preparation or recommendations of these two budgets.

With its low valuation compared to other towns in the school district, Rome carries only 10% percent of the five-town school district's financial burden, which is its equal share mathematically but not a fair share as it relates to the towns size and tax base.

The Town has a clear accounting and budgeting system in place which makes it very easy to track expenditures by program and line item. This enables town officials and members of the public to readily understand how municipal funds are spent. A summary of expenses and revenues by account for 2017-2021 are shown here:

Five Year snapshot of Rome budget information:

YEAR	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Rome's State Valuation	\$299.3 M	\$328.5 M	\$345.5 M	\$353.0 M	\$424.2 M
County Tax	\$315.3 K	\$341.0 K	\$262.7 K	\$374.5 K	\$400.7 K
Rome town budget	\$910.3 K	\$922.9 K	\$984.8 K	\$965.7K	\$986.5 K
Education Appropriation	\$1852.4 K	\$2017.3 K	\$2179.3K	\$2290.3 K	\$2428.6K
Rome Mill Rate*	9.28	10.02	10,77	19,95	11.40
Rome K-12 students	130	140	139	136	141
RSU 18 K-12 students	2882	2861	2845	2721	2794
Education \$ /Rome student	\$14,250	\$14,409	\$15,678	\$16,840	\$17,224
Avg \$ for RSU 18 Students	\$12,300	\$12,900	\$13,400	\$14,400	\$14,300
Education as % Rome Tax	60.2%	62.7%	60.4%	61.7%	62,2%

The towns mill rate is a calculated value which means taxpayers pay the mill rate for each thousand dollars of their property's assessed value. For example, for this tax year if your property's assessed value was \$150,000.00 your 2022 property tax was \$150,000.00 X 0.0114 = \$1,710.00.

Approximately 95% of Rome's Education Appropriation is based on Rome's valuation as calculated by the state each year. As you can see in the above table this calculation results in Rome taxpayers paying over \$2,000.00 more for each Rome student than the average paid by RSU 18 towns. Our state assessment is high compared to other RSU 18 member towns due to the value of our extensive shore frontage. In fact, approximately 80% of all Rome taxes are paid by the owners of town shore frontage.

In general, revenues had remained stable through the last few years even growing very slightly. Other revenue sources most affected by outside factors were State Revenue Sharing and successful outside grants.

State Revenue Sharing, which is based on state sales and income tax revenues, decreased significantly as the last recession took hold and the Legislature began raiding those program funds. Thankfully State Revenue Sharing has eventually recovered as the program was fully funded by the Legislature after a period of incremental increases over the last 5 years.

Excise taxes are generally tied to economic conditions also but in general this revenue source will likely continue to increase slightly each year.

The tables overleaf display information about Rome's tax base. The table displays the relatively small proportion (almost 4 percent) of the Town's tax base that is exempt from

taxation. It is not a large amount but the Town could explore fees in lieu of taxes to recover some support for especially relevant municipal services (e.g. roads and public safety), thereby expanding the towns income.

Exempt Real Estate Property

EXEMPT CATEGORY	2021
State of Maine	\$3,603,800
Public Municipal Corporation	\$1,485,700
Churches & Parsonages	\$277,400
Benevolent and Charitable	\$6,046,000
Fraternal Organizations	\$100,100
Veterans	\$221,400
Other	\$12,800
TOTAL EXEMPT PROPERTY	\$11,747,200
STATE VALUATION	\$297,928,400
PERCENT EXEMPT	3.94%
SOURCE: Municipal Valuation Return Statistical Summaries, Maine Bureau of Taxation	

Real and Personal Property By Type

Year	Land	Buildings	Total Land & Building	Mill Rate	State Valuation	Total Real and Personal Property	Motor Vehicle Excise Tax	Distribution & Transmission
2021	\$195,346,000	\$102,158,600	\$297,504,600	10.95	353,000,000	\$423,800	\$228,062	\$2,167,700
2020	195,835,700	101,070,120	296,905,820	10.77	340,550,000	389,700	231,682	2,219,900
2019	195,876,200	101,035,800	296,912,000	10.02	328,500,000	427,300	210,058	2,219,900
2018	195,677,700	99,754,700	295,432,400	9.28	306,700,000	N/A	203,063	2,202,700
2017	195,350,200	98,688,600	294,038,800	8.97	298,500,000	432,900	188,982	1,818,500

Regional Comparison:

Compared with surrounding communities and county averages in 2017 (the latest year for which comparative population, valuation, and tax rates are available), Rome's full value tax rate in 2021 was lower than all surrounding communities and well being under the county average also.

Accounting Practices:

The Town has its financial records audited annually. The 2021 audit was performed by RHR Smith & Company and includes a detailed description of all Town funds and accounting practices. The report was favorable in its characterization of the Town's approach to financial

management. In 2021, the General Fund balance at year-end was calculated at \$1,531,401. This does satisfy the 3-month expenditure cushion that accountants recommend be kept on-hand, but the Town has done well to maintain a balance to that level.

Grant Income:

Grant income is kept out of the regular budget, so it does not appear in the statements displayed earlier in this section. Recent grants related to town operation have been minimal and totaled around \$15,000.

The town currently maintains separate capital project funds or Special Revenue Funds which often receive transfers and intergovernmental revenue. As of 2021 these contained \$99,763 and \$25,899 respectively. The Town maintains a capital equipment replacement plan and funds that plan each year. More of this is detailed in the Capital Investment Planning Section of this plan.

Current Debt Service:

As of June 30, 2021 the Town has managed to operate with no debt.

Tax Collection Rate:

Due to the town's efforts to manage the Town's funds as frugally as possible, the property tax burden is reasonable and affordable to the majority of the Town's taxpayers. If non-payment at the end of the fiscal year is a reliable indicator, the Town's collection rate at the end of 2021 was 96.1%.

Tax liens have been placed on several properties in 2021. And garnered \$15,804. The collection rate for current year taxes has been running in a similar range. Town officials, both elected and appointed, remain vigilant at trying to minimize the tax burden.

Summary and Findings:

This Comprehensive Plan finds that the Select Board and administration have been doing a good job in managing the budget with the usual uncertainties in state, education and national conditions. The Town and Select Board is committed to the efficient and cost-effective delivery of public services. The board continues to review the current mix of public services and develop budget recommendations that protect the provision of essential services, set priorities, and emphasize the need for keeping taxes reasonable. The Town is striving to maintain competitive taxation with respect to the municipal budget and is always seeking innovative and sustainable solutions to that end. They are also committed to limiting the need to incur new public debt by reviewing and updating a multi-year capital plan that addresses the town's needs.

III. RECOMMENDATIONS

One: General Recommendations

Two: Land Use Plan

Three: Capital Investment Planning Process

Four: Regional Coordination

ONE: GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

This section of the Plan lists general recommendations, in the form of policies and strategies, for each of the elements of the plan. These recommendations are intended to address the issues raised in the review and analysis of the elements in Section II, *Community Assessment*. The matrix also shows a suggested implementation timing and responsible party.

