

Kennebunk: A Maine Town
An Action Plan Prepared by the Town of Kennebunk Committee on Aging
June, 2017

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Historical Background of Kennebunk

“At a place called Kenibunck, which is in the Province of Meyne...”writes the amateur herbalist and adventurer, John Josselyn in his “New-England Rarities Discovered” published in London, 1672. Notably, he was describing an occurrence that happened “not far from the River side” in the year 1670. Call this the very first literary reference to our town, if you will.

“Settled in 1640”, state all the welcome signs about town, but the truth is that periodic raids by Abenaki tribes, egged on by the French, made life quite unsettling for white English folk in these parts until the early part of the 18th century, and it was not until 1750 that a group of local Congregationalist churchgoers petitioned First church in Wells to establish a Second church in Kennebunk at what is now called The Landing.

Still tidal up to this point, and navigable at high tide without too much marshland to inconvenience a “landing,” the Kennebunk River at this part of town made it ideal for a safe harbor and first settlement. And so Kennebunk was established as a distinct district in the town of Wells. Nearby sawmills on the Kennebunk and Mousam Rivers made house building less difficult for these hardy settlers, and the more industrious were soon building ships, first on the Mousam River until 1790, then on the Kennebunk River at the Landing, then floating them down to the Port where they were handsomely outfitted and sent to ports beyond. Wheat, corn and dairy farms grew up in the Alewife district. Gristmills followed sawmills on the rivers, and a prosperous town that could feed itself emerged. An early textile mill was built at the Mousam in 1814, and in 1817 when Kennebunk was nearly chosen as the York County judicial seat, and no less a personality than the US President himself, James Monroe, visited town.

The district of Maine separated from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts in 1820 and so, too, the district of Kennebunk, which vehemently opposed that breakup, separated from the town of Wells that same year. But the fears of hardship that might result from such separation were unfounded as the town continued its prosperity, and was visited soon after in 1825 by another national personality, the triumphant French officer of the American Revolution, the Marquis de Lafayette. He was duly impressed, claims his personal secretary, Auguste Levasseur, not only by the town’s cordiality, but by the elegance of its architecture and ambiance.

By this time, the town had a population of nearly 2500 citizens and continued its growth and prosperity by erecting more mills along the Mousam River that manufactured textiles and paper in the 1830s and 40s. Many of the names associated with shipbuilding, notably, Lord, Thompson and Titcomb, were now involved with this manufacturing as wealth has a tendency to travel. In 1842 Maine’s first passenger railroad, the Portland, Saco & Portsmouth was extended through what is today West Kennebunk Village, and established there the original Kennebunk Depot. This was a boon to the Alewife farming community, which could now easily ship its goods to Boston and beyond. It also spurred Robert W. Lord in 1860 to establish a cotton twine mill nearby where twine manufactured there could be sent to Boston for completion as fishnets. In the 1870s shoe manufacturing began with the Davis Shoe Co. After a devastating fire destroyed Davis in 1903, Goodall Woolen Worsted Company’s building was erected in its place. Kessler Shoe replaced Goodall in 1926 and manufactured shoes there until 1972. The Lafayette Center

occupies that building today as a complex of office spaces and small businesses. By the mid-1970s, that glorious heyday of manufacturing in Kennebunk that lasted for more than a hundred years had vanished! All that was left was the charm and architectural splendor that its wealth had generated and the beauty of its shoreline that has given Kennebunk its twenty-first century *raison d'être*.

Those beaches had little interest for the early settlers of Kennebunk, and even for those shipbuilders and millwrights who would come later. The rivers and farmland beyond were the grand components of their lives. But for the rusticators from Boston and beyond in the 1870s this was the main attraction, and would bring a whole new dimension and source of wealth to the town that would last to this day. Indeed, Kennebunk's story is a microcosm of Maine itself, for tourism and its ancillary services have replaced a glorious manufacturing tradition as the mainstay of its economy. And it has brought with it a host of underlying problems, not least of which is that it has become the state with the oldest median age in the country.

Housing and Demographics

The demographic trends, which appear in Kennebunk and in Maine generally, are reflected in the makeup of our current population. Maine is the oldest state in the union, with a median age of 43.8. Importantly, percentiles in our population are weighted towards older groups, for many reasons. The number of adults aged 65 or older in Kennebunk is now 31% and rising, nearly twice the national median. Simultaneously, the percentile of the cohort between 24 and 34 years of age is precariously low; this can oftentimes mean that the availability of craftsman and services of all kinds presents constant problems for seniors and, indeed, all others. Obviously, adults in this group are of childbearing age, and every effort is being made to encourage these adults to move to and settle in the Kennebunk area. Adding even more strain on demographic totals is the constant in-migration of older adults seeking retirement homes and second homes.

