Existing Land Use

Bingham's Vision: ***Offering small town hospitality and charm, Bingham provides residents and visitors alike with a safe community, access to local, quality healthcare, and the support only found in a close-knit town. The town will strive to provide modern and appropriate housing and employment opportunities. As a regional hub, Bingham will prioritize offering the youth of the town an exceptional education and robust development programs. Bingham will continue to embrace its history and pristine natural resources, to preserve and protect those resources for the enjoyment of generations to come.***

Existing land use patterns and future land use considerations are key elements in a community's Comprehensive Plan. In fact, every chapter of the Comprehensive Plan can be tied into both the Existing and Future Land Use sections. As such, relating the community's Vision Statement into the Existing Land Use chapter and Future Land Use Plan is a fundamental practice in ensuring alignment throughout the plan.

A vision is only as good as a community's commitment to work toward it. This work is broken down into a series of policies and strategies, ranging from recommendations for regulatory changes to ideas for better interlocal and public-private collaboration. In addition to ideas, there must be a plan for priorities and implementation to support a successful vision.

Introduction:

Patterns of land use and development form the visual landscape of a town. How a town "feels," whether it feels like a small-town, a bedroom suburb or an urban center, is as much a function of development patterns as overall population.

As a community grows, its character is defined by the use of its land area. The community's self-image as a small city, farm town, or a suburb is molded by the actions of its residents in the development of their various enterprises.

Most people live in a certain area because they appreciate the character of the community. However, a community's character can shift over time. The shift needs to be managed to ensure it remains desirable. This often means walking a fine line between enacting regulations and allowing personal preferences.

Trends that will not be welcomed, such as loss of open space, loss of productive farmland, increasing cost of public services, or lack of vitality in the village center, can be addressed through proper management of growth.

The Existing Land Use chapter serves to review the land use patterns and development in Bingham. Like many rural municipalities in Central Maine, Bingham can be characterized as a rural, residential community within commuting distance to larger, regional hubs, including Skowhegan and Madison. Bingham remains committed to

providing residents with high-quality housing at affordable prices, ensuring the elderly can age in place, offering appropriate economic development opportunities, protecting natural resources, and maintaining the community character of the town, consistent with the vision statement.

Settlement Patterns:

The Town of Bingham comprises about 22,342 acres, of which 1.16 percent is water. The town's landscape is mostly forested, with small farms scattered throughout, and scenic views of the Kennebec River, and mountains, which contribute to the rural character.

Bingham is a unique town in that it is both a regional hub and a rural community. With a population of less than 900 residents, it qualifies as a rural town, but with most of the population and nearly all the commercial development clustered in the village area, it feels like a much larger town. The convergence of Route 201 and Route 16 allow easy access to Bingham from surrounding towns, adding to its role as a service center.

Like most towns in this area, Bingham originated as a river settlement along the Kennebec River, from which farmers and loggers fanned out to settle and work in the surrounding areas. Where Bingham's history differs from other towns is that, in the last half of the 19th Century when many towns experienced decreasing population due to farmers heading west, Bingham developed waterpower, an industrial base and the employment opportunities that go along with it. Much of the farmland reverted to forest, but most of the population stayed or were replaced with new families as mills developed and grew, based on the seemingly infinite supply of forest land to the north.

At the turn of the century, Bingham had established itself as the business and employment center for the surrounding areas and has remained as such. Development of the public water and sewer system contributed to Bingham's historical development, as did the emergence of Route 201 as a major highway, and the construction of Wyman Dam.

In recent years, Bingham has struggled to maintain its role as a service center. The highway, once a means of bringing trade and raw materials to town, now serves as a convenient route to Skowhegan and other larger service centers. At the same time, Bingham is too far from major employment centers to be regarded as a commuter suburb. The loss of the railroad spur was a serious blow to the type of heavy manufacturing that built the town. Bingham is left with a large village bisected by a major highway and a rural resource base which is mostly shipped out of town for processing.

However, even more recently, Bingham has seen an increase in population as people begin to move into town. The availability of high-speed internet through fiber optics has allowed connectivity for those who work from home, resulting in an influx of new residents who want to live in Bingham for its ideal location close to environmental resources, outdoor recreation, and quality of life.

