

# **TOWN OF STARKS COMPREHENSIVE PLAN**

## **PART II. INVENTORY AND ANALYSIS**



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*This document provides the background information  
used to develop Part I. Recommendations*

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**November 6, 2012**

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## **CHAPTER 1. COMMUNITY CHARACTER, HISTORY AND ARCHAEOLOGY**

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### **OVERVIEW**

The character of Starks today reflects its natural landscape and past human activities. Understanding the town's past provides context for the future. It enables the community to evaluate what aspects of its past it treasures most, and then to take steps to preserve the best of its past. This can also include efforts to assure new uses fit in harmoniously with the community's character.

Historical and archaeological resources contribute significantly to the character of the town. The people of Starks treasure their past, which is evident in the ongoing activities of the Starks Historical Society, and in the efforts by others who have researched and documented the town's history, and celebrated its past.

This chapter includes a brief history of the town, a discussion of local efforts to preserve the town's history and cultural heritage, an inventory of archaeological and historical sites, and a discussion about what is being done to preserve these important resources.

### **A BRIEF HISTORY OF STARKS AND HOW IT SHAPED THE COMMUNITY'S CHARACTER TODAY<sup>1</sup>**

The story of human activity in the Starks area shows surprising continuity back perhaps to 6,000 BC or even further. Land use and development have been dictated by its superior assets: premium farmland regularly enriched by river flooding, well-wooded upland teeming with game and building materials, and its location at the junction of rivers going north, south, and west, which themselves offered abundant fish, fur, and transportation resources.

Native American use of this area is well documented and deserves further research. This area figures in International geo-politics between the English and the French during the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. For thousands of years up to the 1690s, at a time when the French had established missionary outreach among the natives, most Native occupation was on the western side of the Kennebec, north and south of the Sandy River. During the latter parts of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, both informally and formally the dividing line between English and French North America came to be

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<sup>1</sup> Sources: "People and Places of Starks" Starks Historical Society; "Canning Gold" Paul Frederic, Starks Historical Society.

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the Kennebec River. In response, the missionaries, specifically Fr. Sebastian Rasle, moved the village and resettled it on the eastern, French side of the Kennebec.

The first-known non-native settlement in Starks was established at the so-called Oxbow in 1774 on land previously cleared and grown to corn by the Abenaki. When the Revolutionary War ended, Starks saw rapid population and agricultural growth along the Sandy River, reaching 327 persons by 1790, with only three towns being larger in Somerset County. Starks was incorporated in 1795 as the 100<sup>th</sup> town in the Massachusetts District of Maine. Settlement first occurred along the intervalles of the Sandy River and the western side of the Kennebec, moved up into the intervalles of Lemon Stream and finally onto the stonier hillsides.

Starks enjoyed rapid growth, reaching 1559 citizens in 1840, keeping pace with other towns in the region. Harnessing smaller rivers, especially Lemon Stream, was easier than the Sandy and the Village grew on the flat around the falls at Sawyer's Mills. Prominent issues in those years were clear land titles, roads, bridges, and ferries. Access to the Village, especially at meeting times in the wet spring was a problem for some and thus two parcels were ceded in this period, to Industry in 1822 and to Mercer in 1835. Yet 1840

saw a vigorous Starks boasting several mills, three general stores, carpentry and cobbler shops, blacksmith, brickyard, tannery, starch factory, and hotel. There were also fourteen schools, two churches, and a meeting house. Land use for farming had spread to the uplands and more remote sections (despite poorer soils) with roads and settlements reaching all corners.

This peak of 1840 was followed by a steady decline for the next 120 years, leveling off in 1960 at 306 inhabitants, approximately the 1790 figure 170 years before. This dynamic was mirrored in small towns all over New England and beyond due to the Industrial Revolution gaining steam, migration to cities, and the opening of the West. A number of outlying farms were abandoned

### *The Starks Corn Shop, 1916-64*

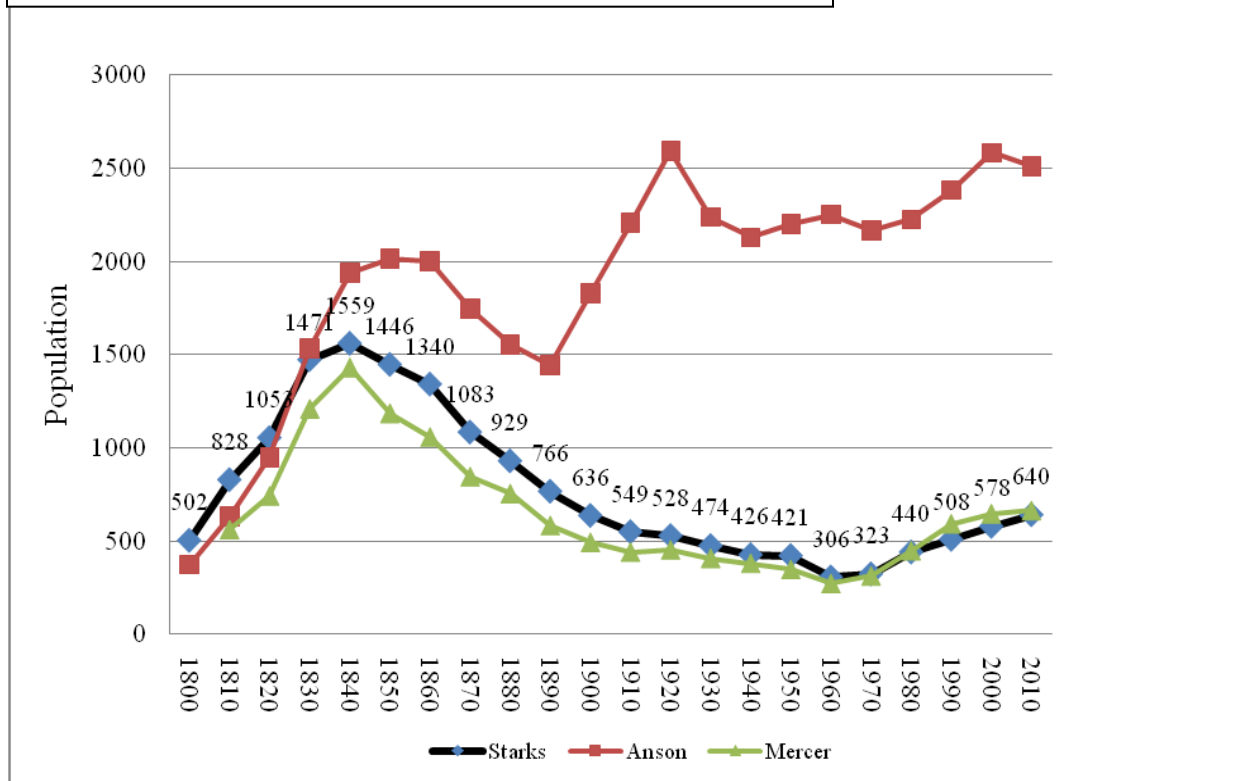
*Canning sweet corn had a prominent part in the economy of northern New England. 136 towns had corn shops, mostly in south-central Maine, canning 'gold' that was shipped all over the globe. Starks has some of the best corn land in Maine and canning was the town's major industry throughout this period. Workers earned seasonal wages - and a few made year-round money, farmers and hands likewise - not to mention owners and managers. The Starks shop payroll was \$50,000 (\$475,100 today) in 1947, a post-peak year. Often the handicapped and under-age were gainfully employed. Taxes were paid and a share of optimism and community pride followed a successful pack. Everyone identified with that goal and canneries acted as social levelers in the shop and around town. They also reduced the migration of families, knowledge, and skills elsewhere, holding communities more intact and stable over time.*

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while others merged into larger units. People and services increasingly clustered in the Village area. One positive development was the corn canning shop which operated from 1916 to 1964 in the Village. But two additional populated portions of Starks were ceded away, to Mercer again (1865) and to Norridgewock (1907). This fixed the Kennebec and the Sandy as our eastern and southern borders (except the SW corner). Despite several chances over the years to become an agricultural, educational, and/or transport nexus, none of these attempts succeeded, and Starks became relatively more isolated due to its geography.

A small but gradual increase in population began in the 1960s, a feature common to many rural New England towns. Propelled by the "back-to-the-land" ethic and access to fairly cheap land this trend continues today, though overshadowed by newer demographic trends. Recreational use and passive enjoyment have largely replaced prior farming impulses. A notable infrastructural development during this era was the creation of the Water District which serves about 23 homes in the Village. Also noteworthy was the Bijah Hill Ski Tow, a true community effort that provided a popular skiing operation for Starks and all surrounding towns. With its warming hut, food service, night skiing, and 800 to 1,000-foot rope tow, over 100 people might be seen on weekends enjoying the many open and wooded slopes. It ran ca. 1960 to 1972.

Figure 1-1: Historic Population Change, Source: U.S. Census



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In its agricultural heyday Starks had a great deal more open land. Today, much of that acreage has reverted to forest, mainly low-quality hardwoods and some conifers. Where there is now a landscape that is 80% wooded and 20% open, the ratio back in the mid-19th century might have been reversed.

In recent years, traditional agrarian uses have been augmented by other development trends, all modest but probably growing:

- Increasing amount of land managed for timber production<sup>2</sup>,
- Construction of new, year-round homes and seasonal second homes on existing roads,
- Growth of Starks as a "bedroom" town for citizens employed in other communities,
- Development of home-based economic activities ("cottage industries"),
- Appearance of modern services (vehicle repair, forest consulting, legal services, solar power, et al.)

## **ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORIC ASSETS**

The Maine Historic Preservation Commission is the agency responsible for overseeing historical and archaeological resources within Maine. The Commission has identified three types of historic and archaeological resources that should be considered in comprehensive planning:

- Prehistoric Archaeological (Native American resources, before European arrival)
- Historic Archaeological (mostly European-American since the introduction of written records)
- Historic Buildings/Structures/Objects (buildings and other above ground structures and objects)

Archaeological resources are those found underground and are locations where there has been prior existence of human beings including structures, artifacts, terrain features, graphics or remains of plants and animals associated with human habitation. Prehistoric archaeological resources are those associated with Native Americans and generally date prior to the 1600s. Historic archaeological resources are those associated with the earliest European settlers.

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<sup>2</sup> *The land enrolled in the Tree Growth program has been slowly but steadily increasing. About 50 to 200 acres of town land are added to that program each year.*

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## **PREHISTORIC ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES<sup>3</sup>:**

There are a number of significant Native American archaeological sites in Starks. Large portions of the banks of the Sandy River and Kennebec River have been surveyed by professional archaeologists as part of federal re-licensing processes for nearby hydro-electric projects (Anson, Abnaki, Weston dams) and the recent removal and decommissioning of the Madison Electric Works dam on the Sandy River (See Archaeologically Sensitive Areas Map).

These surveys resulted in the identification of twelve known Native American archaeological sites all located along the shores of the Sandy and/or Kennebec Rivers. Two of these sites in Starks, and another across the river are listed on the register of National Historic Places (see description on next page).

The Maine Historic Preservation Commission (MHPC) recommends further professional survey work be undertaken on unsurveyed portions of the Sandy River and Lemon Stream floodplains and uplands. These areas have been identified as potentially significant for archaeological resources. (See Archaeologically Sensitive Areas Map)

## **Historic Archaeological Sites**

MHPC is not aware of any significant historic European American archaeological sites in Starks<sup>4</sup>. This is not because they don't exist, but because no professional survey for historic archaeological sites has been conducted to date. MHPC recommends that future fieldwork and identification of significant sites focus on agricultural, residential, and industrial sites relating to the earliest Euro-American settlement of the town beginning in the 1770s.

The types of sites the town might want to further investigate include cellar holes, such as those associated with the first homesteads, remnants of the Sandy River Dam, remnants of ferry crossings, mill/bridge works, and quarries. Some of these sites have been identified on the Cultural Resources Map. In addition, a reputed Native American burial ground on Lemon Stream which, with four acres of stream frontage, was donated to a local conservancy, needs to be further investigated. The site had been noted in a deed from the 1850s and may indicate the burial of Christianized natives. There are other locales in the town with historic value based on reputation and family history.

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<sup>3</sup> *Maine Historic Preservation Commission, inventory data as of September, 2010*

<sup>4</sup> *Maine Historic Preservation Commission, inventory data as of September, 2010*

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## **Historic Buildings/Structures/Objects**

MHPC suggests a comprehensive survey of Starks' historic above-ground resources needs to be conducted to identify those properties which may be eligible for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places. To date, MHPC has not identified any of these types of historic resources in Starks. A survey might reveal properties eligible for nomination to the National Register or properties important to the people of Starks. These structures would likely include many of the historic homes and farmsteads in Starks that continue to be part of its cultural heritage.

## ***STARKS' NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES SITES***

The National Register of Historic Places is the federal government's official list of cultural resources worthy of preservation. Authorized under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, the National Register is part of a nation-wide program to coordinate and support public and private efforts to identify, evaluate, and protect nationally historic and archeological resources.

The Norridgewock National Historic Landmark includes three separate sites near the confluence of the Kennebec and Sandy Rivers. The Old Point Mission Site, now shared by Madison and Norridgewock, but as to the portion now in Norridgewock, in that area formerly a part of Starks, is well known throughout the region and beyond. The other two sites are located in Starks and are called the Sandy River Site and the Tracy Farm Site.<sup>5</sup>

### **The Sandy River Site (ME 69-24)**

The Sandy River site is near the river junction with the Kennebec River. Singularly well-preserved deposits dating to the AD 1390-1690 period include "several hearths, a probable roasting pit, and a buried living surface." One of the greatest finds was most of a St. Lawrence Iroquoian pot, rarely found in Maine, dated to AD 1450 +/- 110. Corn, squash, and other residues suggest at least seasonal occupation. Overall analysis indicates this site was likely abandoned as a habitation when the residents moved to more permanent year-round settlements on higher ground at the Tracy Farm and Old Point villages.

### **The Tracy Farm Site (ME 69-11)**

This site is 500 meters north of the Sandy River Site. It was first studied by anthropologist Harald Prins in 1983, based on a 1647 account that the earliest native village was on the west

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<sup>5</sup> Source: "Research and Preservation at Norridgewock NHL," Cowie, Petersen, and Bourque, 1995.

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side of the Kennebec across from what is known as Old Point. Subsequent research affirmed this and brought to light over 15,000 artifacts spanning the Late Woodland-Historic Contact periods. The discovery of such a key transition site is a sort of 'Holy Grail' to antiquarians. Here UMF and Maine state researchers found terminal-era Abenaki manufactures mingled with glass beads, white-clay tobacco pipes and other unmistakably European objects. But the most stunning find was the remains of an Abenaki longhouse, the only one known in New England. The size of the structure was measured at about 16 x 82 feet, suitable for eight families (36-40 people). Experts who studied the evidence from this site declared the site "a unique resource" for research into the first Native American-European interactions. In the mid 1690's the village was moved across the Kennebec to what is now Old Point.

### ***NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES SITES IN NEIGHBORING TOWNS***

#### **Thompson Bridge**

The Thompson Bridge is located in Industry from 17 to 20 feet west of the Starks/Industry town Line. The span is thought to be among the oldest dry-laid stone bridges in the state, and perhaps the region or country and to date back to 1808. The site is historically important to Starks because it represented an access to a substantial portion of the town prior to the construction of what is Route 43 today. Its listing on the National Register of Historic Places is in recognition of its importance as a historic feature. There are serious concerns about the continuing spalling and other deterioration of the bridge and continued use of the bridge which further threatens its integrity. In 2008, the Historical Society engaged Chris Tanguay, a certified dry-stone-waller to give an evaluation of the bridge. He opined the bridge might collapse within the next five years unless serious attention was given to its condition.

#### **Oxbow Cemetery**

The Oxbow Cemetery is currently located in Norridgewock, but prior to 1907 that land was in Starks. The Oxbow Cemetery is noteworthy because it was one of the earliest cemeteries in the region. James Waugh, the founder of the Town of Starks, is buried there along with other early settlers. James Waugh was Starks' first clerk and held that post for a number of decades.

### ***OTHER HISTORICALLY SIGNIFICANT FEATURES***

#### **Cemeteries**

There are a number of old cemeteries and burying grounds in Starks. Many of these have been identified on the Cultural Resources Map. Cemeteries are also listed in the Chapter on Public Facilities and Services.

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## **Monuments**

Starks has one monument; the Veterans' monument, which is located in the front yard of the Community Center.

## **Cultural Historic Landscapes**

As a rural community Starks has retained many areas where the landscape has remained generally unchanged. In some areas, such as a several mile stretch along Route 43 and the River Road, many original farmsteads and their adjacent farmlands remain intact as a 19<sup>th</sup> century landscape. Other areas of town are forested but were once farmland where only stone walls and cellarholes remain as reminders of the town's agrarian past.

## ***PROTECTION FOR HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESOURCES***

All of the town's historical and archaeological resources are privately owned. The primary threat to most of these buildings and sites is the desire of their owners, present and future, to alter them in ways that destroy their architectural or archaeological integrity. Activities that disturb the ground can potentially destroy significant archaeological information.

The nationally recognized standard for worthiness of preservation of historical or archaeological resources is normally eligibility for, or listing on, the National Register of Historic Places. The National Register, administered by the National Park Service, U.S. Department of Interior, is a listing of those buildings, districts, structures, objects and sites deemed worthy of preservation for their historical, cultural or archaeological significance. Because the National Register is intended to accommodate buildings and sites of national, state and local significance, it can include historic or archaeological resources of value to towns. Structures on the National Register also receive a limited amount of protection from alterations or demolition where federal funding is utilized.

As discussed previously, the town's Native American National Register sites at the mouth of the Sandy River are protected through a conservation easement held by the U.S Fish and Wildlife Service.

Some regulatory protection for historic and archaeological resources is provided through the state subdivision and shoreland zoning statutes. Maine's subdivision statute requires review of the impact on "historic sites", which includes both National Register listed and eligible buildings and archaeological sites. The state shoreland zoning statute includes as one of its purposes, "to protect archaeological and historic resources". The MHPC suggests that local ordinances contain wording similar to the following: "An appropriate archaeological survey shall be conducted for archaeological sites within, or adjacent to, the proposed subdivision/development which are either listed in the National Register of Historic Places, or

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within, or adjacent to, an area designated as archaeologically sensitive or potentially containing sites as determined by the town or Maine Historic Preservation Commission. If one or more National Register eligible or listed archaeological sites will suffer adverse impact, appropriate mitigation measures shall be proposed in the subdivision/development plan, and submitted for comment to the Maine Historic Preservation Commission at least 20 days prior to action being scheduled by the Planning Board.”

The Starks Site Plan and Subdivision Ordinance requires that the Planning Board make a finding that proposed subdivisions and other developments “will not have an undue adverse effect on the scenic or natural beauty of the area, aesthetics, historic sites or rare and irreplaceable natural areas or any public rights for physical or visual access to the shoreline.” This ordinance is not applicable to individual homes, home occupations, or forestry or agricultural activities.

Historical and archaeological resources can also be protected to some extent through public education. The activities of the Starks Historical Society serve to increase public awareness and appreciation for the town’s cultural resources. In the case of the reputed Native burial ground on Lemon Stream, some protection occurred through acquisition by a land conservancy.

### ***STARKS HISTORICAL SOCIETY***

The Starks Historical Society first met July 5, 1985. Members formally signed Articles of Incorporation April 9, 1995, which were filed with the state on April 19, 1995. Society members were active in the formation of the Starks Bicentennial Committee and the Society's first publication, "The People and Places of Starks," which was part of those observances and was published in the spring of 1996. A separate Index volume was published by the Society in 2008.

The town has an essentially complete set of birth, death, marital, and town meeting records back to its incorporation in 1795. The Town has funded the professional restoration and microfilming of these records and an ongoing project of the Society has been conversion of the microfilms to PDF format, one disc for each volume, at no cost to the town. Another current project concerns private collections of glass photographic negatives that depict Starks in the late 19th and early 20th century. Some of these plates have also been processed into PDFs.

Other recent and current activities are the following:

- Clarification of the Higgins Scholarship, given annually by Bowdoin College, with priority to a Starks student. John Higgins was a town official and school teacher in the 1890s era.

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- Planning for a joint Society and town municipal website that will highlight town historical information as well as current affairs.
- Evaluating and improving, if necessary, the condition of the many town cemeteries.
- Videotaping the town's roads to establish a baseline for future viewing of what the town's environs look like now.
- Transcribing the U.S. Federal Census data for Starks.
- Completing an inventory of Starks Historical Society items.
- Playing an active role as Starks decides future uses for the former elementary school, a \$1.5 million building that is now town property.
- Sponsoring field-trips to historically significant sites in the town.
- Working to preserve historically significant sites.

*The Starks Bicentennial Celebration*  
Starks was incorporated in 1795 and celebrated its 200th anniversary in 1995 with winter and summer programs. Among the features were parades, dramatizations, and music; creation of a commemorative calendar; a country barn dance at a local, historic barn; crafting of a Bicentennial Quilt; and many other activities.

As examples of the preservation of historically significant sites, the Society helped fund restoration work on the so-called Oxbow Cemetery, one of the oldest cemeteries in Somerset County, originally located in Starks, but since secession in 1907, in Norridgewock. This work was done in conjunction with the Association for Gravestone Studies, as part of a conference the Association held in Maine in June, 2011. As stated above, the Society also worked to preserve and protect a reputed Native American burial ground and four acres surrounding it on Lemon Stream, including the stream frontage itself, by arranging for its acquisition by a local conservancy, the Somerset Woods Trustees.

The Society has in recent years initiated and continues to organize an annual Dessert Soiree, a gathering of members of 8 to 10 historical societies from many surrounding communities. The Soiree takes place at the Hilton Stock Farm, with tours of the farm buildings, which are historically significant in the area.

### CHAPTER 2. WATER RESOURCES

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#### **OVERVIEW**

Starks' water resources are vitally important to the town. The town's wetlands, rivers and streams provide recreational opportunities and valuable natural habitat. Groundwater resources provide drinking water for the town's residents.

In general, the town's water quality is very good primarily due to the small and widely dispersed population and mostly forested land cover. Undisturbed forest land is about the least polluting form of land cover in terms of nutrients and sediments lost to surface waters.

Water Resources in Starks are displayed on the Water Resources Map.

#### **SURFACE WATERS**

##### **Ponds**

There is one named pond in Starks, Cold Pond, and several unnamed ponds. All of these ponds are less than ten acres in size, and there is little to no development associated with these water bodies.

##### **Streams and Brooks**

There are three major streams that carry surface waters out of Starks. They are Hilton Brook, which drains the northern part of town; Lemon Stream, which drains the central part of town and passes through the village; and Josiah Brook, which drains the western part of Starks.

Lemon Stream is the largest stream and drains an area of more than 25 square miles for nearly all of its length in Starks. This means that it is defined as a "river" for purposes of state shoreland zoning, which requires a 250 foot shoreland zone on both sides.<sup>6</sup> Hilton Brook and Josiah Brook are both defined as "streams" for most of their length in Starks, and have 75 foot shoreland zones on both sides. Pelton Brook, a tributary to Hilton Brook, and Falls Brook, a tributary to Lemon Stream also have 75 foot shoreland zones.

Lemon Stream is perhaps the most significant stream in town because it runs through and directly drains Starks Village. It adds considerably to the character and aesthetics of the village. Hilton Brook and Josiah Brook drain very rural and sparsely developed parts of town.

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<sup>6</sup> *Maine Mandatory Shoreland Zoning Act (38 MRSA §§ 435-449)*

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The watersheds for each of the streams are illustrated on the Water Resources Map. There are also numerous smaller tributaries. With the exception of a small area in the northeast corner of town, all streams empty into the Sandy River. The Sandy River and a small tributary in the northeast corner, Ira Young Brook, drain directly into the Kennebec River.

All of the streams and brooks in Starks are classified by the Maine Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) as Class B, the third highest quality rating for fresh surface waters<sup>7</sup>.

According to the definition in state statute, Class B waters:

“...are suitable for the designated uses of drinking water supply after treatment; fishing; agriculture; recreation in and on the water; industrial process and cooling water supply; hydroelectric power generation, except as prohibited under Title 12, section 403; navigation; and as habitat for fish and other aquatic life. The habitat must be characterized as unimpaired.”

### Rivers

Two important rivers form the southern and eastern borders of Starks. The Kennebec River, delineating the northeast border of Starks, is classified as an impaired river by the DEP. The water quality classification for the Kennebec River ranges from A (the highest possible rating) north of Madison, to Class C in Fairfield. The portion of the Kennebec bordering Starks is classified as Class B, but impaired by legacy pollutants, specifically polychlorinated biphenyls, or PCBs. PCBs are a class of organic chemical that were used in the manufacture of electronics, plastics, adhesives and other industrial applications for decades. The production of PCBs was outlawed in the late 1970s, but the pollutant still persists in many areas that have been exposed in the past. The DEP conducts fish tissue tests for the presence of PCB and other contaminants. This segment of the Kennebec has also been classified by the DEP as impaired by dioxin, a pollutant released by various industrial processes, including paper production. Contamination from dioxin and other pollutants in Maine waters has led the DEP to issue fish

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<sup>7</sup> *Maine has four water quality classes of rivers and streams: AA, A, B, and C (38 MRSA § 465). Each classification assigns designated uses and water quality criteria, and may place specific restrictions on certain activities such that the goal conditions of each class may be attained. There is actually not much difference between the uses or the qualities of the various classes because all attain the minimum fishable-swimmable standards of the federal Clean Water Act. Most support the same set of designated uses with modest variations. The classification system is really a hierarchy of risk, more than one of use or quality, the risk being the possibility of a breakdown of the ecosystem and loss of use due to either natural or human-caused events. Ecosystems that are more natural can be expected to be more resilient to a new stress and to show more rapid recovery.*

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consumption warnings and restrictions to limit the public's exposure. DEP expects the dioxin-contaminated stretch of the Kennebec to attain its designated water quality classification by 2020. If this proves accurate, at that time the river segment will no longer be considered impaired by dioxin.

The Sandy River, running along the southern border of town is classified by the DEP as Class B, and is not classified as impaired.

### **Wetlands**

Wetlands are vital to preserving water quality and the quantity of surface and groundwater resources. The term "wetlands" is defined under both state and federal laws as "those areas that are inundated or saturated by surface or groundwater at a frequency and duration sufficient to support prevalence of vegetation typically adapted for life in saturated soils." Wetlands include freshwater swamps, bogs, marshes, heaths, swales and meadows. Wetlands can serve many functions: they protect water quality; control flooding and erosion; provide a natural habitat for waterfowl, wildlife and unique plant life; encourage nutrient recycling; and serve as fish sanctuaries and nursery grounds.

There are many wetlands in Starks as displayed on the Water Resources Map. Didson Meadow, located in north-central Starks, is one of many important freshwater wetlands in town.

### ***GROUND WATER RESOURCES***

Groundwater is the primary drinking water supply for Starks residents. Most residents rely on private drilled or dug wells. Residents in Starks Village get their water from the Starks Water District well. There are also public water supplies (wells) at the Starks School and at the Camp at the Eastward.

High yield groundwater resources are particularly important for future planning. "Significant sand and gravel aquifers" have water yields that might be suitable for public water supplies or for uses that require significant quantities of water. Groundwater resources (called aquifers) may be of two types: bedrock aquifers, and sand and gravel aquifers. A bedrock aquifer is generally adequate for small yields. A sand and gravel aquifer is a deposit of coarse-grained surface materials that, in all probability, can supply large volumes of groundwater.

The Maine Geological Survey (MGS) has mapped "significant" sand and gravel aquifers in Starks; most are located along the Sandy and Kennebec Rivers. These groundwater aquifers are capable of producing at least 10 gallons of water per minute according to the MGS. (See Water Resources Map)

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The Town is also aware of important sand and gravel aquifers associated with Lemon Stream, particularly in areas above the village.

### **Public Water Supplies**

There are three public water supplies in Starks according to the Maine Drinking Water Program (DWP). A “public water system” is defined by state and federal statute as one that serves 25 or more people for 60 or more days per year. Public water supplies include systems serving municipal water districts and schools, and can include systems serving office buildings, motels, restaurants, campgrounds and other uses that meet the statutory definition.

The Maine Drinking Water Program has the following information on public water supplies in Starks:

- **Starks Water District:** The Starks Water District is a local non-profit quasi-municipal corporation that provides water to approximately 23 households in the village of Starks. The public water supply serving the water district is a 140-foot deep drilled bedrock well with a 300 foot wellhead protection radius, and an unknown overburden thickness. There is a moderate existing risk of contamination from type and site geology. The well has a moderate existing risk of acute contamination, because there is a septic system within 300 feet of it. While the Drinking Water Program also indicates the well has a high risk of future acute and chronic contamination because of limited or no land protection around the well, the immediate area around the well is fenced.
- **Starks Community Center:** This public water supply is a drilled-bedrock well, 102 feet deep. It has a 300-foot wellhead protection radius. It is considered at moderate existing risk of contamination due to type and site geology (unknown overburden thickness). It has a high existing risk of acute contamination (septic system located within 300 feet of the well), and a high risk of future acute contamination (limited or no land protection around the well). The supply is at a moderate risk of existing chronic contamination (it is approximately 300 feet from an above-ground oil tank), but a high risk of future chronic contamination, due to limited land ownership and control. The town may want to consider obtaining easements to provide additional protection.
- **Camp at the Eastward:** This public water supply is a 180-foot deep drilled bedrock well. It is considered at moderate existing risk of contamination due to type and site geology (unknown overburden thickness). It has a low existing risk of acute and future acute contamination.

### **THREATS TO WATER RESOURCES**

Sediment is usually the single greatest pollutant by volume in most watersheds. Roadside runoff, gravel pit runoff and stream bank erosion are major contributors of sediment to surface waters. Road crossings (bridges and culverts) can contribute significant amounts of polluted runoff to streams.

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Other threats to water quality include nutrients and pathogens from improperly maintained septic systems; pathogens, nutrients, sediment and toxic substances, such as heavy metals from storm water runoff from landfills and other developments; salt storage sites; underground storage tanks; hazardous materials spills; and litter. These activities also threaten ground water resources. Activities as diverse as golf courses, cemeteries, burned buildings, and automobile service stations are also potential threats to groundwater.

Agricultural and timber harvesting activities can also impact water quality. Most non-point source pollution from agriculture occurs during the fall, winter and spring when the ground is frozen. Agricultural activities that can contribute pollution include livestock wading in streams, barnyard runoff, farmland eroding into adjacent watercourses, and improperly applied fertilizers, pesticides and water management practices. Timber harvesting activities, such as the layout of roads and skid trails, location of landings and stream crossings, can also contribute to water quality problems, particularly when these activities are conducted on steep slopes.

Once groundwater is contaminated, it is difficult if not impossible to clean. Contamination can eventually spread from groundwater to surface water and vice versa. Thus, it is important to take measures to prevent contamination before it occurs.

### ***REGULATORY PROTECTION FOR WATER RESOURCES***

There are state, federal and local laws designed to protect water resources. Some of the most important laws include the U.S. Clean Water Act, the Maine Natural Resources Protection Act, the Maine Shoreland Zoning Act, and the Maine Minimum Lot Size Law and the Maine Subsurface Wastewater Disposal Rules. Maine's Shoreland Zoning, Minimum Lot Size Law, and plumbing and wastewater disposal rules are all administered by the town.

Starks adopted its first Shoreland Zoning Ordinance in the early 1970s. The current version of the Starks Shoreland Zoning Ordinance was adopted in 2007, and is consistent with the State's minimum standards. This regulation provides considerable protection to Starks' valuable water resources and aquatic habitats (see Critical Natural Resources chapter).