For the purpose of this chapter, the implementation priority is divided into near-term, mid-term, long-term, and ongoing:

- “Near-term” is presumed to be activities which can be completed within two years. These are primarily changes to Zoning and other ordinances, and easily achievable actions.
- “Mid-term” activities will be commenced and/or completed between two and five years after adoption. These consist of lower-priority activities or those which require additional planning or preparation.
- “Long-term” activities are those which are more nebulous, and for which the path to implementation has not yet come into focus.
- “Ongoing” is used to identify strategies which are currently in place and should continue.

Policies:	Strategies:	Implementation:
<p>HISTORIC RESOURCES:</p> <p>Official historic buildings, sites, and artifacts are not overly common in Rome, but there remains a connection with our valued heritage. Unlike many towns in Maine, the town does not have an official historical society or sufficient resources to do all the identification and preservation work that may be warranted. There are a number of historic cemeteries in town also. Some historic and archeological resources have been identified in Rome, but more work is needed to preserve and restore them.</p> <p>Goal: To preserve the town's historic and archeological resources for the enjoyment and education of future generations.</p>		
<p>1. The Town recognizes the importance of buildings and sites of historic significance and will make decisions to help preserve them within the town.</p>	<p>1.1 – Create an Historical Society in efforts to integrate and catalog historical resources / documents etc.</p> <p>1.2 – Conduct a comprehensive inventory of historical buildings in Rome, for potential identification and inclusion on state, or federal historic listings.</p> <p>1.3 – Establish a historical marker program for locally identified historical sites and buildings in Rome.</p>	<p>Selectmen, near term.</p> <p>Historical Society, mid-term.</p> <p>Historical Society, mid-term.</p>
<p>2. The Town will prevent disturbance of archeological resources by regulating development in areas likely to contain those resources.</p>	<p>2.1 – Look into possible ordinance provisions or building standards that require applicants to identify and protect archeological resources in sensitive areas.</p> <p>2.2 – Make MHPC information and map of areas with high archeological potential widely available.</p>	<p>Planning Board, ongoing</p> <p>Code Enforcement Officer, near term</p>

NATURAL AND WATER RESOURCES:

Rome's land and water assets call for necessary buffers against environmental degradation and support for resource-based economic activity such as forestry. Water-based assets provide a basis for recreation and tourism, as well as sustaining life. Protection of these assets from over-development is an important function of this Plan.

Goals: To protect Rome's natural resources, including wetlands, wildlife and fisheries habitat, shoreland, scenic vistas, and unique natural areas. To protect the quality and manage the quantity of Rome's water resources, including the lakes, streams, and groundwater aquifers.

3. Provide strong regulatory protection for critical natural resources, including surface and groundwater, wildlife habitat, and wetlands.	3.1 – Look into the possibility of greater standards within all current and future Land Use Regulations regarding pollution, erosion control, and preservation of critical natural resources. Update current practices as necessary. Consider upgrading shoreland zoning to include first order streams and creating conservation easements for sensitive areas, such as riparian zones, wetlands, and shorelines. Incorporate Low Impact Design standards where appropriate. (Many upgrades are detailed in the 2022 2022 North Pond Ordinance Review Report.)	Planning Board, ongoing
	3.2 – Consider protection provisions within any current and future land use ordinances and incorporate maps and information from this plan's relevant section into analysis of protected areas.	Planning Board, near term
	3.4 – Work with MEMA and/or Kennebec County to develop, adopt and maintain an all-hazard emergency response plan.	Planning Board, near term
	3.5 – Continue to keep the Flood Ordinance up to date with State standards.	Code Enforcement Officer, ongoing

	<p>3.6 – Educate the public on septic system upkeep and water quality protection basics, through the enforcement of the plumbing code and advertisement of current tax use programs that help protect natural resources.</p> <p>3.7 – Ensure any contractors working on any development (including public and private road construction) have erosion control training for Best Management Practices.</p> <p>3.8 – Make enforcement of all existing and future regulations a high priority.</p> <p>3.9 – Through local ordinances, require the planning board to include as part of the review process for development projects consideration of pertinent BwH maps and information regarding critical natural resources.</p>	<p>Planning / CEO, ongoing</p> <p>Road Commissioner / Planning Board (MDEP and 7Lakes Alliance), near term</p> <p>Selectmen/CEO, ongoing</p> <p>Planning Board, CEO, ongoing</p>
<p>4. Engage in community-wide and regional efforts for the Town's principal environmental assets: North Pond(s), Great Pond and Long Pond</p>	<p>4.1 – Maintain commitment to and support of the Seven Lakes Alliance and / or Lake Smart.</p> <p>4.2 – Support efforts to reduce inputs of phosphorus from existing sources in the watershed, guiding future development so that additional inputs of phosphorus are minimized, and protect riparian areas. Consider a Phosphorous Control Ordinance (watershed based) to enable greater water quality protection. Include robust enforcement options.</p> <p>4.3 - Consider options and ramifications of a potential Mooring Ordinance in anticipation of issues already identified in the region.</p>	<p>Selectmen, ongoing</p> <p>CEO / Planning Board, near term</p> <p>Selectmen, ongoing,</p>

	<p>4.4 – Encourage local school district, and town events to utilize towns water bodies as a learning resource. Working with 7 Lakes Alliance, provide landowner education for protection of critical natural resources. Set up and lead an outreach programs to educate the public</p> <p>4.5 – Continue to monitor invasive species (both plants and fish) on the ponds and provide educational materials at appropriate locations. Utilize volunteer inspection programs.</p> <p>4.6 - Provide information on water quality Best Management Practices for preventing erosion and sedimentation to earthwork contractors, arborists, farmers and loggers and adopting water quality protection practices and standards for construction and maintenance of public and private roads and properties.</p> <p>4.7 - Form a Lake Water Quality Standing Committee – to make annual reports and budget recommendations – cover all three lakes and as needed the watershed and coordinate with other lake frontage towns Potential Role of Lake Water Quality Standing Committee: Research and advise the Town for financial support for lake water quality activities, that might include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Study and then remediation of North Pond (annual expense and build into the towns capital reserve fund) • Substantial annual financial support for 3 lake monitoring, boat inspectors, etc. (BLA, 7Lakes) • Financial support for Lake/Pond clean up (invasive plants) (BLA ,7Lakes) 	<p>RSU 18 School Board Rep / Selectmen, ongoing</p> <p>All town representatives, ongoing</p> <p>CEO, Planning Board, near term</p> <p>Selectmen, mid term</p>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fund/assist & motivate replacements of antiquated lakefront septic systems • Put a houseboat overnight ordinance in place <p>4.8 - Evaluate the current fees (and fines) for shoreland zone water quality related activities</p>	Selectmen, Planning Board, CEO, near term
5. Continue and improve town level oversight, enforcement and educational actions of regulations to protect water quality	<p>5.1 - Continue to monitor the Code Enforcement Officer Position to ensure that it can provide adequate time and resources to address approvals and inspections as regards the construction, shore land zoning, septic, and hazard tree removal ordinances and the addressing of non-compliant structures, clearing, & camp road runoff.</p> <p>5.2 - Update the CEO job description to include water quality related activities permitting, enforcement and inspections</p> <p>5.3 - Create a CEO work syllabus to highlight monthly and yearly inspection requirements</p>	<p>CEO, Selectmen, Planning Board, near term</p> <p>CEO, Selectmen, Planning Board, near term</p> <p>CEO, Selectmen, Planning Board, near term</p>
6. Maintain and provide more waterfront access.	<p>6.1 - Make a sustained effort to place undeveloped shoreland in trust or under protective covenants (possibly as town parks), alternatively purchase the frontage.</p> <p>6.2 – Work to open our waterbodies to “non frontage” town residents – land, parks, put ins, exclusive to town residents</p> <p>6.3 - Make a commitment to have a town resident exclusive beach and put-in on the three major lakes (NP, GP and LP)</p>	<p>Selectmen, Recreation Committee, mid term</p> <p>Selectmen, Recreation Committee, mid term</p> <p>Selectmen, Recreation Committee, mid term</p>