Much of Maine is suburban, rural or semi-rural, within driving distance of large cities. Unfortunately, “The Brookings Institute reported that by 2008 more than half the poverty in the United States was located in suburbs, not cities.”¹ Of course, this includes Maine.

According to the most recent census, the Kennebunk population was 11,111 in 2014. Projections for growth from state agencies and the Southern Planning and Development Commission, (SMPDC) are in a range between 1% and 1.7%. However, with the construction and renovation of much of the school system, it has been projected, and hoped for, that the number of children attending the local schools will increase along with the population addition of the number of young adults

In addition, Kennebunk has a growing number of hospitality services and facilities, and at full occupancy, the Town’s population could grow to 13,407 people during the summer high season (July-August). In 2014, there were 934 seasonal or recreational units in the Town. A recently passed ordinance has made it possible to increase slightly the numbers of guests allowed in certain guesthouses.

According to the Town of Kennebunk's Comprehensive Planning Committee and the Maine SMPDC, the housing supply stands at, as of 2014, 6,039 units. Of these, 4,795 are owner occupied, 1,090 are renter occupied, and there are 1,244, which are vacant. Included in the total, 934 are used for seasonal occupancy. The average household size is 2.27 individuals. In the United States, by 2035, single-person households will become more prevalent, and by this date there will be 9.3 million one-person households aged 80 or over, representing 57 percent of households in that age group.

According to a recent report from the Joint Center for Housing Studies of Harvard University, “older adults have expressed a strong desire to live as long as possible in their communities with as much independence as is feasible. To make these wishes reality, the nation needs more housing options for older adults, home accessibility features to support the millions projected to have mobility-related disabilities and affordable units and financial supports for those with minimal resources in their retirement years.”²

Problems and Solutions

One of the constant themes in newspaper articles and journals these days is the question of affordable housing: what it is, whether it exists, and what effect it is having on us as a country. Accordingly, this has put pressure on the “Aging-In-Place” concept of staying in your own home for as long as possible. Because of nationwide trends, Kennebunk can expect to see an increase in households of one and two-person occupancy, putting a strain on housing growth for smaller families.

In 2016, the Town of Kennebunk established the Committee on Aging. Their mission statement reads that they “will strive to provide informational resources and promote the interests of senior Kennebunk residents so that they might remain active, engaged participants in our community.

The Committee on Aging will seek to strengthen and promote existing Town services and activities that enhance the quality of life for seniors in Kennebunk.

The Committee on Aging will actively engage in advising Town officials and other committees of possible policy and infrastructure changes in order to enhance the quality of life not only for seniors but for all residents of Kennebunk.”

Through our cooperation with other non-profits in Kennebunk, the Committee is hoping to learn what can be done to increase the availability of affordable housing, access to the services of workers engaged in home improvements for aging-in-place, and other essential services.

Action Items

With the growth of the older population of adults aged 65 and older, there will arise a need for caregivers, nurses, home aid workers, and gerontologists. We would propose that attention be given to the construction of so-called “workforce” housing to accommodate this anticipated need. Such development may entail government subsidies, various funding mechanisms, and possible changes in zoning in the Town of Kennebunk, The Lower Village, and West Kennebunk.

“Over the next twenty years, the [U.S.] population aged 65 and over is expected to grow from 48 million to 79 million. Meanwhile, the number of households headed by someone in that age group will increase by 66% to almost 50 million--with the result that by 2035, an astounding one out of three American households will be headed by someone 65 or older.”³

What these statistics will mean for the residents of Kennebunk and surrounding areas, York County, and Maine in general should be obvious. We will need careful planning to secure a comfortable future for seniors and for the entire population as we age in an Age-Friendly environment.

Additionally, the need for affordable housing for seniors and the public will have to be studied in order to ascertain the viability of our community as it is currently constituted. We will make suggestions and recommendations to the Town in this regard.