Characteristics of Bingham's Land:

Bingham has an abundance of natural resources, outlined further in the Natural Resources chapter. When considering land-use planning, it is imperative to plan with consideration for these fragile, natural resources, if not just for their inherent values, then also for Bingham's property values.

Bingham is fortunate that many of its natural resources have been well maintained and preserved. This is in part due to lack of development, but also because many of the people who choose to live in Bingham are aware of the integral value of the area's resources as well as their benefit to the town's economy for both the tourist industry and the forestry industries. To continue to protect these resources, it is imperative that they be incorporated whenever and wherever possible in future land use planning.

Bingham collaborates with the Old Canada Road National Scenic Byway on projects for both preservation as well as promoting natural resources.

Residential Land Uses:

New housing construction is primarily a function of economic factors, including the availability of land, public sewer and water, and roads. The supply of land in the rural areas of town is the chief influence on siting new homes.

Presently, residential land uses are most concentrated in the village due to smaller lot sizes, ease of access, and connectivity to public water and sewer. The village is built up and land for new residential construction is limited, if available at all. For that reason, any new homes constructed are outside of the immediate village, but still within the town's growth area, as designated in the 2000 Comprehensive Plan.

In the rural areas, most of the land is privately owned by the timber company Weyerhaeuser, or other private timber companies. Although they sell individual parcels periodically, the lack of public roads and other services results in most of the new development in these areas only being seasonal camps.

All the new residential development in Bingham is occurring lot by lot, rather than in approved subdivisions or developments. However, since the new, year-round residential development is occurring within the town's designated growth area, it aligns with the community's vision in providing housing while protecting natural resources.

Since Bingham does not have zoning aside from Shoreland Zoning, there is little the town can do to influence the location or types of future residential development.

Subdivision Developments:

New subdivisions typically reflect patterns of development throughout town and beyond. Subdivisions are regulated in Bingham by the Subdivision Ordinances. Bingham's current Subdivision Ordinance does not have an adoption date and does not appear to have been updated recently. It would benefit from updating to reflect current standards and state legislation.

There have been minimal subdivisions created recently. The most recently added subdivision is Breem Acres on Mahoney Hill Road, created approximately five years ago. Since its creation, only a few houses have been developed on the subdivided lots, with many more buildable lots currently vacant. This subdivision is in the town's designated growth area.

Other, older subdivisions include Gateway Cabins and Tanglewood Drive. Both subdivisions were created roughly 20 years ago, and both are in the town's designated growth area. Neither subdivision is at capacity.

There have been other subdivisions application since the creation of these three subdivisions; however, they were never pursued to completion. The cost of building supplies and other related expenses are the most likely roadblock in developing in existing subdivisions or creating new ones.

The analysis and statistics on the number of subdivisions in Bingham is based on the state definition of "subdivision." Maine defines subdivision as:

The division of a tract or parcel of land into three or more lots within any five-year period that begins on or after September 23, 1971. This definition applies whether the division is accomplished by sale, lease, development, buildings or otherwise. The term "subdivision" includes the division of a new structure or structures on a tract or parcel of land into three or more dwelling units within a five-year period, the construction or replacement of three or more dwelling units on a single tract or parcel of land and the division of an existing structure or structures previously used for commercial or industrial use into three or more dwelling units within a five-year period.

For comparison, the state does not consider the following to be subdivisions:

1. Gifts to [of land] relatives,
2. Transfer to governmental entity,
3. Transfer to conservation organizations,
4. Transfer of lots for forest management, agricultural management, or conservation of natural resources,
5. Unauthorized subdivision lots in existence for at least 20 years.

The specific details relating to what constitutes subdivision and what does not are outside the scope of this plan. For a deeper understanding, review the enabling statutes (MRS Title 30-A §4401 et seq. Municipal Subdivision Law, and MRS Title 12, §682-B. Exemptions from Subdivision Definition).

Industrial and Commercial Development:

Bingham's current day industrial development is primarily related to forestry operations and the working forest that covers most of the town. Though Bingham was historically a mill town, there are no operable mills left, although the town has been working with a company on the redevelopment of a new business in the old Quimby Mill. If everything goes as proposed, Maine Plywood USA will be in operation soon.