Agricultural and Forest Resources

Natural resource-based industry was Rome's first form of economic development, and still provides jobs and income for some households. In addition, forest land provides multiple other benefits. Farming in Maine overall is evolving from a commodity-based mass market industry to a locally based business but this may not be an opportunity for the town, due to topography and geology. Forest management is supported by markets for wood products that are beyond local control, but since the forest gains value from one year to the next, it can generally withstand temporary fluctuations.

Goal: To safeguard Rome's agricultural and forest resources from development which threatens those resources, by building a strong and healthy resource-based economy.

<p>7. The Town will consider farming, and forestry, and its infrastructure a part of its economic base. Where possible agriculture will be encouraged and supported to the same extent as other businesses.</p>	<p>7.1 – Make sure that Agricultural and forestry operations are given consideration in any future economic planning within the town.</p> <p>7.2 – The Town should promote local foods and value-added industry through support of local/regional area farmers markets and incentives for related businesses.</p> <p>7.3 – The Town will review any existing and future ordinances, permits or policies to ensure that they are farm and forest friendly.</p>	<p>Selectmen, near term</p> <p>Selectmen, staff, ongoing</p> <p>Planning Board, mid term</p>
<p>8. The Town recognizes the importance of land as a prospective agricultural base. Identification of prime farm soils will help to preserve this base.</p>	<p>8.1 – Make available to residents' resources from Maine Farmland Trust, local land trusts and other programs which offer conservation / agricultural easements and similar programs to preserve valuable farmland.</p> <p>8.2 – Require identification of prime farmland soils on any subdivision plans and commercial developments.</p>	<p>Selectmen, ongoing</p> <p>Planning Board, near term</p>

	<p>8.3 – To preserve land and open space, consider if it would be appropriate to implement cluster/conservation standards in the town’s subdivision regulations.</p> <p>8.4 – Promote and educate residents about the farmland tax programs.</p>	<p>Planning Board, near term</p> <p>Selectmen, staff, near term</p>
<p>9. Seek to manage forest land in the town for sustainable yields and multiple uses.</p>	<p>9.1 – Where necessary, maintain a forest management plan for any town owned land.</p> <p>9.2 – Report violations of the state timber harvesting regulations and evidence of invasive plant species or insects.</p> <p>9.3 – Promote and educate residents about the tree growth tax programs</p>	<p>Selectmen, ongoing</p> <p>CEO, ongoing</p> <p>Selectmen, Assessor, staff, ongoing</p>

Policies:	Strategies:	Implementation:
<p>RECREATION:</p> <p>Rome has some limited facilities that provide indoor and outdoor recreation and cultural opportunities for area residents. Access to recreation and cultural facilities is available for a wide spectrum of interests and needs especially in the region. With such a broad range of opportunities, obviously there are several areas available for improvement.</p> <p>Goal: Promote and protect the availability of indoor and outdoor recreation opportunities for Rome citizens, including access to surface waters.</p>		
<p>10. Continue improvements to town parks and open spaces, including local recreation programs.</p>	<p>10.1 – Continue operation and support for the towns Recreation Committee</p> <p>10.2 – Expand opportunities in existing town owned parks, possibly through establishing non-sport activities for adults, community gardens, and more community events. Look to include an accessible walking trail, playscape for children, covered area with picnic tables for events and outdoor entertainment</p> <p>10.3 – Continue to maintain and improve Town Beach by controlling erosion and improving access roads.</p> <p>10.4 - Seek new ways to increase recreation opportunities for all ages and abilities and work in cooperation with neighboring communities and regional groups.</p> <p>10.5 – Look for land acquisition opportunities to create more municipal recreational facilities</p>	<p>Town Selectmen, mid-term</p> <p>Recreation Committee, near term</p> <p>Recreation Committee, near term</p> <p>Recreation Committee, near term</p> <p>Selectmen, Mid term</p>

Policies:	Strategies:	Implementation:
11. Maintain local recreational trail opportunities.	<p>11.1 – Continue to support snowmobile groups with trail maintenance/development.</p> <p>11.2 – Pursue the possibility with DOT of widening / paving the shoulder on Rt 225 for bikes and pedestrians</p> <p>11.3 – Continue to look for more connected trail opportunities through town and region.</p>	<p>Town Selectmen Ruff Riders Club, ongoing</p> <p>Selectmen and Road Commissioner, ongoing</p> <p>Recreation Committee, Town Selectmen, mid term</p>
12. Improve information about and access to local cultural offerings.	<p>12.1 – Promote the local arts community and creative projects in cooperation with local organizations and Maine Commission for the Arts.</p> <p>12.2 – Encourage newspapers to expand coverage of municipal affairs. Improve and update the town website as necessary.</p>	<p>Rec Committee / Town Office, ongoing</p> <p>Town Selectmen, ongoing</p>