The Minimum Lot Size Law regulates subsurface waste disposal through requirements for minimum lot size and minimum frontage on a water body. This law along with the plumbing code and wastewater disposal rules is primarily administered by the town's code enforcement officer/plumbing inspector.

***Regulatory Protection for Public Water Supplies:*** Federal and state (Public Law 761) regulations require that owners of these types of public water supplies take steps to protect their water. New septic systems should be located at least 300 feet from wellheads, and underground fuel

## Chapter 2. Water Resources

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storage tanks must be at least 1,000 feet away from well heads. Further, public water suppliers must be notified of certain activities occurring on nearby properties. These activities include automobile graveyards, recycling businesses, junkyards, septic system expansions or replacements, activities requiring a Maine Natural Resource Protection Act Permit or a State Stormwater permit, subdivisions, and other land use projects. In general, in any situation where a permit is required, any nearby public water suppliers should be notified of the project. Starks' ordinances should be amended to include reference to the above state law.

### **FLOODPLAINS**

Floodplains serve to accommodate high water levels of rivers and streams associated with late winter and spring snow melts and storm water runoff. Flooding can cause serious destruction to structures and property. Historically, countless years of flooding on the banks of the Sandy River has resulted in nutrient-rich deposits of sediment, known as the intervale, which is excellent for farming.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) which administers the Federal Flood Insurance Program has mapped 100-year floodplain levels in Starks. The 100-year floodplain level is where there is a 1% chance in any given year that flooding at this level or above this level will occur. One hundred year floodplains in Starks are associated with the Sandy River, Lemon Stream, Hilton Brook, Josiah Brook and some of the other smaller tributaries and some wetlands.

Currently there are only a few structures located in the 100-year floodplain. The Starks Floodplain Management Ordinance, which is in compliance with FEMA requirements, discourages further structural development on 100-year floodplains.

While flooding has not been a significant problem for homeowners in Starks, there has been significant damage to the town's culverts and bridges as a result of major flood events.

*Public Opinion about Protection of Water Resources:*

*Respondents generally believe there is adequate protection of water resources from future development, as follows:*

- 49% - groundwater resources
- 51% - Sandy River
- 52% - streams
- 51% - wetlands

*(Note: about 25% to 30% of respondents had no opinion)*

### CHAPTER 3. CRITICAL NATURAL RESOURCES

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#### **OVERVIEW**

“Critical natural resources”<sup>8</sup> are those natural resources most vulnerable to the impacts of development. Critical natural resources include sensitive shoreland zones; large habitat blocks; multi-function wetlands; essential wildlife habitats including habitats for threatened or endangered species; high value waterfowl and wading bird habitat; high value deer wintering areas; significant vernal pool habitat; and significant fisheries habitat. This chapter outlines Starks’ critical natural resources, the regulations that govern them, and the town’s policies and strategies for protecting and enhancing them.

#### **WILDLIFE AND PLANT HABITAT**

The rural nature of Starks provides extensive natural habitat for a variety of plants and animals. Sprawl and development can threaten natural habitats through direct loss of natural areas and through fragmentation of existing large areas of habitat (habitat blocks). Fragmentation of habitats by roads, buildings and other development isolates some plants and animals limiting their ability to travel, feed and/or reproduce. Fragmentation also creates an edge effect where disturbed areas between developed and natural areas are more easily colonized by non-native species. As development and fragmentation continues, more rare species may be pushed to the brink of extinction.

Considerable identification and analysis of wildlife habitats has been done through the *Beginning with Habitat Program (BwH)*<sup>9</sup>, a habitat-based landscape approach to assessing wildlife and plant conservation needs and opportunities. The goal of the program is to maintain sufficient habitat to support all native plant and animal species currently breeding in Maine by providing information depicting and describing various habitats of statewide and national significance.

*BwH* suggests maintaining a rich complement of plant and wildlife habitat by interweaving important wetland and riparian areas, high value habitats and large habitat blocks to identify

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<sup>8</sup> *Maine’s Growth Management Act definitions.*

<sup>9</sup> *Beginning with Habitat (Notebook and Maps); Maine Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, Maine Natural Areas Program, Maine Audubon, Maine State Planning Office, U. S. Fish and Wildlife, Maine Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Unit, Southern Maine Regional Planning, Nature Conservancy and Wells National Estuarine Research Preserve; January 2003. Maps are available at the town office.*

## Chapter 3. Critical Natural Resources

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those areas most critical to protect or conserve. Mechanisms to protect wildlife habitat can include both regulatory and non-regulatory approaches.

The program recommends enhancing shoreland zoning to protect riparian habitats around water bodies. Conservation of undeveloped areas should focus on large blocks of agricultural and forested habitat that include high value plant and animal habitats. Large blocks of undeveloped land usually have more wildlife diversity than smaller areas and are important to certain wildlife species that require large unfragmented habitat (undeveloped and generally road-less areas).

### **Habitats of Statewide Significance**

The Beginning with Habitat (BwH) program collects and maintains detailed information about critical natural areas throughout Maine, including existing locations of rare, threatened, or endangered plant and animal species and other valuable habitats. Information provided by the BwH program indicates several such areas in Starks (see Critical Natural Resources Map).

***High-Value Plant and Animal Species:*** Two high-value plant species have been identified in Starks: Clinton's Bulrush (*Trichophorum clintonii*, a species of special concern) along the Kennebec, and a threatened orchid, Shining Ladies'-tresses (*Spiranthes lucida*), along the Sandy River. There are also two wildlife species of special concern in town. The Bald Eagle, *Haliaeetus leucocephalus*, has established nesting sites along the Kennebec River in Starks. The Creeper (*Strophitus undulatus*), a freshwater mussel, has been identified in the Kennebec, as well as the Sandy River and Lemon Stream in Starks. These habitats are displayed on the Critical Natural Resources Map.

***Deer Wintering Areas (DWA):*** BwH also identifies several deer wintering areas, predominantly in the northern and western parts of town (see Critical Natural Resources Map). White-tailed deer in Maine are at the northern limits of their geographic range. During winter, deer are exposed to cold temperatures and deep snow that makes it hard to find food and keep warm. Deer adapt to winter by congregating in DWA where the snow is not as deep and there is protection from the wind and ample food. A DWA 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". DWA are crucial to winter survival of deer. Use of DWA is usually ongoing from one year to the next, and specific sites may receive annual use by many generations of deer.

A DWA is ideally composed of over 50% conifers, with a conifer canopy of over 50%, and predominant tree heights of over 35 feet. Greater than one half of a DWA should be in mature conifers at any one time, while the remainder is made up of several age classes of regenerating

## Chapter 3. Critical Natural Resources

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forest that are interspersed throughout the DWA. It is recommended that landowners interested in DWA management contact the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife (MDIFW) for advice because DWA conditions are highly variable and benefit from individualized management approaches.

Over-harvesting of the forested cover as part of a logging operation or for building is the primary threat to deeryards. Regulatory protection of DWAs is minimal because the state has not adopted this mapping for regulation by the Natural Resources Protection Act. Starks does not have any protections for DWA either. DWA along portions of the Industry Road, Sawyers Mills Road, and the Mayhew Road are potentially threatened by development. The MDIFW does not recommend limitations on development or timber cutting to preserve deer wintering areas, but encourages landowners to adopt management practices that will preserve their integrity.

***Waterfowl and Wading Bird Habitats:*** Several significant waterfowl and wading bird habitats have been identified in Starks (see Critical resources map). Waterfowl and wading bird habitat includes breeding, migrating/staging, and wintering habitats for inland waterfowl, or breeding, feeding, loafing, migration, or roosting habitats for inland wading birds. Waterfowl and wading birds occupy areas of Maine for all or a portion of the year so it is necessary that efforts be taken to conserve their habitats.

There are two known blue heron rookeries - one associated with a wetland east of the Sawyers Mills Road/Mayhew Road, and a second associated with a wetland northeast of Kimball Lane.

High and moderate value wading bird and waterfowl habitats are considered “significant wildlife habitat” and are afforded protection through the Natural Resources Protection Act. Some of these wetland habitats in Starks are also protected through shoreland zoning.

***High Value Habitat for Priority Trust Species:*** BwH also identifies (but not through field surveys) many areas of High Value Habitat for Priority Trust Species throughout Starks (see Critical Resources Map). These areas represent the top 25% of important habitats for 91 species of important fish, wildlife, and plants, as modeled by the US Fish and Wildlife Service’s Gulf of Maine Coastal Program.

### **Other Wildlife**

Wildlife watching, hunting and trapping are recreational activities dependent on healthy wildlife populations. Deer, bear, beaver, coyote, fisher, mink, river otter, raccoon, muskrat, and red fox have all been harvested in Starks. If these animals are to continue to exist in significant

## Chapter 3. Critical Natural Resources

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numbers to warrant the interest of hunters, trappers, and those who just enjoy seeing a deer or fox in a field, then it will be necessary to protect their habitats.

### **PROTECTION FOR SIGNIFICANT WILDLIFE AND PLANT HABITATS**

The Town of Starks has limited protection for critical natural habitats in its current ordinances. The Shoreland Zoning Ordinance, adopted in 2007, provides the most protection for valuable water resources and aquatic habitats. The Resource Protection Zone encompasses lands within 250 feet of the normal high water mark of Cold Pond and several other unnamed ponds, the Sandy and Kennebec Rivers, Didson Meadow and other important wetlands. This zone limits many types of development, offering some level of protection to the habitats found therein. Similarly, shoreland zoning also provides significant protection within a 75-foot zone along both sides of Josiah Brook, Pelton Brook, Hilton Brook, and Falls Brook. A 250 foot shoreland zone that includes many areas of Resource Protection provides protection for Lemon Stream.

The town's Site Plan Review and Subdivision Ordinance contains performance standards that provide some habitat protection, but this is only applicable to subdivisions and commercial and other uses that come under site plan review. The ordinance could be amended to include more consideration for wildlife habitat through reference to the BWH maps and data and provisions to encourage maintaining open space, clustering of development and consideration for wildlife corridors. State laws providing some level of protection include the Natural Resources Protection Act and the Maine Endangered Species Act.

Non-regulatory approaches to protecting habitat include education and land conservation efforts, such as conservation easements held by a non-profit. An example in Starks is the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's conservation easement held on shorelands and wetlands associated with the Kennebec and Sandy Rivers on portions of Rivercroft Farm at the end of the Olde Ferry Road. Another example is the Somerset Woods Trustees ownership of the Native American burial grounds adjacent to Lemon Stream.

Lastly, it is important to note that there are considerable overlaps in protection for critical natural resources – these efforts often serve to protect water resources, historical and archaeological resources, recreational opportunities, scenic resources, and agriculture and forestry.

*Public Opinion about Protection of Natural Resources:  
Respondents generally believe there is adequate protection of natural resources from future development, as follows:*

- 51% - Sandy River
- 52% - streams
- 51% - wetlands
- 50% - wildlife habitat

*(Note: about 25% to 30% of respondents had no opinion)*

## Chapter 3. Critical Natural Resources

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### ***LOCALLY IMPORTANT FISHERIES***

Most of the Sandy River along Starks' southern border has been identified as rearing and spawning habitat for Atlantic Salmon. This information comes from field surveys of Maine's salmon rivers and tributaries conducted by the Maine Department of Marine Resources and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The Sandy River also has small mouth bass, and wild brook trout occur in the river seasonally (fall through spring) in low numbers when the water is cool. There are also stocked brook trout and brown trout that drop down from stockings in New Sharon and Farmington, and some may move upstream from stockings in the Kennebec. There is also some natural reproduction of brown trout. With the exception of brook trout and Atlantic Salmon, the above-mentioned species are not native to the area.

A number of the brooks in Starks support naturally-reproducing populations of brook trout and several other fish species. Hilton Brook supports populations of brook trout, common sucker, common shiner, blacknose dace, redbelly dace, creek chubs, and sculpins. Pelton Brook, a tributary to Hilton Brook, also has brook trout. Josiah Brook contains brook trout, blacknose dace, common sucker, common shiner, and creek chub. Lemon Stream has common suckers, brown trout and blacknose dace. Brook trout do occur in the headwaters, but much of the lower main stem is too warm for trout.

### **Protection for Fisheries**

Land use activities, particularly those that remove trees and vegetation from shoreland areas of brooks, streams and ponds, can result in increased water temperatures and degradation of water quality. Maintenance of vegetative buffers to provide shade, particularly for cold-water species (trout and salmon), and to protect water quality is important to maintaining healthy fisheries. Destabilization of banks and activities that increase erosion and sedimentation diminish water quality. Maine's Natural Resources Protection Act and local shoreland zoning regulations provide considerable protection for fisheries through requirements for vegetative buffers and restrictions on activities that remove vegetation. However, some very small tributaries potentially important for fisheries are not protected through shoreland zoning. Often, adequate monitoring of land use activities and enforcement are the issues of concern.

Road construction and maintenance activities can also have a significant impact on fisheries. The biggest threat to aquatic habitats is fish passage, particularly for those species that require upstream habitats for spawning and other needs. Improperly designed culverts can prevent fish passage. The Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife (MDIFW) recommends that culverts less than 4 feet in diameter be embedded into 6 inches of stream bottom, and larger culverts be embedded in at least 1 foot of stream bottom material. Continuance of the natural stream bottom surface material without major changes in elevation is critical. The town might

## Chapter 3. Critical Natural Resources

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consider reviewing the MDIFW data and then consulting with MDIFW on making improvements to culverts. Ditching and drainage designs should direct runoff into vegetated areas or sediment ponds to allow for the filtering out of sediments before runoff is released into water bodies.

### **CHAPTER 4. AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY RESOURCES**

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#### ***OVERVIEW***

Starks' forests and agricultural land are the foundation of its rural landscape and cultural heritage. These areas provide many benefits to the community, as follows:

- Scenic and quiet rural landscape
- Habitat for fisheries and wildlife
- Air and water quality protection
- Open lands for outdoor recreation
- Jobs for local people
- Locally grown food
- Economic benefits to landowners
- Undeveloped resource base for the future

The following sections describe and evaluate forestry and agricultural resources in Starks.

#### ***FORESTRY***

Aerial photography and land cover data for Starks quickly reveal that most of the land in Starks is covered by forests (See Forest and Farmland Map). Overall Starks' forests are mixed stands of evergreens and hardwoods. Sandy areas near the rivers are noteworthy for having outstanding pine groves.

Forestland in Starks is owned by small woodlot owners rather than any large industrial landowners. Landowners may use their forestland for a variety of purposes including home sites, timber harvesting for personal use, for sale to others, for its scenic value, for privacy or buffering from adjacent uses, for wildlife habitat, or for recreation. Landowners can have a variety of reasons for harvesting timber including a desire to generate income, improve the forest, produce firewood, or expand open areas for homebuilding, pastureland or lawn, or to improve aesthetics. Several Starks residents also do custom sawing using portable or stationary sawmills.

Landowners are required to notify the Forest Service before timber is cut or removed when the primary purpose of the harvest is to sell or use the timber as forest products. Loggers usually fill out the notifications which are good for two years. The notifications allow the Maine Forest Service to monitor compliance with the Forest Practices Act, which limits the size of clear cuts and requires best management practices.

According to the Maine Forest Service there have been 314 timber harvests in Starks since 2000 (Table). This translates to an average of 32 harvests per year and about 583 acres harvested per year. Data for the 1990s is also displayed in the table to provide a historical perspective.

## Chapter 4. Agriculture and Forestry Resources

According to a local forester, the data presented below should be used with caution, because loggers may not be clear on the definitions and distinctions in the type of timber harvesting. Further, the notifications may not entirely reflect what the harvest actually ends up being.

Year	Selection harvest, acres	Shelterwood harvest, acres	Clearcut harvest, acres	Total harvest, acres	Change of use, acres	# of active Notifications
1991	677	0	10	687	0	13
1992	638	0	22	660	7	19
1993	607	12	14	633	0	16
1994	345	0	5	350	0	15
1995	126	65	0	191	0	9
1996	332	0	0	332	0	12
1997	227	16	0	243	0	11
1998	618	0	0	618	0	25
1999	698	16	0	714	17	51
Total (1990s)	4,268	109	51	4,428	24	171
2000	352	374	15	726	0	50
2001	635	30	0	665	0	38
2002	294	250	0	544	0	33
2003	513	150	0	663	0	29
2004	649	71	0	720	0	30
2005	569	35	0	604	3	29
2006	321	42	0	363	7	27
2007	446	3	0	449	10	26
2008	499	59	0	558	0	23
2009	512	30	0	542	0	29
Total (2000s)	4,790	1,044	15	5,834	20	314
Total (Both decades)	9,058	1,153	66	10,262	44	485
<p>Key to Headings:</p> <p>“Selection harvests” remove some trees of all sizes, either singly or in small groups with the goal of encouraging regeneration with a multi-aged stand structure.</p> <p>“Shelterwood harvests” remove trees from a forest stand in 2 or more stages; the initial harvest removes most mature trees, leaving enough trees to serve as seed sources and to provide the right amount of shade to produce a new generation of trees.</p> <p>“Clearcut harvests” remove most or all the trees in one harvest; regeneration occurs through natural seeding by nearby trees, from stumps, planting seedlings, or from seedlings already growing in the understory.</p> <p>“Change of Use” is usually removal and sale of trees prior to land clearing for a home or other development.</p> <p>Sources: Maine Forest Service; data from Confidential Year End Landowner Reports</p>						

## Chapter 4. Agriculture and Forestry Resources

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### Land Enrolled in the Tree Growth Property Tax Program

The Maine Tree Growth Program allows for the assessment of property taxes on forestland to be based on current use rather than market value as long as the land is managed according to the criteria set forth in the law. The law specifies that there must be at least 10 acres of forestland used for commercial harvesting, and that a Forest Management and Harvest Plan be prepared. If the forestland no longer meets the criteria of eligibility, or the landowner opts to withdraw from Tree Growth classification, then a penalty is applied to recover some of the back property taxes.

There are about 6,300 acres of forestland in Starks enrolled in the state Tree Growth Property Tax Program. The town encourages forestland owners to enroll in the Maine Tree Growth Program, which is designed to encourage forestry based on a forest management plan done by a certified forester.

The amount of land enrolled in the Tree Growth Program increased considerably during the early 2000s largely the result of escalating land prices, desire to invest in forestland as opposed to the stock market, and the availability of funding for forest management plans.

Year	Total (acres)	Softwood (acres)	Mixed Wood (acres)	Hardwood (acres)	Other (acres)	Number of Parcels
2005	6,097	1,158	2,827	2,112		183
2009	6,272	1,224	2,870	2,179	-	104

Source: Starks' 2009 Municipal Valuation Return

Since then enrollment into the program has averaged around 50 to 200 acres per year. Often, it is existing landowners with Tree Growth property adding new acreage and/or parcels into the program.

### Future Trends in Forestry

Forestry will likely continue as it has over the past decade. However, as land is converted to house lots or divided into smaller lots, there will be less of a land base for commercially viable forestry.

## **AGRICULTURE**

Agricultural land uses have evolved from the traditional dairy or livestock operation to include more diversified agricultural activities. Today, commercial farm operations in Starks include one remaining dairy farm; several dairy replacement operations; several beef cattle farms; an alpaca farm; a goat farm; a sheep farm; a deer, buffalo and elk operation; and several equine

## Chapter 4. Agriculture and Forestry Resources

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facilities. Many of these farms also sell hay and some also do commercial forestry. There are several farms in Starks that lease land to large dairy farms outside Starks for chopped grass silage, hay, corn and pasture for replacement heifers. There are also several commercial market garden operations, and farms that sell products, such as eggs, meat, wool, soaps and other goods. Lastly, there are many people with gardens, or who raise a few horses or other livestock for personal use.

The Forest and Farmland Map displays land cover data for “cultivated crops, pasture and hay land” (combined); United State Department of Agriculture farmland soils (prime farmland soils and farmland of statewide importance); and farmsteads as identified locally.

The growing interest in locally grown food nationally is evident in the region and Starks. Active farmers markets providing year-round sales are located in both Farmington and Skowhegan, and others will likely spring up over time. In Starks, a non-profit organization, the Southern Somerset Local Foods Connection (former Grange Hall), intends to establish a community kitchen and other facilities to support locally produced products.

### **Policies Supporting Agriculture in Starks**

Starks Tax Assessors have instituted a policy to maintain lower property valuations on farm and forest land to support these land uses. Given this policy, the Assessors believe there is no real incentive for farmers to put their land in the Maine Farmland Property Tax Program<sup>10</sup>. Additionally, unlike the Tree Growth Program the town does not receive any state reimbursement for properties enrolled in the Farmland Program. For these reasons, there are no properties enrolled in the Maine Farmland Property Tax Program.

### **Future Trends in Agriculture**

The increasing diversity of agriculture will likely continue over the next decade. Some predict that maintaining agricultural land will become increasingly important in the future as farmland in more developed areas continues to be lost to development. Impacts from climate change and its effects on agricultural areas may also increase the importance of maintaining

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<sup>10</sup> *The Maine Farmland Property Tax Program is similar to the Tree Growth Program in that property taxes are assessed based on current use rather than market value if the land remains in agricultural use. In the Farmland Program the property owner is required to have at least 5 contiguous acres. The land must be used for farming, agriculture, or horticulture, and can include woodland and wasteland. The farmland must contribute at least \$2,000 gross income from farming activities each year. If the property no longer qualifies as farmland, then a penalty is assessed.*

## Chapter 4. Agriculture and Forestry Resources

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agricultural land. The expansion of agriculture has and will continue to include year-round crop production with greenhouses including the use of hydroponics.

### **PROTECTION FOR FARM AND FOREST LAND**

Perhaps the most significant threat to agriculture and forestry is the conversion of productive land to other uses, such as sites for homes and camps. This conversion can happen for a number of reasons, such as the marginal viability of the land for agricultural and forestry uses (income that can be derived from timber or agricultural products), and the differential between the agricultural product market and the residential market.

Other than the property taxation policies described previously, Starks does not currently have any specific policies or regulations that protect or encourage forest or agricultural land. On the other hand, the town does not have any regulations or policies that restrict these activities, such as ordinances that prohibit or restrict farm stands, portable sawmill operations, or other farm or forestry related activities.

Options the Town might consider to encourage preservation of productive forest and farmland include:

- Enacting a “resolution” that Starks is and agriculturally friendly community.
- Identifying an agricultural enterprise area where non-regulatory and regulatory mechanisms are directed.
- Adding provisions to allow open space subdivisions (clustered development) in local regulations
- Requiring buffers between agricultural land and residential subdivisions
- Encouraging land conservation through the Maine Farmland Trust or some other land trust
- Including forestry and agriculture in any business promotion efforts

*Public Opinion about Agriculture and Forestry:*

- 73% of survey respondents would like more locally grown food
- 67% would like more agriculture
- 43% would like more forestry, 38% want forestry to stay the same
- 52% believe there is adequate protection for farmland
- 54% believe there is adequate protection for forestland

*The results of the Visioning Forum further confirmed the town’s strong interest in preserving farmland.*

# CHAPTER 5. POPULATION CHARACTERISTICS<sup>11</sup>

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### **OVERVIEW**

Predicting future population changes is important to community planning because it affects housing, land use, jobs, health care, social desires, education, and other community services. By reviewing past and current population data, locally and regionally, a community can predict or forecast future population trends. This chapter examines the characteristics of Starks' population - population change (birth and death rates, in-migration), population age characteristics, educational attainment, and income and poverty rates. A state perspective is presented to provide context for the analysis.

### **STATE PERSPECTIVE<sup>12</sup>**

Population change is primarily driven by the economic climate of an area. Demographic and social trends, geographic location and physical setting also contribute to the growth or decline of a population. A major factor affecting Maine is that it has one of the overall oldest populations in the country with a very low percentage of population under age 18. This has had, and will continue to have, far reaching implications for Maine as described below.

Maine's population grew at one of the slowest rates in the nation during the 1990s. Lower birth rates and higher mortality consistent with the aging of the "baby boom" generation<sup>13</sup>, and young adults leaving in search of better jobs were factors. The economic recession of the 1990s resulted in fewer job opportunities and contributed to this loss of population.

Maine's population grew slightly faster during the early part of the 21<sup>st</sup> century primarily as a result of the in-migration of people from away. In fact, in-migration to Maine between 2000 and 2004 was over seven times greater than natural increase (population change due to births minus deaths). This trend reversed later in the decade, such that from 2008 to 2009, Maine experienced net out-migration, perhaps due in large part to the stagnant economy.

Maine is projected to experience continued slow population growth over the next decade and beyond due to its rapidly aging population with its corresponding low birth rates and higher

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<sup>11</sup> All population data are from the U.S. Census unless indicated otherwise. Some data are total counts, and some are based on a statistically significant sample.

<sup>12</sup> Sources: "Charting Maine's Future", Brookings Institution Metropolitan Policy Program, 2006; analysis of U.S. Census data; and "Maine Population Outlook 2013-2028", March 2010, Maine State Planning Office

<sup>13</sup> The "baby boom" generation consists of people born between 1947 and 1964.

## Chapter 5. Population

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mortality. Any population growth will primarily be from in-migration, both from other states and abroad. While some of these newcomers may be retirees, others may be seeking job opportunities, which means the state’s economic health will be a key factor in future population growth.

Population growth generally goes hand-in-hand with economic growth. States and regions experiencing slow population growth often find it difficult to attract businesses because of concerns about a future workforce. Maine’s aging population means more and more people retiring each year, making it increasingly more difficult for employers to find workers to fill jobs. The aging population also increases the demand for health care services - more nurses, doctors, and other medical personnel.

If current trends continue the increasingly larger elderly population will depend on an increasingly smaller working population unless migration trends bring more workers to the state. For Maine’s population to grow and firms to find the employees they need, in-migration to Maine must increase. The state’s future economic prosperity is dependent upon balanced and stable population growth. This is also true for counties and towns.

### ***COUNTY PERSPECTIVE***

Somerset and Franklin counties have experienced very slow population growth as compared to the state as a whole over the past two decades, as displayed in the following table.

Table 5-1: Population Change for Counties and State - 1990 through 2010								
	2010	Change from 2000	% Change from 2000	% Change from 1990	2000	Change from 1990	% Change from 1990	1990
Franklin County	30,768	1,301	4.4%	6.1%	29,467	459	1.6%	29,008
Somerset County	52,228	1,340	2.6%	4.9%	50,888	1,121	2.3%	49,767
Maine	1,328,361	53,438	4.2%	3.8%	1,274,923	46,995	3.8%	1,227,928

Source: U.S. Census

### ***POPULATION CHANGE IN STARKS AND AREA TOWNS***

Starks’ population growth reflects its geographic location within the region. Located in the foothills of western Maine, Starks with its population of around 640 (2010 Census) is one of the smallest organized towns in Somerset County. It serves as a bedroom community to Madison and Skowhegan to the east, Farmington to the west, and to a lesser extent, Waterville and Augusta to the southeast.

# Chapter 5. Population

Starks' population growth between 1980 and 2000 was fairly steady, averaging seven residents annually. During the most recent decade, 2000 to 2010, the rate of growth slowed slightly averaging 6.2 residents annually.

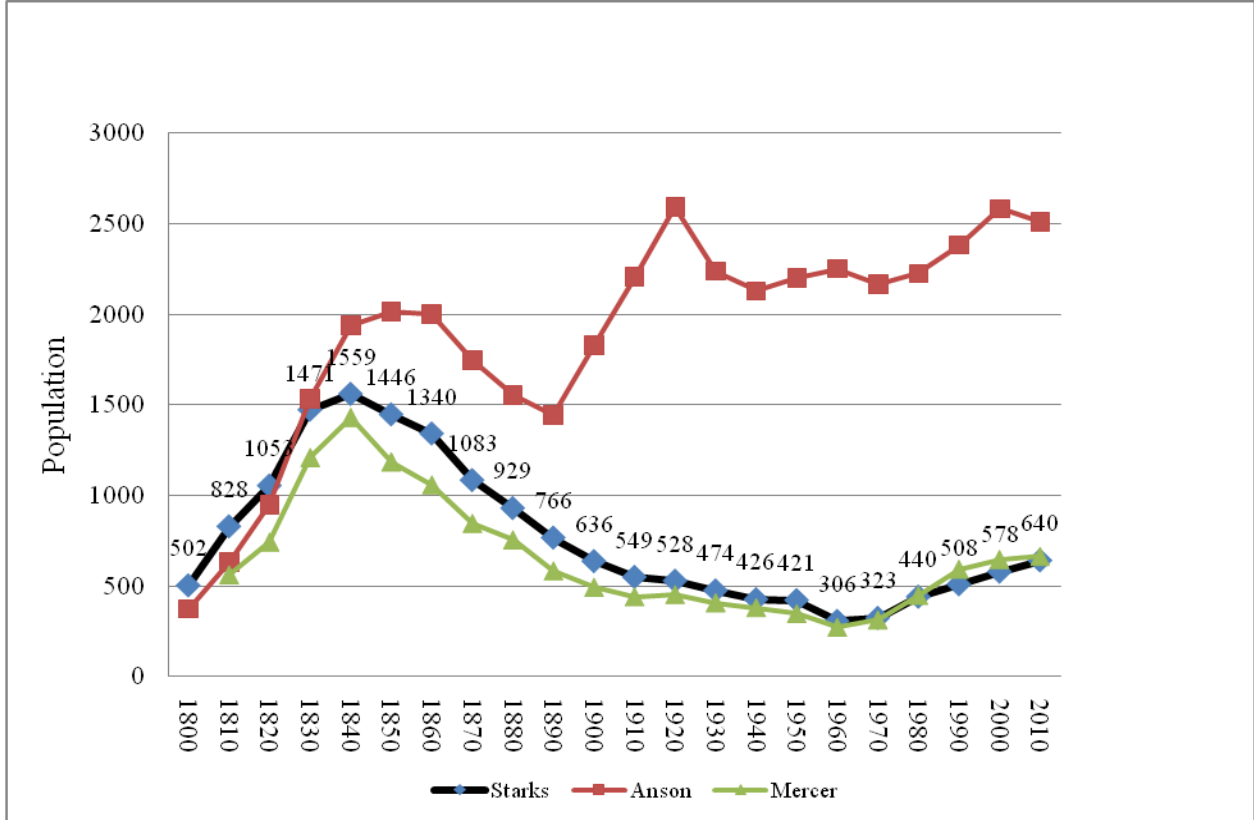


Figure 5-1: Historic Population Change, U.S. Census

Between 2000 and 2010, Starks' population grew at a faster rate (10.7%) than other area towns, with the exception of Industry where the rate of growth was 17.6% (Table 5-2). Also noteworthy is the fact that the towns to the west of Starks - Industry, New Sharon and Farmington, combined - grew by almost 600 people as compared to an increase of only 25 people for Anson, Madison and Skowhegan combined, between 2000 and 2010.

## Chapter 5. Population

Table 5-2: Population Change for Area Towns

Town	County	2010 Population	2000-2010			2000 Population
			Numerical Change	% Change	Annual Average Change	
Starks	Somerset	640	62	10.7%	6.2	578
Anson	Somerset	2,511	-72	-2.8%	-7.2	2,583
Madison	Somerset	4,855	332	7.3%	33.2	4,523
Skowhegan	Somerset	8,589	-235	-2.7%	-23.5	8,824
Norridgewock	Somerset	3,367	73	2.2%	7.3	3,294
Mercer	Somerset	664	17	2.6%	1.7	647
New Sharon	Franklin	1,407	110	8.5%	11.0	1,297
Farmington	Franklin	7,760	350	4.7%	35.0	7,410
Industry	Franklin	929	139	17.6%	13.9	790

Source: U.S. Census

Perhaps, the driving force in how quickly Starks grows will be the affordability of housing and land relative to its neighbors. The cost of commuting might also be a factor.