Domain: **Housing and Demographics** Goal: **Provide more affordable housing, including work force housing**

Activities	By Whom	By When	Resources & Support	Potential Resistance	Partnerships	Metrics	Outcome
Create a working group for affordable housing -- make recommendations, establish metrics and monitor success.	Committee on Aging	1 to 3 years	Town Planning Board, Budget Board and other Town committees		Builders and developers	Committee formed Y/N	Gather information and support to make recommendations for affordable housing
Make recommendations for affordable housing	Committee on Aging	3 to 10 Years	Town Planning Board Budget Board Federal, State funds	Budget Board Town selectmen	Builders and developers Federal, State, Town Funding and subsidies	Number of homes and rental units built which are designated affordable	
Create a working group to explore workforce development —to encourage new workers to locate in Kennebunk and to keep older workers engaged in the workforce	Committee on Aging	1 to 3 years	Other Town committees Regional Council on Government Chamber of Commerce	Town selectmen	Chamber of Commerce; Local health care industry; Sanford Regional Technical Center; Kennebunk HS; University of New England	Committee formed Y/N	Gather information and support to make recommendations for municipal sponsorship of workforce development initiative.
Make recommendations for a larger work force of caregivers, nurses, craftsmen. Goal is to provide services needed for people to age safely in the community.	Committee on Aging	3 to 5 years	Kennebunk Budget Board	Budget Board	Town of Kennebunk	Demographic variety	

Transportation

Of the two or three most pressing concerns of seniors in towns and cities across the country, perhaps issues around transportation are paramount. As we age, we will become more and more likely to lose our ability to drive for ourselves, having in many cases to rely on friends and neighbors that are not always there. In rural or partially rural cities and towns, such as Kennebunk, that need will become more evident over time.

While it is true that most adults living in Kennebunk have access to a motor vehicle, 6.5% of residents do not. With our rapidly aging population, many drivers every year will need more and more help to get around. The public transportation options in Kennebunk are extremely limited; the F.I.S.H. program, which is staffed by volunteer drivers through the Lower Village Senior Center, requires riders to make appointments in advance. There is a nascent movement to start an Uber taxi service in Kennebunk, and there are private taxi companies.

Problems Solutions

It is well known that isolation is a major problem for the health and quality of life of our seniors. Isolation can be clearly connected to lack of transportation; easily available transportation for cultural events, socializing, personal care needs (hair appointments) is a vital part of decreasing a senior's sense of isolation. This needs to be a town and community coordinated effort to insure our seniors have options to stay involved and engaged with their community.

In recent focus groups undertaken by one of our sister organizations, No Place Like Home, issues concerning transportation were mentioned by every group in this study. Enumerated by respondents included, wheelchair accessible transport; affordable transport to local businesses; transportation at night; transport to social/cultural events in and out of town. Notably, respondents all complained of the total, or near total, lack of public transportation, affordable taxi service, and importantly, a lack of communication about transportation options.

An effort should be made to expand the F.I.S.H. program at the Senior Center. We need to have an expanded public bus service in the three towns of Kennebunk, Kennebunkport, and Arundel. Applying for state and federal grants, as well as privately financed transportation, might be an option. Our seniors will be more and more isolated in the coming years without the kinds of services that are available to many other small and medium sized towns throughout the country.

There are two trolley lines operating in Kennebunk and Kennebunkport, offering guided tours in the Spring, Summer, and Fall. These are designed for tourism, and have limited hours. There is also a limited bus service, which operates during the tourist season - these services could be expanded. Currently there is no rail service in Kennebunk, although Amtrak is planning to reopen the station there.

As in other communities, we need to investigate lower priced taxi and van services, smaller vehicles that run in Kennebunk and the nearby towns.

Action Items

Establish a Town committee to investigate public and private funding options for regularly scheduled, year-round public transportation, from buses to van service to Uber taxis, and others. Make a plan to work with all three towns to establish routes and points of pickup and drop off. The Town should be seeking ways to finance, through either federal monies, state funding, county funding, and private funds, or a combination of all these sources, public transportation that will address the needs of the three contiguous communities of Kennebunk, Kennebunkport, and Arundel. Until autonomous mass transport is a reality, we will remain underserved and at a distinct disadvantage when it comes to solving our transportation needs.