Policies:	Strategies:	Implementation:
<p>LOCAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT:</p> <p>The local economy of the Town of Rome is always important and linked to many other areas of town policy. Like many other communities, the Town is fighting trends that are not favorable, such as being in a rural part of the state and lack of investment capital. But Rome has several assets as well – it’s waterbodies, recreational opportunities and good quality of life. Rome must begin to work on building on these assets, cooperating with private business and regional economic players, and maintaining a focus on suitable matches if it is to succeed in building a more robust economy.</p> <p>Goal: To promote an economic climate and provide infrastructure that increases job opportunities and overall economic well-being. Encourage development of local business in appropriate areas of town.</p>		
<p>13. Continue to work with regional development partners and public-private initiatives to identify and develop new business and employment opportunities.</p>	<p>13.1 – Participate in regional economic development planning efforts of Kennebec Valley Council of Governments, SBDC and any other regional entities.</p> <p>13.2 – Expand cooperation with the mid Maine Chamber of Commerce.</p> <p>13.3 – Consider utilizing TIF programs and State / Federal grants to enable greater economic growth.</p>	<p>Town Selectmen, Planning Board, ongoing</p> <p>Town Selectmen, near term</p> <p>Town Selectmen, long term</p>
<p>14. Improve access to funding, business, and training opportunities for prospective entrepreneurs and job seekers.</p>	<p>14.1 – Promote access to the Small Business Development Center for business advice and counseling.</p> <p>14.2 – Seek out and promote opportunities for more skill training through adult education, vocational programs, KVCC, and employer-based programs.</p>	<p>All Town Staff, ongoing</p> <p>Town Staff, near term</p>

Policies:	Strategies:	Implementation:
15. Target development efforts to a specific commercial cluster(s) within the town	<p>15.1 – Establish an economic development committee (EDC) of volunteers (include business owners etc.)</p> <p>15.2 – Identify a specific Growth area as a commercial hub and explore possible use of the Tax Increment Financing.</p> <p>15.3 – Develop a general Economic Development Plan for the community and market Rome to appropriate businesses and recreational opportunities.</p> <p>15.4 - Review the towns regulatory standards to guide the design and development of commercial activities. Site Plan / Commercial Dev Review /Subdivision and SLZ</p>	<p>Town Selectmen, near term</p> <p>Town Selectmen, EDC, near term</p> <p>Town Selectmen, EDC, mid term</p> <p>Planning Board, EDC, Town Selectmen, mid term</p>
16. Ensure that local economic development becomes a priority, with local energy and resources dedicated to economic development efforts.	<p>16.1 – Support and grow the Economic Development Committee and ensure that adequate staff resources are dedicated to economic development activities.</p> <p>16.2 - Continue to recognize the value of the town’s Natural resources, Conservation and Recreation as increasing economic drivers and work to support and foster these activities.</p> <p>16.3 – Consider Installation of Rome Gateway signage on all routes into town.</p>	<p>Town Selectmen, mid term</p> <p>Town Selectmen, EDC, mid term</p> <p>Town Selectmen, EDC, long term</p>
17. Broadband / Infrastructure provision - Continue efforts to strengthen infrastructural offerings including broadband access development.	17.1 - Develop a community wide survey followed by a professionally-led internet study as well as the completion of the economic potential of such a network – Discuss the identified options at a community level	Broadband Committee, Town Selectmen, short Term

Policies:	Strategies:	Implementation:
	<p>17.2 - Work with other communities, including the Western Kennebec Lakes Broadband Community Broadband Association to learn from their process and plans.</p> <p>17.3 - Follow the Island Institute Community Broadband Guide process to help focus our work to engage the community and assess infrastructure options.</p> <p>17.4 - Work to create a complete capital estimate to provide the high-speed switches and fiber optic cable in town as required. Then apply for an infrastructure (phase II) grant.</p>	<p>Broadband Committee, Town Selectmen, short Term</p> <p>Broadband Committee, Town Selectmen, short term</p> <p>Broadband Committee, Town Selectmen, mid term</p>

Policies:	Strategies:	Implementation:
<p>HOUSING:</p> <p>Rome has a slowly growing housing stock, mostly of a rural nature, despite the recent population growth of the town. There is no real developed village area, with fewer older house and with some contemporary and mobile homes across the rural areas. Considering the changing demographic structure of the town, the town can anticipate need for more rental housing and senior housing. Affordability is definitely an issue for owner-occupied homes, as well as for rentals, partly because of the tight market for them. There are no land use standards to protect residential neighborhoods from commercial encroachment but due to the current nature of the town this has not been a significant issue.</p> <p>Goal: To encourage and promote a range of affordable, decent housing opportunities for Rome citizens.</p>		
<p>18. Ensure that housing in Rome is available and affordable for the existing and projected residents. At least 10 percent of new housing units should be affordable.</p>	<p>18.1 – Review and as needed consider amending “growth area” land use regulations to increase density, decrease lot sizes, setbacks and road width, or provide incentives such as density bonuses, to make housing less expensive to develop.</p> <p>18.2 – Designate location(s) in growth areas where mobile home parks could be allowed pursuant to 30-A MRSA 4358(3)(M).</p> <p>18.3 – Housing data information should be compiled and analyzed to assist with decision making. Consider GIS system (digitized tax maps) to help with this. Use the occupancy permit system to monitor building permit progress and communicate with town assessor.</p>	<p>Planning Board, mid term</p> <p>Planning Board / CEO, ongoing</p> <p>CEO / Town Assessor</p>

Policies:	Strategies:	Implementation:
19. Plan for shifting demographic demands for housing.	<p>19.1 – Be open to developing or joining a regional housing consortium to construct more rental housing.</p> <p>19.2 – Work with local hospitals/senior organizations to develop a plan for senior/assisted housing within the community or region.</p> <p>19.3 – Review the possibility of changes to accessory apartment allowance per dwelling unit, subject to site suitability.</p> <p>19.4 – The town should consider retaining certain tax-acquired properties which may be best suited to provide housing opportunities for low income and elderly.</p>	<p>Town Selectmen, mid term</p> <p>Town Selectmen, long term</p> <p>Planning Board / CEO, near term</p> <p>Selectmen, ongoing</p>
20. Maintain the quality of the existing housing stock.	<p>20.1 – Promote grant funding for local homeowners to upgrade / maintain homes and make them more energy efficient.</p> <p>20.2 – Maintain an adequate Building Inspection program and consistently enforce building codes.</p> <p>20.3 -- Add a sunset clause to existing minimum lot size ordinance to eliminate grandfathered development of lots which do not conform to size/frontage requirements or specify need to have contiguous lots which do.</p> <p>20.4 -- Upon recording of transfer of property initiate notification and website link to new owners where to review town ordinances for review prior to any renovations or changes to dwellings.</p>	<p>Town staff, Selectmen, ongoing</p> <p>Town Selectmen, CEO, ongoing</p> <p>Planning Board, CEO near term</p> <p>Town Tax Collector CEO near term</p>

Policies:	Strategies:	Implementation:
21. Preserve and expand existing residential neighborhoods.	<p>21.1 – Develop mixed use and/or home occupation standards.</p> <p>21.2 – Where possible, provide incentives for development in specified growth areas.</p> <p>21.3 – Explore TIF options for residential development</p>	<p>Planning Board, CEO, ongoing</p> <p>Planning Board, Town Selectmen, Mid term</p> <p>Selectmen, Mid term</p>