### ***CHARACTERISTICS OF POPULATION CHANGE: NATURAL INCREASE AND MIGRATION***

Population change is derived from two sources: births and deaths within the community, and migration into or out of the community. The difference between births and deaths is known as *natural change*. It tends to be a fairly constant figure based on statistical reflections of the population profile (primarily, the number of women of child-bearing age, and the overall age of the population.) In smaller towns, statistics are less valid, and tend to be more erratic; however trends are evident.

In Starks, natural increase in population between 1980 and 1990 was 35; and between 1990 and 2000, it was 29. Between 2000 and 2010, natural increase fell to just 11 (65 births and 54 deaths) which suggests an increasingly older population overall. (Source: Vital Statistics - births and deaths, Town of Starks)

Net migration is the difference between natural increase or decrease, and overall population change. Migration occurs for social or economic reasons, and is a good indicator of the economic health of a town. A *net out-migration* indicates a faltering economy relative to the

## Chapter 5. Population

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area. In Starks, in-migration accounted for 41 new residents during the 1990s and 51 new residents between 2000 and 2010.

### **AN AGING POPULATION**

As noted previously, Starks' population is becoming an older population overall. This is not a new phenomenon. The *baby boom generation* has been moving through the population since the 1950s. Baby boomers are now in their 50s and early 60s. The Starks' 45-64 age group consisted of 78 individuals in 1970 or 24 percent of the population; in 2000, that group consisted of 183 individuals which was 32 percent of the population; and in 2010, that age group consisted of 196 individuals, which was 31 percent of the population. In a few years, this age group will become "senior citizens" with their accompanying issues and needs.

The population aged 65 and over has been increasing in size over the past several decades. In 1970, the town had 43 individuals in that age group. By 2000, it had risen only slightly, to 48 individuals. But by the year 2010 the number of people aged 65 and over almost doubled, to 93 individuals. By 2020, many of the baby boomers will be age 65 or over causing this age group to increase dramatically in size.

Starks' youth population – those under the age of 18 – has fluctuated in size over the past several decades. In 1970, Starks had 122 residents under age 18. In 2000, there were 158, a rather substantial gain. But that was almost completely reversed by 2010, when there were 137 individuals under the age of 18. The overall percentage declined from 37 percent in 1970 to 21.4 percent in 2010.

The *median age* is the point at which exactly half the population is older and half younger. Median age can be used to compare the overall age of communities. In 2010, Starks' median age was estimated to be 42.1. In 2000, it was 38, and in 1990, 33 (U.S. Census). This illustrates the effect of the baby boom generation in increasing the overall age of the population. Even though the median age in Starks is rising, the town is still (as of 2000) one of the youngest around. The sidebar shows that in both 2010 and 2000, Starks was the youngest town among its neighbors, but the town is in a rather older part of the state. The median age in Somerset County in 2010 was 43.6, and in Maine, 42.7.

#### *Median Age Comparison:*

<i>Town</i>	<i>2010 age</i>	<i>2000 age</i>
<i>Industry</i>	44.1	39
<i>Starks</i>	42.1	38
<i>Madison</i>	44.6	42
<i>Anson</i>	44.3	38
<i>Mercer</i>	44.9	42
<i>New Sharon</i>	43.7	41

*Source: U.S. Census*

# Chapter 5. Population

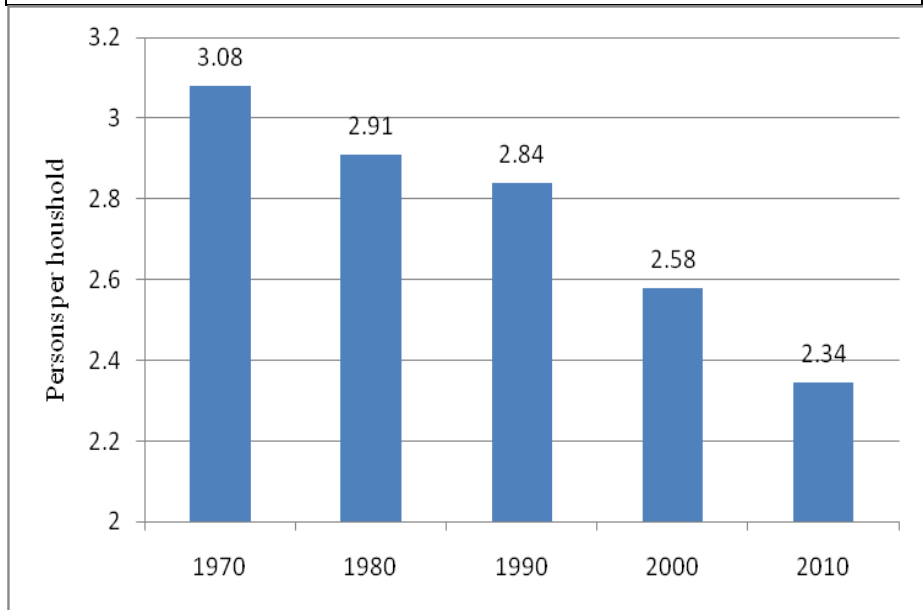
## HOUSEHOLDS

**Shrinking Household Size:** The average household size is decreasing both nationwide and in Starks. As the population ages, there are more empty nesters, elderly householders, and new young-adult householders.

Higher rates of breakups and divorce, creating two families out of one, also contribute to smaller households. These trends affecting household size are expected to continue over the next decade.

Why is the number of people in a household important? Consider that in 2000, Starks' population of 578 occupied 224 housing units, with an average household size of 2.58. If the 2000 population still had the same household size as it did in 1980, it would have fit into only 199 houses. That means that, over 20 years, 25 houses – one-third of

Figure 5-2: Average Household Size for Starks, U.S. Census



all new homes -- were built in Starks not to accommodate population growth, but to accommodate smaller households. Between 2000 and 2010, the declining household size accounted for 20 of the 49 new housing units in town.

**Household Characteristics:** Starks had 273 households as of 2010. This was 49 more households than in 2000. Of the 273 households in 2010, only 167 of them were families (two or more related individuals). Of the 167 families, only 66 had children at home. That means more than half of the family households in Starks consist only of a couple. An additional 81 households consisted of a single person. So, two-thirds of the households in Starks consist of one or two people.

<i>Household Characteristics:</i>		
	2010	2000
<i>Total Households</i>	273	224
<i>Family Households (HHs)</i>	167	160
<i>Family HHs with Children</i>	66	76
<i>Source: U.S. Census</i>		

## Chapter 5. Population

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A total of 67 households have one or more elderly occupants. Nineteen households are single-parent households as compared to 47 households with both parents.

To some extent, the number of people in a household both affects and is affected by the type of housing available. Urban areas tend to have smaller household sizes because they have rental housing such as apartments or senior citizen housing complexes. Rural communities traditionally have larger household sizes along with larger houses and homesteads. Traditionally, homesteads continued to be occupied by successive generations. That is no longer the case, due to greater mobility among the young, plus more services available to independent-living seniors. This can result in an “under-utilized” housing stock in economic terms.

### **SEASONAL POPULATION**

In some towns, a large number of camps or tourist attractions result in a seasonal population bulge that affects town services. This is not the case in Starks. Even though the town has 94 “seasonal” housing units (U.S. Census 2010), it is not likely that they represent a significant population. Because there are no lakes or other resort attractions in Starks, it is likely that the seasonal units are primarily small hunting camps. The Camp at the Eastward, a summer youth camp, brings a relatively small number of people into the town.

### **FUTURE POPULATION GROWTH AND IMPLICATIONS FOR HOUSING NEEDS**

The purpose of analyzing the demographic nature of the community is to predict what might happen in the future. Starks’ population according to the 2010 Census was 640. The Kennebec Valley Council of Governments (KVCOG) produces estimates that are based on a mathematical extension of past population and building trends. KVCOG’s estimate for the population of Starks in 2030 is between 770 and 800.<sup>14</sup> This forecast for very moderate population growth considers the fact that there were eight houses per year added to the year-round housing stock in the 90s and four per year in the 2000s.

For the purpose of predicting the number of new housing units needed in the future, two scenarios for population growth are presented here; one that assumes no growth and another that assumes some growth.

*Public Opinion about Population Growth:  
39% of respondent would like the year-round population of Starks to stay the same, while 35% would like to see the population increase in size.*

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<sup>14</sup> Based on 2010 Census

## Chapter 5. Population

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### **No Growth Scenario**

The first scenario is the *no growth scenario* and assumes no net population growth between 1990 and 2030. However, “no growth” only refers to population. Assuming that household size continues to decline as it has in the past (9 percent per decade), the town would need more new homes for the same population. In 2010 there were 243 homes. Under this scenario, about 300 homes would be needed in 2020. Even if the rate of decline was cut in half, the town would still cross that 300 home threshold in 2030.

There were only 43 new homes built in Starks between 2000 and 2010. Under the “no growth” scenario, the town would need to see an increase in housing just to maintain its current population. More significantly, the new homes would accommodate smaller households, so they would likely be small houses, rentals, or mobile homes under this scenario.

### **Growth Scenario – Based on Past Population Growth**

The *growth scenario* assumes that the population will continue to grow at the same rate as the past twenty years. This scenario accounts for both the impacts of population increase and smaller households.

Starks has grown from 508 to 640 people in the past twenty years. Another 20 years at that rate would result in a population of about 800 by 2030. A population of 800 at current household sizes would require 69 new housing units (about 3½ per year), but the same population with 10 percent smaller households would require 107 new units (over 5 per year). In 2030, the town would have 380 occupied housing units, about a 40 percent increase over 2010.

The impacts of growth go beyond mere home construction. If each home were built on a 2 acre lot, another 107 housing units would occupy over 200 acres of land. If each household generated the average number of workers (1.34 per household in Starks), 107 new units would generate demand for 140 new jobs. Because the households (and, hopefully, housing units) would be smaller, probably fewer new school children would be expected, but with more houses they would probably be more widely scattered, resulting in longer times along school bus routes. However, given the shift to the Farmington area schools, the town may become more attractive to families with children.

The second scenario is a *growth scenario* that is based on the current rate of construction of new homes. Between 2000 and 2009, Starks’ town assessors reported the construction of 43 new year-round homes, an average of 4.8 per year. (During the 90s the average was 4.5 per year.) Projected forward to 2030, this is an addition of 100 new households. Factoring in shrinking household size, the projection yields 367 total households and a population of 793 by the year 2030.

### **CHAPTER 6. ECONOMY**

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The economic health of Starks is dependent upon the economy of the region, state, New England, and national and international economic trends. The purpose of this chapter is to present information on the economic status of Starks within the context of the overall economy so the town can make policy decisions about how it might plan for the future. While Starks does not have the staff or funds to undertake economic development activities, it may want to support or participate in regional efforts, or merely help its citizens become more aware of the trends and available opportunities. Additionally, local regulations should reflect the town's policies regarding economic activity within the community.

#### ***STARKS' LOCAL ECONOMY***

At one time farming and forestry were the most significant economic activities in Starks and many neighboring towns. Today, Starks primarily serves as a bedroom community to area service and employment centers, such as Madison and Farmington. Many Starks residents travel to one of these areas for employment, goods, and services. But not everyone travels out of town for work. An inventory of local businesses, which included a business survey, identified at least 54 businesses in Starks and a possible total of 60 scattered throughout the town.

Thirty-six business owners representing 67% of the town's identifiable businesses responded to the business survey. Some residents own more than one home-based business. The businesses listed in Table 6-1 and displayed on the Starks Business Map represent those who indicated they would like their information published in this document. A number of other businesses were identified, such as the town's only dairy farm, several farmers who raise hay and a few livestock, several market garden operations, an automobile mechanic in the village, an electrician, and there are certainly others.

Based on the number of confirmed businesses (not all of which responded to the survey), the most common home-based businesses, 61% of the total, and their numbers include: agriculture (20), contractors/construction (8), forestry/forest products (5) and crafts-Maine made (4). All remaining categories consist of 3 or fewer businesses.

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<b>Table 6-1. Inventory of Businesses in Starks</b>		
<b>Map #</b>	<b>Business Name (Owner)</b>	<b>Location; Description-Contact Information</b>
<b>Agriculture</b>		
1	<i>Frederic Farm</i> (Paul Frederic)	141 Chicken St. Sells round/square bales of hay, raises beef cows/dairy replacements, & pastures other farmer's livestock; 696-8339; frederic@myfairpoint.net
2	<i>Hyl-Tun Farm</i> (Ernie & Gwen Hilton)	8 Olde Ferry Rd. Hay sales (square bales); agricultural land leasing; forest products; equestrian facility (trails/jump courses/clinics); RV/boat/equipment storage; www.hyltunfarm.com; 696-3038; ghilton1@myfairpoint.net
3	<i>Medicine Hill</i> (Linda Smithers)	404 Sandy River Certified organic farm producing eggs/beef/pork/chicken; Eggs/ground beef available year-round. Order in late winter/early spring for fall delivery of beef/pork/chicken; 696-4100; linda@medicinehill.com Rd.
4	<i>Moonshadow Farm</i> (Scott & Christine Adams)	544 Anson Rd. Raises registered Belted Galloway beef cattle. Sells freezer beef, replacement animals and hay; 696-3812; cell 431-3510; mnshadow@tdstelme.net
5	<i>Rivercroft Farm</i> (Joe & Judy Miller)	182 Olde Ferry Rd. Sheep & horse farm. 150 head of 6 breeds of sheep. Shows sheep at fairs/sells wool to hand-spinners/weavers/crafters/felters. Sells breeding stock & meat. Raises Shire Draft Horses for show/breeding stock/work; 696-8203; Rivercroft@DialMaine.com
6	<i>Sandy River Alpacas, LLC</i> (Marie Ring)	1005 New Sharon Alpaca breeding, sales & fiber production. Sells square hay bales/seasonal vegetables. Farm Store (seasonal) sells Maine made soaps/afghans/tote bags/sweaters/ jewelry/quilts/hats/etc.; 696-8416; cell 751-0447; Sandyriveralpacas@yahoo.com Rd.
7	<i>Shady Maple Deer Farm</i> (Norman & Beth Luce)	892 Mayhew Rd. Deer/buffalo farm. Sells round and square bales of hay, venison and buffalo meat; www.lemonstreamgamelands.com; 696-3006; Norman and Beth@lemononstreamgamelands.com
8	<i>The Old Fletcher Place</i> (Jim Murphy)	843 Anson Rd. Pasture/hayfield rental and forest products; Gene Hackman imitations; 696-4233/431-3052; jmurphy@gwi.net
<b>Automotive &amp; Small Engine Repair</b>		
9	<i>Quickstart Small Engine Repair</i> (Brad Nichols)	261 Mayhew Rd. All repairs and maintenance to snowblowers, garden tractors, lawn-mowers, rototillers and other yard equipment; 696-5053; cell 431-0589
<b>Carpenter</b>		
10	<i>Kiger Carpentry</i> (Nate Kiger)	90 Chicken St. Residential construction, building and remodeling, interior and exterior de sign & all aspects of construction; 570-4197; Kigercarpentry@yahoo.com
<b>Construction and Contactors</b>		
11	<i>Aurora Contracting</i>	55 Cemetery Rd. Painting, siding, roofing, tiling, flooring and window cleaning; www. AuroraContracting.com; (207) 635-1575;

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	(Jonathan Troy Hull)	hull@auroracontracting.com
12	<i>Bob Clark Construction</i> (Bob Clark)	Rd. 634 Sandy River Complete earthwork for cellars, driveways, septic systems and landscaping; Sand, gravel and loam; 696-3698; cell 431-2719
13	<i>Dennis Krebs Contractor</i> (Dennis Krebs)	1440 New Sharon Rd. General contracting and construction; 399-9296; dskrebs@hotmail.com
14	<i>Earl Sterry Building/Designer</i> (Earl Sterry)	282 Sawyers Mills Rd. Custom log homes and camps; cell (207) 631-8470; ccoles@dishmail.net
15	<i>Hayden Logging-Construction</i> (Joe Hayden)	417 Anson Rd. Logging, road building, septic systems and builds residential and commercial buildings; 696-4411; cell 431-5471
16	<i>Kiger Carpentry</i> - See Carpenter	
17	<i>Pine Cone Builders</i> (Troy Sterry)	119 Anson Rd. Builder of rustic log homes and camps; cell (207) 778-1905
<b>Counseling</b>		
18	<i>Substance Abuse Counseling</i> (Maxine Wolph-Johnson)	173 Dill Rd. Family and individual counseling for problems with drugs and alcohol; 696-4225; maxinewj@gmail.com
<b>Crafts -Maine Made</b>		
19	<i>Acorn Country Creations</i> (Cynthia Kimball & Sandra Frith)	13 Kimball Lane Long arm quilting, makes table runners, quilts, wall hangings, etc.; www.accquilting.com; 696-4337; (207) 635-2309; accquilting@roadrunner.com; momsquilts2009@live.com
20	Sandy River Alpacas, LLC -see <b>Agriculture</b>	
21	<i>Spare Time Quilt Shop</i> (Diane J. Lovell)	364 Branns Mills Rd. Sells home-made quilts, house plants, books, crafts and odds and ends; 696-5556; dianelovell@Netzero.com
22	<i>Taylor Hill Twig Wreaths</i> (Carol Nichols)	261 Mayhew Rd. Creates one of a kind hand-made twig wreaths; 696-5096; cell 431-0598
<b>Equestrian</b>		
23	<i>Hyl-Tun Farm</i> - See <b>Agriculture</b>	
<b>Forestry and/or Forest Products</b>		
24	<i>Hayden Logging/Construction</i> - See <b>Construction &amp; Contractors</b>	
25	<i>Hyl-Tun Farm</i> - See <b>Agriculture</b>	
26	<i>Mt. Hunger Forestry</i> (Kerry Hebert)	31 Mt. Hunger Rd. Licensed Maine Forester, timber appraisals, forest management plans, & logging supervision; 696-3756; abear@hciwireless.net

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27	<i>Taylor Logging</i> (Brandon Taylor)	1234 New Sharon Rd. Logging with a small skidder-one man crew; 696-5324; cell 399-1823
28	<i>The Old Fletcher Place</i> - See <b>Agriculture</b>	
<b>Kitchenware Consultant</b>		
29	<i>Carolee Hand Pampered Chef Consultant</i> (Carolee Hand)	2731 Industry Rd. Organizes Pampered Chef parties which include opportunities to learn healthy-economic recipes. Sells PC kitchenware & entertainment ware. Catering; 696-0990; (207)-660-5596; caroleehand@yahoo.com
<b>Maine Made Products</b>		
	<i>Acorn Country Creations</i> - See <b>Crafts</b> <i>Sandy River Alpacas</i> - See <b>Agriculture</b> <i>Spare Time Quilt Shop</i> - See <b>Crafts</b> <i>Taylor Hill Twig Wreaths</i> - See <b>Crafts</b>	
<b>Map Making</b>		
30	<i>Maps by Liz</i> (Liz Frederic)	141 Chicken St. Maps created for businesses/documents/books/magazines/professional publications/advertising, etc.; 696-8339; frederic@myfairpoint.net
<b>Photography</b>		
31	<i>Northeast Wedding Photography</i> (Erin Frost)	119 Anson Rd. Photographer specializing in weddings, senior portraits and family portraits; 207-907-8008
<b>Sand, Gravel and Loam</b>		
32	<i>Bob Clark Construction</i> - See <b>Construction &amp; Contractors</b>	
<b>Solar Energy</b>		
33	<i>Maine Solar</i> (Floyd Severn)	535 Sawyers Mills Rd. Thermal Mass home design. Off grid solar power systems, sizing + installations. Solar Rd. hot water (domestic). All display systems, equipment, world's most efficient appliances at our store; www.mainesolar.com; 207-491-3461; mainesolar@hotmail.com
<b>Sporting Goods/Services</b>		
34	<i>Landing Nets/Stevens Nets</i> (Alan & Vickie Stevens)	27 Remick Rd. Makes hand-made wooden landing nets; 696-8204; stevensva@hciwireless.net
<b>Storage</b>		
35	<i>Hyl-Tun Farm</i> -See <b>Agriculture</b>	
<b>Taxidermist</b>		
36	<i>Spirit of Nature Taxidermy</i> (Diane Gifford)	115 Locke Hill Rd. Mounting/preserving wildlife taken by hunting, trapping, fishing or road kill; www.spiritofnaturetaxidermy.vpweb.com; 696-4007; dianec.Gifford @yahoo.com

## Chapter 6. Economy

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### **2011 PUBLIC OPINION SURVEY INFORMATION**

The results of the 2011 public opinion survey support the conclusion that Starks has a small but active local economy. Nearly 30% of survey respondents indicated they were self-employed, and 23% indicated they worked in Starks.

The data also confirm Starks' role as a bedroom community to area employment centers. A majority of survey respondents worked in Madison (66%), Farmington (55%), and Skowhegan (43%).

Caution should be used in interpreting the data from the survey, because respondents were asked to check as many responses as applicable to the questions for the data as presented below. For example, some respondents might be both self-employed (i.e. have their own business) and employed at a part-time job.

Survey Question	Number of Responses	Percentage of Total Respondents
Self Employed	37	29%
Employed	63	49%
Unemployed – Looking for work	8	6%
Work in Starks	29	23%
Work in Farmington	71	55%
Work in Madison	85	66%
Work in Skowhegan	55	43%
Work in Waterville or Augusta	13	10%
Work Elsewhere	55	43%

Note: Data reflect responses where respondents could indicate “as many as apply”.  
Source: Starks 2011 Public Opinion Survey (128 completed surveys for a 50+% response)

### **STARKS WORKFORCE: U.S. CENSUS**

In 2000, Starks had 389 residents over the age of 18 according to the U.S. Census. Of those, 234 (60% of those over age 18) were in the labor force, that is they were either employed or seeking employment as of April 1, 2000. In 2010, the working-age population jumped to 509 according to the Census. Ninety four percent of households in Starks had employment income in 2009 according to the 2010 Census. More specific data for 2010 which is necessary to make an “apples to apples” comparison is not available.

Of the 216 employed people in 2000, 32 of them – about 15 percent -- worked at a job in Starks. That included 13 who worked at home. Of the remainder, about 62 worked in Anson or Madison, 31 worked in Skowhegan, and 25 worked in Franklin County. The average time it took

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to commute was 28 minutes. Not surprisingly, very few people live in Starks and commute to work in Starks. The Census listed only 14 people who worked in Starks but lived elsewhere. (Data from the 2000 Census)

### **EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES IN THE REGION**

Starks is located within a region that has a fairly broad and diverse economic base that includes hospitals and other health service organizations, schools and universities, paper mills and forest products industries, major retail businesses, supermarkets, major wholesale distributors, telemarketing businesses and state, county and local governments. Perhaps the most significant challenge facing Starks residents is the distance and related cost of commuting associated with employment.

Many Starks' residents worked in manufacturing, construction, or in retail or service businesses according to the 2000 Census. Those four areas employed about two-thirds of the Starks' workforce, and because there is very little evidence of those industries in town excluding contractors-construction, it stands to reason that they would commute to the job centers for work. As of 2009, only 2.6 percent (9 individuals) were reported working in agriculture or forestry. That number would exclude part-time or hobby farmers.

Place	# of Starks Residents
Lewiston, Livermore Falls, Androscoggin Co.	5
Linneus, Aroostook Co.	2
Falmouth, Portland, Cumberland Co.	4
Carrabassett Valley, Kingfield, Franklin Co.	6
Farmington, Franklin Co.	6
Jay, Franklin Co.	9
New Vineyard, Strong, Temple, Franklin Co.	6
Augusta, Windsor, Kennebec Co.	14
Waterville, Winslow, Kennebec Co.	8
Dixfield, Newry, Oxford Co.	4
Bangor, Newport, Penobscot Co.	4
Anson, Somerset Co.	16
Bingham, Somerset Co.	5
Fairfield, Somerset Co.	3
Harmony, Somerset Co.	2
Madison, Somerset Co.	46
Norridgewock, Somerset Co.	7
St. Albans, Somerset Co.	2
Skowhegan, Somerset Co.	31
Starks, Somerset Co.	32
Wellesley, MA	1
Fairfax Co. VA	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>216</b>
Source: U.S. Census, 2000	

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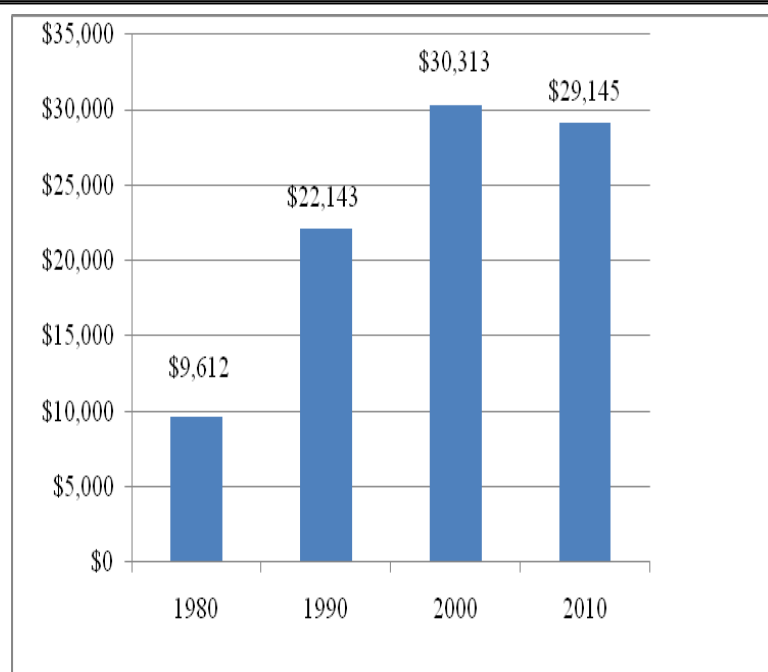
### **INDICATORS OF LOCAL ECONOMIC HEALTH**

Census and other sources of data reveal a picture of the economic vitality of local households. One of the principal measures of economic vitality is the income level of households.

The following chart shows the trend in median household income. Median household income is a point at which half the households have more, half have less. Median household income increased substantially between 1980 and 1990, and a little less so from 1990 to 2000. Because of inflation, the gain between 1990 and 2000 was only 5 percent in constant dollars. The figure for 2010 is a five-year estimate that actually includes the recession years 2008 and 2009 adjusted for inflation.

Household income is the combined income of all household members and therefore it makes a difference how many members of the household are working. In 2010, Starks had 371 residents identified as in the labor force, representing 273 households. This is an average of 1.36 workers per household. In 1990, the town had 222 residents in the workforce, from 180 households, an average of 1.23 workers per household. Despite an aging population, or perhaps due to the poor economy, there are more people in the workforce.

Figure 6-1: Median Household Income in Starks 1980-2010, U.S. Census



There were 45 people in Starks collecting social security in 1990, with the number rising to 60 in 2000, but dropping back to 51 in 2010. The 2010 figure is based on a sample, and given the small sample size may not be accurate, particularly given that there are 93 residents over the age of 65. In 2000, there were 131 disabled individuals (ages 5 and over) or 23.9 percent of the population. The Census does not have more current figures for disability status for Starks.

Another measure of household security is the percentage of residents living below the poverty level. "Poverty level" is a defined income level that is based primarily on the number of people

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in a household. In Starks, 19.9 percent of the population was living below the poverty level in 2010. In 2000, 16.7 percent of the population was living below the poverty level, and in 1990, only 15.2 percent of the population fell below the poverty level. The poverty rate in Starks is rising.

With an increasing poverty rate, the concern is whether certain populations may be at risk. The most vulnerable are generally children and the elderly. According to the Census, the elderly were generally better off than the population in general: 10.9 percent of the elderly were living below the poverty level in 2010, down from 17.4 percent in 2000. Children are another story - a very significant 46 percent of persons under age 18 were in households living below the poverty level.

“Per capita income” is a simple calculation of the aggregate income of all residents divided by the population. It does not reveal anything about the local economy, but helps to measure one town’s relative wealth versus another. The box below illustrates how Starks

*Per Capita Income (PCI) Comparison:*

<i>Town</i>	<i>1990 PCI</i>	<i>2000 PCI</i>	<i>% change</i>
<i>Skowhegan</i>	<i>\$11,332</i>	<i>\$15,543</i>	<i>37%</i>
<i>Starks</i>	<i>\$10,033</i>	<i>\$13,764</i>	<i>37%</i>
<i>Anson</i>	<i>\$9,735</i>	<i>\$12,691</i>	<i>30%</i>
<i>Mercer</i>	<i>\$10,864</i>	<i>\$18,068</i>	<i>66%</i>
<i>New Sharon</i>	<i>\$10,549</i>	<i>\$15,690</i>	<i>49%</i>
<i>Madison</i>	<i>\$10,232</i>	<i>\$16,698</i>	<i>63%</i>

*Source: U.S. Census*

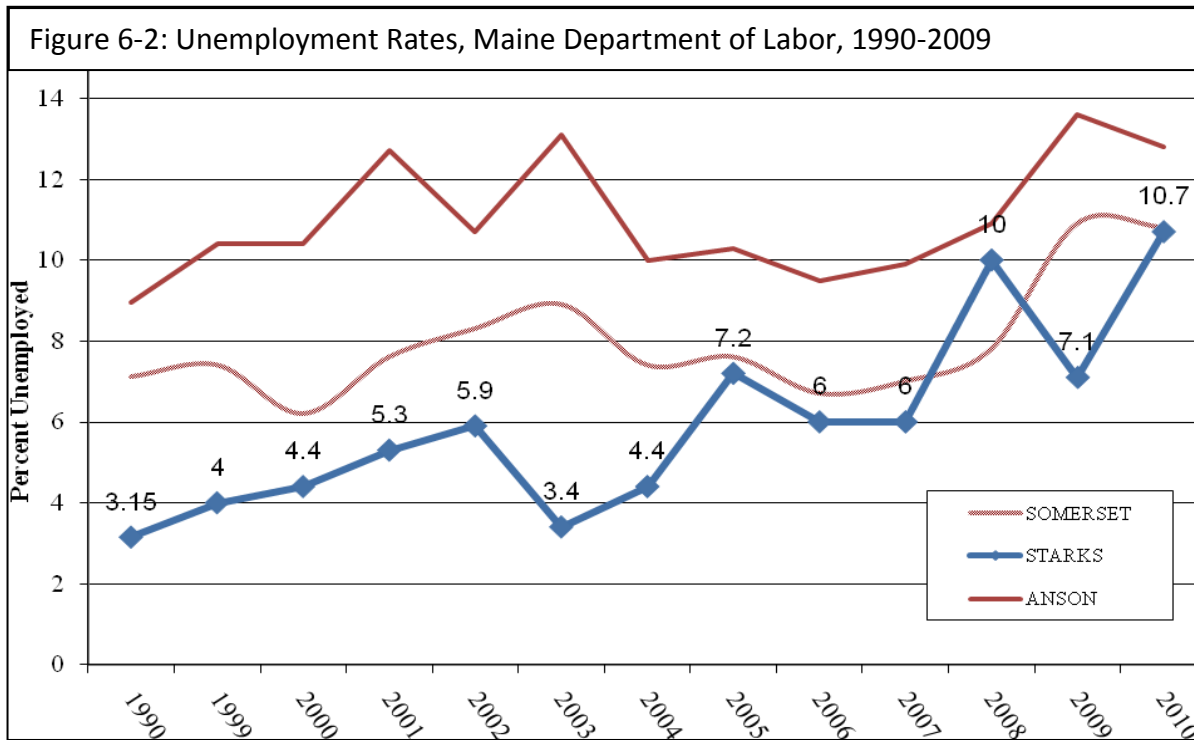
compares with its neighbors. Somerset County as a whole had a per capita income of \$15,474 in 2000 – an increase of 48 percent. Starks has one of the lower levels of per capita income and one of the slower growth rates. In 2010, Starks’ per capita income had only risen to \$14,847, an 8 percent growth rate, and well behind the rate of inflation.