Domain: **Transportation** Goal: **Establish options for public transportation**

Activities	By Whom	By When	Resources & Support	Potential Resistance	Partnerships	Metrics	Outcome
Form a regional transportation committee to explore transportation options for Kennebunk, Kennebunkport, and Arundel; make recommendations, establish metrics and monitor success.	Committee on Aging, working with key transportation committee members from each of the three towns.	1 -3 years	Town Planning Board Budget Board Regional and local transportation providers	Budget Board Town selectmen	Local and Regional transportation programs	Committee formed y/n	Gather information and support to make recommendations to raise awareness of and expand access to current transportation options; investigate need for creation of additional services.
Explore creation of a volunteer drivers program to provide rides for errands and socialization (to augment FISH)	Committee on Aging	3 to 5 years	FISH and The Center	Budget Board	Town of Kennebunk; The Center/FISH	Plan for Volunteer Transportation program in place y/n	A plan will be in place to provide needed social/errand transportation for people who cannot get those needs met through the public transportation programs currently available.

Outdoor Spaces and Buildings

The town of Kennebunk has a plethora of amenities: lots of open space, public and serviceable private buildings, and an adequately interconnected infrastructure. These features have contributed to the World Health Organization's assessment of Kennebunk as an Age Friendly Town.

There are nine Kennebunk Land Trust parcels with trails that meander through open grassland, marshes, woodland and tidal estuaries. The Eastern Trail passes over the Maine Turnpike, via a new bridge, offering an ample bicycle road while serving the hiker, cross country skier and snowshoer.

There are two public ball fields that include tennis and basketball courts and three school playgrounds that offer much the same. A community garden adjacent to the West Kennebunk ballfield and courts is an added benefit to this space. There are two public parks for leisurely enjoyment as well as historic, well-kept cemeteries in nearly every section of town. Rogers Pond offers a quiet outing close to the Mousam River as well as a large, sheltered pavilion for protection from the elements.

The spacious and wooded grounds of the Franciscan Friary in the Lower Village are open to all and offer a peaceful and meditative respite from the hustle and bustle. The two public sand beaches and one private, pristine Parsons Beach, open to the public, top this list of open spaces that make the town so special.

The town has a wealth of historic houses and buildings that give the town its charm. In addition, the Museum in the Street signage program gives a special interpretive meaning to these places. The Kennebunk Town Hall as well as the Free Library are well placed in the center of town, as is the police and central fire station.

The Brick Store Museum nearby contains artifacts and archives that graphically illustrate the town's history and heritage. Adjacent buildings of the museum offer space for concerts, lectures and special gatherings.

Two post offices, one in West Kennebunk Village, the other just off Portland Rd. bring convenience to the correspondent. There are fire stations staffed by volunteer crews in Lower and West Kennebunk Villages.

The River Tree Center in Lower Village offers a rich cultural menu of music, graphic art and classes throughout the year. There is a fine Senior Center in Lower Village. Town churches provide their own social offerings such as Food Pantries, Bean Suppers, concerts, free lunches and outreach.

The Chamber of Commerce building, as well as the Kennebunk Light & Power and Water District buildings, are all conveniently located in or near downtown Kennebunk. The newly established Waterhouse Center offers a first-class ice skating rink complete with Zamboni for

winter enjoyment, and the space is available the rest of the year for concerts, communal gatherings, fairs, markets, theatre, movies and a number of other activities, including that senior favorite, “Pickle Ball.”

The town’s infrastructure enhances and serves its abundant natural and built environment. While the Maine Turnpike rudely severs the town, it also serves as a very convenient and speedy conduit for the town’s citizenry to travel for Portland, Portsmouth and beyond. At the same time, it makes the town an easy stop for tourists, visitors and vacationers from away. River crossing is made relatively easy with bridges at Mill St., Main St. and Western Avenue across the Mousam, and the Kennebunk is traversed at Lower Village, the Landing, Portland Rd., the Eastern Trail and Downing St. The old stone railroad trestle over the Mousam at Twine Mill pond offers a sometimes very muddy passage to the intrepid hiker. The Eastern Trail foot/bike bridge over the Maine Turnpike is a real blessing for the intrepid. The sidewalks that connect West Kennebunk Village with the Middle and Elementary schools are a great boon to the walker and a great incentive to parents to motivate their children into hiking regimens. Older adults are frequently walking this great enhancement for their daily constitutionals and for leisurely pet walks. The recently installed sidewalk lamps make this little village of Kennebunk very inviting and increases its potential as a mecca for both affordable and senior housing. The public beaches have good sidewalks that are kept in good repair and offer benches for the weary. Railed, wooden or composite steps at intervals make beach access from the high sea walls relatively easy.