As recently as just a few decades ago, Bingham had a bustling village area, boasting a variety of store fronts where residents could easily meet all their needs without leaving town. Currently, Bingham has a significant number of vacant stores and buildings in the downtown area; although the town has made substantial progress in removing or remodeling many of these buildings. Most of the old buildings previously housed commercial or industrial businesses and have potential to do so again.

The loss of businesses in Bingham did not happen overnight; it was a gradual process that began with the closing of the Quimby Mill, roughly between 1980s-1990s. Before this time, there were drug stores, multiple gas stations, a movie theater, bowling alley, rec centers, pool hall, hotels, restaurants, coffee shops, numerous churches and more. Most businesses were merchant or retail stores. This variety of businesses that provided necessary services and goods was what leant to Bingham's status as a service center for the region.

As a result, most Bingham residents commute out of Bingham for employment and travel to larger service areas, such as Skowhegan or Madison. That does not change the fact that Bingham still serves as a regional hub for other smaller, more rural communities and acts as a bedroom community for those who commute to other towns for employment.

Today, Bingham's Route 201 corridor and the village area is the primary location for any industrial and commercial development, both new and old. Continued growth and redevelopment of commercial and industrial businesses in this area is expected since it is served by public water and sewer connections, is easily accessible, and there are plenty of options for places they can locate. Additionally, the availability of high-speed internet is anticipated to increase the draw of commercial and industrial development.

While some national and regional chains have a presence in Bingham, most of the businesses are primarily small businesses, lending to the town's unique character and appeal of buying locally. Many of the small businesses and home occupations in Bingham are internet sales only, making them inconspicuous. Continued encouragement of small businesses and home occupations is keeping with the community's vision as it promotes character, drives the economy, and increases available services in town.

The largest economic factor in Bingham besides forestry is outdoor recreation and the tourism industry. Recreational outfitters in Bingham offer rafting, ATVing, snowmobiling, guided fishing and hunting, and other services. Tourists visit Bingham in all four seasons to take advantage of the excellent outdoor recreation opportunities.

Increasing the mixture of diverse business options including both commercial and industrial in appropriate areas is in keeping with the community's vision as this type of development will continue to support employment and supply services for both residents, those in neighboring town, and tourists passing through.

The Institutional and Service Sector:

A range of businesses in Bingham, all conveniently located in the village area, provide critical services to people throughout the town and the region. The Town Office, Bingham Fire Department, Bingham Union Library, Upper Kennebec Valley High School, the town garage, public utilities, the Upper Kennebec Valley Ambulance Service, and the health care facilities are near the town's center.

The only necessity that is not in the village area is Bingham Transfer Station, which is in Concord Township.

Land Use Trends:

New development in Bingham has been spread throughout town, on a lot-by-lot basis. Most new developments have predominantly been for residential uses in the past several years. While most of the growth is occurring on a lot-by-lot basis, that growth is still within the designated growth area, as determined in the 2000 Comprehensive Plan. For that reason, the growth Bingham is currently experiencing is in keeping with the town's vision.

Residential development is more challenging to direct into growth areas than commercial development because there are fewer regulatory and nonregulatory incentives. For example, most new commercial development would opt for a location served by public water and sewer connections (a nonregulatory incentive); however, this is rarely a consideration for residential development.

The lack of land use regulation or incentive coupled with the lack of available land in the village area has led to new residential construction outside of the village, although still along the Route 201 corridor and in the growth area. The village only has room for new development if existing buildings are remodeled or converted from another use.

For the minimal development in the rural area, some people choose to move to Bingham specifically because of the rural character of the town and prefer to live outside the more developed parts. Though there has not been much development in the rural areas, the development that has occurred is mostly off-grid, camp styles homes.