### **EMPLOYMENT STATISTICS**

The primary mechanism for income is employment. Ninety four percent of households in Starks had employment income in 2009 according to the 2010 Census. The availability of jobs, as expressed through the unemployment rate, is one of the most basic measures of the health of the economy. Even though Starks has no significant employers, its unemployment rate reflects community health.

Figure 6-2 charts the unemployment rate in Starks since 1990. Rural towns tend to have lower unemployment rates than average, illustrated by the higher lines for Anson and Somerset County (wavy line). But because Starks is such a small town, a few jobs can make a big impact on the unemployment rate, causing the graph to jump up and down. The figure makes it clear, however, that the trend has been towards a gradual increase in unemployment.

## Chapter 6. Economy



Both wages and employment prospects vary with the type of jobs. The Census collects information on residents by type of job and the industrial sector where Starks residents work.

Data on employment by job type indicated that about 20 percent of the workforce worked in management or professional jobs, 56 percent worked in sales, service, or administrative jobs, and 24 percent worked in skilled labor jobs for the 2010 Census. In 2000, just over 27 percent worked in management or professional occupations, and only 37 percent in sales and service. This means that there was an increase in the number of residents working in sales, service or administrative jobs, and a decrease in management or professional jobs.

Data on employment by industrial sector found that 18 percent of Starks' residents worked in the construction or manufacturing sector, 30 percent in retail, and 37 percent in health care or educational businesses in 2010. This compares to only 14 percent of the workforce who worked in retail trade and 18 percent in health care or educational services in 2000.

The apparent shift of the workforce to lower-paid professions and economic sectors is a reasonable explanation for the drop in household and per capita income between 2000 and 2010.

## Chapter 6. Economy

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### **EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT**

Perhaps the strongest indicator of the potential of Starks' workforce is the educational attainment of residents. Higher levels of education correlate strongly with higher wage levels and better job descriptions. The table below profiles the changes in Starks residents' (age 25 years and over) educational attainment over the past 20 years.

The following conclusions can be drawn using the Census data for 1990 and 2000, which are more accurate than the

Attainment	1990	2000	2010
Not Graduating High School	20.7 %	16.5 %	36.4 %
High School Degree Only	55.6	65.5	43.3
College degree (2 or 4)	21.0	15.6	15.2
Graduate or Professional Degree	2.7	2.3	5.1
Source: U.S. Census			

2010 multi-year sample data. There was an increase in the proportion of people graduating from high school from 80% in 1990 to 84% in 2000. There was a decrease in the proportion of residents with a college degree from 24% in 1990 to 18% in 2000. The 2010 Census figures are quite alarming with respect to the proportion of people age 25 or over having not graduated from high school. These figures may be questionable due to the small sample size.

In any case, the data presented here are cause for concern. An education beyond high school is generally required for an individual to be successful in earning a living wage. Starks recently switched from the Madison based RSU 59 to the Farmington based RSU 9 and anticipates this will improve public school education for the community. To further enhance educational opportunities the town is providing after school and summer enrichment programs, developing a library, and providing internet access at the Community Center.

### **ECONOMIC TRENDS AND ISSUES**

Starks' economic health is heavily dependent on employment opportunities beyond its borders. The number and types of jobs available in Madison, Skowhegan, Farmington, Augusta and Waterville influence economic conditions in Starks. Based on the town's population, location and current investment in economic infrastructure, the chance for significant economic opportunity within the community is uncertain. While the majority of employed residents travel to other communities for jobs, approximately 60 home-based businesses, mostly part-time, operate in Starks (Source: Starks Business Survey). This figure represents approximately 16 percent of the town's estimated housing units. Recently improved and increased access to high-speed Internet service may eventually result in additional home-based businesses or expansion of those already in existence.

## Chapter 6. Economy

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The overall income and wealth of Starks' families appears to be in decline. This does not necessarily mean that individual households are getting poorer. Statistics suggest one cause may be declining educational levels that lead to fewer opportunities for people to find well-paying jobs. Usually, the only way educational attainment levels decline is through migration patterns – either well-educated move out or poorly educated move in. However, the educational attainment level may increase if Starks joins a more educationally focused school district. Another factor to consider is the increasing number of retirees and associated changing household income levels.

Because there is usually a correlation between the income of a household and the quality of housing, it will be important to determine whether the quality of housing in Starks has been declining at a rate similar to declining incomes.

*Public Opinion:*

*When asked to think about the next ten years and economic needs, survey responses were as follows:*

- 78% - town needs a lot more/some more businesses - availability of goods and services
- 78% - town needs a lot more/some more job opportunities
- 56% - town needs some more/a lot more industrial development (23% - should stay the same)

*Starks Business Survey Conclusions:*

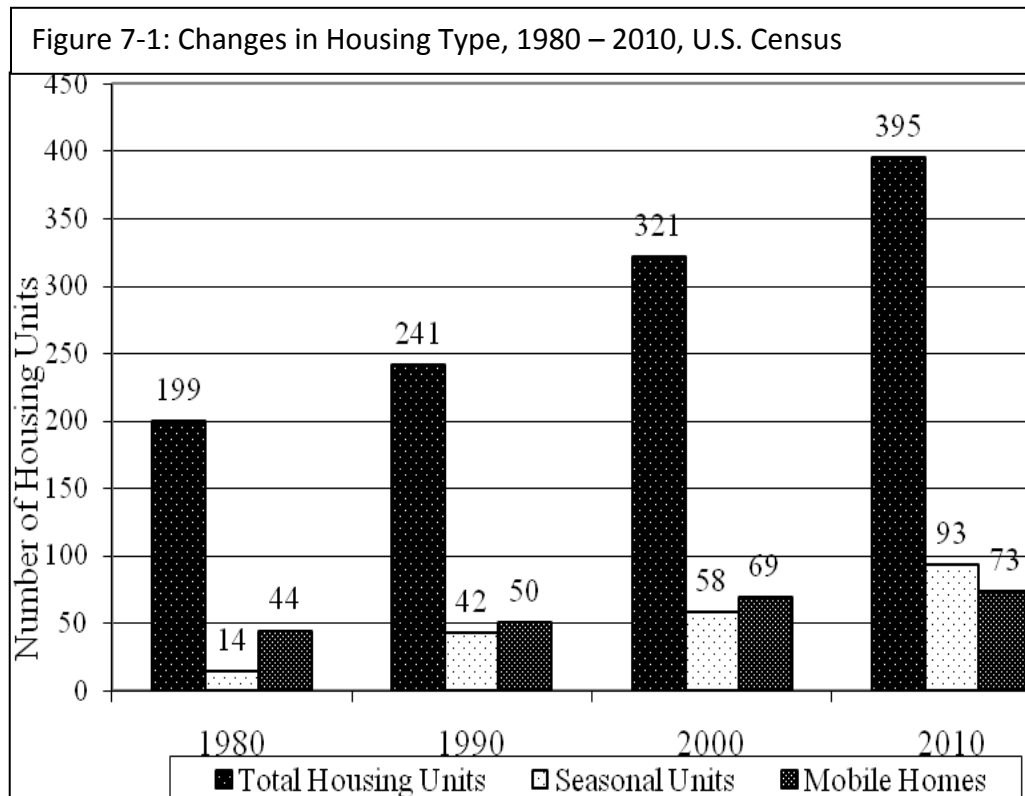
*A majority (56%) of Starks business owners supports the idea for a Starks web page containing business information but only 28% appear to be in a position to support such a project. Owners are, for the most part, in favor of promoting their businesses on a well-organized Town business bulletin board. Approximately one-third feel newspaper feature articles might be beneficial for the business community. Twenty-two percent of businesses are interested in information about applying for grants and technical assistance but only 14% are in favor of having the town find ways to seek grants to promote business activity. While 47% of business owners would be interested in attending a meeting to discuss Starks businesses, only 22% are interested in forming a business alliance and an even smaller percentage (14%) would be interested in becoming involved with a business sub-committee of the Comprehensive Plan Committee. Using the newly acquired school building to promote/support/expand business activity in Starks had a 42% approval rating. Because planning for the building's multi-varied use is in its infancy stage, ideas offered by 22% of the business owners may help guide the community in formulating future goals to enhance local businesses.*

## CHAPTER 7. HOUSING

Homes are an essential part of the Starks community. The quantity, style, and cost of housing help to define local character. Although the town, through its planning process, is not directly involved in creating or managing the housing stock, there are several areas where it may become involved. Starks may choose to apply for grants to update substandard houses, adopt standards affecting the construction of houses, institute rules that affect the supply of housing and implement a number of other strategies.

### **HOUSING QUANTITY AND QUALITY IN STARKS**

The number of homes in Starks continues to grow over time as the population grows and changes. Existing houses disappear sometimes, and new homes spring up. Figure 7-1, below, illustrates the growth of housing in Starks over the past 30 years. These figures are from the U.S. Census; Starks' Assessors figures (Municipal Valuation Reports (MVR)) are generally consistent with the Census. The 2000-2010 MVRs reported a total of 79 new homes (Census = 74), ten new mobile homes (Census = four) and 36 new seasonal homes (Census = 35).



## Chapter 7. Housing

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In 2010, Starks had 395 housing units according to the federal Census. About 322 of these were year round units and 93 were seasonal units. There were 73 mobile homes. Nearly all, if not all housing in Starks is single family housing.

According to the Starks' Assessors records, 79 new residences were added between 2000 and 2010. Ten of these were mobile homes and 36 were seasonal residences. The new seasonal residences accounted for 46 percent of the total added over the decade, suggesting a significant trend.

Seventy three mobile homes is about 18 percent of the total housing stock. This percentage is not much different from other areas: Somerset County only has 15 percent mobile homes, but Anson has 25 percent. Like stick-built houses, mobile homes tend to vary widely in quality. In general, newer mobile homes are better constructed, but there isn't any available data on the age of Starks' mobile homes.

Data on the overall age of all housing in Starks is available. The assessor's records indicate that 43 year-round houses were built in approximately the past eight years. According to the census, another 62 houses were built in the 90s. So that means approximately 1/3 of all houses in Starks are less than twenty years old. At the other end of the scale, the census estimates that 71 homes were built before 1960, making them at least 50 years old. That is 23 percent of the total.

By comparison, in Somerset County 21 percent of the houses in the county are less than 20 years old, and 42 percent of the housing is over 50 years old. This means the average house in Starks is significantly newer than in Somerset County.

One would expect that if houses were newer, on average, they would be better quality than older houses. The census looks at only a few measures of housing quality, such as houses without plumbing or kitchen facilities. In 2010, the census estimated that only 14 year-round houses lacked complete plumbing, and only nine lacked kitchen facilities. But that is a much higher percentage (5.5 and 3.5 percent, respectively) than the average for Somerset County (1.6 and 1.5 percent). It should be noted that the numbers are very small, so the difference of just a few houses in Starks would make a big percentage difference.

Housing which is, on average, newer but lacking in measures of quality suggests construction issues. One possible explanation would be if there were more contractor-built houses in the county as a whole, and more self-built houses in Starks.

Just fewer than 16 percent of the housing units in Starks have 0 or 1 bedrooms. Although this figure is not that much different from Somerset County (16.4 percent), the characteristic of 0 or

## Chapter 7. Housing

1 bedroom is common to the kinds of housing units found in apartments or rooming houses in Skowhegan or Madison. Starks has neither, so these units lacking bedrooms are freestanding houses.

### **THE PRICE AND AFFORDABILITY OF HOUSING**

The single largest living expense for many families is the cost of owning or renting a home. This expense represents whether or not a family is in good financial shape and able to maintain a safe and secure home. “Cost” has two meanings: it can refer to the actual price of the home, or it can mean the relation between the price and the owner’s ability to pay. For example, a \$40,000 home may be considered inexpensive by today’s standards, but too costly for someone who makes only \$7 an hour.

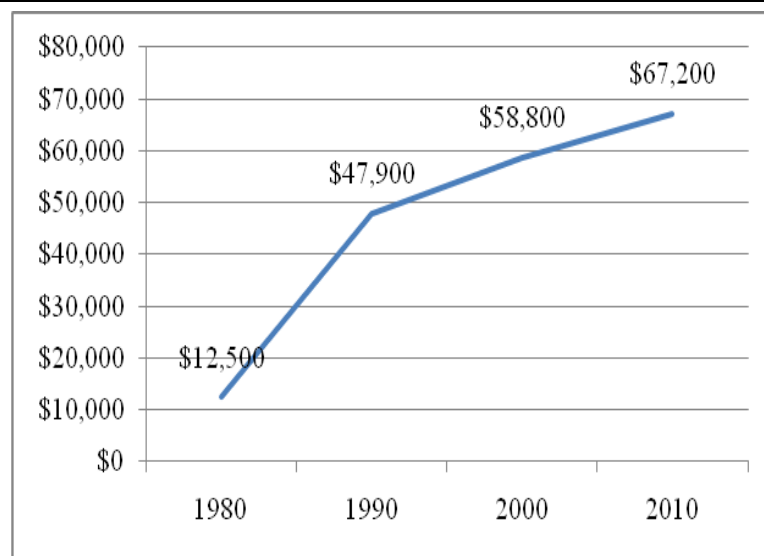
According to the census, 87 percent of the homes in Starks are owner-occupied. Only 35 (13%) are rentals. So the sale price and monthly ownership costs are the best measures of cost in this town. Figure 7-2, below, shows the progression of housing values in Starks over the past 30 years. (Census values are the homeowner’s personal estimate of value.)

Median home values in Starks almost quadrupled in the 1980s. Although this was a period of high inflation (almost 60 percent over the decade), that does not in any way account for the increase. The 80s must have been a period of high demand for housing in Starks that was not met by new home construction (only 30 new year-round houses were built in the 80s).

In the 1990s and 2000s, new home values increased much

more modestly. The value of the average home increased 23 percent in the 90s, and 14.3 percent in the 2000s. These increases are actually below the overall cost of living increases of 32 percent in the 90s and 28.4 percent in the 2000s. That means over the past two decades, homes in Starks have actually lost value relative to the overall economy.

Figure 7-2: Median Home Value, U.S. Census 1980 - 2010



## Chapter 7. Housing

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These home values are not the best gauge of housing costs because they are guesses by the homeowner. A better gauge would be the actual price paid for houses in Starks. Starks does not have enough home sales in any one year, though, to develop an average, so other information must be used to evaluate the cost of housing.

In Somerset County, the median home sale price in 2009 was \$85,900. The Census-reported median value was \$102,400. That means actual prices were about 84 percent of value estimates. Only about a dozen individual towns had sufficient sales in 2009 to average. In Anson, the median Census value was reported at \$88,000; the actual 2009 average sale price was \$67,000. In Hartland, the median from the Census was \$99,800; the actual average price was \$46,000. The 2009 sales were probably greatly affected by the recession, and home values have not yet recovered.

These figures suggest that the actual cost of housing in Starks is somewhat below what the Census reported. If the ratio represented by Somerset County is applied to Starks, it would yield a 2009 average home cost of \$56,000.

If a family were to purchase a \$56,000 home, they would likely have to show that they could afford the mortgage, interest, taxes, and insurance. These monthly costs must add up to a percentage of income (usually 32 percent or less). From these estimates, it is possible to calculate how much income is needed to afford a home. According to the Maine State Housing Authority, a household needs an income of \$19,000 per year to afford a \$56,000 home at current interest rates.

According to Census figures, Starks' median household income was \$29,145, certainly comfortably able to afford a \$56,000 home. In fact, that median income can afford a home about \$85,000. The state standard for "affordability" within a community is actually that an income of 80 percent of the median can afford a home. That would be an income of \$23,300 in Starks, which would cover the cost of a \$64,000 home. These figures demonstrate that Starks does not, on average, have an affordability issue.

There may still be individual cases of households struggling to afford their home. In 2010, there were an estimated 23 families with household incomes less than \$15,000. It is likely that these households are having trouble with household expenses. In fact, the Census has cross-indexed household incomes with housing costs. The Census estimate is that 24 out of 224 homeowners pay more than 35 percent of their income for housing costs. Among Starks' very small population of renters (35), about  $\frac{3}{4}$  pay more than 35 percent of their income for rent.

## Chapter 7. Housing

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Though there are no statistics to demonstrate, it is likely that struggling households fall into two categories. The first is senior households who are likely to own their own homes, perhaps even without a mortgage, but be living on a much reduced income. The second is young individuals, most likely renting a house. Though these might be the “youth of the community,” they will be very mobile, in an effort to find jobs and affordable housing.

### **TRENDS AND ISSUES**

Starks has experienced new housing construction at a slow but steady rate. Some of the new construction was seasonal camps, but much was stick-built and mobile homes. While there is no evidence that new construction is of poor quality, there are definite signs that the overall housing stock has some quality issues. Some of these issues could be addressed through housing improvement programs, such as grants or regional energy efficiency efforts.

Except for limited circumstances, housing appears to be “affordable” in Starks. However, given the overall aging of the population there will be more and more seniors on fixed incomes and with changing housing needs. Seniors may need to consider moving to a smaller more affordable home/trailer, renting, moving in with relatives, renting a room or space in their existing home to a renter, or moving to another community where there are more senior housing options. For this reason, the town might consider supporting any efforts in Anson, Madison or Farmington to increase the availability of senior housing options.

#### *Public Opinion about Housing:*

*When queried about the next ten years –*

- *39% of respondents indicated there was a need for more affordable housing, while 29% indicated affordable housing should stay the same.*
- *33% indicated there should be more senior housing, while 27% felt it should stay the same.*

*A majority of respondents (65%) felt that “overall, there is a need to improve housing in Starks”. Examples included “plumbing, weatherization-insulation, safety, wiring, heating, construction, aesthetics, and abandoned structures, etc.”*

*Of those who thought there was a problem with housing,*

- *52% favored a housing rehab program to provide grants or low interest loans to assist residents*
- *50% favored providing information on available programs, such as through KVCAP and energy audit assistance*
- *38% of respondents favored enactment of a building code*
- *38% supported a requirement that mobile homes meet federal standards*
- *Only 9% of respondents felt the town should do nothing.*

*44% of respondents would either be “very likely” or “somewhat likely” to take advantage of grants or low interest loans to renovate their home, and 49% indicated they were “not likely” to take advantage of such assistance.*

*52% supported enhance property maintenance in the village*

### CHAPTER 8. OUTDOOR RECREATION AND OPEN SPACE

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#### **OVERVIEW**

The availability of outdoor recreation opportunities, including access to rural land and water bodies, is a strong tradition in many Maine communities. Open space provides areas for outdoor recreation, such as access to water bodies for canoeing, kayaking, fishing, swimming and ice skating, and trails for walking, snowshoeing, cross-country skiing, hiking, wildlife and bird watching, ATVing and snowmobiling. Hunting is also an important recreational pursuit in the area. Open space provides areas for wildlife and contributes to the scenic beauty of the area. Regionally, open space and other outdoor recreational offerings are increasingly considered economic assets for ecotourism.

All of the streams and wildlife in Starks are owned by the citizens of Maine. Because nearly all of the land in Starks is privately owned, enjoyment of these features and open space, in general, is reliant on the generosity of private landowners. The only publicly-owned outdoor recreational facilities in Starks are the two boat launches described below and the open space, woods, playground and ball field at the Starks Community Building, which was discussed in the Chapter on Public Facilities and Services. The Starks Village Green, which is owned by East Parish Housing, has traditionally served as open space in the village available to the public for ball games and other outdoor activities.

*Public Opinion:*

*50% of survey respondent rated recreational facilities as needing improvement, while only 19% indicated they were good or excellent.*

This chapter also inventories private recreational facilities, trail systems, scenic resources and land conservation initiatives.

#### **PUBLIC ACCESS TO PRIVATE LAND**

Traditionally, many recreational activities (hunting, hiking, cross-country skiing, snowmobiling, and access to streams and ponds for fishing and boating, etc.) have relied on the generosity of private landowners to allow public use of their property for these activities. Often, as open land becomes more developed and built-up, this traditional access is no longer welcome, and in the case of hunting, not safe due to the close proximity of homes. Landowners may post land to prohibit certain uses, such as hunting or motorized vehicles, or may totally prohibit use of their property by the public.

## Chapter 8. Outdoor Recreation and Open Space

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Posting of land in Starks is increasing. To some extent this has been the result of dumping of trash, unauthorized tree stands, rutting of land, and other vandalism. Community efforts to promote public access to private land might include a neighborhood watch program, landowner and user education, and landowner appreciation activities such as those done by the local snowmobile club.

Another way of addressing public access that is pursued by the state, some towns and non-profit organizations is to purchase either outright, or as conservation easements, land for open space and outdoor recreation.

### ***RIVERS AND STREAMS AS RECREATIONAL ASSETS***

The Kennebec River, Sandy River, Lemon Stream, Joshua Brook, Hilton Brook and other smaller streams provide the public with a number of recreational opportunities including canoeing, kayaking, fishing and swimming. Formal public access to these water bodies within Starks includes two public boat launches on the Kennebec River. Historically, public access was also available via public road and ferry crossings across the Sandy River, including the following:

- Wilson/Athearns/Moore/Johnston Ferry (Olde Ferry Road)
- Butler Ferry (Butler Ferry Road)
- Pipers Ferry (Quimby Road)
- Davis Ferry (River Road)

These accesses have generally been used by the public over the years, but actual legal status is unclear. The public also has access to some water bodies directly from the public roads, such as the traditionally used swimming hole on Lemon Stream from the River Road bridge crossing. As described in the chapter on Natural Resources, most of the town's rivers and streams have significant fisheries available for fishing enthusiasts.

### ***PUBLIC BOAT LAUNCHES***

There are two public boat access ramps to the Kennebec River located in Starks. These facilities are accessible using Arnolds Lane in Anson (See Map) which leads into a single lane gravel road which then runs past a closed landfill/sewage lagoon and the Four Seasons Rod and Gun Club. These boat ramps were constructed around the year 2003 by Madison Paper Industries as one of the stipulated requirements necessary to obtain Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) relicensing of the Anson Project and Abnaki Project hydropower dams.

The ramps were conceived at least in part for drift boat fishing wherein a boat is launched at an upper location which drifts down through a section of river to a lower location. However,

## Chapter 8. Outdoor Recreation and Open Space

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among the many users of the ramps are those who use the access road to reach what is known as the "Madison Wave" which is located between two of the ramps.

The "Madison Wave" is a stretch of renowned whitewater on the Kennebec River, particularly popular with kayakers. The "Wave" comes in at a flow level of around 20,000 cfs, which often occurs during periods of sustained rain. The hydraulic includes a standing wave formation with a deep hole that is sought after by both recreational and professional kayakers. With online access to water flow information, as many as several dozen kayakers will show up on any given occasion. Many come from all across New England and Atlantic Canada.

### ***FOUR SEASON ROD AND GUN CLUB***

The Four Season Rod and Gun Club is located in the north-east corner of Starks, near the Kennebec River. Access is via Arnolds Lane in Anson. It then follows a scenic forest road south along the river to the Club's two buildings and beyond. It is an area valued and enjoyed by people from both Starks and Anson. The Club was formed around the mid-1980s on land belonging to Madison Paper. Eventually about 24 acres just west of the trail were deeded to the Club and a chain-link fence erected along that side of the trail. The Club is overseen by three officers (president, vice-president, and secretary-treasurer) and its use is for members only, currently about 110 people. Membership is open to the public. Dues are \$30 per year.

The unique location of the Club and the wider area around it makes it a significant, even beloved, spot for a growing number of people. All of this land is private land, where traditionally public access has been allowed. Admirers and patrons are not limited to the immediate Starks-Anson area. All three Club officers, for example, reside further away. Besides being a gun club and a hunting ground, the locale is used by walkers, ATV users, skiers, snowshoers, birders, and others. It includes a section of the Kennebec River -- both flat and white water -- essentially devoid of visible development on either bank. The "Madison Wave" (see above), located here, is increasingly popular, even on the Internet. The trail itself is quite possibly part of Arnold's route to Canada. Looking ten years out, the pristine uniqueness, multi-use character, growing popularity, and adjacency of two Native American National Historic Register sites all suggest that preservation and protection efforts be considered by the two towns.

### ***TRAIL SYSTEMS***

#### **Snowmobile Trails**

The state's Snowmobile Interconnected Trail System (ITS) has over 13,000 miles of trails in Maine that are developed and maintained by local snowmobile clubs with funding from state

## Chapter 8. Outdoor Recreation and Open Space

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registration fees (\$14/snowmobile/year for Maine residents), some gas tax revenues, municipalities, chambers of commerce and others. The local snowmobile club is the Anson-North Anson Snowmobile Club, which maintains and grooms the trails in both Anson and Starks. There are no ITS trails in Starks, only local trails. Starks' local trails connect to ITS Route 87 in Mercer.

Starks town meeting has traditionally voted to pass along its share of the reimbursements from the state snowmobile registrations to the Anson-North Anson Snowmobile Club. The Maine Bureau of Parks and Lands Off-Road Division also has funding available to assist in the development of trails.

All of the snowmobile trails in Starks are across private property. The Anson-North Anson Club contacts landowners on a regular basis and also sponsors an annual landowner appreciation supper. Most snowmobilers use the trails when they are officially open with adequate snow cover. In some areas of town, however, there have been problems with snowmobiles not staying on the marked trails, riding when there wasn't enough snow, and not closing gates where there were livestock. While the local club can put pressure on users to comply with the rules, in reality it ends up falling on the landowner to enforce the rules, including opting to post the property to prohibit snowmobiles. The Maine Department of Conservation's Landowner Relations Office is available to assist in resolution of issues, including assistance in enforcement by Maine Wardens. Anyone wishing to report a violation should contact Operation Game Thief at 1(800) ALERT-US [1(800) 253-7887].

### **ATV Trails**

There is a statewide effort to develop an interconnected ATV trail system in Maine similar to the one for snowmobiles. The potential property damage impacts from ATVs have made this effort particularly challenging, with many landowners prohibiting ATV use on their property. As a result the statewide organization Alliance of Trail Vehicles of Maine (ATVMaine) was organized to support the development of local ATV clubs and ATV trail systems. The Maine Bureau of Parks and Lands Off-Road Division is also available to provide assistance, including funding for the development of trails. ATV registration is \$34 per ATV per year for Maine residents.

The local club is the Starks Trail Riders. The club has developed some trails and has been able to convince the Starks Selectmen to designate sections of a few roads on the east side of Lemon Stream for ATV's to connect with the local trails.

## Chapter 8. Outdoor Recreation and Open Space

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There have been ongoing issues with irresponsible and illegal use of ATVs in Starks. State law requires that ATV users obtain permission prior to riding on private property unless they are riding on a designated ATV trail. Illegal activities have included riding without landowner permission, riding on public roads not designated for ATV use, and destruction of private property including hay and crops. Landowner options for reporting violations are the same as those for snowmobiles mentioned above.

*Public Opinion about Outdoor Recreation and Open Space:*

*Regarding what is needed over the next ten years, responses were as follows:*

- *40% public and emergency access on unmaintained roads should stay the same, while 36% indicated more was needed.*
- *43% indicated public access to open space should stay the same, while 31% indicated more was needed.*
- *46% indicated more public access to rivers and streams was needed, while 38% indicated it should stay the same.*
- *36% indicated more ATV trails were needed, while 34% indicated they should stay the same.*
- *46% indicated trails for snowmobile should stay the same, while 34% indicated more were needed.*

### **PUBLIC ROADS AND RIGHTS-OF-WAY**

Walking, running and bicycling are growing in popularity and many people use public roads for these activities. Not all of Starks' public roads are safe for walking, running or bicycling. Traffic volumes and speeds on main roads, and even town ways, generally force walkers, joggers and bicyclers onto the rough, gravel shoulders of the roadway, which are not easy to negotiate. Wider and smoother shoulders along Route 43, particularly in the village would be desirable. Town-owned roads generally have lower volumes of traffic where bicycling, walking and running are somewhat safer even though the shoulders of these roads are narrow or non-existent.

Starks does have a number of public road segments that were formally discontinued some time ago. Generally these roads continue to be used as forest management roads and for recreational, including camp access.

### **LAND ENROLLED IN THE OPEN SPACE PROPERTY TAX PROGRAM**

The Maine Open Space Property Tax Program allows for the assessment of property taxes on open space to be based on current use rather than market value as long as the land is managed according to the criteria set forth in the law. The open space tract must be preserved or restricted in use to provide a public benefit. Benefits recognized in the law include public recreation, scenic resources, and game management or wildlife habitat. There is no minimum

## Chapter 8. Outdoor Recreation and Open Space

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acreage requirement with this program. The valuation placed on open space is typically done by reducing the fair market value in accordance with a cumulative percentage reduction for which the land is eligible according to certain categories. Those categories are as follows: (1) ordinary open space - 20% reduction; (2) permanently protected - 30% reduction; (3) forever wild - 20% reduction; and (4) public access - 25% reduction. In other words, the owner would see a cumulative reduction of up to 95% on the classified open space land, if the property met all of the above requirements. If the property no longer qualifies as open space, then a penalty is assessed using the same methodology as is used for removal from the Tree Growth classification. There is no land in Starks enrolled in the Open Space Property Tax Program. A discussion on land enrolled in the Tree Growth Property Tax Program is included in the chapter on Agriculture and Forestry Resources.

### ***SCENIC RESOURCES***

Towns have come to realize the importance of preserving their scenic resources, as time-and-again in their opinion polls, “protecting rural character and the scenic quality of town” has topped the list of public concerns.

Starks possesses extensive and exceptional scenic resources. Starks’s broad intervals, numerous wetlands and streams, the Sandy River, rolling topography and rural landscape make for many scenic views and vistas. Perhaps, the most important scenic views and vistas are those visible to the general public from public roads, public recreation areas or other publicly accessible locations.

Scenic resources can be categorized as follows (examples in Starks are included):

#### **Scenic views –**

- Rivers and streams (views of the Sandy River from the River Road and the New Sharon Road; views of the Kennebec River from the public boat launches)
- Distant landscapes and mountains (views of the western mountains from the Anson Road and Sawyers Mill Road; views of Mt. Phillip and/or the Kennebec Highlands from the Locke Hill Road, Emery Road and Anson Road; views of the Central Maine hills and lowlands from the Sterry Hill Road and the Anson Road)
- Farmland (views of farms along the New Sharon Road, River Road, Anson Road, Emery Road, Mayhew Road, Olde Ferry Road and Chicken Street)

#### **Cultural landmarks –**

- Prominent historic buildings (church in the village, the restored Grange Hall and other historic homes and farmsteads)
- Traditional village areas (views of Starks village from public roads)
- Camp at the Eastward

## Chapter 8. Outdoor Recreation and Open Space

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- View of the historic Thompson’s Bridge from the Thompson’s Bridge Road
- Village or town gateways (views of Gray’s Farm on the Anson Road, and the Shady Maple Farm on the Mayhew Road)
- Town road corridors (19<sup>th</sup> Century corridor with original farmsteads and land along the Anson Road and the River Road)

### **Natural landmarks –**

- Hills (Abijha Hill)
- Didson Meadow from the Mayhew Road
- Heron Rookery off the Sawyers Mills Road
- French Rips and former Sandy River Dam site from the Butler Ferry Road

Many scenic views have been identified and are displayed on the Cultural Resources Map.