Policies:	Strategies:	Implementation:
<p>TRANSPORTATION:</p> <p>In today’s society, transportation is a critical element to the local economy and community, providing access to jobs, services, and products. Rome’s transportation system is structured to provide access both within the town and to a larger market area. The road network serves primarily motor vehicles and is generally in good condition, but with no close access to the interstate system. The town has a no real pedestrian network, and no direct access to public transportation.</p> <p>Goal: To maintain and improve an efficient transportation system that aids economic growth and serves all users.</p>		
<p>22. Maintain a safe and convenient transportation system in the most cost-effective manner within budgetary constraints of the town.</p>	<p>22.1 – Maintain adequate funding in the local road budget for continued maintenance of local roads. Establish a reserve account for large scale improvement projects (bridges etc.).</p> <p>22.2 – Participate in DOT funding solicitations and planning for future road improvements in Rome and the region.</p> <p>22.3 – Review access and parking standards for any major development to ensure consistency with DOT rules and minimal conflicts with neighboring properties.</p> <p>22.4 – Convert gravel roads to pavement to save road maintenance budgets in the long term.</p>	<p>Town Selectmen, Road Commissioner, ongoing</p> <p>Town Selectmen, ongoing</p> <p>Planning Board, near term</p> <p>Road Commissioner, Selectmen, Medium Term</p>

Policies:	Strategies:	Implementation:
23. Create and maintain more of a safe and attractive pedestrian and bicycle network in compatible areas of town.	<p>23.1 – Where feasible try to add shoulders to roads to accommodate pedestrians and cycle users.</p> <p>23.2 – Request DOT look at the possibility of Bicycle routes / lanes as well as effective crosswalks in needed locations, specifically in the growth areas identified in this plan.</p> <p>23.3 – Look into parking issues at popular trail system entrance points that may spill over to roads. Explore signage options.</p>	<p>Town Selectmen, Road Commissioner, Rec Committee, ongoing</p> <p>Town Selectmen, long term</p> <p>Rec Committee, Road Commissioner, Town Selectmen, near term.</p>
24. Ensure that the transportation system is compatible with other community values.	<p>24.2 – Ensure contractor crews use best management practices for erosion control and habitat protection.</p> <p>24.3 – Look to support any Regional Public Transit Initiatives as they arise. Neighbors driving neighbors for example.</p>	<p>Road Commissioner, ongoing</p> <p>Town Selectmen, ongoing</p>

Policies:	Strategies:	Implementation:
<p>PUBLIC SERVICES:</p> <p>Rome provides limited public services to its residents. The Town is responsible mainly for fire, and emergency services, public works and cooperates with the school district on education. The Town therefore needs to be very good at controlling its budget. Cost-effective methods of service delivery are a top priority.</p> <p>Goal: Meet the public service demands of the Rome citizens and business community in the most cost-effective manner possible</p>		
<p>25. Utilize fiscal responsibility and public involvement to provide needed general Government Services in the most cost-effective manner possible.</p>	<p>25.1 – Actively pursue cooperative purchasing opportunities with neighboring towns, regional organizations, and the school district.</p> <p>25.2 – Continue to utilize a team approach to town government operations, sharing labor on joint projects, and meeting regularly among all town employees.</p> <p>25.3 – Welcome community involvement through use of informational displays and flyers, and active use of the Town website.</p> <p>25.4 – Utilize available resources for programs for town employee’s health and welfare.</p> <p>25.5 – Evaluate and plan for the future of existing town owned land and buildings and their physical infrastructure and condition.</p> <p>25.6 – Identify potential land acquisition sites for future public facility buildings as needed.</p>	<p>Town Selectmen, ongoing</p> <p>Town Selectmen, ongoing</p> <p>Town Selectmen, all committees, ongoing</p> <p>Town Selectmen, mid term</p> <p>Town Selectmen, mid term</p> <p>Town Selectmen, mid term</p>

Policies:	Strategies:	Implementation:
26. Provide Emergency Services at current level of staffing and continue to fund improvements through Capital Improvement Plan (CIP).	<p>26.1 – Continue the police protection arrangement with County and State organizations whilst monitoring the budgetary costs. Consider future changes to law enforcement.</p> <p>26.2 – Continue to provide reports of type and number of fire/rescue calls to highlight changing needs of capacity.</p> <p>26.3 - Actively maintain existing and seek new opportunities for regionalization of fire protection and rescue services, including shared equipment purchases and training sites and other opportunities.</p> <p>26.4 – Continue to monitor the adequacy of fire call response time and water availability.</p>	<p>Town Selectmen / ongoing</p> <p>Town Selectmen, Fire Chief, ongoing</p> <p>Selectmen, Fire Chief, ongoing</p> <p>Selectmen, Fire Chief, ongoing</p>
27. Work with Education providers to promote learning and involvement in civic affairs while keeping affordable.	<p>27.1 – Elected school board members and Town Selectmen should meet to discuss issues of joint interest.</p> <p>27.2 – Promote the use of service-learning opportunities to get students contributing to civic improvement.</p>	<p>Town Selectmen, School Board, ongoing</p> <p>Town Selectmen, School Superintendent, near term</p>
28. Waste Services – Look for continued opportunities to provide a cost-effective waste disposal service to town residents	28.1 – Maintain and evaluate contracts with services in the region to provide the best options available.	Town Selectmen, ongoing

Policies:	Strategies:	Implementation:
<p>FINANCIAL RESOURCES:</p> <p>Rome is in acceptable financial condition, with no debt and sound financial management. In general, revenues have been reasonably stable after stabilization from the 2009 recession. The Select Board are committed to working to achieve a balanced budget with respect to the municipal side and seek innovative and sustainable solutions to that end.</p>		
<p>29. Recognize the limitations of the property tax and seek to diversify the tax base while exploring creative sources of municipal funding.</p>	<p>29.1 – Seek new, compatible and diverse forms of industrial and commercial development to be situated in appropriate locations.</p> <p>29.2 – Support legislative initiatives to increase state financial support to towns and schools.</p> <p>29.3 – Explore grant opportunities available to assist in the funding of capital investments within the community.</p>	<p>Town Selectmen, near term</p> <p>Town Selectmen, ongoing</p> <p>Town Selectmen, near term</p>
<p>30. Improve the town's fiscal capacity to provide existing public facilities with minimal impact on the annual budget.</p>	<p>30.1 – Formalize the town's Capital Improvement Program and expand its scope to anticipate needs 10 years into the future and update annually.</p> <p>30.2 – Capitalize a Capital Improvement Reserve Account with estimate of annual depreciation of existing buildings.</p> <p>30.3 – Maintain a working knowledge and listing of grants and deadlines for financing special projects.</p> <p>30.4 – Explore the educational budget alternatives and ways to reduce the per student cost.</p>	<p>Town Selectmen, Treasurer, Budget Committee, near term</p> <p>Town Selectmen, Treasurer, Budget Committee, near term</p> <p>Town Selectmen, Treasurer, Town staff, ongoing</p> <p>Town Selectmen, Treasurer, Budget Committee, ongoing</p>

Evaluation Measures of Implementation:

The Board of Selectmen for the town will appoint an Implementation Committee. The committee will assist with implementation of the Strategies identified in the Comprehensive Plan. Annually, the plan will be reviewed for implementation progress in the following categories:

- A. The degree to which future land use plan strategies have been implemented;
- B. Percent of municipal growth-related capital investments in growth areas;
- C. Location and amount of new development in relation to community's designated growth areas, rural areas, and transition areas (if applicable)
- D. Amount of critical natural resource, critical rural, and critical waterfront areas protected through acquisition, easements, or other measures.