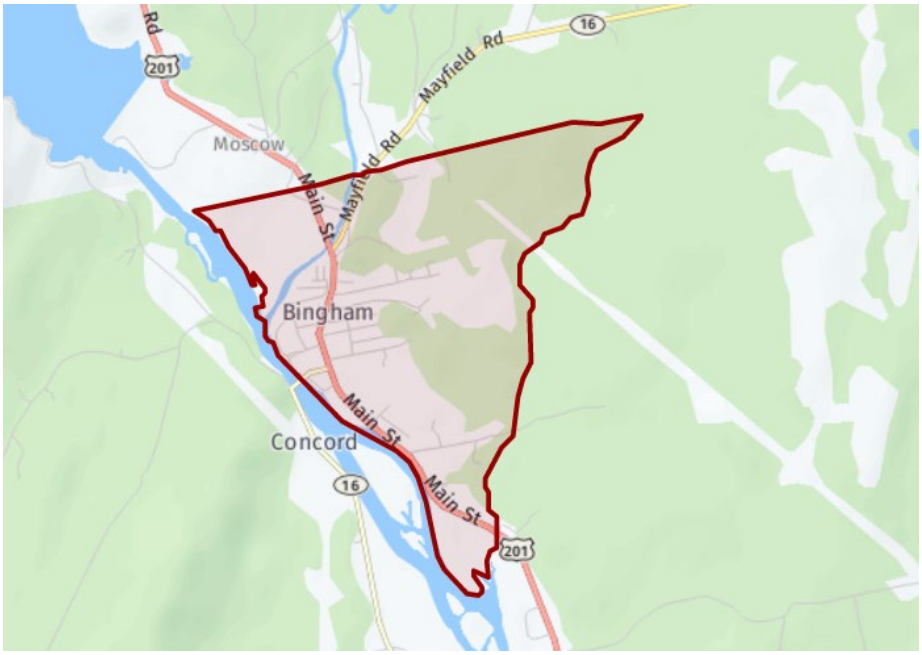
Bingham does not have an online permit tracking system. The approved permits are documented and tracked by the Chairman of the Planning Board. The application records, approvals, and denials are maintained in the town office. As the town grows, this may not be the most efficient method of record maintenance. The town should consider future options to improve and simplify tracking of permit application.

Census Designated Place:

Bingham has the notable feature of having a Census Designated Place or CDP. A CDP is a concentration of population defined by the United States Census Bureau for statistical purposes only. A CDP is not the same as a town; it is a location delineated by the Census Bureau based on population density in that area.

Bingham's Census Designated Place had a population of 708 as of July 1, 2023. The boundaries of the CDP are comprised of the primary, original settlement in Bingham and consists of approximately 2.27 square miles. Bingham is classified as U1 Census Class Code, which means it is a Census Designated Place with an official federally recognized name. In Figure 1 below, outlined and shaded in red is the official, federally recognized Census Designated Place in Bingham. The CDP is only the more densely populated and developed portion of town. Bingham's entire town population, per the 2020 Census is 866; approximately 82 percent of the population in Bingham live within the CDP. Bingham's CDP ranks 125th for total population and 108th for population density when compared to the 153 other CDPs throughout the State of Maine.

FIGURE 1: BINGHAM'S CENSUS DESIGNATED PLACE BOUNDARY



Source: 2020 Census

Land Use Regulation:

The Town of Bingham employs a part-time, fully certified Code Enforcement Officer (CEO) to work with and advise the Planning Board. The Town's Planning Board consists of seven members and two alternates, who are involved and care about what happens in their community.

Bingham does not have zoning regulations, although the town has the following ordinances:

- Shoreland Zoning Ordinance, adopted in 2008
- Subdivision Ordinance, no date
- Floodplain Management Ordinance, adopted in 1995
- Building Permit and Lot Requirements Ordinance, adopted 1990, amended through 2008

The state guidelines for Shoreland Zoning has been updated since 2008, so Bingham should update their Shoreland Zoning Ordinance to reflect the latest amendment.

The Subdivision Ordinance requires Planning Board review for creation of new lots but lacks contemporary standards that would more effectively ensure efficient development while protecting public values and natural resources, such as up-to-date stormwater management and engineering standards. It offers a minimal level of regulatory oversight regarding the environmental impacts of development. If updated, consideration should be given to included standards for low impact development design, cluster subdivisions, and other standards aimed at improving protection of natural resources while providing the Planning Board the tools and oversight in approving future development.

The Subdivision Ordinance does not have an adoption date, nor an amendment date, but it is outdated and would benefit from an update to reflect the most current version of State Statute.

The Floodplain Management Ordinance, adopted by the town in 1994, is out of date and inconsistent with the most recent changes to the state's model floodplain ordinance. Although FEMA has not updated the floodplain maps for Somerset County recently, Bingham should consider updating their Floodplain Management Ordinance to reflect the current standards in the state's model ordinance.