### ***LAND CONSERVATION INITIATIVES IN STARKS***

#### **The Somerset Woods Trustees (SWT) [www.somersetwoodtrustees.org](http://www.somersetwoodtrustees.org)**

The SWT was formed in 1927 and is likely the oldest land trust in Maine. It is a non-profit land trust whose purpose “is to acquire, hold, manage, arrange, maintain, and where practicable, open to the public under suitable regulations tracts of land that the organization may be able to acquire, alone or in cooperation with others, in Somerset County, Maine.” Further, “The mission ... is to protect lands in Somerset County that have significant natural or cultural resources and manage them in a sustainable way for public benefit.

The SWT owns approximately 600 acres throughout Somerset County. Many of the parcels are in the greater Skowhegan area. In addition to the owned properties, SWT also hold conservation easements on approximately 500 acres of woodland. Most recently, a nearly 4 acre parcel in Starks was donated to SWT to assure the protection of a historically significant burial ground along the shores of Lemon Stream.

#### **U.S. Department of Interior/Maine Historic Preservation Commission Easements**

The U.S Department of Interior and Maine Historic Preservation Commission hold two separate conservation easements on shoreland areas near the confluence of the Sandy River with the Kennebec River. The land is part of Rivercroft Farm at the end of the Olde Ferry Road. The Interior Department Interior easements are designed to protect shorelands, wetlands and drainages in the area in perpetuity. The Historic Preservation Commission easements, also in perpetuity, are designed to protect two nationally significant archaeological sites (See chapter of Community Character and Cultural Resources).

# CHAPTER 9. TRANSPORTATION

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### **OVERVIEW**

The transportation system provides access to and from areas outside as well as within the town. It ties together the various land uses, and must remain efficient and functional to ensure the continued well-being and economic vitality of the community.

Despite its critical role, the transportation system to this point has grown without much planning or forethought: from cowpaths and wagon trails to the gravel and paved roads, and highways of today. As the cost of building and maintaining the system grows, though, towns have gradually had to begin to manage “more with less.” While the Starks transportation system remains fairly simple, it is up to the town to keep it cost-effective in the face of more development, larger vehicles, and costlier maintenance.

### **HIGHWAYS, ROADS AND BRIDGES**

#### **State Highways**

The state highway system, designed to accommodate commerce and movement throughout the state and nation, is represented in Starks by just a few of the town’s more well-travelled roads. Population density and economic activity in Starks simply does not warrant a larger investment by the state in the town’s road system. State highways in Starks consist primarily of two numbered routes (Routes 43 and 134), both classified in the state’s system as collector roads. State Route 148 skirts Starks to the north and west, but provides access to Starks via the Mayhew and Sawyers Mills Roads. Route 148 also provides an alternative east-west route for area traffic. These roads are discussed below.

#### **Maine Route 43**

Route 43 is the primary artery in Starks, running from the northeast corner of town, near Anson village, to the western boundary, at the Industry town line. The total road length in Starks is about 8.98 miles. Pavement conditions vary, as several segments are improved at different times, but the overall condition of the pavement is good. Shoulders are not paved, however, making the pavement surface relatively narrow (roughly 22 feet).

Speed limits on Route 43 are 45 mph, except for a short segment of about 1.3 miles, which is posted at 35 and encompasses the village. Traffic levels, measured in terms of the average daily number of vehicles over the course of a year, range from about 300 vehicles per day to about 930 vehicles per day. A counting station installed south of the Route 134 intersection estimated 410 vehicles per day in 1993, and 450 in 2006, so traffic is not growing significantly. A counting

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station near the Community Center estimated 750 vehicles per day in 2008, the highest count in Starks. In comparison, a rural highway only begins to feel crowded at about 5,000 vehicles per day.

### **Maine Route 134**

Route 134 joins Route 43 just south of the village of Starks and continues south into New Sharon, a distance inside Starks of 4.15 miles. Like Route 43, Route 134 is classified by the state as a major collector and “state aid highway” which means that the state is responsible for paving and summer maintenance, while the town must plow snow in the winter. Like Route 43, this road has no paved shoulders.

The speed limit on Route 134 is 45 mph throughout. Traffic volumes are low. The counting station installed just south of Route 43 estimated 350 vehicles per day in 1993 and just 270 per day in 2006.

### **Maine Route 148**

Route 148 crosses into and out of Starks in the northwest corner of the town, for a total distance of about seven-tenths of a mile. Route 148’s significance to Starks is that it provides an alternate east-west route for through traffic traveling between the Anson/Madison area and the Farmington area. Route 43 and Route 148 intersect in Anson at Five Corners and in Industry at Goodrich Corner. The Route 43 segment between these two corners is about 2 miles longer than the Route 148 segment between these two corners. The 2008 traffic count data for Routes 43 and 148 west of their intersection (Five Corners) in Anson show a count of 1,210 for Route 148 as compared to a count of 990 for Route 43 (See Transportation Map). Several miles to the west the counts are 370 for Route 148 and 340 for the Industry Road.

Some people have observed that there is more truck traffic traveling on Routes 43 and 134 in Starks than in the past. Truckers may view Route 43 and 148 as two options for traveling between the Madison area and the Farmington area depending on the conditions of these roads.

### ***STATE HIGHWAY MAINTENANCE RESPONSIBILITIES***

The town of Starks is responsible for winter maintenance (sanding, salting and snowplowing) on Routes 43, 134 and 148. The State is responsible for construction and all other maintenance of state highways. A more complete discussion of the town’s responsibility for state roads is included in the Public Facilities and Services Chapter.

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### **TOWN ROADS**

Town ways form a network accessing most of the undeveloped land in Starks and connecting developed areas with the state highway network. The Transportation Map displays the local road system, including state roads, paved and gravel town roads, and private and discontinued town roads. Names have been assigned according to the E-911 naming protocol.

There are approximately 40.75 miles of town roads in Starks. About 5.75 miles are paved, and the rest are gravel. Major portions of the River Road, Chicken Street and Sawyers Mills Road are maintained as paved roads. A short section of the Peterson Road is also paved. The town works to maintain its existing paved roads, and has not converted any gravel roads to paved roads in the past decade. The cost of paving has skyrocketed over the past several years, making it unaffordable to expand the miles of paved roads in town.

An inventory of state and local roads is displayed in Table 9-1. The inventory could be expanded to include information on road dimensions, construction, and condition, and future needs. This information could be used to prioritize, schedule and budget for future road improvements. Each year the inventory would be adjusted to reflect what was completed and any changes in priorities.

Table 9-1: Highway and Road Inventory			
Road Name	Beginning Location	End Location	Length (Miles)
<b>State Aid Roads</b>			
Route 43/ Industry Rd	Town Line - Industry, Starks	Intersection of Anson Rd, Chicken St, Industry Rd, Locke Hill Rd	2.7
Route 43/ Anson Rd	Intersection of Anson Rd, Chicken St, Industry Rd, Locke Hill Rd	Town Line - Anson, Starks	6.28
Route 134/ New Sharon Rd	Town Line - New Sharon, Starks	Intersection of Industry Rd, New Sharon Rd	4.15
Route 148/ West Mills Rd	Town Line – Industry, Starks	Town Line – Starks, Industry	0.71
<b>Town Roads</b>			
Abijah Hill Rd	Intersection of Abijah Hill Rd, Industry Rd	End of Abijah Hill Rd	0.32
Beans Corner Rd	TL - New Sharon, Starks	Town Line - New Sharon, Starks	0.37
Branns Mills Rd	Intersection of Branns Mills Rd, Industry Rd	Intersection of Branns Mills Rd, New Sharon Rd	2.65

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Table 9-1: Highway and Road Inventory (continued from prior page)			
Road Name	Beginning Location	End Location	Length (Miles)
Cemetery Rd	End of Cemetery Rd	Intersection of Cemetery Rd, Chicken St	0.71
Chicken St	Intersection of Anson Rd, Chicken St, Industry Rd, Locke Hill Rd	Intersection of Chicken St, Emery Rd	1.66
Churchill Rd	Intersection of Churchill Rd, New Sharon Rd	End of Churchill Rd	0.15
Dill Rd	End of Dill Rd	Intersection of Anson Rd, Dill Rd	1.51
Emery Rd	Intersection of Chicken St, Emery Rd	Intersection with Thompson Bridge Rd	0.80
Faulkner Hill Rd	End of Faulkner Hill Rd	Intersection of Anson Rd, Faulkner Hill Rd	0.41
Glenn Harris Rd*	Town Line - New Sharon, Starks	Intersection of Beans Corner Rd, Glenn Harris Rd	0.05
Krebs Rd	End of Krebs Rd	Intersection of Krebs Rd, New Sharon Rd	0.44
Locke Hill Rd	End of Locke Hill Rd	Intersection of Anson Rd, Chicken St, Industry Rd, Locke Hill Rd	1.3
Lynds Rd	End of Lynds Rd	Intersection of Anson Rd, Lynds Rd	0.25
Mayhew Rd	Intersection of Mayhew Rd, Sawyers Mills Rd	Town Line - Anson, Starks	4.49
Olde Ferry Rd	End of Olde Ferry Rd	Intersection of Anson Rd, Olde Ferry Rd	0.9
Peterson Rd	End of Peterson Rd	Intersection of Peterson Rd, Sandy River Rd	0.29
Poor Farm Rd	End of Poor Farm Rd	Intersection of Industry Rd, Poor Farm Rd	0.14
Poor Farm Rd	Intersection of Branns Mills Rd, Poor Farm Rd	End of Poor Farm Rd	0.07
Pressey Rd	Intersection of New Sharon Rd, Pressey Rd	Pressey Rd, end	0.15
Quimby Rd	Intersection of Quimby Rd, Sandy River Rd	Quimby, end	0.24

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Table 9-1: Highway and Road Inventory (continued from prior page)			
Road Name	Beginning Location	End Location	Length (Miles)
Ricci Rd	End of Ricci Rd	Intersection of Anson Rd, Ricci Rd	0.28
Duly Rd	Chicken St, Duly Rd	Duly Rd, end	0.05
Sandy River Rd	Intersection of New Sharon Rd, Sandy River Rd	Intersection of Anson Rd, Sandy River Rd	4.54
Sawyers Mills Rd	Intersection of Sawyers Mills Rd, W Mills Rd	Intersection of Anson Rd, Sawyers Mills Rd	3.62
Sterry Hill Rd	Sterry Hill Rd, end	Intersection of Sawyers Mills Rd, Sterry Hill Rd	0.9
Thompson Bridge Rd	Intersection of Emery Rd	End of Thompson Bridge Rd	0.17
Waugh Rd	End of Waugh Rd	Intersection of Anson Rd, Waugh Rd	0.45
Source: Maine Department of Transportation and Town Officials			

Adequate maintenance of town roadsides is an issue of concern in Starks. This involves mowing, bush hogging, chipping and, in some cases, ditching. Regular bush hogging and chipping has been suspended due to limited funding, but this work will become necessary at some point.

### ***ABANDONED AND DISCONTINUED ROADS***

The town has formally abandoned a number of roads over the years, and these are displayed on the Transportation Map combined with roads that have always been private. The issue of public use and adjacent landowner use of abandoned and discontinued roads arises from time to time, but generally remains one to be addressed by the parties involved as opposed to the town. Abandoned and discontinued roads are often used for recreation and/or forestry operations.

### ***CULVERTS AND BRIDGES***

Starks' road system of necessity includes a number of stream crossings. Many of these are small to medium-sized culverts, most of which are the responsibility of the town to maintain. Culverts are cleaned and inspected regularly, and replaced as necessary. Of the nine bridges in Starks, five are owned and maintained by the town and the other four are the state's responsibility. The Maine Department of Transportation (MDOT) monitors the condition of bridges every two years and the information is reported to Selectmen and is included in the following table.

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Bridge Description	Owner/ Maintainer	Type	Length	Condition	Notes
Route 43/Curtis Bridge/Josiah Brook	State	Concrete slab	21'	Very Good	Built 1938
Route 43/ Lemon Stream	State	Steel Girder	77'	Very Good	Built 1941, Bridge was reconditioned in 2010/2011
Route 43/ Hilton Brook	State	Rigid concrete	23'	Very Good	
Route 134/ Josiah Brook	State	Concrete slab	21'	Good	Built 1934
River Road/ Lemon Stream	State	Steel Girder	75'	Good	Built 1962
Branns Mills Road (west)/Josiah Brook	Town	Steel Girder	22'	Poor	Built 1920, Posted for weight
Branns Mills Road (east)/Josiah Brook	Town	Steel culvert	16'	Good	Multi-plate
Sawyers Mills Road/ Lemon Stream	Town	Steel girder	21'	Poor	Channel condition critical, posted for weight
Mayhew Road/ Pelton Brook	Town	Steel Girder	24'	Poor	Substructure in serious condition, posted for weight

Source: MDOT Bridge Inventory, 2010; Town edits, 2010

Of the four state bridges, three are in very good condition and one is in good condition.

According to the MDOT bridge inventory, there are three town-owned bridges that are in poor enough condition to be limited on the weights they carry. MDOT has mandated that these three bridges be replaced within the next 2 to 6 years. The Sawyers Mills Road Bridge will be replaced this year (2012), and the town recently obtained grant funding to rebuild the Pelton Brook Bridge on the Mayhew Road. The Branns Mills Road Josiah Brook (west) should be replaced sometime in the near future.

### **STATE AND LOCAL ROAD CONFLICTS**

The most significant conflict is traffic speeds. These roads are posted at 45 mph, except for a short section that is 35 mph on Route 43 in the village. Speeding along straight stretches in rural areas, and through the village is a concern. The 90 degree turn on Route 43 in the village helps slow traffic down. The town may want to explore various options to slow traffic down, such as additional posting of speed limits, increased law enforcement (state and county), and possible traffic calming options in the village.

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### ***TRAFFIC CONTROLS***

Traffic controls are infrastructure to help manage the flow of traffic. They range from STOP and YIELD signs to traffic signals, speed limit signs, and cautionary signs. Because Starks has very little traffic, controls are minimal. There are several Stop signs located where local roads join with state highways. The intersection of Routes 43 and 134 also has a STOP sign (for Route 134). Other traffic controls include posted speed limits and cautionary signage, such as arrows indicating a sharp turn ahead, children playing or school bus stop ahead. Speeding is an issue in a number of locations in town – including in the village and on town and state roads, particularly where there are straight-aways. Speeding may have also been a factor in vehicles running off roads when negotiating several of the right angle turns on some of the town’s roads. With respect to cautionary signs, the town has posted some of these in response to citizen requests.

### ***PARKING***

No public parking in Starks is provided other than that associated with public buildings. Small parking lots are provided at the former town office and the current town office/community center. No demand is apparent for additional off-street parking for either public or commercial purposes, other than possibly trailhead parking for ATVs. Illegal use of public roads by ATVs is an issue that will be discussed in the chapter on Recreation.

The Starks Site Plan and Subdivision Ordinance includes standards for off-street parking applicable to commercial and other developments. These standards are designed to assure that new developments have adequate on-site parking and loading facilities so that public roads are not used, or depended upon for these purposes. These standards are not applicable to individual residences or home occupations.

### ***ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES***

Road systems have been generally recognized to have an impact on natural and environmental assets. Potential issues include light pollution from street lights, noise associated with traffic, stormwater runoff from road surfaces, disruption of wildlife travel corridors, and impacts to fisheries at stream crossings. Given the very rural nature of the town, many of these are not issues of concern at this time.

Lighting is not much of an issue in town. There are several street lights in the village and there are lights at public buildings. Glare from lighting for business and signage is not an issue.

One area of concern is the impact of culverts and bridges on fisheries. Poorly designed culverts and bridges can serve as barriers to fish needing to swim upstream to spawn. Additionally, road

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stream crossings are often locations where sand, salt and other contaminants can flow directly into water bodies creating water quality concerns that can negatively impact aquatic life.

Another environmental issue in some parts of town is the impact of beaver activity that causes flooding of roads and clogging of culverts. The town works with the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife on an ongoing basis to address this issue.

### ***TRANSPORTATION CHOICES***

“Transportation choices” refer to alternative ways of getting to and from places. In Starks, there is a huge reliance on personal motor vehicles, and thus the road system. Because almost all alternatives require either a) shorter trips, such as in a village setting, or b) higher population densities necessary to support mass transportation, there are few viable alternatives for Starks.

Starks has a tiny village area, with no dedicated sidewalks. Bicycles are occasionally seen in Starks, but without paved shoulders on the roads, riding is not necessarily safe. Paved shoulders and/or walking paths would be particularly desirable in and around the village. Other existing hazards for pedestrians and bicyclists include the narrow culvert at the bottom of the hill on Route 43 just west of the center of the village, and the narrow bridge over Lemon Stream to the east of the center of the village. Both these areas are of concern particularly for children. Safer pedestrian amenities would encourage people to walk and exercise more.

Other transportation alternatives include a private taxi service based in Madison/Anson and the Kennebec Valley Community Action Program (KVCAP) that offers volunteer drivers for primarily special needs clients (low income individuals, seniors and people with disabilities) on an “as called” basis. Some Starks residents take advantage of these services.

There is no bus service in or near Starks. The closest bus service is in Waterville, which is over 30 miles away.

There are no railroad tracks in Starks for either freight or passenger service. Rail freight access is available in Madison, although no businesses in Starks would be able to take direct advantage of it.

There are no public or private airstrips in Starks. The Central Maine Airport in Norridgewock is the nearest airport for general aviation use. Scheduled passenger service is available in Augusta, Bangor and Portland. All three of these airports are at least an hour from Starks.

Some people in Starks may use snowmobiles for transportation in the winter. The locally maintained trails connect to neighboring towns, and beyond. The Anson-North Anson

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Snowmobile Club maintains many of these trails. It is possible to access the larger, Interconnected Trail System (ITS), but the nearest connecting trail is in Mercer.

The lack of transportation alternatives in Starks may become an increasing issue with the aging population and potential increase in cost of fuel. The town may want to explore solutions to this problem.

### ***TRAFFIC AND DEVELOPMENT***

The quality of the transportation system depends not only on its physical condition, but on the usage it receives. Government is generally responsible for the infrastructure itself, but in the past has not had much control over how (and how much) it is used. Traffic levels are a function of the location of trip points (“traffic generators”), and traffic conflicts (“crashes”) are often the unintended consequence of those locations.

Traffic volumes have been cited in the section on state roads, and they generally indicate that no roads in Starks experience congestion of any kind. The only traffic generator of any significance in Starks is the Town Office/Community Building, but this has not created any traffic problems to date. MDOT has not identified any High Crash Locations (HCL’s), which is an intersection or road segment where there have been eight or more reportable accidents over a three-year period.

Traffic follows development, and future traffic growth is likely to be tied directly to the location of housing and commercial growth in Starks. Nearly all development in recent Starks history has been of a small scale and spread out along existing roads. At this rate, it will be many years before development creates congestion or significant traffic issues.

Perhaps the most significant issue for Starks is increasing development and traffic on the town’s gravel roads. The town continues to upgrade and maintain its gravel roads within its budgetary constraints. Problems on some parts of gravel roads are particularly severe in the spring during mud season. This is an issue the town will need to address.

The location of new driveways associated with residential or commercial development presents another potential issue for Starks. An individual or commercial driveway located at the wrong point on a road can create an accident hazard. All new or expanded driveways and entrances onto state highways (Routes 43, 134 and 148) require a MDOT driveway/entrance permit. The rules set standards (sight lines, vertical alignment, driveway width, etc.) for the construction of driveway entrances within MDOT’s right-of-way, and require permits for new driveways and entrances on state roads. State permits are also required for changes in existing driveways and entrances, including changes of use, to state roads. The Town is required by law to inform

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landowners and potential buyers of land requiring access to state roads of this permit requirement.

State permits are not required for driveways off town roads. The town can help to avoid potential conflicts by working with landowners to locate new curb cuts in the safest locations. The town does require that any new driveway from a town road meet the requirements of the town's culvert sizing ordinance, which is administered by the Road Foreman.

Starks Site Plan and Subdivision Ordinance (adopted 1990), applicable to subdivisions,

*Public Opinion about Roads and Transportation Options:*

*When queried about what is needed for the next ten years, the responses were as follows:*

- *45% of respondents indicated paved town roads should stay the same, while 37% indicated more paved town roads were needed.*
- *57% indicated more transportation options are needed for those who don't drive or have a car.*
- *40% indicated that public and emergency access on unmaintained roads should stay the same, while 36% indicated more public and emergency access was needed.*

businesses and other developments, requires that new or expanded developments "will not cause unreasonable highway or public road congestion or unsafe conditions with respect to use of the highways or public roads existing or proposed both on and off site". The ordinance has provisions that provide design guidelines for driveways and entrances onto public roads that include required site distances, and restrictions on the number of access points. There are also requirements for adequate off-street parking and loading areas. The ordinance also allows the town to require a traffic impact analysis for large developments that might indicate the need for turning lanes.

The Starks Road Ordinance (adopted in 1988) is applicable to roads in subdivisions and other developments. The ordinance contains road design and construction standards including provisions for stormwater drainage. The purpose of the ordinance is to assure that roads used by the public, including subdivision roads, are constructed adequately. The standards are also applicable to any private road that is to be accepted by the town as a town road. The ordinance also requires that all major subdivision (10+ lots) have internal roads, and not have individual lots with driveways providing access to state highways. Subdivisions with 15+ lots must have two access points to a public road.

# CHAPTER 10. PUBLIC SERVICES AND FACILITIES

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### **OVERVIEW**

The following is an inventory and analysis of community services and facilities, with a primary focus on those services and facilities over which the town has some control. The condition and capacity of these services and facilities are examined to determine what improvements, if any, might be needed to serve anticipated population growth and development within the next ten years. Planning ahead for necessary or anticipated capital improvements, and guiding growth and development to areas most efficiently served, are actions the town can take today to manage ongoing and future municipal expenditures.

### **TOWN GOVERNMENT**

Starks has a Selectmen-Town Meeting form of government. The three-member Board of Selectmen also serve as Overseers of the Poor. Selectmen serve staggered three-year terms. The Town has a separate three member Board of Assessors; Assessors each serve staggered three year terms.

Other elected offices include:

- Budget Committee (5 members, 1 year terms)
- Clerk (3 year term)
- Tax Collector (3 year term)
- Treasurer (3 year term)
- School Board Member(s) (1 member, 3 year term)

Appointed positions include:

- Addressing Officer (E 911)
- Animal Control Officer
- Appeals Board (5 members, 2 alternates – 5 year terms)
- Cemetery Sexton
- Code Enforcement Officer/Plumbing Inspector
- Fire Chief and Warden
- Local Health Officer
- Library Board of Directors
- Planning Board (5 members, 2 alternates – 3 year terms)
- Road Foreman, Assistant Road Foreman
- Community Center Building Committee (1 and 2-year terms)
- Warrant Officer
- Water District Board of Trustees (4 trustees - 3 year terms)
- Superintendent/Janitor

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Multi-municipal Corporations Starks is a member of include:

- Anson-Madison-Starks Ambulance Service (Board of Directors comprised of Selectmen from member towns)
- Kennebec Regional Development Authority/First Park (General Assembly is comprised of municipal officials from member towns and cities)
- Kennebec Valley Regional Waste Corporation (Board of Directors comprised of Selectmen or other designee from member towns)
- Maine Municipal Association (Town is a member)
- Kennebec Valley Council of Governments (Town is a member)

Starks has regular town office hours – Mondays (10 a.m. to 2 p.m.), Wednesdays (3-7 p.m.) and the first Saturday of each month 8-11 a.m. Selectmen's meetings are held every Monday evening at 7 p.m. Assessors meet every Monday evening at 7 p.m. The Planning Board, Budget Committee and the Board of Appeals hold meetings as needed.

The town's current form of governance is reliant on volunteers and town officials who generally receive very little or no pay for their services. This keeps the costs of town administration low. Citizens appear to be fairly satisfied with the current system according to the results of the public opinion survey (2010). Key to satisfactory governance is the willingness of qualified, experienced and dedicated citizens to serve as town officials.

There have been times in the past when dissatisfaction with town governance led to proposed changes that were discussed, and in some cases made, at town meetings. Changes that were made included:

- some elected positions were made appointed positions, such as changing from an elected Road Commissioner to an appointed Road Foreman – others were considered, but not implemented;
- terms of office have been increased to allow more continuity, such as 3-year terms for tax collector, clerk and treasurer;
- terms of office have been increased to allow for staggered terms and more continuity, such as 3-year terms for selectmen and assessors;
- the selectmen and assessors were made two boards instead of one; and
- created a Budget Committee

There was also a proposal that was not accepted by the town meeting to establish a professional administrative assistant position that would be hired by and report to the Selectmen. One option suggested creating an administrative assistant position by combining the tax collector and clerk positions, and expanding the duties of the position to include bookkeeping, grant writing, correspondence and other support for the Selectmen. One goal of

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this proposal was to be able to offer an attractive salary to a qualified person, without having to raise a lot more money. At some time in the future, the town may want to re-visit the need for a professional administrative assistant or town manager. Perhaps, sharing positions with neighboring towns could be considered in the near-term. The town may in the near-term consider making some other improvements, such as regularly updating written job descriptions and bylaws for the various boards, adopting a code of ethics, and adopting a town charter.

*Public Opinion:*

*64% of survey respondents rated town government as either excellent or good.*

*31% indicated town government needs improvement*

*When asked what changes should be considered over the next ten years, respondents indicated as follows:*

- *44% increased office hours*
- *30% town structure is good, don't change it*
- *20% combine positions (tax collector and clerk)*

### **STARKS TOWN OFFICE/ COMMUNITY CENTER**

The Town of Starks acquired ownership of the local elementary school upon its official closure by RSU #59 on July 1, 2010. In March 2011 the Town voted to permanently move the Town Office from its former site at the corner of Locke Hill Road and Route 43 to the former school, now called the Starks Community Center. Many residents supported the move believing that the Community Center would be a cohesive force for the town, generating a stronger sense of community pride and greater participation in locally sponsored civic, social, physical, health and education programs and events. As of this writing, April 2012, this vision has come to fruition.

The Community Center is located on approximately 13 acres of land. In 1945, residents voted to complete the construction of the village elementary school building and in 1989 the structure was expanded to include the present complex. The building is a wood-frame, one story-two level structure approximately 11,450 square feet in size. The facility is served by an on-site well and subsurface waste water disposal system.

The interior of the Community Center consists of a gymnasium with bleachers and a stage, a partially furnished commercial kitchen adjacent to the gym, a Selectmen's meeting room (former classroom), the Town Office (former classroom) with an adjoining kitchenette/storage area, a large open area housing the library, two upper level classrooms with one containing an abundance of young children's toys and play equipment and several small rooms and storage areas. Public restrooms with showers are located off the gym and there are 5 additional restrooms most adjoining the former classrooms. Disabled individuals can readily access the

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first floor year-round but not the second level due to the inoperable elevator. High speed internet access is available throughout the building.

Although the building is in relatively good condition, very time consuming maintenance problems/issues and repairs have been and continue to be handled by the Selectmen, Town Office officials and some volunteers. The town recently hired a building Superintendent/Janitor who will be responsible for handling future building maintenance/upkeep, repair problems and other issues as they arise. Maintenance of exterior lawns are also the responsibility of the Superintendent/Janitor.

The outdoor area is comprised of an equipped playground, baseball field, open space, forest and a large parking lot. This site is the only public place in Starks where children/families/groups and individuals can gather to exercise and recreate safely throughout most of the year. Additions to the grounds have included a community garden, an exterior sign for announcing upcoming events and the Veterans Monument. For safety reasons, volunteers spread donated bark mulch under all playground equipment. A snowshoe trail was established in the winter of 2012.

Prior to the official recognition of the Starks School Building Standing Committee (SSBSC) in July 2011, a group of volunteers met regularly to address building needs/issues/problems/uses. Topics regularly under discussion have included: rental space for social gatherings, theatrical performances, a youth activity room, adult education programs, a place for health and social services representatives to meet clients and offer informational programs, additional physical fitness/organized sports programs, an open gym for families/individuals, an after school secular educational/enrichment program, a community garden, a senior citizens group, space to display the Starks Historical Society's artifacts, indoor/outdoor community events for children/teenagers/adults, etc.

The SSBSC established rules for the use of the building and for rental purposes. As of April 2012, the center received 4 grants totally close to \$17,000. - one from the Stephen and Tabitha King Foundation for library equipment (see Library write-up); and three from New Balance Foundation Somerset Heart-Health Move More Kids to purchase children's physical fitness equipment for use during and after the 2011 five session StarksSummerKids children's program that focused on literacy and healthy activities; to purchase children's nutritious snacks and snow shoes and books on eating healthy foods for use during and after the 2012 StarksWinterKids and StarksSummerKids programs; and to purchase tools needed to establish a community garden. A grant to purchase a riding lawn mower, week whack and storage building is pending.

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In addition to serving as the Town Office and meeting place for official town boards/committees, the building and property have been used by many groups on a regular basis including an infants and toddlers group, the Starks Historical Society, the local ATV and snowmobile clubs, the Starks Enrichment and Education Society (SEEdS), a weekly adult exercise group, weekly volleyball games, children's story-time/craft-making, open gym on Wednesday afternoons and birthday parties and wedding receptions. A memorial service for a recently deceased volunteer was attended by residents and non-residents alike. Other facility uses have included a CPR training program, a meeting of the Franklin County Community College Network and Somerset County Economic Development Corporation, meetings of the Board of Directors of the Maine Old Cemetery Association, the Starks Fire Auxiliary dinner, and a United States Department of Agriculture Soil and Water Conservation District Annual meeting and dinner.

Numerous other events/programs at the center have drawn significant numbers of children and/or adults including: the 2010 and 2011 Pumpkin Festivals and community suppers; the 2010 and 2011 Town Christmas Celebrations and plays; the March 2011 and 2012 Town Meetings; a June 2011 State coordinated search and rescue command center to locate and eventually find a missing elderly resident; the 2011 and 2012 week long children's program sponsored by a local church; the 2011 StarksSummerKids program; the winter 2012 Comprehensive Plan Review meeting for residents; and a dance organized to raise funds for Japanese tsunami victims. A Starks Community Center Open House and Elementary School Reunion to be held at the Community Center in June 2012 is expected to draw a large crowd.

Potential future uses of the Community Center and grounds remain almost limitless. However, short term and long-term building maintenance and repair issues/problems will have to be addressed and prioritized. The roof leaks in several places and may require temporary patching and eventual total replacement. The gymnasium tile floor continues to degrade and cracked tiles are continually removed creating an unsafe/uneven surface. The entire floor needs replacement and various options are being investigated. The exterior wooden siding needs to be repainted either entirely or in sections. Because the upper level is not accessible for the disabled, the inoperable elevator may either be repaired or replaced or a ramp might be build. Some of these major repairs will require assistance from grants.

An evaluation of the Superintendent/Janitor's working hours may require addressing due to the large size of the center compared to the former Town Office building, exterior lawns exceeding in size those at the former building and activities at the center have escalated dramatically. The town will need to develop a plan for the final configuration of town office space including adequate long-term storage for important records.

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To date, a core group of dedicated volunteers has shouldered much of the responsibility for organizing and executing programs/events/activities at the center. Additional volunteers will be needed if the public wants to expand program offerings and activities. Because the Town of Starks recently joined another school district, RSU #9 (Farmington), the possibility exists for the school district's Foster Technology Center staff to consider providing expertise and student man-power regarding multi-use options for the forested area behind the Community Center. Grants from the State may assist in this endeavor.

*Public Opinion: Regarding the Town Office/Community Building, respondents suggested the following uses:*

- 48% support its use as a school (day and/or after school programs).
- 44% supported food cupboard use.
- 56% supported library use.
- 48% supported use as a regional community center.
- 69% supported its use as a community building for multiple uses.