The town has its own excellent and responsive light and power company, as well as a shared water district that provides the same reliable service. Rates are kept relatively low and there is assistance for the elderly needy. Busy Route 1, north as Portland Rd., south as York and Main St. at the center of town, is well maintained by the state and serves as a vital commercial link for businesses as well as a convenient conduit to adjacent towns. It really binds and bonds the town in many ways. Roads, in general, are well maintained in all seasons and serve the citizenry well. Street signs are well placed and readable, entry welcome markers are clear and historical markers give the Historic Districts of the town a special feel and offer citizens and tourists alike valuable information. The downtown area has plenty of off street parking, and the presence of Amtrak Downeaster train service from Brunswick, through Portland to Boston makes for a very promising future for the town’s structural needs.

Solutions

Our riverways may be valuable waterfronts for private landholders, but they are, for the most part, inaccessible to the public with the exception of Picnic Rock, Rogers Pond and the Rotary Park areas. One can envision, in the absence of the present dams (Twine Mill & Dane/Perkins) the creation of a riverside village along the Mousam at West Kennebunk Village. High walls on either side of the river would contain flooding, in the manner of old European river villages, public walkways and even roadways on either side, and private, mixed-income residential units rising up on both sides of these walkways with connecting footbridges across the river. A similar, but smaller village might be created along the Mousam near Lafayette Center and below and above the bluff that rises above the Cumberland Farm gas station.

Parking spaces at the Land Trust trail sites need to be more clearly marked and designated, and more information needs to be provided about these sites and what they offer. Interpretive signage is lacking, also. Senior bus trips to these sites could also be offered.

The parking problems at Lower Village are ongoing and never ending. It is critical that the town find solutions or commercial interests will triumph, threatening the village's vitality and cohesiveness as a place where people live.

Parking and access to the beaches in Kennebunk have become worrying problems. Cars parked along the roads adjacent to all the three beaches sometimes block traffic, and make it difficult to move around. Additionally, the beaches themselves may need, in the future, improvements to handicap access. Mother's Beach in particular has access at only one end, and very uneven stairways and railings at two other breaks in the concrete wall abutting the beach. This beach is particularly popular with families and their children.

The downtown intersections, most notably at the Library, BSM and Kennebunk Savings can be frightening for the older citizen, not to mention the challenges they present to the driver. The intersection of Routes 1 and 35 present a hazard to those users of motorized wheelchairs. The town needs to seriously study the downtown traffic patterns and take measures to mitigate the smooth and peaceful flow of traffic for pedestrians and drivers alike.

The Eastern Trail needs to be extended through West Kennebunk Village and should be made a state and town priority. It would be nice if the railroad bridge across Alfred Road might be restored to accommodate bike and foot traffic especially since West Kennebunk Village seems to be where affordable and senior housing could and should thrive.

A proposed Amtrak station is intended to open at the Kennebunk Depot. A year-round, centrally located stop there would be a great help to seniors wanting and needing this convenient service to Boston and Portland. Of course, there should be connections for taxi service as well as other means of transportation, and an adequate parking lot for pickup vehicles.

"The Landing" needs to be made a more well defined and accessible village of the town. Sidewalk lamps (a la West K might help).

Rogers Pond is a bit seedy. With a little landscaping and imagination it could be a really beautiful area for young and old alike. Rotary Park could be made a bit more inviting also and would make a good place for an information kiosk.

Action Items

There needs to be a very visible, well-placed kiosk at the center of town. This kiosk should be technically advanced and not a receptacle for everyone's business cards and service announcements, but provide readable, informative announcements about town events and places of interest with a well-designed map of the town. .

There should be signage for the location of public toilets.

Domain:

Outdoor Space and Buildings

Goal:

Create and improve public spaces

Activities	By Whom	By When	Resources & Support	Potential Resistance	Partnerships	Metrics	Outcome
Create an Outdoor Spaces committee to address I need for information, better wayfinding signage, and parking improvements, among other issues.	Committee on Aging Working with other interested residents and town committees	1 year	Parks and Recreation Town Planning Committee Downtown Association	Budget Board	Parks and Recreation Town Planning Committee Downtown Association	Committee formed y/n	Recommendation for kiosk, wayfaring, parking improvements, and signage for public toilets presented to the town and partners. Committee will then follow up with evaluation of effectiveness of implementation.
Advocate for an information kiosk at the center of town	Committee on Aging	3 to 5 Years	Town Planning Board Budget Board	Budget Board Town selectmen	Parks and Recreation	Spaces improved signage improved Parking spaces improved	
Make recommendations for better way finding signage and parking improvements	Committee on Aging	1 to 3 years	Town Planning Board Budget Board	Budget Board	Town of Kennebunk	Signage improve Parking spaces improved	
Advocate for improved signage for public toilets	Committee on Aging Working with other Town committees	1 to 3 years	Town Planning Board Budget Board		Parks and Recreation	Signage yes/no	