If Rome's evaluation concludes that portions of the current plan and/or its implementation are not effective, the implementation committee will propose changes.

PART TWO: LAND USE PLAN

Latest development trends:

According to town officials, development has had no discernible pattern in terms of areas seeing most of the building. It is essentially spread about town with the majority being residential permits.

The following lists the trend of issued permits over the years:

Building Permits	2021	2020	2019	2018	2017	2016	2015	2014	2013	2012	2011
Total	72	48	36	43	39	43	45	51	47	47	55
New Homes	11	7	6	9	4	3	8	16	2	10	14

The core “village” clusters in Rome have experienced little single-family and multi-family development over the past decade, as well as a general maintenance of the residential housing stock. It is clear that the value of living close to the so-called village centers of Rome is not really a strong factor with the desire to be out in the rural areas outweighing it.

Notable Issues:

In community discussions, it has been clear that the pattern of growth is not really a large issue in Rome. There is adequate land available in Rome’s existing rural areas, so that there is no real need for any kind of detailed land use planning to control large amounts of growth. The town hence has very basic Zoning or Land Use standards that do not go much beyond mandated shoreland protections.

The results of the survey and public participation events for this plan show that there seems to be general support for sensible Land Use Regulations that particularly aim to protect water quality but there is no strong opinion that there is unsuitable development occurring in certain areas of town. The town should certainly look to bring this idea back for consideration.

Vision:

Rome's vision guiding the town's activities contains multiple references to ideals that can be achieved through good land use strategies:

Our vision is for a rural and diverse community that values and protects its many human and natural resources. The town prioritizes conservation, provides for quality education, encourages recreational and cultural opportunities and recognizes the need for compatible development while maintaining a strong sense of community for all its residents and visitors.

Active Land Use Planning is essential as a tool that could be used to achieve the vision.

Anticipated Growth:

This plan presented growth projections at the conclusion of the Housing Chapter. The projections were based on current trends and ordinances lot sizes. They ended up estimating a mid-range average of around 180 new homes over a 20-year period, with a best guess of about 8 homes per year.

What are the potential land use impacts? These are difficult to visualize. Because growth happens slowly, “incrementally,” it creeps up on us like a rising tide, and we do not realize it until our feet are wet. What if we went away for twenty years and came back? What changes would we see?

Here is the most conservative scenario. With the lowest growth projection, and every new lot at the legal minimum size, twenty years will result in 120 acres of new housing and 2 acres of commercial development. That is only about one quarter of a square mile, and well under the size of the identified growth area. It should be remembered that all of those “development lots” need frontage on a public road or a new subdivision road. If each one-acre lot were “squared,” each lot would require 200 feet, resulting in under five miles of road filled with new homes and/or commercial development.

Here is the much more likely scenario. A best guess is 160 new homes over 20 years. The average size of lots allowed in town is about 1 acre. Twenty years at that rate will see the corresponding 160 new acres for housing, and say another 10 for commercial use, occupying a potential of about 8 miles of road frontage. One hundred and seventy acres is only a little over 1 percent of Rome's total land area, but 8 miles of road is about 25 percent of the present 30 miles.

The challenge for this plan is to work with the current rate of development – which the apparent majority of residents appear to think is about right – to manage it in such a way as to reduce the impact, both on Rome's rural character and on town services. This is generally done by encouraging new development to locate closer to each other and existing public services.

Land Use Plan Strategies:

Growth/Rural Boundaries:

Growth areas are intended to accommodate higher density housing, and some growth areas are intended for larger commercial projects and large subdivisions. Most commercial activities, except for home occupations and natural resource businesses, will be directed or strongly encouraged to locate into designated growth areas. Most (75%) future municipal capital investments will be directed to growth areas.

The obvious course would be to use the identified village areas as the basis for the growth areas which form natural centers for growth, but, inevitably, these are also within pond watersheds. Given the sensitivity of the town's ponds, any effort to increase density or impervious surface within these watersheds will likely be met with a great deal of skepticism, not to mention the considerable constraint of there being no water and sewer availability. Secondly, the other natural attractant for growth – particularly the commercial variety – is Route 27. The temptation to designate a larger portion of Route 27 as a growth area must be tempered with a recognition of the impacts on its safety and mobility.

In many cases it often makes sense to further break a growth area into industrial, commercial, village, or suburban categories. The only reason to do this is if the town were to adopt a different set of policies for one type of growth (e.g., suburban residential) versus another (e.g., highway commercial). With the town seemingly not wanting this level of land use regulation it looks like a simpler solution is needed.

Therefore, due to the lack of demand for development overall and the adequacy of current supply, and the lack of any substantive land use regulations, very basic growth areas will be defined by this plan and no other potential land use areas of any kind. Without an existing established Comprehensive Plan prior to this, there is no reference for the success or otherwise of past growth area designations.

Designated Growth Areas:

“Growth areas” on the map include all of the contiguous areas *except* Rural. This area clearly shown on the [Future Land Use Map](#) in the appendix which also shows the development constraints (conserved lands, agricultural and natural resources and shoreland zones that are protected). There is still plenty of developable land within the growth areas.

The identified growth areas consist of the “village center” located at the intersection of the major routes in town, Route 27 and Route 225 and up to the Mercer Road intersection incorporating the municipal building. Also, the area on Route 225 that is currently a reduced speed zone encompassing the Fire Station, Church and Hoyts Lane access to the town beach.

These are intended to serve as a mixed-use growth area for residential and suitable commercial activities. Allowing higher density to a lower minimum lot size along with lower dimensional requirements is potentially recommended. Architectural design guidelines/incentives are also recommended so that new development blends in with any traditional village architecture. These areas are shown on the Future Land Use Map –in this Plan’s Appendix. As mapped, they total 158 acres with several undeveloped lots / areas. The boundaries tried to conform to parcels where appropriate, but this was not based on any real reason for incorporated some areas over others, so should not be considered a firm boundary.