### **LIBRARY SERVICES**

When the Town of Starks acquired the former elementary school, a large open area in the building housed the contents of the school's remaining children's books, reference materials and many duplicate copies of used grades 1-4 textbooks covering reading, writing, math, science and music subjects. An inventory of the hundreds of remaining children's books was lost when the school closed. Soon after the town took ownership of the building, a group of 5 volunteers led by a retired former librarian took on the task of addressing library needs, issues, problems and organization of its contents.

Duplicate copies of textbooks and some children's books were made available free to the public while others continue to be sold at a very minimal price. Over 800 children's and appropriate adult level books and over 200 VCR's have been donated by residents, non-residents, former teachers and such organizations as the Book Donation Connection located on Long Island, New York. A large number of wooden shelving/bookcases donated by Skowhegan Doctors Dorney and Lamke have been installed and presently house the growing number of adult level books.

Many activities for children have been conducted at the library. During the summer of 2011, a five session StarksSummerKids program funded in part from the New Balance Foundation Somerset Heart Health Move More Kids involved 22 children in story-telling, physical activities, crafts and snacks. This program, funded again with a New Balance grant, will be repeated in the summer of 2012 with emphasis on reading newly purchased books about healthy eating habits and food related activities. Numerous other events have been offered at the library including weekly/monthly/holiday/vacation story-telling times and craft activities.

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Starks Selectmen appointed the volunteers to a Library Board of Directors in early 2012 thus enabling the directors to apply for certain types of grants. In February 2012, the library received a \$15,000 grant from the Stephen and Tabitha King Foundation to purchase library and annex shelving/bookcases, mobile display carts, paperback displays, a marker board, two computers/monitors/software, a bar code scanner/bar codes, a printer and stipends for volunteers to bar code each book and assemble/install new equipment. The major task confronting the volunteers is to bar code and scan all volumes in order to establish a user friendly computer based process for residents to identify the library's holdings and to check out books. Becoming part of the Maine State Library System would be a huge challenge for the Starks Library because additional library hours and salaried staff would be required. However, residents can locate books within the State's system via the new library computers.

The Madison and Farmington Public Libraries and the Mantor Library at the University of Maine Farmington are also utilized by Starks residents.

### **RECREATIONAL PROGRAMS**

Town owned and/or operated public recreational facilities and programs are limited in Starks to the Community Center building and outdoor area. Children's physical education equipment for indoor and outdoor use and more recently snow shoes purchased from the previously mentioned New Balance Foundation grant have been used extensively during holidays and vacations, town office hours, church organized programs, and SEEdS events. Volleyball games continue to function on Tuesday evenings and there is some discussion relative to a senior citizen's exercise program. Infant and toddlers use some equipment as well youth attending Camp at the Eastwood and groups renting the gymnasium. Children frequently gather in the equipped playground.

As more citizens become involved in the property's reuse efforts, the building and outdoor open space, baseball field and forested area can provide outstanding opportunities for additional organized recreational programs.

Other organized recreational needs are met through school programs, Madison Recreational Programs, Farmington

*Public Opinion about Recreation:*

*50% of respondents indicated recreation facilities need improvement.*

*69% support a community recreation/park in the village.*

*Regarding what is needed in the future, respondents indicated the following:*

- *66% more recreation for youth.*
- *62% more recreation for young adults.*
- *52% more recreation for seniors.*

## Chapter 10. Public Services and Facilities

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Recreational Programs, active scout groups, church-sponsored programs and other organizations such as the snowmobile and ATV clubs discussed later in this document. Adults also take advantage of a variety of recreational programs and facilities in nearby towns. Outdoor Recreation and Open Space will be discussed in another chapter.

### ***PUBLIC WORKS***

Public works are all of the activities the town undertakes to maintain its facilities including town-owned buildings, grounds, roads, culverts, bridges, etc. It also involves the purchase and maintenance of the equipment needed to maintain the town's facilities.

The Starks Road Foreman is responsible for public works under the direction of the Board of Selectmen. The department consists of two full-time personnel with part-time help during winter, two buildings (town garage and sand/salt shed), five major pieces of equipment, and ancillary apparatus. The Road Foreman and his assistant must be 'jacks of all trades,' blending mechanical repair skills and welding, for example, with truck and grader/loader operations. While their primary responsibility is road maintenance, they may occasionally be asked to perform other duties, such as maintenance of other public buildings and facilities, such as the town office and fire station.

### **Road Department**

The town garage and the sand/salt shed are located on Chicken Street and are of recent construction, in good condition with no anticipated needs. The garage is about 4,000 sq. ft. in area. The sand/salt shed was built in the fall of 2008 to remove threats of groundwater contamination. Since then, the State has ceased to require groundwater monitoring. The shed holds 3,400 cubic yards of sand/salt, adequate for recent winters. The town budgets around \$6,500 per year to the town garage account for facility maintenance, building fuel expenses, and for support equipment, such as an air compressor.

### ***Summer Road Maintenance***

Residents at Town meeting usually vote to spend around \$40,000 per year which, after payroll, leaves about \$2,000 for materials and other costs. Primary duties are to ditch the roads, re-gravel and/or raise road grades, and replace culverts. Scheduling is simple: the most urgent project gets done first. Ditches are the town's basic storm-water facility. Other summer work includes bush hogging and chipping road sides (mowing has been suspended), unplugging culverts, and removing downed trees. The last two jobs are often coordinated with the Fire Department.

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### *Capital Projects (Roads, Culverts and Bridges)*

Starks uses State Urban-Rural Initiative Program (URIP) funds, usually around \$40,000 per year, for capital projects (includes salaries and materials). URIP requires that funds be used only for road and bridge infrastructure projects that have a life of at least 10 years. Starks uses this money for road reconstruction, paving, culvert replacement, and bridge construction projects. Starks' URIP allotment from the state is calculated as a re-imbursement for winter road maintenance on state roads Routes 43, 134 and 148. The Road Foreman indicated that this re-imbursement rarely covers the cost of winter maintenance on these roads, resulting in taxpayer money being used for the shortfall.

Three bridges in Starks need replacement soon; one on each of the following roads: Sawyers Mills, Branns Mills, and Mayhew Roads. The town received a \$100,000 grant through the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program for the Sawyers Mills Bridge over Lemon Stream constructed in spring of 2012. The next bridge replacement will be the Mayhew Road Bridge over Pelton Brook and Starks received a \$100,000 grant for that job. Eventually the same process will be pursued for the west bridge over Josiah Brook on the Branns Mills Road.

The most urgent need with respect to roads is to address deteriorating roadways on the River and Peterson Roads, but especially on Chicken Street. The surface has degraded so much in some areas that re-paving will not be enough. Improvement of the roadbed itself will be required. Close inspection by qualified authorities will determine the exact extent and costs of these jobs. But at more than \$100,000 per mile for rebuilding the roadbed and paving, this will be a sizable outlay. The town should begin planning for this work.

### *Winter Road Maintenance*

The town usually votes to budget about \$68,000 for winter roads. In uncertain weather, the roads are checked every two hours even during the night and equipment is deployed as necessary to maintain safety. Starks has winter plowing arrangements with Anson, Industry, and New Sharon for exchanging inconvenient portions of roadways that are shared. Starks trades off its less accessible stretches on their borders and in return Starks maintains roads beyond its town lines, serving the same purpose for them. The roads involved are portions of Routes 148, 43, 134, and Mayhew, Beans Corner, Glenn Harris, and Sawyers Mills Roads.

Sand and salt are important to winter maintenance. The town currently purchases salt through a collective purchasing program with the Kennebec Valley Council of Governments. Salt has grown quite expensive, more than doubling in cost over the last ten years. About 80% of this salt is used for state road winter work, which the state repays the town through URIP as discussed previously. According to the Road Foreman, the URIP reimbursement rate has not

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increased significantly for about 20 years. Sand also has become a concern because good town-owned sources are depleted. Starting in 2010 Starks began buying sand from private pits, a trend that will grow, shifting winter costs up. At \$8 per yard, the town's 2,000-yard/year usage costs about \$16,000.

### *Public Works Equipment*

The town owns three trucks, a grader, and a bucket-loader for public works:

- 2005 International dual rear axle (wheeler) - good condition
- 1995 GMC truck with plow and wing - fair condition
- 1987 Ford truck w/ hopper/new sander, plow and wing - poor condition
- 2008 Volvo road grader - almost new condition
- 1992 John Deere bucket-loader - fair condition
- Rock-rake, only used sparingly, still in good condition.

The Road Foreman indicated that the most immediate need is to replace the '87 Ford truck. It has required serious repairs, most prominently in 2008 to get through that winter. It has remained operable since then. The Road Foreman estimates the cost of a replacement at \$130,000. Five or so years out, there also will be a need to replace the '95 GMC truck with a wheeler (about \$160,000, today's cost) and eventually the bucket-loader (about \$160,000, today's cost).

The town maintains two accounts related to public works:

- Equipment maintenance account - Town meeting usually votes to maintain about \$40,000 in the equipment maintenance account, which is used for repairs and maintenance of the public works equipment.
- Capital reserve account - The capital reserve account has been used to purchase major pieces of equipment. It is important to note that the capital reserve account is not restricted to just public works equipment, but could be used for other capital projects, as voted upon at town meeting.

### *Public Opinion:*

- 71% of respondents rated summer road maintenance as excellent or good.
- 78% rated winter roads (snow removal) as excellent or good.

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### ***SOLID WASTE DISPOSAL, RECYCLING, AND SEPTAGE DISPOSAL***

#### **Solid Waste Disposal**

There is no town supported program for regular trash and garbage disposal. Citizens make individualized arrangements with private haulers of which there are several.

The town has provided a large-item pick up service once per year for several years. It is now an every other year program. This service was started in 2008 and enables citizens to dispose of bulky goods (tires, appliances, scrap metal, furniture, etc.) and household electronic wastes (computers, fluorescent lights, etc.) on an annual basis. The town currently contracts with Archie's of Mexico for pick-up at an annual cost of about \$5,000 to \$6,000.

While participation in the large-item pick-up has been significant, some property owners continue to accumulate and store large items and trash such that it poses a public health risk. Trash and junk on certain properties have been a significant problem for some time in Starks. The town had hoped that the large-item pick-up service would address the issue, but it appears that enforcement of existing state and local laws will be essential if this problem is to be effectively and fairly addressed by the town.

Efficient and user-friendly trash collection, large-item pick-up, and recycling programs are important, and these programs should be reviewed often and refined to meet the present and future needs of town residents.

There are several programs offered regionally that provide for safe disposal of prescription drugs and household hazardous wastes, such as pesticides and waste oil. The town could monitor the availability of these programs and provide information to citizens, as appropriate.

#### **Recycling**

The Kennebec Valley Regional Waste Corporation (KVRWC) provides recycling service to the Towns of Starks and Anson. At the time of its formation in 1991, it also included Bingham and Moscow. These two towns recently withdrew from the organization. KVRWC also provides contract service to Regional School Unit #13 in Bingham.

KVRWC's Board of Directors is comprised of the Selectmen from Starks and Anson. Its property includes a materials processing and storage building in Bingham, a fork-lift, a materials baler, a 2006 Ford F250 pick-up, a 1997 Chevy half-ton plow truck and a 2006 custom built recycling trailer. All are in good working order except for the plow truck which will need to be replaced in the near future. KVRWC contracts with Three Rivers Disposal and Recycling Company of Anson

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for collection, processing and marketing of materials. Items for recycling (paper, cardboard, glass, plastics, etc.) are picked up curbside twice monthly.

Because two of the four member towns recently dropped out of KVRWC, past data for the organization is not a good reflection of the future. In 2010, KVRWC collected and processed 153 tons of material from Anson and Starks, of which 51 came from Starks. Starks does have a high rate of recycling.

The corporation is in sound fiscal condition. In 2009, it had a surplus of \$11,800, and in 2010 that figure was \$24,600 and in 2011 it was \$26,000. Market conditions for recycled materials are in constant flux and forecasting income is difficult. Each member town contributes an assessment and beginning in 2011, only two municipalities remain in KVRWC. Starks currently pays \$8,567 per year and that is expected to remain stable in the near term. Although Starks has a high rate of recycling there is room for improvement. Environmental impact is reduced with each can or newspaper that is recycled rather than dumped in a landfill. In Starks, with its trash user fee, every pound that goes into the recycling program is a pound less that the citizens pays for garbage pick-up.

*Public Opinion:*

- *63% rated household trash disposal as excellent or good, while 23% indicated needs improvement.*
- *71% rated recycling as excellent or good.*
- *93% rated large item pick-up and disposal as excellent or good.*

### **Septage Disposal**

Septage is handled by a number of area contractors. There are no licensed septage disposal sites in Starks. This service appears to be adequate.

### **POWER AND COMMUNICATIONS**

**Electricity** is provided by the Central Maine Power Company (CMP) and Madison Electric Works (MEW). MEW is a Town of Madison owned utility that serves portions of Route 43 (including side roads), portions of the River Road (generally northeast of Lemon Stream), all of the Mayhew Road and most of the Sawyers Mills Road. CMP provides service to the other areas of Starks. Three-phase power is available along Route 43 between Anson and Starks Village.

**Communications** services in Starks consist of Fairpoint Communications telephone service, the Central Maine Morning Sentinel (Waterville), the Franklin Journal (Farmington), and the Bangor Daily News. Internet service is available through several servers. High speed internet

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(broadband and wireless) is available in some areas of the town. Fairpoint Communications is providing high speed internet to any household with phone service that is within 3 miles of the Town Office. Additional high speed internet is needed throughout the town, and should become increasingly available over time as a result of state-wide efforts.

**Town Communications:** In 2008, the Town Clerk (Jennifer Hebert) began publishing the *Voice of Starks*, a town newsletter that is mailed out on a quarterly basis. She also established an e-mail notification list. The town would also like to establish a town WEB page.

*Public Opinion Survey:*

- 70% indicated high speed Internet access needs improvement.
- 45% rated cell phone reception as good or excellent and 45% indicated it needs improvement.
- 85% rated Town communications (newsletter, e-mail notices) as excellent or good.

### **EMERGENCY 9-1-1 SERVICES**

Emergency 9-1-1 services are in place in Starks. Responders are as follows:

- Police Responders: Somerset County Sheriff's Department and Maine State Police
- Fire Protection Responders: Starks Fire Department; mutual aid agreements with Industry, Anson, Madison, and New Sharon.
- Emergency Medical Responders: Anson-Madison-Starks Ambulance Service; reciprocal agreements with Redington Fairview Hospital Ambulance (Skowhegan) and North Star (Farmington)

Emergency dispatch for all services is through the Somerset County Sheriff's Department.

Starks has an addressing officer and has adopted an addressing ordinance that provides for ongoing maintenance and enforcement of the E 9-1-1 addressing system. Road signage and addressing is in place.

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### ***EMERGENCY PLANNING AND HAZARD MITIGATION***

As of November 2003, towns and counties were required to have a Hazard Mitigation Plan approved by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) in order to qualify for assistance associated with all types of disasters (flooding, forest fires, homeland security, hazardous chemical spills, and flu pandemics). Mitigation planning is a tool that helps towns target their most disaster-prone areas and reduce repetitive loss of property.

The Somerset County Emergency Management Agency (SEMA) developed its county emergency management plan several years ago. Starks' Fire Chief is the town's local representative to SEMA. The agency's mission statement is as follows: The Somerset County Emergency Management Agency provides the ability to effectively prepare for (to mitigate before it happens), train for (through participation in joint exercise and execution of mutual aid agreements), and best manage (by completing operational and planning capabilities) emergency management activities to protect the lives and property of the citizens of Somerset County in the event of one or several of the many all-hazard occurrences or disasters.

According to SEMA, Somerset County is subject but not limited to fire, flood, drought, hurricanes, ice storms, mass casualty incidents, hazardous material chemical spills, and terrorist weapons of mass destruction incidents. The agency has also prepared an Individual and Family Disaster Preparedness Guide.

Starks also participates in the Federal Emergency Management Agency Flood Insurance Program, which is designed to assure appropriate use of floodplains to reduce the risk of property loss. As a participating town, property owners and renters are eligible to purchase subsidized flood insurance, which is often required when applying for a loan or mortgage for property located on a floodplain. Additionally, the United States Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service and the Somerset County Soil and Water Conservation District work with property owners to reduce potential flood damage. Fortunately, flooding has not been a huge problem in Starks, although there have been a few areas where it has damaged property, including some private properties, and public roads, culverts and bridges.

### ***FIRE PROTECTION***

Starks Volunteer Fire Department was established in the 1950s. The Fire Department provides 24-hour on-call fire protection for the community. Starks spends between \$30,000 and \$35,000 on fire protection per year. The Department has a Fire Chief and about a dozen members. The Department has mutual aid agreements with the towns of Anson, Madison, New Sharon and Industry. The Department's Auxiliary supports the Department through fundraising and other assistance.

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The Department tries to respond to a call within 15 minutes.

The number of calls the department has responded to over the past several years has been between 48 and 55 calls per year (Table). In 2011, 21 calls were standby calls for Anson/Madison calls. Other calls were for car accidents (6), AMS assists (7), downed power lines/trees (9), assist Anson/Madison fires (6), and 2 structure fires in Starks. Other responses were for missing persons (1), lightning strike (1), road washout (1) and a chimney fire.

Year	Number of calls
2007	-
2008	48
2009	42
2010	50
2011	55

Source: Fire Department, Annual Town Reports

The Fire Department operates out of the Fire Station located in the village off Chicken Street. The steel frame structure was constructed in 1993. It consists of two bays and a meeting room. A number of improvements have been made over the past few years including interior stairs, better drainage and upgraded storage. According to the Fire Chief the structure needs additional interior improvements and the roof repaired or replaced.

The Departments' major equipment consists of Engine 92 tanker truck (1999 GMC) and a rescue truck (1990 Ford) and a 1972 tanker on loan from the State Forest Service. Other equipment consists of Scoot air packs (masks, tanks and carrying cases), hose and communications equipment. The Department would like to purchase a new or used fire truck sometime within the next five years.

Primary water supplies utilized for fire protection are a hydrant at the fire barn and a number of dry hydrants in outlying areas.

Recruitment and retention of volunteer firefighters is a significant issue for the Department, particularly given the increasing regulatory requirements for training. Regionalization of area fire departments (Anson, Madison, Starks) is currently being discussed, and may be a viable option for Starks to consider.

*Public Opinion:*

- 61% rated ambulance service excellent or good.
- 55% rated first responder/rescue service as excellent or good, 20% indicated needs improvement.
- 42% rated police protection as good, while 34% indicated needs improvement.
- 63% rated fire protection as good or excellent, while 30% indicated needs improvement.

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### ***POLICE PROTECTION***

The Maine State Police and the Somerset County Sheriff's Department provide police services to Starks. Warden Service is provided by Maine Inland Fisheries and Wildlife. Some level of concern about police protection was expressed in the Public Opinion Survey, but further research is needed to determine the exact issues and how best they can be addressed. The town does not currently have a Town Constable.

### ***AMBULANCE AND RESCUE SERVICES***

The Anson-Madison-Starks Ambulance Service (AMS), located on Arnolds Lane, Anson, provides ambulance and rescue services to these three towns. As needed, AMS coordinates with Madison Fire Department whose special equipment such as the "Jaws of Life" ensures that full rescue services are available. All three towns pay to support AMS by fees determined per capita. Starks became a member around 1998 and currently pays about \$11,000 annually.

The director manages AMS literally on a moment-to-moment basis. He works from 6 am to 6 pm, Monday through Friday and he answers to the Board of Directors. The Board members (President, Vice-President, Secretary, and Treasurer) are elected by the three Towns' Selectmen. Dispatch is handled through the Sheriff's Department in Skowhegan. Liability insurance is secured through the Maine Municipal Association. The largest expenses are payroll and fuel.

Current staff consists of about 30 EMTs, ranging from Basic license to Intermediate to Paramedic. Most serve per diem but four are full-time paramedics. AMS has three ambulances, two primary ("first out") and a back-up, 12-year-old vehicle. AMS owns the building and the land where it is headquartered. Its major equipment items are heart monitors/defibrillators, electric lift-stretchers, and radios. This busy service answers about 1,700 calls per year. About 70% are emergency calls, the rest being non-urgent such as transfers and stand-by requests. AMS funding comes from two streams: insurance reimbursements for services provided (by far the greater of the two) and payments from the towns.

A new ambulance (\$155,000) was purchased in July 2011 with the aid of a USDA grant. AMS needs to upgrade its radios which are older but still usable. The completion of a grant application for new units is pending.

Looking ten years out, Director George Demchek sees the need for another new ambulance by then. While recruitment and training were problems in the past, a joint effort including Kennebec Valley EMS (KVEMS) and Kennebec Valley Community College (KVCC) pays EMT

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trainees to go to school and receive their technical training, from basic all the way to full paramedic.

Overall, AMS is seen as an excellent service, well rounded, financially strong, and well managed. The director sees no changes in its ability to meet all the town's needs.

### **STARKS WATER DISTRICT**

The Starks Water District is a local, non-profit, quasi-municipal corporation that provides water to approximately 23 households in the village area of the town. A board of four Trustees, appointed by the Selectmen for 3-year terms, is responsible for overseeing the management of the water system. Trustees are paid \$200 per year. The Board of Trustees generally meets on a monthly basis.

Two key positions are the Water District operator and the clerk. The operator monitors the day-to-day functioning of the system and reports to the Board as appropriate. The clerk handles the accounts for the district. For the year 2010, the District had an operating budget of \$3,477.

The system was built in the early 1960s with money raised largely by fundraising. A major upgrade was carried out in 1989 to correct pressure, supply, and contamination issues. The Farmers Home Administration provided \$112,500 toward those improvements. Nine acres were purchased on Newcomb Hill for a new well and a new 30,000-gallon tank. All mains were replaced, a chlorination system added, and new meters were installed at the houses. Rates for water usage were shifted to reflect the number of fixtures per household.

Ratepayers (users) fund the Water District. The biggest user by far is the Town of Starks itself. The 2009 rate increase of 5% was the first in 12 years.

Water quality is monitored regularly by the State of Maine. The Water District keeps users apprised of water status through reports, as needed. There are monthly tests for E. coli, quarterly tests for organic and inorganic contaminants, and copper/lead tests every third year. The Health and Environmental Testing Lab in Augusta automatically sends out sampling kits when tests are due. When the HETL finds an unacceptable result, they work along with the Drinking Water Program of Department of Health and Human Services, consulting with the towns about any problems and likely solutions. In addition, an on-site inspection is done every two years by a Sanitary Agent. Especially helpful is the Maine Rural Water Association (MRWA) and its "circuit riders," licensed and experienced operators who aid local water districts in fixing problems. The Starks Water District pays \$150 dues per year for MRWA membership.

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The only current issue with the system involves replacing the risers associated with the shut-off valves at each house. These are below the frost line and each is connected to a metal extension that reaches almost to the surface. At least two failures of these extensions have been noted lately, requiring emergency repairs. Because all users have these extensions of the same age and type, it is suspected that the fittings at the remaining houses should be examined and/or replaced in the near future. The major cost will be the excavations. The Water District is seeking funding for this project so that work can begin as soon as possible.

### ***PUBLIC HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES***

#### **Town and Town-Supported Services**

The Town of Starks administers the General Assistance Program. At the present time, the town does have a Local Health Officer. It is uncertain if public health issues are being adequately addressed. The town also provides annual subsidies to the Starks Food Cupboard and the Franklin County Animal Shelter.

- General Assistance Program: Municipal Program - \$3,432 (fiscal year 2010)
- Starks Food Pantry – Municipal Subsidy - \$850 (fiscal year 2010)
- Franklin County Animal Shelter - Municipal Subsidy - \$925 (fiscal year 2010)

A number of other agencies apply for funding from the town on an annual basis. The town generally provides funding to the Kennebec Valley Community Action Program (KVCAP) for its Family Violence Program and the Transportation Program.

Starks does not have any other medical or social services in town. Area medical providers include the Franklin Memorial Hospital (Farmington), the Redington Fairview Hospital (Skowhegan), the Maine General Medical Center - Seton and Thayer Campuses (Waterville) and Inland Hospital (Waterville). The Madison Area Health Center, and several dentists and a chiropractor are located in Madison. A wider range of medical services is available in Farmington, Skowhegan, Augusta and Waterville.

**Somerset Heart Health** is a task force that works with communities, schools, healthcare services, work sites, and recreation centers to help promote increased physical activity, improved nutrition, tobacco-free and drug-free living.

Somerset Heart Health is one of the 28 Healthy Maine Partnerships organized within one of the eight newly established Public Health Districts. Somerset Heart Health is in the Central Public Health District and is the community based health promotion and prevention component of the Greater Somerset Public Health Collaborative. It receives funding, as do all of the Healthy

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Maine Partnerships statewide, from the Master Settlement Agreement with the tobacco companies through the Fund for a Healthy Maine, and is administered through the Partnership for a Tobacco-Free Maine, Department of Health and Human Services, Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention. Somerset Heart Health was developed in 1998 by a group of caring individuals from the Redington Fairview General Hospital and other local community health care providers and was formerly known as the Somerset County Cardiovascular Health Task Force. It first received its current funding in January of 2001. It has filed a proposal for continued funding, and if funding is secured the new contract will begin in July 2011.

The areas of concentration that this funding addresses are as follows: to support the public health infrastructure, provide health promotion, health education, support for policy and environmental changes to address tobacco use, physical activity, nutrition/healthy weight, substance abuse and chronic disease both within the community as well as within the schools.

Somerset Heart Health serves a wide range of communities in Somerset County, and its service area includes Starks, but there has been little participation by members of the Starks community at its meetings or as members of its advisory group. This participation should be encouraged as it will more closely tie Starks to the emerging infrastructure for public health, promote training and technical assistance on health and well being and provide opportunities for assistance with prevention and health promotion at no cost to the residents.

*Public Opinion:*

- 44% rated access to health, dental and other services as good or excellent, while 30% indicated needs improvement.
- 52% rated the food cupboard as good or excellent.
- 61% rated animal control as good or excellent.

### **CEMETERIES**

There are seven town maintained cemeteries in Starks along with a number of private cemeteries and burial grounds. These are all displayed on the Cultural Resources Map. As a result of a fire many year ago, there are no written records to accurately determine how many graves are present or if there is any space left in some/many of these cemeteries. Some of the better kept cemeteries show burial lots still available. The Frederic and Locke Cemeteries are two private cemeteries with lots still unoccupied. Because of poor records and, in most cases no records at all, it must be assumed that the remaining cemeteries have no vacant lots. This could be more accurately determined if the cemeteries were sounded out with a sounding rod.

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This time consuming method is the only alternative available to find graves with no markers visible.

The seven town-maintained cemeteries are as follows:

1. Brake Hill, Industry Road
2. Churchill Cemetery, New Sharon Road
3. Didson Cemetery, Mayhew Road
4. Fairbanks Cemetery, Sawyers Mills Rd
5. Greenleaf, New Sharon Road
6. Piper Cemetery, Sandy River Road
7. Williamson Cemetery, Sandy River Road

Some additional private cemeteries are as follows:

1. Abbott Cemetery, New Sharon Road
2. Bickford Cemetery, Anson Road
3. Butler Hill/Lemon Stream Cemetery, Sawyers Mills Road
4. Farnsworth Cemetery, Sterry Hill Road
5. Fish Burial Ground, New Sharon Road and Sandy River Road intersection
6. Frederic Cemetery, Chicken Street
7. Heaven's Gate Cemetery, Sandy River Road
8. Hilton Cemetery, Anson Road and Dill Road intersection
9. Hooker Family Cemetery, Branns Mills Road and Poor Farm Road intersection
10. Locke-Fish Cemetery, Cemetery Road
11. McLaughlin Cemetery, Dill Road
12. Quimby - Melancon Cemetery, Anson Road
13. Ricci Family Cemetery, Ricci Road
14. Single stone Cemetery, Gordon Road
15. Sterry Hill Cemetery, Sterry Hill Road

The need for additional cemetery space in Starks does not appear to be an issue. The town believes there will be adequate cemetery space available for the foreseeable future.

### ***STARKS ENRICHMENT AND EDUCATION SOCIETY (SEEDS)***

SEEdS was organized in 2010 by a group of parents to replace the Starks Parent Teachers and Friends organization that dissolved when MSAD #59 closed the Starks Elementary School. The primary purpose of SEEdS is to provide enrichment to the inhabitants of the Town of Starks through encouragement of the visual and performing arts, development and operation of a library, support of a historical society, development of exercise and health-related programs,

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and such other and further means as generally support the education, enrichment and health of the adults and children of Starks and surrounding areas.

Some of the specific projects the group has undertaken include:

- Fundraising by selling seeds - seed packets say this “Our Mission: Fundraising to enrich the education of our children through scholarships, special events, and other unifying activities.”
- Organizing Town Meeting dinners
- Awarded two scholarships to graduating seniors
- Organized and funded field day – bounce house, T-shirts for school students
- Organized and funded roller skating field trips for students
- Organized and funded L.C. Bates Museum to come and do a presentation to students
- Organized field trips to the Bangor Children’s Museum and some local farms
- Organizing a community vegetable garden

Some future projects include:

- Continue fundraising
- Award yearly scholarships
- Attain non-profit status (IRS) to be able to receive grants to provide opportunities to further our mission
- Help the town maintain and develop the community center in the former school building
- Sponsor activities and events for our citizens

## Chapter 10. Public Services and Facilities

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*Public Opinion about Public Education:*

- 63% of respondents indicated the public school system needed to be improved.
- 70% supported leaving RSU 59 to join another school district.

### ***PUBLIC EDUCATION (TURN THE BUS AROUND – TURN THE TOWN AROUND)<sup>15</sup>***

Starks operated its own elementary school until 1966 and tuitioned its high school students to area high schools primarily in Madison, Farmington and New Sharon. In 1966, Starks joined School Administrative District (SAD)/Regional School Unit (RSU) #59 which comprised Athens, Brighton Plantation, Madison and Starks. During the next forty-six years, SAD/RSU #59 educated the town's students. In June 2010, the school district Directors voted to close the Starks Elementary school and Starks public school children were sent to Madison schools. This change had no impact on the few children that attended private schools or were home schooled.

In July 2010, a number of Starks citizens began investigating education options for the town's children. This movement reflected growing dissatisfaction with Madison based SAD/RSU #59. During a two year period of fact finding, exploratory, withdrawal and reorganization committees were formed, public hearings were held, many votes were taken and negotiations were conducted with both SAD/RSU #59 and Farmington based SAD/RSU #9. Starks withdrew from #59 and joined #9 effective July 1, 2012. SAD/RSU #9, also known as Mount Blue Regional School District includes Chesterville, Farmington, Industry, New Sharon, New Vineyard, Temple, Weld and Wilton. Starks is the first town in the State of Maine to change school districts overnight. Citizens found that offerings (academic, cultural and extracurricular) far exceed those offered in Madison and there is a large (approximately \$75,000.-\$100,000.) per year cost savings to the town. For 2012-2013, savings are approximately \$97,297. (Table 1).

In the fall of 2012, Starks students can chose which school system they want to attend. Mount Blue will circulate busses throughout Starks and SAD/RSU #59 will run a bus to and from Madison schools to the Starks Community Center (former elementary school) (Figure 1). By the fall of 2013, Starks students must elect which system they wish to continue attending for the duration of their education. New students starting school in the fall of 2013 must attend Mount Blue schools: Cape Cod Hill (grades Pre-K-6) in New Sharon, Mallett School (Pre-K –3) in

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<sup>15</sup> Sources: Starks Opinion Polls 2010; Mount Blue Regional School District Budget 2012-2013.