Community Support and Health Services

One of our partner groups, No Place Like Home, has established a group of volunteers to do small household services (e.g., install grab bars, change light bulbs, move furniture, lower storm windows) for seniors, a Handy Man Brigade. A similar program has been established in other Age-Friendly towns in Maine, notably Bowdoinham. We are also planning to establish a medical equipment loan closet, a system whereby seniors will be able to get, free of charge, lightly used medical devices such as walkers, crutches, wheelchairs, and other kinds of equipment. Establish a system of support for family caregivers as a crucial component of home and community based care for seniors. Initiate discussions with home health services and social services to identify new and innovative ways to coordinate local health and social services for seniors.

Action Items

We should establish a firm relationship with the Kennebunk High School, where students are required to perform a certain number of hours of community service, in order to structure a program for working with seniors. This might entail volunteering to shovel snow in the winter, rake leaves in the fall, and do light cleaning in and around a person's house.

The Town of Kennebunk needs to make sure that citizens are aware of nursing services in the immediate area, including home-care service, hospice service, and others.

Improve access to information about senior services, most notably through the town's website and printed materials available at the Town Hall.

Support and promote the efforts of volunteer organizations in the Town of Kennebunk, and encourage volunteerism.

Domain:

Community Support and Health Services

Goal: Establish links between the community and providers

Activities	By Whom	By When	Resources & Support	Potential Resistance	Partnerships	Metrics	Outcome
Form a task force that will partner with the Kennebunk Senior Center to advocate with the town to improve infrastructure/access to the Center	Committee on Aging	3 to 5 Years	Town Planning Board Budget Board	Budget Board Town selectmen	Kennebunk Senior Ctr	Signage for the center is improved (y/n) Number of designated parking spaces with easy access to the Center.	Signage improved Parking spaces improved
Form a committee to determine the best way to promote awareness of volunteer opportunities to support aging in place in Kennebunk. Develop a communication plan and oversee it.	Committee on Aging No Place Like Home Kennebunk Senior Center	3 to 5 years	Town Planning Board Budget Board Non-profit groups	Budget Board	Town of Kennebunk		Creation of a Communication plan to promote volunteer opportunities that support aging in place in Kennebunk.
Develop a Handy Man Brigade.	Committee on Aging No Place Like Home	1-5 years	Community goodwill; Technical Assistance AARP Maine	Liability concerns (Budget Board; Town Selectmen)	No Place Like Home Kennebunk HS	Year 1: Explore partnerships with Voluntary Organizations and Develop Policies and Procedures. Year 2: Begin Training Volunteers Year 3: Implement	

Develop a Resource Guide with information about home medical and non-medical care available in Kennebunk & surrounding area	Committee on Aging No Place Like Home The Center	3-5 years	AARP Maine's Resource Guide Template; No Place Like Home;	Finding volunteers willing to create the Resource Guide	No Place Like Home	Resource Guide produced (y/n).	Resource Guide with needed information for people to access care they need to stay at home.
Maintain and enhance the Medical equipment loan closet program	Committee on Aging	ongoing	Aging Excellence Kennebunk (space for closet); Fire and Rescue;	Town Selectmen (liability concerns)	Home Instead Senior Care; Kennebunk Fire and Rescue	Number of people borrowing equipment	Access to medical equipment for residents and visitors

Communication and Information

Communication assets include the newly updated and completely redesigned Town of Kennebunk website, as well as numerous communications networks maintained by non-profit groups in Kennebunk, and designed for seniors. Numbered among these are No Place Like Home, The Center (known previously as The Senior Center), A Place to Start, the New Neighbors Association, and the various medical care groups serving the Town, especially those of Maine Health Care.

Businesses having communications links and working with seniors include Atria, Huntington Commons, Home Instead, Aging Excellence, and Comfort Keepers. The predominantly age fifty-five-and-over developments such as Coventry Woods and The Farragut all use internal communications systems, as do several subsidized housing facilities which serve seniors. Finally, the Fire Department/EMS and the Police department have extensive one-on-one contact with seniors, albeit primarily in emergency situations.