The town participates in the National Flood Insurance Program and agrees to comply with the National Flood Insurance Act of 1968 (P.L. 90-488, as amended) as outlined in the Floodplain Management Ordinance, adopted in 2011. Maps are updated with federal data releases. Bingham's Floodplain Management Ordinance needs to be updated to reflect the most recent standards, though it is enforced consistently.

The Building Permit and Lot Requirements Ordinance includes setback requirements, lot ratio requirements, and minimum road frontage requirements, as detailed below:

Minimum Lot Size:

- With Municipal Sewer Connection: 10,000 square feet
- Without Municipal Sewer Connection: 40,000 square feet

Setback Requirements:

- At least 25 feet from any road right-of-way;
- At least 10 feet from any property line

Lot Ratio:

- No lot shall have a frontage to depth ratio that exceeds1:5 (depth shall not exceed five times the frontage).

Minimum Road Frontage:

- With Municipal Water and/or Sewer Connection- at least 60 feet
- Without Municipal Water and/or Sewer Connection- at least 150 feet

Exemptions to these requirements include those lots and/or structures in existence prior to enactment of this Ordinance.

Bingham's Shoreland Zoning Ordinance breaks the town into seven Shoreland Districts:

(1) Resource Protection
(2) Limited Residential
(3) Limited Commercial
(4) General Development I
(5) General Development II
(6) Stream Protection
(7) Commercial Fisheries

These Shoreland Districts are detailed below; however, since they are Shoreland Zones, they are not intended to directly influence development patterns.

Resource Protection District- The Resource Protection District includes areas in which development would adversely affect water quality, productive habitat, biological ecosystems, or scenic and natural values. This district shall include the following areas when they occur within the limits of the shoreland zone, exclusive of the Stream Protection District, except that areas which are currently developed and areas which meet the criteria for the Limited Commercial or General Development I Districts need not be included within the Resource Protection District.

(1) Areas within 250 feet, horizontal distance, of the upland edge of freshwater wetlands, and wetlands associated with great ponds and rivers, which are rated "moderate" or "high" value waterfowl and wading bird habitat, including nesting

and feeding areas, by the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife (MDIF&W) that are depicted on a Geographic Information System (GIS) data layer maintained by either MDIF&W or the Department as of May 1, 2006. For the purposes of this paragraph "wetlands associated with great ponds and rivers" shall mean areas characterized by non-forested wetland vegetation and hydric soils that are contiguous with a great pond or river and have a surface elevation at or below the water level of the great pond or river during the period of normal high water. "Wetlands associated with great ponds or rivers" are considered to be part of that great pond or river.

(2) Floodplains along rivers and floodplains along artificially formed great ponds along rivers, defined by the 100-year floodplain as designated on the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) Flood Insurance Rate Maps or Flood Hazard Boundary Maps, or the flood of record, or in the absence of these, by soil types identified as recent floodplain soils.

(3) Areas of two or more contiguous acres with sustained slopes of 20 percent or greater.

(4) Areas of two (2) or more contiguous acres supporting wetland vegetation and hydric soils, which are not part of a freshwater wetland as defined, and which are not surficially connected to a water body during the period of normal high water.

(5) Land areas along rivers subject to severe bank erosion, undercutting, or riverbed movement.

Limited Residential District- The Limited Residential District includes those areas suitable for residential and recreational development. It includes areas other than those in the Resource Protection District, or Stream Protection District, and areas which are used less intensively than those in the Limited Commercial District or the General Development Districts.

Limited Commercial District- The Limited Commercial District includes areas of mixed, light commercial and residential uses, exclusive of the Stream Protection District, which should not be developed as intensively as the General Development Districts. This district includes areas of two or more contiguous acres in size devoted to a mix of residential and low intensity business and commercial uses. Industrial uses are prohibited.

General Development I District- The General Development I District includes the following types of existing, intensively developed areas:

(1) Areas of two or more contiguous acres devoted to commercial, industrial or intensive recreational activities, or a mix of such activities, including but not limited to the following:

- (a) Areas devoted to manufacturing, fabricating or other industrial activities;
- (b) Areas devoted to wholesaling, warehousing, retail trade and service activities, or other commercial activities; and

(c) Areas devoted to intensive recreational development and activities, such as, but not limited to amusement parks, racetracks and fairgrounds.