## Chapter 10. Public Services and Facilities

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Farmington, Cascade Brook School (grades 4-6) in Farmington, Mt. Blue Middle School (grades 7-8) in Farmington or Mt. Blue High School (grades 9-12) in Farmington.

In 2011-12, Starks had approximately 68 school age children with the majority, about 79%, attending public schools while about 15% attend private schools and the balance are home schooled (Source: Public Opinion Polls 2011). A comparison of Starks and the two school systems yields demographic and socio-economic differences which generally favor Mount Blue. A 2010 demographic profile indicates Starks has a high percentage of very young children and a large number of senior citizens (Figure 2). Education levels in Starks are far below the average in both districts and the State. Mount Blue offers better opportunities for educational improvement (Figures 3 and 4). Economic conditions in Starks and SAD/RSU #59 are poor compared to SAD/RSU #9 (Figures 5 and 6). Starks citizens feel that sending children to a school district that comprises a population with higher education achievement levels and greater economic prosperity will lift aspirations and enhance chances of success in life.

The Mount Blue school system has a total budget of \$28,992,000. (proposed 2012-2013) with \$10,050,553 derived from local taxes. Starks is responsible for 2.55% of that amount (Table 1). Schools in the Mount Blue district are in good condition with a new primary school constructed in 2012 and a reconstructed high school/vocational center (currently under construction). The district debt stands at \$74,138,351 (2011). Since Starks joined the SAD/RSU #9 after this debt was incurred, Starks has no obligation for it. Starks will pay its share (\$17,875.) of the Madison district debt when Starks leaves that district in the summer of 2012.

Research by Desjardins and Donaldson found that regarding: "High school achievement in Maine, where you come from matters more than school size and expenditure."<sup>16</sup> By changing school districts, Starks has changed where its children come from.

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<sup>16</sup> Desjardins, F. and G.A. Donaldson Jr. (2008). "High School Achievement in Maine: Where You Come From Matters More Than School Size and Expenditures." *Maine Policy Review*, pp. 85-93

## Chapter 10. Public Services and Facilities

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<b>RSU #9 Proposed Town Assements 2012-2013</b>						
	% of total Additional Local Funds	2012-13 Gen'l Fund Proposed	2012-13 Adult Ed Proposed	2011-12 Gen'l Fund Assessment	2011-12 Adult Ed Assessment	Assessment Difference
Chesterville	6.63%	683,187	7,757	623,959	5,694	61,291
Farmington	35.08%	3,614,807	41,043	3,464,240	31,613	159,997
Industry	6.10%	628,984	7,142	644,112	5,878	(13,864)
New Sharon	7.54%	777,164	8,824	723,972	6,607	55,409
New Vineyard	4.93%	508,101	5,769	469,836	4,287	39,747
Starks	2.55%	241,567	2,980	341,843	0	(97,297)
Temple	3.26%	335,744	3,812	326,908	2,983	9,665
Vienna	4.77%	491,333	5,579	465,358	4,247	27,307
Weld	6.93%	365,255	8,107	351,110	5,956	16,296
Wilton	22.23%	2,287,428	25,972	2,113,325	19,285	180,790
<b>Totals</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	<b>9,933,570</b>	<b>116,983</b>	<b>9,524,663</b>	<b>86,550</b>	<b>439,340</b>

Source: Mount Blue Regional School District 2012-2013 Budget

Table 1

# Chapter 10. Public Services and Facilities

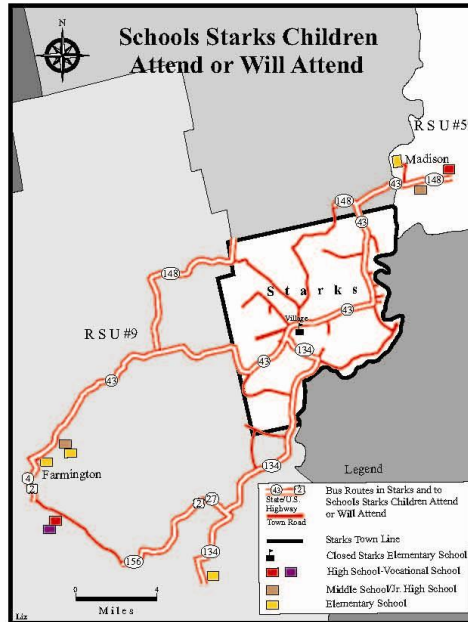


Figure 1

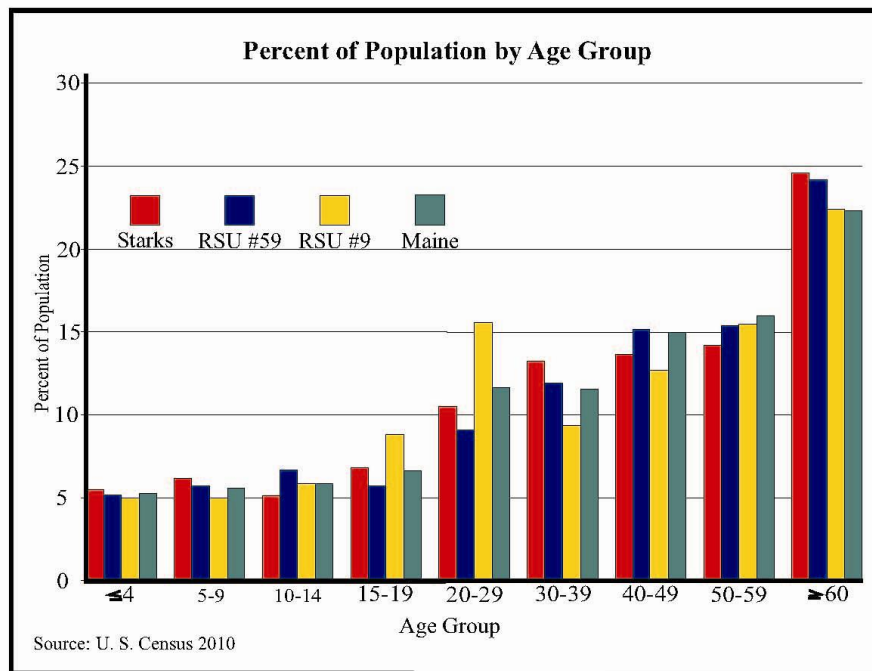


Figure 2

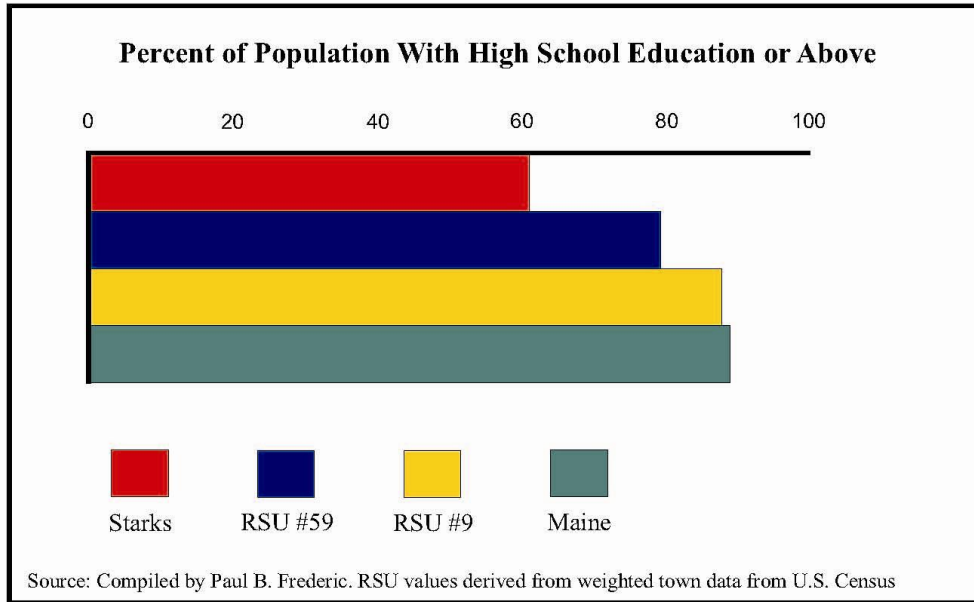


Figure 3

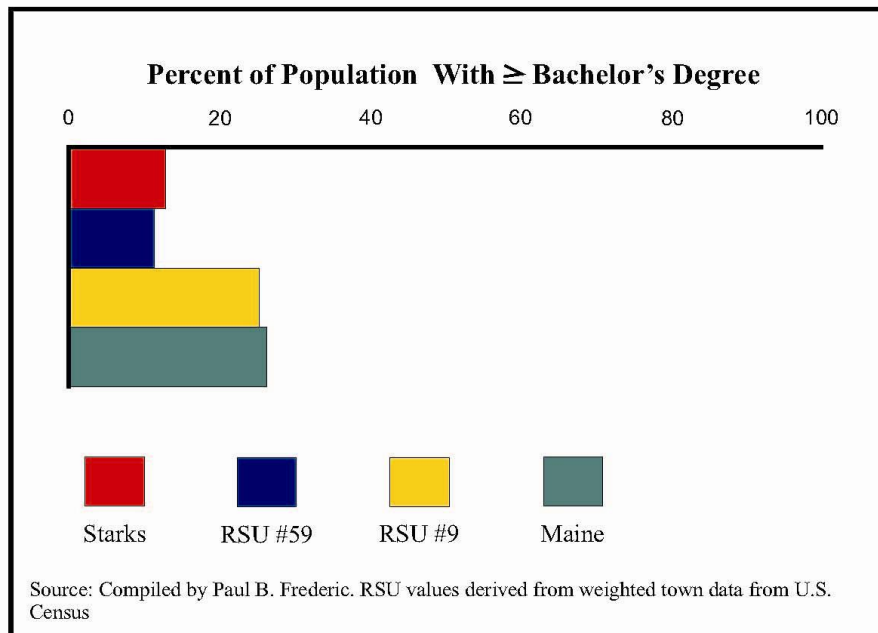


Figure 4

## Chapter 10. Public Services and Facilities

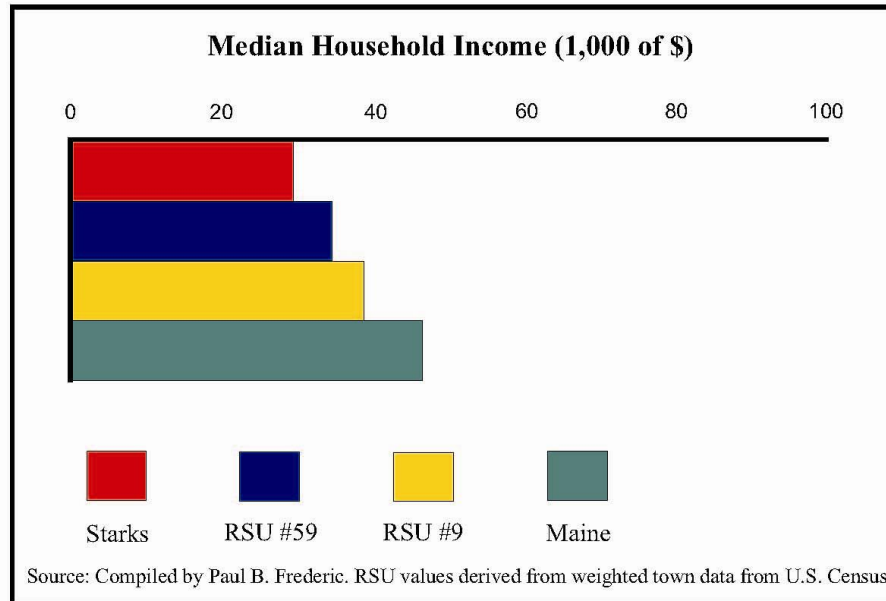


Figure 5

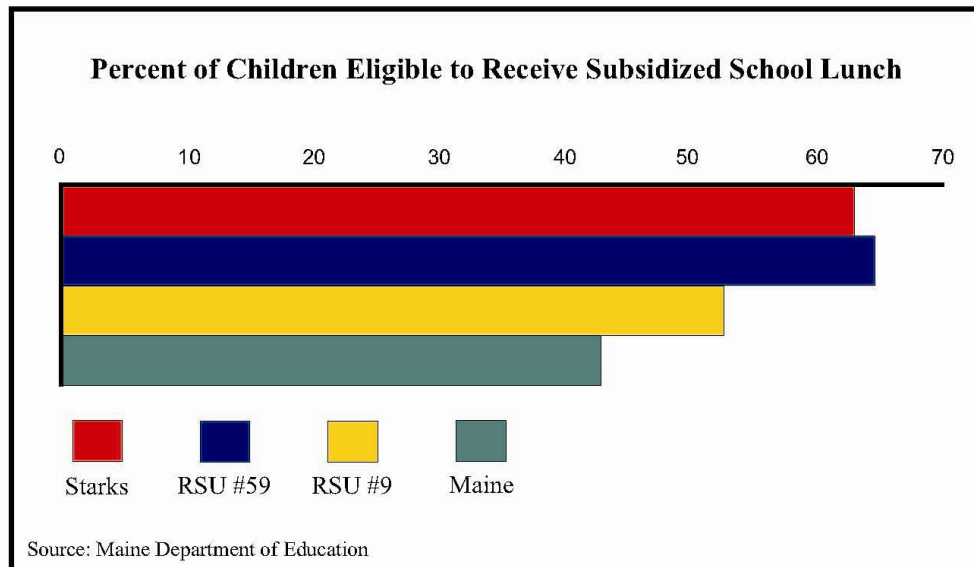


Figure 6

## Chapter 10. Public Services and Facilities

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### **CHURCHES AND AFFILIATED GROUPS**

There are two places of worship in Starks – the United in Christ Presbyterian Church in the village and the Sandy River Chapel on the River Road. There are other places of worship located in adjacent towns.

The United in Christ Presbyterian Church and its affiliates have been very active in Starks for many years, as is described in the following

#### **Mission at the Eastward (MATE)**

Begun in 1954 by the Presbyterian Church National Board Mission at the Eastward (MATE) it strives to serve rural towns in west-central Maine by organizing congregations and by social action. It is a cooperative parish which ministers through eight "family members," churches in Starks, Farmington, Hartford, Leeds, New Portland, North New Portland, North Turner, and Wales. One of its key ministries is the Camp at the Eastward (see below), which it owns and operates. Based in Farmington, MATE also administers housing ministries there and in Leeds. It operates youth programs and other services that extend as far as South Africa.

#### **Camp at the Eastward**

Camp at the Eastward (CATE) is a summer camp located on 45 acres overlooking Lemon Stream, not far from Starks Village. It was built in 1960 as a project of the MATE of the Presbyterian Church, USA. Camp functions are overseen by a CATE Committee and its Chair. It runs summer programs for youngsters from age five up through high school, week-long for grades 3-12 and day sessions for K-2 campers. It draws a diversity of young people from all over the northeast. Also many of the summer work groups from away choose to stay there during their volunteer stints, and there are specialty camps for rent to other groups. Many camp staff and directors are camp 'alumni' or affiliates of MATE.

#### **Food Pantry**

The Starks Food Bank was started by Jane Brackett around 1987. In 1990 ownership and operation were transferred to East Parish Housing, which is now the state-recognized supplier of food assistance to Starks' residents. A new, efficient building was erected by work groups on Corn Shop land. Three Food Pantry volunteers prepare for the first-and- third-Wednesday openings by making up parcels in advance. The equipment includes a refrigerator and three freezers. Surplus food from the U.S. Department of Agriculture and Nissen Bakery are significant contributions. Major funding comes from the Town of Starks (\$850 per year), grants from Good Shepherd Food Bank and United Way, and private donations. The Food Pantry regularly serves about 60 families today. In addition, food baskets are given out for Thanksgiving, Christmas, and Easter.

## Chapter 10. Public Services and Facilities

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### **Starks Progressive Club**

The Starks Progressive Club is a venerable town institution that dates from 1913. In 1915, the village acquired paved sidewalks thanks to the Club. Through the years it has carried out countless relief projects for citizens in need, as well as providing the dinners at Town Meeting. Officially an auxiliary of the United Church, it functions under the aegis of the Presbyterian Women's Group, with membership open to all Starks' residents. The Club is run by a mediator (chair), aided by a secretary and a treasurer. Meetings are normally on the first Sunday of the month at Memorial Hall and are open to the public. The Club owns the Hall on land owned by the Church. Current activities are administering the Scholarship Fund (to a qualifying high school student in town), rummage sales and fundraising dinners approximately quarterly, and providing Christmas quilts and food baskets to elders in town and in nursing homes. One new project is compiling a database of all Starks seniors, listing who lives alone or with others and their birthdays, so that close contact can be kept and free dinners offered to them. The Club's most pressing need is for new people to join, as its membership has dwindled in recent years.

### **East Parish Housing (EPHM)**

The East Parish Housing Ministry (EPHM) was founded by Starks' residents Dolores and Roger Abbott in the early 1980s to meet shelter needs in town. Originally a branch of Mission at the Eastward (MATE, see above), it is dedicated to serving our neighbors, especially regarding food, clothing, and shelter. The Executive Director, who manages regulatory, budgetary, and coordination concerns, as well as the ten volunteer Board members, who oversee EPHM's missions, are all local citizens. The Board has monthly meetings, open to the public. Every spring it chooses the housing work for that summer's work groups, some coming from as far away as N.J. and PA. The Executive Director and the Work and Site Supervisors are employees.

In the 1990s EPHM became an independent group, but still shares close ties to MATE, with many people working with both groups. Also, many EPHM summer workers stay at MATE's Camp at the Eastward. Today EPHM is an ecumenical, non-profit 501 (c)(3) corporation that reaches to Anson, North Anson, West Mills, eastern Industry, and northern New Sharon, providing support to low income, disabled, and elderly neighbors. It owns the former Starks Corn Shop site and operates the Food Pantry (see above) in a modern building there that was built by its work groups. The Helping Hands Thrift Shop, in the Corn Shop warehouse section, closed in 2009 because of that building's poor condition. Current plans are to replace it with another new structure to house and resume the Thrift Shop's activities. EPHM's third, year-round ministry is the Village Green which it owns and maintains as perpetually open space for common use.

## Chapter 10. Public Services and Facilities

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### **Helping Hands Thrift Shop**

Planning and fund-raising are underway for the new Thrift Shop. Design details are not yet finalized but work is likely to begin in 2014 for a single-story building to be added on to the rear of the existing Food Cupboard and to occupy the cement pad in place there. Thus it is expected to be about 50% larger in area than the Food Cupboard. As presently envisioned, the store would sell used clothing, footwear, common household items, furniture, working appliances, and other domestic furnishings such as windows and tools. It will continue as a project of East Parish Housing.

### ***REGIONAL COORDINATION AND COOPERATION***

Regional and inter-local efforts can often result in more cost-effective and improved delivery of services.

The following is a summary of town services where there are cooperative agreements:

- Ambulance Service (AMS - Anson and Madison)
- Ambulance Service – reciprocal agreements with Redington Fairview Hospital Ambulance (Skowhegan) and North Star (Farmington)
- Economic Development (Kennebec Regional Development Authority/First Park) (multi-town – Somerset and Kennebec Counties)
- Education - Regional School Units (RSU) #9 and #59
- Emergency Management Services (Somerset County)
- Fire Protection Mutual Aid Agreements (Anson, Madison, Industry, New Sharon)
- Greater Somerset Collaborative – Healthy Maine Partners
- Kennebec Valley Council of Governments – Cooperative purchase of salt; regional planning and economic development
- Library Services (subsidy to Madison)
- Recreation Services (Madison, Farmington and other nearby towns)
- Recycling Services (Anson)

Other cooperative agreements or efforts, including potential expansions of current agreements, that have been identified include:

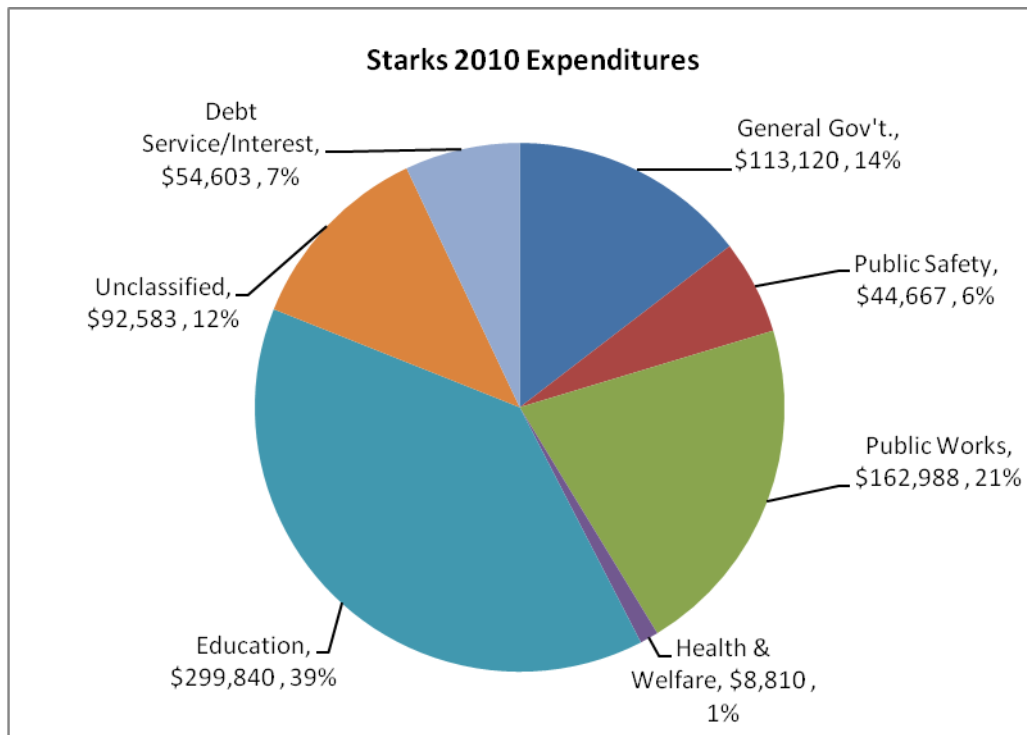
- Town administration, such as a shared administrative assistant or a local health officer
- Sharing of road equipment
- Fire Protection

## CHAPTER 11. FISCAL CAPACITY

“Fiscal Capacity” in the context of local planning means the ability of local government to pay for the future costs associated with growth and development of the town. Such costs may include new or expanded general government or fire protection facilities, improved roads, implementation of recycling programs, or any of dozens of other citizen services. The ability of local government is a measure of how well it has responded to the fiscal challenges of the past, and how it can improve its ability to meet those of the future. The principal measure of past performance is the budget of revenues and expenditures of local government.

### EXPENDITURES

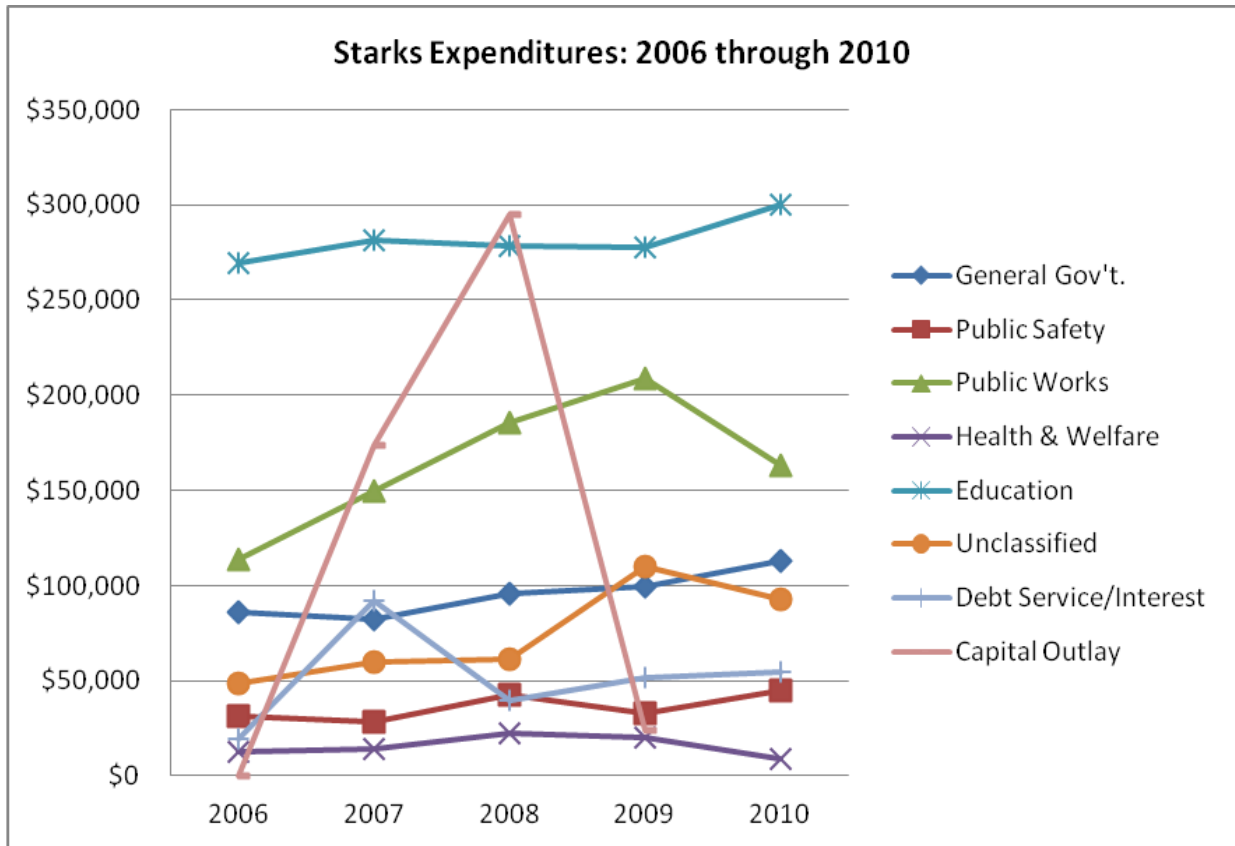
The following figures and table display Starks’ expenditures between 2006 and 2010. Education was by far the largest expense category for Starks amounting for nearly \$300 thousand, or 39% of the budget for 2010. The next largest category was Public Works at almost \$163 thousand, or 21% of the municipal budget. Public Works primarily includes road department expenditures. The third largest expenditure category was general government at \$113 thousand, or 14% of the budget. General government includes town office administrative expenses including salaries. The unclassified category at almost \$93 thousand, or 12% of the budget, consists primarily of the County tax, which included paying for the new county jail. Public safety includes expenses for the fire department and ambulance service.



## Chapter 11. Fiscal Capacity

### Analysis of Expenditures

- The municipal budget peaked in 2008 at just over \$1 million, although nearly 30 percent of that figure was capital outlay for the sand and salt shed at around \$305,000. Excluding capital outlays, expenditures peaked in 2009 at about \$801,000. Capital outlays between 2007 and 2009 included: 2007 – purchase of the grader at \$178,000; 2009 – purchase of a used truck and air compressor
- Adjusted for inflation, overall expenditures between 2006 and 2010 rose 22.7 percent – about 5.3 percent per year. The assessed value of property during that period rose 29 percent, so overall expenditures as a percentage of property values decreased during the period. Commitment (portion of the budget paid for by property taxes) rose by 57 percent, resulting in the rise in tax rate.
- Expenditures classified as “debt service” and “unclassified” rose steadily during the period, both in dollar terms and as a percentage of overall expenditures. Both “public safety” and “public works” line items showed a lot of variability during the period. Variability is an indication of one-time expenditures impacting the annual budget.
- The largest single line item – “Education” – rose by only 11 percent in four years, dropping from 46 percent of all expenditures to only 37 percent.



## Chapter 11. Fiscal Capacity

**Table 11-1: Starks Annual Expenditures 2006 through 2010**

Category	2010			2009			2008		
	Expenditure	% of total	% increase	Expenditure	% of total	% increase	Expenditure	% of total	% increase
General Government	\$113,120	14.6%	13%	\$99,683	12.1%	4%	\$95,575	9.4%	16%
Public Safety	\$44,667	5.8%	34%	\$33,289	4.0%	-22%	\$42,414	4.2%	49%
Public Works	\$162,988	21.0%	-22%	\$208,830	25.3%	13%	\$185,312	18.2%	24%
Health & Welfare	\$8,810	1.1%	-56%	\$20,126	2.4%	-12%	\$22,757	2.2%	59%
Education	\$299,840	38.6%	8%	\$277,457	33.6%	0%	\$278,508	27.3%	-1%
Unclassified	\$92,583	11.9%	-16%	\$109,811	13.3%	80%	\$61,082	6.0%	2%
Debt Service/Int.	\$54,603	7.0%	6%	\$51,701	6.3%	31%	\$39,586	3.9%	-95%
Capital Outlay			-100%	\$24,178	2.9%	-92%	\$294,644	28.9%	70%
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$776,611</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>-6%</b>	<b>\$825,075</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>-19%</b>	<b>\$1,019,878</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>16%</b>
Adjusted: 2006 \$	\$714,961		-7%	\$770,971	93.4%	-21%	\$978,732	96.0%	15%
Local Valuation	\$25,668,022		3%	\$24,810,200		2%	\$24,283,672		5%
Mill Rate	23.5		4%	22.5		11.11%	20.25		12.50%
Commitment	\$603,199		8%	\$559,748		13%	\$494,640		18%
Full Value Mill Rate				16.63		7%	15.47		7%

Category	2007			2006	
	Expenditure	% of total	% increase	Expenditure	% of total
General Government	\$82,268	9.3%	-5%	\$86,447	14.8%
Public Safety	\$28,549	3.2%	-10%	\$31,666	5.4%
Public Works	\$149,658	17.0%	31%	\$113,884	19.6%
Health & Welfare	\$14,272	1.6%	10%	\$12,952	2.2%
Education	\$281,446	31.9%	4%	\$269,535	46.3%
Unclassified	\$59,852	6.8%	24%	\$48,373	8.3%
Debt Service/Int.	\$92,402	10.5%	371%	\$19,609	3.4%
Capital Outlay	\$173,709	19.7%	0%	\$0	0.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$882,156</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>51%</b>	<b>\$582,466</b>	<b>100%</b>
Adjusted: 2006 \$	\$847,412		45%	\$582,466	
Local Valuation	\$23,225,149		17%	\$19,825,830	
Mill Rate	18		-6%	19.25	
Commitment	\$419,807		9%	\$384,907	
Full Value Mill Rate	14.44		2%	14.19	

Source: Municipal Audit Reports, Maine Dept. of Revenue Services; compiled by the Kennebec Valley Council of Governments, 2011

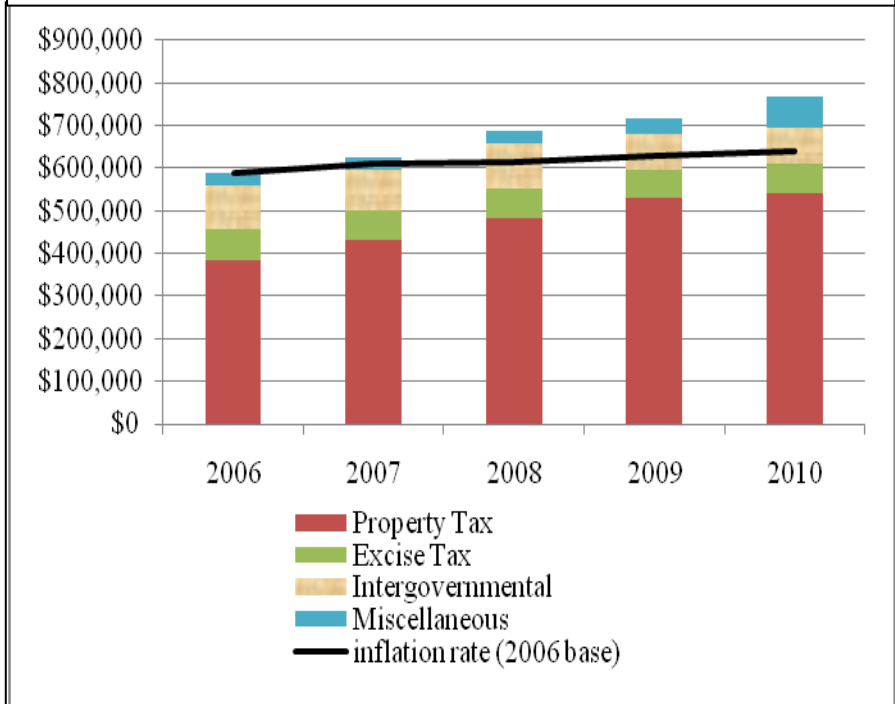
# Chapter 11. Fiscal Capacity

## REVENUES

As hinted in the observations above, the actual impact of the budget on local taxes is a function of the revenue side. Even though the budget itself rose at a slower rate than property values, taxes rose. That is because the property tax has been shouldering a larger percentage of the overall municipal budget. Figure 11-1,

below, illustrates the trend in sources of funding for the budget.