There are also thriving, small periodicals in the area, such as The Kennebunk Post, The York County Coast Star, and the Village. These all represent a valuable resource for citizens.

Action Items

Many towns in Maine are currently evaluating their Internet and broadband services, both in terms of quality and access. Kennebunk is no exception. Our basic service provider has a virtual monopoly, and the charges are expensive for many customers. The Town of Kennebunk Comprehensive Plan Update Committee, in its new proposal, will be calling for community-wide, high-speed, high-quality broadband services, importantly as a means of making Kennebunk more attractive to the growing population of telecommuters, residing or considering locating in the town. Improved Internet service will naturally benefit the entire population.

Kennebunk should try to establish and maintain Wi-Fi hot spots along certain streets and in certain areas.

The Town of Kennebunk has been proactive with street signage, but needs to add more, especially signs indicating public facilities and toilets. There should be an information kiosk on Maine Street, protected from the weather, where tourists could find maps and guide materials for Kennebunk and surrounding areas. For more about the action plan for street signage and information kiosk, please refer to the Outdoor Spaces goal (above).

Domain:

Communication and Information (See also Outdoor Spaces Action Plan—above).

Goal: Establish links between the community and providers

Activities	By Whom	By When	Resources & Support	Potential Resistance	Partnerships	Metrics	Outcome
Request that a representative of Age-Friendly Kennebunk sit on the town Broadband Committee to make age-friendly recommendations.	Committee on Aging	1 Year	Town Planning Board And Comprehensive Planning Committee Non-Profit Kennebunk The Center	Town selectmen	Town of Kennebunk Broadband Committee	Aging Committee member on town Broadband Committee (y/n)	Improved internet access for town residents and visitors.

Social Participation

The Kennebunk Recreation Department has a remarkable catalog of activities for all ages, from the very young to seniors. Among the listings are programs of the plays of Shakespeare, performed for free in Lafayette Park in the summer months. There are also educational programs sponsored by MaineStage, for those who wish to learn more about acting and the plays of Shakespeare.

The entire catalog is online at the newly renovated and upgraded Kennebunk Town website, at www.kennebunkmaine.us. Our Committee should make every effort to publicize and promote these services and opportunities.

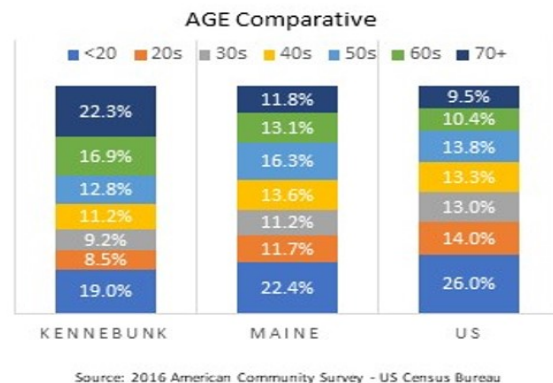
Here in Maine and more so Kennebunk, we enjoy a higher than the current national average density of 60 and 70+ people in our communities. Unlike many Maine towns, Kennebunk is fortunate to have the benefit of a senior center. Twenty-seven years ago, Hank and Annie Spaulding recognized that their parent's social isolation was increasing. Their strong will and vision were pivotal in creating a nonprofit known today as the Center, located in Lower Village.

It offers a warm welcoming environment that is open five days a week, and continues to serve as a place for seniors to meet, have fun and volunteer.

Whether it is an educational or yoga class, friends' meeting over coffee, or free FISH medical rides, the Center is here to serve. Countless medical studies have linked seniors being isolated to health issues such as early onset dementia, depression, and increased falls. The Center gives seniors a reason to get out of their homes offering engaging programs that keep our seniors healthy, happy, and independent and connected to our community.

The Center is funded through nominal membership dues, fundraising, and local citizen and business support. Less than one percent of our budget is funded by the town of Kennebunk. We continue to serve the senior population and community with 800+ people using our services in 2016 alone. Through our social service programs such as FISH, Elder Elves, Tender Loving Calls and Grief Support, the Center serves our community 365 days a year. Our members support us with over 4000 volunteer hours given not only to the Center but through our outreach programs, our greater community as well. Membership is open to those ages 50 and above but "friends of the Center" can be any age!

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The Town of Kennebunk has a large number of churches that sponsor all manner of support activities for seniors. Notable among these are the First Unitarian Universalist church and St. Martha's.