(2) Areas otherwise discernible as having patterns of intensive commercial, industrial or recreational uses.

General Development II District- The General Development II District includes the same types of areas as those listed for the General Development I District. The General Development II District, however, shall be applied to newly established General Development Districts where the pattern of development at the time of adoption is undeveloped or not as intensively developed as that of the General Development I District.

Portions of the General Development District I or II may also include residential development. However, no area shall be designated as a General Development I or II District based solely on residential use. In areas adjacent to great ponds classified GPA and adjacent to rivers flowing to great ponds classified GPA, the designation of an area as a General Development District shall be based upon uses existing at the time of adoption of this Ordinance. There shall be no newly established General Development Districts or expansions in an area of existing General Development Districts adjacent to great ponds classified GPA, and adjacent to rivers that flow to great ponds classified GPA.

Stream Protection District- The Stream Protection District includes all land areas within seventy-five (75) feet, horizontal distance, of the normal high-water line of a stream, exclusive of those areas within two-hundred and fifty (250) feet, horizontal distance, of the normal high-water line of a great pond, or river, or within two hundred and fifty (250) feet, horizontal distance, of the upland edge of a freshwater wetland. Where a stream and its associated shoreland area are located within two-hundred and fifty (250) feet, horizontal distance, of the above water bodies or wetlands, that land area shall be regulated under the terms of the shoreland district associated with that water body or wetland.

Commercial Fisheries District- The Commercial Fisheries District includes areas where the existing predominant pattern of development is consistent with the allowed uses for this district as indicated in the Table of Land Uses, Section 14, and other areas which are suitable for functionally water-dependent uses, taking into consideration such factors as:

(1) Shelter from prevailing winds and waves;
(2) Slope of the land within 250 feet, horizontal distance, of the normal high-water line;
(3) Depth of the water within 150 feet, horizontal distance, oftl1e shoreline;
(4) Available support facilities including utilities and transportation facilities; and
(5) Compatibility with adjacent upland uses.

The 2000 Comprehensive Plan delineated the designated growth area as the village area and along the Route 201 corridor, which can be seen on the *Existing Land Use Map* in the Appendix of this Plan. Although Bingham has little in the way of official regulatory measures to direct growth into the designated growth areas, there are other non-regulatory measures for directing growth.

Growth Areas Explained: The Maine Growth Management Act requires towns to prepare Comprehensive Plans to designate areas preferred for new development, called "growth areas," and areas where new development is not encouraged, termed "rural areas." This approach directs new development to parts of town with amenities and capacity for growth and away from areas with environmental or other constraints. The purpose of the Growth Management Act is to prevent sprawl. Sprawl in rural areas increases the town's expense in road maintenance and other municipal services. It also has a negative environmental impact on natural resources, such as habitat, biodiversity, water quality, and loss of farmland.

Non-Regulatory Measures:

In addition to the ordinances detailed above, Bingham also has a few non-regulatory means for directing growth to desired areas. The most obvious non-regulatory measure is the public sewer and water connectivity in the village area and extending south to Gateway Cabins. The availability of municipal water and sewer lowers development costs in the designated growth areas and helps to locate future development where desired. Although expansion of either system is not feasible, both have capacity for an increased number of users.

Besides municipal sewer and water, Bingham has already acted on other non-regulatory measures to encourage appropriate development in desired areas. For example, Bingham has been in the process of revitalizing its downtown area, including improving aesthetics, planting trees, sidewalk maintenance, creating green space in the village, and working with the state to lower the speed limits through town. By promoting the downtown area through revitalization, beautification, and increasing green space, Bingham emphasizes the importance of the village and provides a location for people to gather. In addition, all these measures encourage walkability and bicycle access in the village area, which creates a sense of place for residents and visitors alike.

Most of the rural land outside the village area is working forest and privately owned. This is an unintentional non-regulatory measure that will prevent sprawl and development in the rural areas unless Weyerhaeuser sells portions of its holdings. Essentially, the historical development pattern of Bingham acts to direct growth to the already developed areas within town.

All these non-regulatory measures, intentional or unintentional, work to direct future growth and development into the designated growth areas, while protecting the town's rural areas, preserving natural resources, reducing the impact of sprawl, and reducing the cost of supplying municipal services to areas outside of the town's center. Directing

growth into areas that are already developed and preserving the rural character of the town are in keeping with the community's vision statement.