There are some small parts of this growth area that are eliminated by natural constraints of wetland and shoreland zone but this does not significantly reduce development potential as there is still lots of suitable land adjacent to existing development.

Anticipated major capital investments needed to support the proposed land use will depend on implementation of strategies in Public Facilities and Services Chapter.

These growth areas were selected because they have the following attributes:

- Many of the Town’s public facilities and services are already located in these areas.
- These areas contain existing homes and some businesses.
- These areas are located either on or at the intersection of the State Routes that run through town and has some available road frontage
- Relatively few natural development constraints,
- The areas align with the Vision Statement.

The fundamental strategy is to direct a minimum of 75% of new municipal growth-related capital investments into designated growth areas identified in the Future Land Use Plan. This shows the Town’s approach of using public investments, rather than regulation, to reduce any future development pressure in the rural area and encourage it in and around the “village” areas. (It must be noted that by definition, road maintenance and some other rural investments would not count as “growth-related”)

Critical Resource Areas:

The existing Shoreland Zoning Resource Protection Zone in Rome is designated a Critical Resource Area and is protected by mandatory regulatory mechanisms. Other high-value areas identified by the Natural Resources Chapter of this plan may also be designated as Critical Resource Areas and will be protected primarily by non-regulatory mechanisms. Included amongst these mechanisms are BwH maps being referenced for planning projects within the Town of Rome, and any projects requiring permitting may be reviewed by MDIFW and MNAP. These areas align with the Vision Statement. Additionally, there is a large of amount of already conserved land that is protected from development that is mapped out.

Rural Area:

After the conserved land, critical resource and growth areas are taken into consideration, the balance of the land in town will be designated as a Rural Area. This area is intended for agriculture, animal husbandry, forestry, outdoor recreation, natural resource-based activities such as lumber yards and sawmills, and agriculturally based activities, which will be encouraged.

Housing and home occupations will be allowed but will ideally be expected to conform to the rural character of the area so that traditional activities such as farming, and forestry will not be hindered. This area aligns with the Vision Statement. The area is also shown on the Land Use Map in the Appendix.

Possible Regulatory Changes:

The town currently has little in the way of land use regulations that need to be reviewed or refined. As the result of this plan's process and meetings etc., there may be some renewed interest in developing further land use regulations as the town used to have a more comprehensive land use ordinance and this certainly should be explored as a tool that helps the town. Any prospective Land Use Regulation should hope to achieve the following:

- 1.) Include standards for site and architectural design of new commercial and multi-family buildings to be compatible with existing "village" character.
- 2.) Provide opportunities to reduce the current minimum lot sizes within the growth areas, while maintaining watershed protection, neighborhood character and space for replacement septic systems.
- 3.) Add standards for parking and landscaping/buffers for commercial development.
- 4.) Encourage mixed-use and multi-family development in growth areas.
- 5.) Encourage village-design (clustered) subdivision with a 20 percent residential density bonus or 40 percent commercial lot coverage bonus, provided the developments can meet waste disposal and phosphorous control measures.
- 6.) Reduce "additional" minimum lot size requirement for multi-family developments. A single accessory dwelling unit would require no additional lot area unless necessary for an expanded or replacement septic system.
- 7.) Include Low Impact Design / Green Infrastructure requirements for suitable development.
- 8.) Add standards on highway-sensitive design of landscaping, buffers, parking, signs, etc. to minimize the visual impact of strip development.

Existing regulations should be examined to maintain flexible phosphorous control standards that would permit working cooperatively with neighboring development on shared

installation and maintenance. The current subdivision regulations could also be changed to have the same standards in the above listed suggestions.

Non-regulatory Changes:

The Town recognizes the potential and reality of market-based incentives to steer growth away from valuable rural areas and towards existing “denser” areas. Historically, both residents and businesses would be attracted to the availability of public services, utilities, and amenities in certain areas. However, the most glaring difference is the lack of public water and sewer service (for commercial and multi-family development). Other traditional incentives are also somewhat lacking in Rome, such as proximity to parks, sidewalks, and an inviting environment that would provide strong attractions for continued development in the growth areas.

The Town should try to add to this trend by investing in its “village” infrastructure where possible. Although not ignored, rural areas of town have generally not been targeted for capital improvements outside of transportation infrastructure and location-dependent recreation facilities.

Nevertheless, opportunities exist to encourage growth in the “village” area while discouraging additional growth in the rural area without imposing a regulatory burden. The strategies recommended in this section are a wide range of non-regulatory tools for directing growth.

General Approaches to Encourage Growth in Growth Area:

- Pre-plan for access management and site impacts of commercial development along Route 27 and 225.
- Look to develop and expand usage of village area parks generally, with dog walks, community gardens, and places to hold community events.
- Where appropriate look to provide sidewalks and walking paths in village areas of town and look to make more areas accessible on foot.
- Continue to market the available land and buildings for commercial development and expand access to land by improving access to the area.
- Develop areas as a gateway to the community, with improved entry signs.
- Identify infrastructure and parking improvements, façade improvements, and amenities for the identified “village” areas.
- If ever considering sewer and utility provision, coordinate development with private developers to be more efficient and cost-effective for the overall area. The Town should not authorize sewer development outside of the growth areas.

General Approaches to Discourage Growth in Rural Areas:

- Coordinate efforts to implement conservation projects and continue to seek out land conservation opportunities.
- Incorporate future potential for agriculture and forestry into the Town's economic development planning and strategies.
- Continue to promote enrollments in current-use agricultural and tree growth tax programs.
- Discourage any forms of large, high-density development.

Monitoring and Evaluation:

The Town should put into place a formal system to track growth and development. This will become more important as and when growth picks up again in the future. The Town should be able to monitor growth on at least an annual basis and respond if it becomes apparent that growth is not responding to the strategies in this plan.

The following strategies are recommended:

- The Town Office / Code Enforcement Officer will continue to utilize a permit tracking system to identify the location by district of new housing and commercial buildings. Also tracked should be conversions from seasonal lake camps to year-round residences.
- The Code Enforcement Officer will prepare a written report for each calendar year with the results of the permit tracking. The report will be presented to the Planning Board and Town Select Board for review and discussion.

PART THREE:

CAPITAL INVESTMENT PLANNING PROCESS

Description of Existing Process:

The Capital Investment Plan (CIP) component of the Comprehensive Plan identifies growth related capital investments and a strategy for accommodating them. The CIP anticipates future expenses, sets priorities and timetables, and proposes a mechanism to fund them. The plan is important because it alerts both municipal officials and citizens about future expenses and allows the Town to find the most cost-effective way to finance the Improvement.

The Capital Investment Plan will include items identified in this plan which are called capital expenses. A capital expense is defined as having a cost that is not a maintenance or operating expense. Rome does very basic capital planning for its municipal facilities. The Town should maintain a prioritized list of anticipated capital needs.