The Kennebunk Free Library has programs of reading clubs and other adult programs.
<http://kennebunklibrary.org>

Respect and Social Inclusion

As our citizens age, we will need a means to connect with other groups to maintain a sense of community and inclusiveness. This might mean intergenerational connections to young people at Kennebunk High School, where the students would be able to meet their requirements for community service by working with older residents in various ways.

We would hope to establish a more culturally diverse community here in Kennebunk, through the creation of more employment opportunities.

Action Items

Goals for Social Participation and Respect and Social Inclusion are integrated throughout the plan.

A primary need is to bring the community together—to encourage people to take advantage of the many social opportunities in Kennebunk and to create ways to bring the generations together.

Domains:
Social Participation and Respect and Social Inclusion

Goal:
Ensure Social Connections between all residents

Activities	By Whom	By When	Resources & Support	Potential Resistance	Partnerships	Metrics	Outcome
Form a Social Committee to make recommendations for greater social connections in the community between residents of all ages.	Committee on Aging	1 to 5 years	Town Planning Board		Town of Kennebunk	Committee formed (y/n)	Implement intergenerational programs
Partner with the Center to increase awareness of their social programming for older residents of Kennebunk		3 to 5 years			The Center		Increased participation in The Center
Advocate for an increase in town funding for the Senior Center to strengthen its programs for older people.		3 to 5 years	Budget Board Non-profit groups	Budget Board	Parks and Recreation		More and better programs for seniors

Civic Engagement and Employment

Civic engagement is key to the success of the age-friendly action plan presented. In order to achieve the goals described, the committee will need to engage residents of all ages in making needed changes. However, the majority of volunteers will likely be 50+ because they have time to give to the community that younger people raising families may be hard-pressed to find.

The State of Maine, while at nearly full employment on paper, has serious problems with seasonal workers and part time employees. In a recent discussion on Public Television, it was noted by members of the Statehouse, as well as experts in the field, that every year several sectors of the economy face severe shortages of workers. These include many hospitality employment and retail sectors. Because of these shortages, some hotels in the immediate area have had to curtail their services and even shut down earlier than usual.

Solutions

Age-Friendly Kennebunk will continue to promote civic engagement by residents of all ages while age-friendly action plan is implemented.

Finding ways to connect seniors who have valuable skills with likely employers in Kennebunk and the towns nearby would be a beginning strategy.

- Establishing training facilities for seniors to improve their computer skills, even on specific tools used in hospitality or other specialized fields, would be a great place to begin.
- The Chamber of Commerce holds a jobs fair every year, and this would be a great place for seniors, and, indeed, all others, to locate part time and seasonal work.

Summary

Kennebunk is located in the third-wealthiest county in Maine. It has many advantages because of its year round tourist season, its spectacular ocean beaches, and its location near to Portland and Boston. Kennebunk has great schools and a vibrant community spirit. The architectural beauty of Kennebunk is known throughout the world, from the fame of the Wedding Cake House, listed on the National Register, to the First Parish Unitarian Universalist Church. In 1933, the noted photographer Walker Evans made images of the Wedding Cake House, producing several world-famous photographs.

As pointed out in a document produced by AARP, “The goal of age-friendly community work is that people of all ages: Can actively participate in community activities...” In a very real sense, the solutions for livability issues for seniors and, indeed, all segments of our community, are inextricably linked by proximity, common interests, and the public good.

Due to careful town planning and thoughtful management, Kennebunk has developed a very important town center consisting of municipal buildings, the Waterhouse Center, a beautiful Main Street, and significant amenities, all within walking distance of one another.

Because of our unique qualities and location, we have the opportunity to retain this special character of our town and at the same time become one of the most modern, forward-looking small towns in America. If we act to diversify our housing stock, keeping at the same time its New England style and character, but increasing its density in a thoughtful way, we can help establish more affordability and population-age variability. A slight to moderate density increase would make possible changes to transportation availability and reduce automobile travel. If we do these things we can attract and keep a larger number of younger residents who would be able to work on modernizing our infrastructure.

By building more housing, adding mixed zoning solutions, investigating and possibly creating public and private transportation for seniors, creating more green spaces, and modernizing our mix of energy sources, we can become the Kennebunk of the future.

Notes

¹ The Well-Tempered City, Jonathan F.P. Rose, 2016.

² Joint Center for Housing Studies, Harvard University, 2016.

³ *IBID*

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