Forestry and Agriculture:

As forestry, and to a lesser extent, farming were the historical economic cornerstones of the community, these resource-based practices should be supported and afforded protection. Particularly because Bingham still relies heavily on the forest industry even today.

Enrollment in the Open Space, Farmland, and Tree Growth Tax Law are encouraged for property owners to reduce property tax valuations. The amount of acreage in Bingham enrolled in the Tree Growth Tax Law alone adds up to 13,287 acres (59 percent) out of the 22,342 acres which make up the town of Bingham.

To underscore the importance of forestry in Bingham, timber company giant Weyerhaeuser, currently holds approximately 13,569 acres of working forest land in Bingham. They are the largest landowner in town. For further information on agriculture and forestry in Bingham, see the Agriculture and Forestry Chapter of this Plan.

Bingham's Rural-Urban Balance:

The size of Bingham's rural area far surpasses the size of the village area or growth area. The Census Designated Place accounts for only about 0.01 percent of the town's total land base and houses more than 80 percent of the population, highlighting the increased density in this area. With about 60 percent of the town's land base in the Tree Growth Tax Law Program, and 80 percent of the town's population residing in the 2.27 square mile CDP, Bingham provides its residents with rural life along with most of the benefits associated of a much larger town.

Bingham's more rural areas are less likely to see any high-density development simply because they lack public utilities, electricity, or even roads to access them. In addition, most of the rural areas are privately held by timber companies who are unlikely to part with their land.

Projections:

Population and Housing Projections
Referring to the population projections in the Community Profile and Housing chapter, it is difficult to anticipate significant future demand for housing.

- The **State Economist's Office** predicts a population of 974 people by 2038- an increase of 108 people (12.5 percent increase).
- **KVCOG** predicts a population of 799 people by 2030- a decrease of 67 people (7.7 percent decrease).

Obviously, these are quite different scenarios and emphasizes the undependable nature of population projections. Neither prediction has factored in the effects of the global pandemic COVID 19, on population fluctuation, either.

It is also important to note that neither projection considers changes to household size: declining household size requires additional housing to accommodate individuals living alone, whereas increasing household size means less houses required to accommodate a larger population of individuals sharing living quarters. Bingham's average household size has been decreasing steadily since the 1980s, reaching an all-time low of 1.95 in 2010. In 2021, the household size has rebounded slightly to an average of 2.22 people per household. On Table 1 below, the data is detailed and explained by rows.

Highlighted in Green: With Bingham's current population of 866 people and current average household size of 2.22, the existing, year-round housing stock of 460 units is adequate for accommodating this population. In fact, according to household size data and housing stock data from the American Community Survey, there is a surplus of housing stock by 70 units

Highlighted in Gold: Based on the State Economist's population project of an increased population to 974 people, combined with the current average household size of 2.22, Bingham's current housing stock would be sufficient to accommodate this increase. This population increase would require approximately 440 housing units and Bingham's existing housing stock is 460 housing units.

Highlighted in Orange: Based on the State Economist's population project of an increased population to 974 people, combined with a (hypothetical) decreased average household size of 1.95 people per household, Bingham's current housing stock would be short 40 houses. This projected population and smaller average household size would require approximately 500 housing units and Bingham's existing housing stock of 460 housing units would not be sufficient.

Highlighted in Blue and Gray: Based on KVCOG's decreased population projection of 799, regardless of the average household size (current and hypothetical), Bingham's current housing stock would be sufficient to accommodate the decreased population.

TABLE 1: POPULATION PROJECTIONS AND HOUSING NEEDS, BASED ON HOUSEHOLD SIZE

	Population Projection	Total Current Housing Units (Minus Seasonal)	Average Household Size	Amount of Housing Needed	Deficit?
Current	866	460	2.22	390	N/A
State Economist's Population Projection	974	460	2.22	440	No
State Economist's Population Projection	974	460	1.95	500	Yes, 40 houses
KVCOG's Population Projection	799	460	2.22	360	No
KVCOG's Population Projection	799	460	1.95	410	No

Based on Table 1, Bingham would only need additional housing to accommodate its residents if the population projection by the State Economist is attained and only if the average household size decreased down to 1.95 people per household. If the State Economist's population projection is reached and Bingham's average household size stays at 2.22 people per household, then the current housing stock is adequate, although just barely.