As the coordinators for all the town's activities, the Town Selectmen are responsible for the CIP. However, they must rely on the other town staff and committees to submit needs and cost estimates and set priorities. Thus, the CIP process should ideally be prepared alongside the annual budget, so that a portion of the annual budget is set aside to fund the CIP. This can be in the form of contributions to a reserve fund, one-time appropriations, or commitment to pay interest on a loan.

Rome's CIP should continue to be developed by the Town Selectmen, by incorporating the guidelines needed to reach the goals of the initial project list presented in the plan.

The revised CIP will be integrated with the budget process beginning in 2022/3. The capital investments listed below include both those identified by this plan and other capital improvement projects that have come up in town discussions over the past five years.

	Overall Projected cost	Subtotals	
EMA / Fire			
West Side Station Addition	\$ 300,000		
East Side Station	\$ 2,000,000		
24/7/365 Coverage	\$ 500,000		
New Fire Trucks	\$ 625,000		
New Fire Gear	\$ 125,000		
New Fire Equipment	\$ 200,000		
Communications upgrade	\$ 75,000		
Rescue Truck	\$ 100,000		
Rescue Equipment	\$ 100,000		
Snowmobile / four wheeler	\$ 70,000		
		\$ 4,095,000	
Road Commissioner			
Road Reserve Fund		\$ 2,000,000	
Utility Storage Building		\$ 25,000	
	\$2,025,000		
Town Office / Clerk / Selectmen / Education			
Plumbing / bathroom renovation		\$ 30,000	
Electrical Overhaul, Generator		\$ 16,000	
Town Office Parking and Driveway		\$ 50,000	
Town Office Septic		\$ 20,000	
Heating / Cooling Systems		\$ 20,000	
Lighting		\$ 10,000	
Salt Shed New building		\$ 400,000	
Community Center Water Filtration System		\$ 15,000	
	\$561,000		
Strategic Municipal Land Acquisition			
New Fire Station / Salt shed / recreation space - 2 pieces?		\$ 100,000	
	\$100,000		
Tax Collector			
Re-evaluation?		\$ 100,000	
	\$100,000		
Recreation Committee			
Walking Track		\$ 10,000	
Dog Park (50' x 100') - Fencing		\$ 8,000	
Playground		\$ 20,000	
Fenced Pickleball Court		\$ 20,000	
Pavillion		\$ 15,000	
	\$73,000		
TOTALS		\$6,954,000	\$6,954,000

PART FOUR: REGIONAL COORDINATION

As part of the northern Kennebec service area (Augusta and Waterville are the Service Centers), Rome can play a small ongoing role in bringing together communities for the purpose of enhancing economic development, managing government resources, and protecting natural resources. In addition, Rome participates in larger regional organizations where it is evident that a regional effort is more effective.

Current regional activities include (this is not an exhaustive list):

- Mutual aid with neighboring municipalities for recreation and fire / rescue services;
- Rome is actively involved with multi-town, regional watershed organizations and groups for the waterbodies in town.
- Member of Kennebec Valley Council of Governments; RSU 18 Board of Directors (two positions)

For the purpose of this comprehensive plan, several of the recommendations contain a regional component. The following is a listing of those strategies:

- 3.4 – Work with MEMA and/or Kennebec County to develop, adopt and maintain an all-hazard emergency response plan.
- 4.1 – Maintain commitment to and support of the Seven Lakes Alliance and / or Lake Smart.
- 4.4 – Encourage local school district, and town events to utilize towns water bodies as a learning resource. Working with 7 Lakes Alliance, provide landowner education for protection of critical natural resources. Set up and lead outreach programs to educate the public
- 4.7 - Form a Lake Water Quality Standing Committee – to make annual reports and budget recommendations – cover all three lakes and as needed the watershed and coordinate with other lake frontage towns
 - Potential Role of Lake Water Quality Standing Committee:
 - Research and advise the Town for financial support for lake water quality activities, that might include:
 - Study and then remediation of North Pond (annual expense and build into the towns capital reserve fund)
 - Substantial annual financial support for 3 lake monitoring, boat inspectors, etc. (BLA, 7Lakes)

- Financial support for Lake/Pond clean up (invasive plants) (BLA ,7Lakes)
- 7.2 – The Town should promote local foods and value-added industry through support of local/regional area farmers markets and incentives for related businesses.
- 8.1 – Make available to residents resources from Maine Farmland Trust, local land trusts and other programs which offer conservation / agricultural easements and similar programs to preserve valuable farmland.
- 10.4 - Seek new ways to increase recreation opportunities for the elderly and work in cooperation with neighboring communities and regional groups.
- 11.3 - Continue to look for more connected trail opportunities through town and region.
- 13.1 – Participate in regional economic development planning efforts of Kennebec Valley Council of Governments, SBDC and any other regional entities.
- 17.2 – Work with other communities, including the Western Kennebec Lakes Broadband Community Broadband Association to learn from their process and plans.
- 19.1 – Be open to developing or joining a local housing consortium to construct more rental housing.
- 19.2 – Work with local hospitals/senior organizations to develop a plan for senior/assisted housing within the community or region.
- 24.3 - Look to support any Regional Public Transit Initiatives as they arise. Neighbors driving neighbors for example.
- 25.1 – Actively pursue cooperative purchasing opportunities with neighboring towns, regional organizations, and the school district.
- 26.3 - Actively maintain existing and seek opportunities for regionalization of fire protection services, including shared equipment purchases and training sites and other opportunities.
- 27.1 - Elected school board members and Town Selectmen should meet to discuss issues of joint interest.

APPENDICES

MAPS

Basic Planning Map

Critical Natural Resources

Forest and Farmland

Relief Map

Soils Map

Water Resources

Existing Land Use

Future land Use

Transportation Maps

- General Transportation
- Traffic Volumes
- Crashes

Survey Results:

- Comprehensive Plan Committee Survey
- Recreation Committee Survey
- Broadband Committee Survey

Public Meeting Notes and Information

List of Acronyms

Acronyms

ACS = American Communities Survey (US Census)

BRCA = Belgrade Region Conservation Alliance

BwH = Beginning with Habitat Program (MDIFW)

CEO = Code Enforcement Officer

DACF = Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry

EDC = Economic Development Committee

KVCC = Kennebec Valley Community College

KVCOG = Kennebec Valley Council of Governments

M.R.S.A. = Maine Revised Statutes Annotated

MDEP = Maine Department of Environmental Protection

MDIFW = Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife

MDOC = Maine Department of Conservation

MDOT = Maine Department of Transportation

MHPC = Maine Historical Preservation Commission

MNAP = Maine Natural Areas Program (MDOC)

MSHA = Maine State Housing Authority

OPM = Maine Governor's Office of Policy and Management

RSU = Regional School Unit

SBDC = Small Business Development Council

SLZ = Shoreland Zone

TIF = Tax Increment Financing