It's essential to bear in mind that these population projections are based on past trends, not current circumstances. Bingham's observed current trends for the past few years are of a steadily increasing population; an influx of new residents moving to Bingham from elsewhere.

It's also essential to understand that even with slow population growth, the components of the population will most assuredly change. The aging population and the trend towards decreased average household size will undoubtedly impact the need for certain housing types. Eventually, the decline in household size will plateau if it has not already, but the median age will likely continue to increase for some time, based on the Baby Boom generation.

The aging population is a necessary consideration. This demographic has a specific set of requirements, such as handicapped accessible homes so residents can age in place, the construction of more one-story homes, appropriately sized homes, and elderly housing facilities. Additionally, with the increase in residents, both younger and seniors living alone, the demand for smaller homes will increase. In short, the population may not be growing drastically, but the changes in the demographics of the population will result in the need for more homes or different types of homes.

Regardless of population projections, population fluctuation, and existing housing stock, it is unreasonable to assume no new houses will be built. The construction of new houses will consume more land for development. Since Bingham does not have zoning, the minimum lot size requirements are determined by the availability of public water and sewer connections, as set by Bingham's Building Permit and Lot Requirement Ordinance. For lots that can be connected to the town sewer, the minimum lot size is 10,000 square feet. For lots without a connection to the town sewer, the minimum lot size is 40,000 square feet.

Under the State Economist's population projection and a hypothetical decreased household size to 1.95 people per household (Table 1- row in orange), Bingham would need to add approximately 40 housing units to accommodate the population increase. Theoretically, if those houses were built in an area with access to the town sewer, those 40 houses would only take up 40,000 square feet or slightly less than one acre. This estimation does not include other necessities such as driveways, roads, or utilities which would take up more land.

Conversely, if all 40 hypothetical houses were built in the rural part of town on minimum lot sizes, they would take up 1,600,000 square feet of land or approximately 37 acres. Again, this does not take into consideration other necessities such as driveways, roads, or utilities which would take up more land.

Ideally, new homes would be built within Bingham's designated growth area, which is consistent with the town's vision, as well as with comprehensive planning guidelines.

Institutional, Industrial, and Commercial Projections

New commercial and industrial development in the last 10 years has been minimal in Bingham. That is not to say there has not been new businesses coming into Bingham; new businesses coming in take up residence in existing buildings, rather than developing or constructing new buildings.

An Increase in growth for the industrial and commercial sectors is anticipated for the next 10 years. This is due to several factors. The green energy provided by the windmills and solar fields have been noted to draw in businesses, as well as people who work on these projects. The upgrades to the municipal sewer and water supplies are also a draw to businesses. And, once the plywood mill is in operation and producing, it is expected to potentially bring 120 new jobs to the area. There are other employment draws, as well, such as the Central Maine Power Corridor, and various tree projects for the timber industries in and around Bingham.

With new job opportunities comes new residents and an increased need for housing. Bingham has already experienced this to some degree and is poised to continue to meet future demand.

New institutional development is not currently anticipated; although, if Bingham's growth continues to increase, then the town will have to consider the adequacy of existing institutional offerings.

Analysis:

Bingham is undeniably changing. The town will need to find ways to protect its natural resources and rural areas to prevent negative impacts related to growth and development as the town continues to grow and change.

The town will need to continue to monitor growth and development to ensure the availability of right sized housing and the availability of housing in general is meeting demand. As the senior population continues to grow, the town may need to consider options to encourage the construction of specific types of homes, such as one-story houses, handicapped-accessible houses, or senior housing.

Bingham should remain aware of population trends and continually review and evaluate the municipal ordinances for effectiveness in managing land uses and protecting natural resources. The Subdivision Ordinance, Floodplain Management Ordinance, and Shoreland Zoning Ordinance are out of date and need to be reviewed and updated to ensure they comply with the state's requirements, at minimum. The Building Permit and Lot Requirement Ordinance would also benefit from a review and update to ensure it provides the utmost protection to natural resources and sets the most current standards.

If Bingham continues to grow, there should be consideration given to taking small, incremental steps towards adopting minimal zoning regulations to continue to protect the town's natural resources and rural character.