Figure 11-1: Starks Revenue Contributions, 2006 – 2010, Town Auditor’s Reports

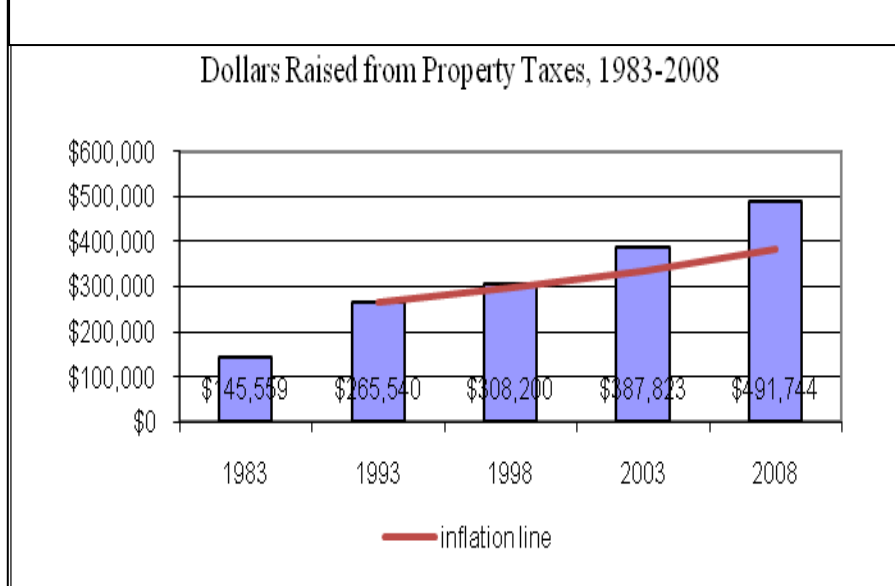


In 2010, property taxes accounted for 69.7 percent of budget revenues. In 2006, it accounted for only 66 percent. That is an increase in property tax collection of about 40 percent. During the same period,

“intergovernmental” revenues (payments from the state) declined by \$16,000 and excise tax revenues declined by \$3,000. “Miscellaneous” revenues increased dramatically primarily as a result of grant income..

The figure also shows the rate of inflation during the period. The

Figure 11-2: Revenues from Property Taxes, 1983 - 2008



## Chapter 11. Fiscal Capacity

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budget has exceeded the rate of inflation. This is true in a longer term perspective. Figure 11-2 illustrates the growth in property tax commitment since 1983 (inflation factors not available before 1990).

The fact that local budgets have exceeded inflation is not automatically a concern. Like many businesses, a town budget is heavily dependent on costs, which must be passed on. For example, oil and energy costs spiked during the period depicted by the tables. Starks uses energy for fuel and heating.

### ***CAPITAL EXPENDITURES AND OTHER ONE-TIME EXPENDITURES***

The greater potential for impact on the municipal budget, and greater concern are the one-time expenditures. One-time expenditures create variability in the annual budget. While these expenditures cannot often be avoided, they can be planned out in such a way as to minimize the budget impact.

Starks uses a combination of funding techniques to minimize the impact of capital expenditures, including grants, borrowing, reserve funds, and annual appropriations. According to the 2010 audit report, the town currently has approximately \$189,000 in debt, although some of that may not be for capital expenditures. The only specific expenditures listed are “Sand and Salt Facility” (\$12,000) and “Grader loan” (\$40,000), and these may be the annual payment and not the loan balance. The \$189,000 in long-term debt is well below the town’s borrowing limit of \$5,175,000 (15 percent of 2010 state valuation); however, it does not include the town’s share of school or county debt.

Starks uses reserve funds for other projects. According to the audit, the town has \$198,000 in reserve for “capital projects,” although these are not enumerated. A (undesignated) Capital Improvements Fund had \$30,198 in it as of 12/31/2010.

The Town has been successful recently in using grant funds to finance some capital projects. Community Development Block Grant funds have been obtained for bridge improvements and for development of the comprehensive plan update.

The Town does not have a formal capital improvements program (CIP).

The property tax base (“local valuation” in table 11-1) is the source of property tax revenue, and increases in the tax base form the basis for planning for capital expenditures. The tax base increased quite substantially between 2006 and 2007, but has slowed considerably since then, increasing by only \$800,000 from 2009 to 2010. At a mill rate of 23.5, the growth in tax base yields only \$18,800. That is the amount available for all increases in the cost of operations for

## Chapter 11. Fiscal Capacity

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town, schools, and county, as well as for capital improvement projects. Any amount over \$18,800 will result in a rise in the tax rate.

Prior to 2012 and the construction of the Central Maine Power switching station, the tax base in Starks was primarily based on residential, agriculture and forestry land uses, with very little commercial or industrial land uses. Like most rural towns, a high percentage of the tax base was in land values. In 2009, land values accounted for \$10,900,000 of the town's valuation (44 percent). By contrast, in all of Somerset County, land valuation accounted for only 43 percent of overall value. The recent addition of the Central Maine Power switching station will add a considerable amount to the tax base. This facility along with the town's extensive open land will have a very positive influence on the tax base. While open land may pay only a few dollars in taxes per acre, the demand for public services is even less. The new CMP facility will also place very little demand on public services. Taxes from the CMP facility and the town's open land will subsidize services to residential development.

Taxpayers in Starks do not have the burden of paying for services to tax exempt properties that people in other towns do. AS of 2010 only \$230,000 of the valuation (less than 1 percent) is tax exempt. No properties in Starks have been designated for Tax Increment Financing (TIF) districts or Pine Tree Zones, which are both state programs designed to support economic development.

# CHAPTER 12. EXISTING LAND USE

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### **INTRODUCTION**

An analysis of how land is used within a community is one of the most important elements of a comprehensive plan. It provides the basis for recommendations of the Future Land Use Plan. This chapter examines land use patterns, identifies development trends and predicts where and how much future growth is most likely to occur. The town's land use regulations and their administration and enforcement are also examined. Key policy issues to be addressed include: to what extent does the town wish to direct future development; how can the town best prepare for future development; how does the town ensure that new development will be compatible with existing uses; and how can the town assure that new development will not over-tax public facilities and services.

### **REGIONAL PERSPECTIVE**

Starks is one of the least populated organized towns in Somerset County. It is a very rural community located between the service centers of Farmington to the west and Madison to the east. Starks has long been split with residents in the western part of town more apt to shop and commute to Farmington and residents in the eastern part of town more likely to commute to the Madison and Skowhegan area.

The following analysis examines factors associated with this split in order to predict how development might occur in the future, particularly with the shift from the Madison area schools to the Farmington area schools.

From a regional perspective, the affordability of housing and land, property tax rates, employment patterns, proximity to services, and population growth rates are key factors to consider.

In predicting future growth trends in Starks, the following are noted:

- Employment location: Currently, a larger proportion of Starks residents appear to commute to the Madison/Skowhegan area than the Farmington area.<sup>17</sup>
- Housing affordability: Data from the Maine State Housing Authority for the year 2009 indicates that with the exception of Farmington, most of the towns in the region are

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<sup>17</sup> *The Public Opinion Survey (2010) found that a majority of survey respondents worked in Madison (66%), Farmington (55%), and/or Skowhegan (43%).*

## Chapter 12. Existing Land Use

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affordable places to find housing, which suggests that potential homeowners looking to move to the area would not choose one place or the other based on housing affordability.

- Property taxes: Property taxes are lower to the west of Starks than in Starks, Anson and Madison. Maine Revenue Services' equalized full value tax rates are as follows: New Sharon (10.42), Industry (10.51), Farmington (13.24), Starks (15.47), Anson (14.86), Madison (15.31) and Skowhegan (15.55).<sup>18</sup>
- Regional growth rates: Recent population data from the Census indicate that the rates of growth between 2000 and 2010 for towns to the west of Starks - Industry, New Sharon and Farmington - combined, grew by almost 600 people as compared to an increase of 25 people for Anson, Madison and Skowhegan, combined.

This analysis suggests that in the future towns to the west of Starks will grow and develop more quickly than towns to the east. Further, Industry and New Sharon will likely develop more quickly than Starks due to proximity to Farmington and lower property taxes. Further, there may be additional pressure for growth in the western half of Starks as a result of the switch from Madison-based RSU 59 to Farmington-based RSU 9. This change in school district as well as the development of the Central Maine Power switchyard and transmission line connector will significantly lower property taxes in Starks, making the town even more attractive to people looking for a rural setting in which to live in the area.

It is also important to note that any projection on where and how development might occur can be impacted by unforeseen events, such as loss or gain of a major employer. Lastly, the location of development in Starks will also be impacted by the location of developable property and landowner decisions.

### **STARKS' OVERALL DEVELOPMENT PATTERN**

Starks is approximately 31.88 square miles with generally rolling terrain covered with forest interspersed with open farmland. About .52 square miles of its area is occupied by water bodies.<sup>19</sup> The Sandy River and a small segment of the Kennebec River form the town's eastern and southern boundary. There are four significant streams – Lemon Stream, Hilton Brook, Pelton Brook and Josiah Brook. Lemon Stream is actually defined as a river in Maine's shoreland zoning statute. Cold Pond is the only pond, but is classified as a wetland like the town's other wetlands for the purpose of shoreland zoning.

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<sup>18</sup> Full values (equalized) tax rates (Homestead, TIF and BETE adjusted) based on 2006, Maine Revenue Services, 2008.

<sup>19</sup> U.S. Census, 2000

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Most of the town's land cover is forest, with a considerable amount of open land, including active farmland. Actual developed land with buildings, lawns, driveways, parking areas, and roads, comprise only a very small portion of the town's total land area.

Starks' small village, located along state Route 43, is situated just to the west of the geographic center of the town. Other development, mostly homes and camps, and a number of farms, is scattered along many of the community's public roads. Commercial uses are relatively small and have not had much noticeable impact on the landscape. Forestry and agriculture are significant activities in Starks, and are discussed in a separate chapter.

Starks' existing land uses are displayed on the Existing Land Use Map and other maps included in this Plan.

### ***STARKS VILLAGE***

The village is located along State Route 43 and includes the intersections of Route 43 with State Route 134, Locke Hill Road, Chicken Street, and Sawyers Mills Road. Lemon Stream, which winds through portions of the village, is a pleasing amenity to the area.

The village consists of about 35 year-round single-family homes of which about three homes are currently unoccupied. Other uses include the Town Office and Community Center, the former Town Office which is currently being leased for a new store, the Fire Station, the Town Garage, the Town sand and salt shed, the United in Christ Presbyterian Church, the Food Pantry, several home occupations, Steve's Garage, a small hydro power facility on Lemon Stream, two vacant stores, and an unlicensed salvage and recycling facility. There is also a private campground nearby. Open space and recreation land in the village includes the ball field and playground at the Community Center and the Starks Green. There are several publicly-owned places that provide access to Lemon Stream, but none have any facilities. The village functions as the center of town activities.

Other than construction associated with town buildings and several houses at the outskirts of the village, there has been very little new development over the past decade. Steve's Garage and the private campground are the only relatively new uses in the village. Two general stores were open for short periods of time, but neither is still in operation.

One striking element is the absence of an established local store, a focal point which has often become the unofficial 'heart' of towns elsewhere. Such a place catalyzes the exchange of local information and the matching of needy citizens with providers. It also serves as a repository of town opinion and helps foster a sense of local identity and solidarity. Finally it keeps a significant amount of money circulating about town, multiplying economic activity. This is

## Chapter 12. Existing Land Use

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money which would otherwise escape, never to return. Yet all efforts to reopen and maintain a store in the village since the closure of the village store in the mid-80s have failed. Perhaps a model can be found that blends necessities and convenience items with locally-made goods, all organized as a hybrid retail/exchange venue. Group-buying 'clubs,' barter networks, local currencies, and skills banks are helping rural areas elsewhere. Such efforts turn personal and household abilities into valuable, fungible assets. From the viewpoint of steady, stable development, having a mixed and many-sided attractiveness as exemplified by recent growth trends serves the town better than the boom-and-bust patterns seen in less diversified local economies.

The Starks Water District serves 23 homes and several town facilities in the village. There is no centralized sewer.

Perhaps the biggest issue for the village is the level of private property maintenance on the part of some residents. The unlicensed salvage and recycling facility, vacant and/or dilapidated homes, and storage of trash, junk cars and other materials and junk outside are problems that directly affect adjacent property owners and the overall character of the village and the town. Property values also suffer.

### **RESIDENTIAL LAND USES**

Residential uses are the predominant structural land use in Starks. Nearly all are single family homes or camps. According to the 2010 Census there were a total of 395 housing units in Starks. About 24% of these (93 units) were used seasonally, and about 18% (73 units) were mobile homes.

Residential growth over the past decade has consisted of the addition of 79 new residences, which includes ten mobile homes and 36 seasonal homes.<sup>20</sup> This means that at least 46% of the new residences added to the town's housing stock were seasonal housing. Seasonally used

#### *Public Opinion:*

*The results of the public opinion survey shed some light on what residents think about the Village, as follows:*

- 87% supported more businesses.
- 69% supported community recreation/park.
- 52% supported enhanced private property maintenance.
- 52% indicated the number of homes in the village should remain the same over the next ten years.
- 48% supported speed limits.
- 39% supported safer pedestrian walkways along roads.
- 56% opposed a public sewer system.

*Respondents were generally neutral about more homes, more street trees and landscaping, better lighting, improved/expanded public water supply, and more off-street parking.*

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<sup>20</sup> Data from Starks Municipal Valuation Returns

## Chapter 12. Existing Land Use

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housing includes rustic camps, often hunting camps in remote wooded areas, and some second homes used by snowmobilers and others seeking a rural setting.

The majority of residential uses are dispersed along state Routes 43 and 134, and along town roads such as Chicken Street and Locke Hill Road. The extension of electric power lines along some town roads has resulted in a considerable amount of new residential development over the past ten to twenty years. Most recently many new homes and camps have been constructed along the Sawyers Mills Road, Sterry Hill Road and Mayhew Road as a result of the installation of electrical power in 1997/98. Around 1987 power was extended up the Dill Road, which also resulted in the construction of a number of new homes. Another example has been the increase in number of camps off the Redneck Road, a private road, as a result of power extensions.

Residential properties are primarily on parcels ranging in size from one acre (the minimum lot size allowed) to twenty acres. The smallest parcels, often around one acre in size, are located in the village. Otherwise, residential lots are generally three to five acres, and often larger. These lots are mostly spread out along the town roads.

### **Residential Subdivisions**

A subdivision is defined in statute as the division of a parcel or tract of land into 3 or more lots within any 5-year period. It applies to divisions accomplished by sale, lease, development, and/or buildings.

There has been very little subdivision activity within Starks over the past 30 years as displayed in Table 12-1. The most subdivision activity in Starks occurred during the 1980s, when 55 new lots were created. During this time period there was also a Patten Corporation land division on the Dill Road that due to the size of the lots (over 40 acres in size) was not technically considered a subdivision. Thirteen new lots were created during the 1990s, and another 9 lots were created during the 2000s. Sixteen of these lots were located on the Sawyers Mills Road.

Most homes and camps constructed or placed in Starks since 1980 have not been placed on subdivision lots. Of the 196 residences or camps constructed or placed in Starks between 1980 and 2010<sup>21</sup>, at most 77 of them could have been placed on subdivision lots. One of the advantages of development occurring through the subdivision process is that there can be more oversight as to the design of the development, as opposed to the single lot building

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<sup>21</sup> *U.S. Census*

## Chapter 12. Existing Land Use

permit review process where there is no consideration for lot layout other than setbacks and the locations of well and septic systems.

Year	Subdivision	Location	# of Lots	Lot Sizes (approx)
1970s	Vincent Marino	Mayhew Rd.	25	10-11 acres
1982	Somerset Acres (Bruce Verrill Ass.)	Industry Rd. (Rte 43)	11	10-11 acres
198?	Eugene Lambert (division of Somerset Acres lot – see above)	Route 43*	2**	5 acres
1985	Sandy River Estates (Dave & Pamela Hill)	New Sharon Rd. (Rte 134)	5	5-10 acres
1986	Lemon Stream Acres (Patten Corp.)	Faulkner Hill Rd.	18	10-50 acres
1986	Pine Hill	Mayhew Road	6	
1986	Riverfront Acres	Anson Rd. (Rte 43)	5	
1987	Sandy River Farms (Patten Corps)	River Road	10	11-20 acres
1990	Lawny Davis	Olde Ferry Rd.	6	3 acres
1993	Southern View Acres (Steve & Paula Brown)	Sawyers Mills Rd.	4	6-20 acres
1999	Ambrose McCarthy	Sawyers Mills Rd.	3	
2003	Steve Brown	Sawyers Mills Rd.	5	3 acres
2004	Sheryl Crawford	Sawyers Mills Rd.	2**	
2004	Earl Sterry and Carol Coles	Sawyers Mills Rd.	2**	3+ acres
* Note: part of subdivision is located in New Sharon.				
** Note: These are re-subdivisions within the statutory 5 years of the original subdivision				
Source: Starks Planning Board files and Annual Town Reports				

### Future Trends in Residential Land Use

If the town maintains its existing land use policies that don't direct growth to one place or another, future residential land use will likely continue as it has in the past. This means most growth will be new single-home lot development as opposed to subdivision development, and that development will continue to occur in rural areas along public roads as opposed to in the village.

The past decade has demonstrated how development increased significantly along roads as a result of the installation of electrical power. Most public roads in Starks now have power. The exceptions are about two miles of the Poor Farm Road and about a half mile of the Cemetery Road, which serves a large cemetery. The Town may want to consider the potential implications of maintaining both these roads as public roads.

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Camps will probably continue to be built in the woods off private roads, and provision of power along these private roads may increase the number of camps located in these more remote areas.

The Kennebec Valley Council of Government's growth scenario<sup>22</sup> projected that the population will be around 800 by the year 2030. This translates to an average of about 5 new year-round homes per year. The land use impacts of growth go beyond mere home construction. If each home were built on a two acre lot, another 107 housing units by the year 2030 would occupy over 200 acres of land. Most of these lots would be spread out along public roads if current trends continue.

### **COMMERCIAL USES**

The majority of commercial uses in Starks (other than those associated with forestry and agriculture – See Agriculture and Forestry Resources) are relatively small, non-intensive land uses, and many are home occupations. The Central Maine Power (CMP) switchyard and transmission line connector along the Anson Road is a major facility, but occupies less than five acres and has little impact of town services. An inventory of other businesses in Starks identified over thirty commercial uses in town.<sup>23</sup> Many of these businesses occupy a very small amount of land area. There are also three commercial sand and gravel mining operations – Hebert's, Quimby's and Abbott's.

Most of the town's home occupations and other commercial uses are located in rural areas along public roads. There are several businesses in the village as described above. Over the past several decades there have been three small convenience stores (two in the village), but none of them still exists. A new one at the former town office is currently planned.

To date, commercial uses and home occupations have generally been compatible with surrounding residential uses – although the unlicensed salvage and junkyard in the village and some of the mass gatherings<sup>24</sup> at a location adjacent to and upland of the village have been exceptions. The annual, and sometimes more often, mass gatherings have generated

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<sup>22</sup> See Chapter 2. Housing

<sup>23</sup> See Chapter 3. Economy

<sup>24</sup> The first of these annual mass gatherings, and others that followed was Hempstock, which was organized by the Maine Vocals to advocate for the legalization of marihuana. In recent years, smaller gatherings have occurred several times during the summer.

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complaints about noise, trespass, unruly behavior, traffic and parking. As a result the town enacted a Mass Gathering Ordinance, which has generally reduced complaints.

Starks' Site Plan Review and Subdivision Ordinance requires a permit for commercial uses, but exempts single family homes, home occupations (as defined), and forestry and agricultural uses. The ordinance provisions are intended to assure that commercial uses are designed to prevent environmental degradation and fit harmoniously with existing neighborhoods.

### **Future Trends in Commercial Uses**

Past trends in the character of businesses in town will likely continue given the town's rural nature. The major exception is the proposed CMP installation, which will contribute significantly to the town's tax base with almost no impact on the provision of services.

Factors that will affect commercial uses to some extent include access to high speed internet town-wide allowing more people to work from home or to establish businesses where location is not important, and more retired or semi-retired people conducting part-time, home-based business endeavors.

It is unlikely that a large industry or business will not locate in Starks because of its distance from major thoroughfares. However, the Anson Road (Route 43) is not posted to heavy trucks in the spring, and three phase power is available along the entire length of the Anson Road, which extends to the center of the village.

### *Public Opinion about Land Use:*

*Regarding what is desirable over the next ten years, the responses were as follows:*

- *39% of respondents want the year-round population to stay the same, while 35% want it to increase.*
- *42% want the number of single family homes to stay the same, while 29% want the number to increase.*
- *46% want the amount of multifamily housing to stay the same.*
- *52% want the number of homes in the village to stay the same.*
- *38% want the number of homes in rural areas to stay the same, and 38% want the number to increase.*
- *39% want the number of seasonal homes to stay the same, while 21% want the number to increase.*
- *78% - want more businesses (to improve the availability of goods and services).*
- *56% - want more industrial development (23% - should stay the same)*

*Responses to questions regarding forestry, agriculture, recreation are included under those chapters.*

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### **PLANNING BOARD PERMITS: SHORELAND ZONING AND SITE REVIEW**

Table 12-2 displays permits approved by the Planning Board since 1990. The Starks Code Enforcement Officer is responsible for issuing building permits, including building permits for residences, camps, and home occupations, and most non-structural uses in the shoreland zone. The Planning Board is responsible for issuing permits for non-residential structural uses in the shoreland zone and for commercial and other non-residential uses town-wide. Generally, forestry, agriculture, and home occupations are exempt from Site Review by the Planning Board. Commercial uses for which permits were issued since 1991 include two general stores, a garage and use of an existing barn for commercial storage and equestrian use.

Year	Ordinance	Applicant	Project	Location
1991	Shoreland Zoning	Anson/Madison Snowmobile Club	Bridges (2)	Dill Road area
1994	Site Review	Sandy River Chapel	Church	River Road
	Site Review	Town of Starks	Town Garage	Chicken Street (village)
1995	Site Review	Dorothy Kennard	?	
1996	Site Review	Katrina Elfahel	General store	Anson Rd. (Route 43)
2001	Site Review	Ernie and Gwen Hilton	HylTun Farm – Commercial Storage/Equestrian Use	Anson Rd. (Route 43)
2004	Site Review	Lisa Gordon	General store	Route 43 (village)
2005	Shoreland Zoning and Site Review	Steve Rackcliff	Garage (Appeals Board variance)	Route 43 (village)
	Shoreland Zoning	Madison Paper Industries	Boat launches (2)	Kennebec River
	Shoreland Zoning	Charles Haley	Private camping area	Anson Rd, near village
2006	Shoreland Zoning	Madison Electric Works	Sandy River dam removal	Sandy River
	Shoreland Zoning	Clifton and Florence Quimby	Gravel removal	Sandy River
2007	Shoreland Zoning	Craig Comstock	Private bridge over Joshua Brook	Off Brann’s Mills Road
2008	Site Review	Southern Somerset Local Foods Connection	Agricultural food processing (former Grange Hall)	Anson Rd. (Route 43)
	Site Review/ Shoreland Zoning	Town of Starks	Town Sand and Salt Shed	Chicken Street (village)
2012	Site Review	Joe and Ashley Hayden	Store at former town office	Locke Hill Rd (village)

Source: Starks Town Reports

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### **PUBLIC AND SEMI-PUBLIC USES**

Public and semi-public uses in Starks include town-owned facilities, churches, and other land and buildings owned by non-profit organizations as listed in Table 12-3. These uses are displayed on the Cultural Resources Map.

Table 12-3: Public and Semi-public Land Uses		
Owner	Facility/Description	Location
Town of Starks	Town Office/Community Building	Route 43 (village)
	Public Works, Sand and Salt Facility	Chicken Street (village)
	Fire Station	Chicken Street (village)
	Former Town Office	Route 43 (village)
	Town Landfill - closed	Dump Road
	Town Gravel Pit	Sawyers Mills Road
	Brake Hill Cemetery	Industry Road
	Churchill Cemetery	New Sharon Road
	Didson Cemetery	Mayhew Road
	Fairbanks Cemetery	Sawyers Mills Road
	Greenleaf Cemetery	New Sharon Road
	Piper Cemetery,	Sandy River Road
	Williamson Cemetery	Sandy River Road
Private Cemeteries	15 private cemeteries	Various locations
Southern Somerset Local Foods Connection	Agricultural food processing	Anson Road (Route 43)
United in Christ Presbyterian	Church	Locke Hill Road
Sandy River Chapel	Church	River Road
East Parish Housing	Food Cupboard	Chicken Street (village)
East Parish Housing	Ballfield/Town Green	Route 43 (village)
Progressive Club	Memorial Hall	Locke Hill Road
Camp at the Eastward	Summer Youth Camp	Sawyers Mills Road
Somerset Woods Land Trust	Conservation Land	Sawyers Mills Road
Four Seasons Rod and Gun Club	Clubhouse and shooting range	Arnolds Lane
Madison Paper Industries	Boat Launches (2)	Arnolds Lane-Kennebec River
Source: Comprehensive Plan Committee		

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### **LAND USE REGULATION**

The Town of Starks has several ordinances that regulate land use. These ordinances include the following:

- Shoreland Zoning Ordinance (state mandated)
- Floodplain Management (federally mandated to participate in flood insurance program)
- Building Ordinance
- Site Plan Review and Subdivision Ordinance (state mandated - subdivision)
- Road Ordinance
- Mass Gathering Ordinance
- Hazardous Materials Ordinance
- Sludge Spreading Ordinance

A description of the most significant of these ordinances is included in Table 12-6.

Maintaining up-to-date regulations is an ongoing task for towns. Starks updated both its Floodplain Management Ordinance and Shoreland Zoning Ordinance within the past decade to be in conformance with current state and federal requirements. With the exception of the Mass Gathering Ordinance, the town's other ordinances have not been reviewed or amended for several decades. All of these ordinances should be reviewed and amended as appropriate to reflect the recommendations of this Comprehensive Plan.

Starks does not have town-wide zoning or any other regulations that are directing development to designated "growth areas", or away from "rural areas" or "critical natural areas". As a result most development has been taking place along rural roads as described previously in this chapter.

Typically, as this pattern of development continues, a town may begin to experience the negative impacts of sprawl. These impacts may include loss of large commercially viable acreages of farm and forest land, loss of wildlife habitat – particularly large blocks of habitat - and overall loss of scenic rural character. The town will spend more to serve this dispersed pattern of development because there will be more miles of roads to maintain to meet the needs and demands of people with homes spread out along many roads as opposed to just a few roads if development were to occur in a designated growth area. Additionally, there will be more miles of travel for emergency services and school buses.

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### **Administration of Land Use Regulations**

The capacity of the town to administer and enforce its land use regulations is an important consideration when looking to the future. Starks has relied on a relatively traditional, low-budget approach similar to that found in many small towns. The Board of Selectmen, Code Enforcement Officer (CEO)/Plumbing Inspector, Planning Board and Board of Appeals have shared in the administration of the town's regulations. While the Selectmen receive a small salary, they have many duties. The Planning Board and Appeals Board are unpaid positions. The Code Enforcement Officer/Plumbing Inspector is a part-time, paid position (an hourly rate plus expenses and a portion of the permit fees).

The Planning Board has been the primary entity involved in drafting new ordinances and amendments to existing ordinances. The Board also maintains permitting records. The Planning Board is responsible for issuing permits through the Starks Subdivision and Site Plan Review Ordinance, the Mass Gathering Ordinance, the Road Ordinance and some Floodplain Ordinance and Shoreland Zoning Ordinance permits. The Code Enforcement Officer/Plumbing Inspector issues Plumbing and Subsurface Wastewater Disposal Permits, Building Permits, and some Floodplain Ordinance and Shoreland Zoning Permits. The Starks Appeals Board hears appeals of decisions on all of these ordinances.

### **Enforcement**

Enforcement of local ordinances and regulations is a challenge in most small towns due to limited funding. Code Enforcement Officers (CEO) usually rely on people to come to them for permits or to report violations. Town budgets for code enforcement often do not include funds to pay the CEO to drive around looking for violations. In Starks, the CEO responds to complaints about violations including complaints made by other town officials. The Board of Selectmen is responsible for directing the CEO to initiate any legal enforcement action.

Two enforcement issues that have arisen in recent years have been violations of the Mass Gathering Ordinance, and state and local laws regulating the storage of salvage materials, junk and unregistered motor vehicles. The Town may want to investigate the best approaches to resolving these issues in the near future.

### **Funding**

Funding sources for administration and enforcement of land use regulations include town appropriations and permit fees. It is generally recommended that permit fees be enough to cover the cost of issuing the permit including copies, public notice requirements, inspections and code enforcement. Permit fees can be included in the ordinance, or reference can be made to a permit fee schedule that is set by the Selectmen. This latter approach allows permit fees to

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be increased by the Selectmen when costs increase without having to amend the ordinance at a town meeting. The town may want to examine permit fees to determine if they are covering administrative costs, and may want to consider amending ordinances to have the Selectmen set a fee schedule.

For larger projects, including subdivisions and commercial projects, the Planning Board has the capacity to require additional funds from developers to hire professional assistance in reviewing the applications. This might include engineering assistance in reviewing road and stormwater designs, and/or traffic impacts.

Technical assistance is also available through the Maine Municipal Association (MMA) and the Kennebec Valley Council of Governments (KVCOG), if the town is a dues paying member of these organizations. Additionally, both organizations hold workshops for Planning Board and other officials. There are also publications, such as “Planning and Land Use Laws” by Frederick Michaud, that is updated every year and Planning Board and Appeals Board Manuals available from MMA. A number of state agencies are also available to assist towns in local land use planning, including the Maine Beginning with Habitat Program, the Maine Department of Transportation’s Local Roads Center, and Maine Department of Environmental Protection’s Shoreland Zoning Division. Starks’ town officials are already utilizing several of these resources.

Maine’s Uniform Building and Energy Code was enacted in 2008 and requires that municipal building and energy codes be consistent with state law. Towns with more than 4,000 residents are required to enforce the state uniform code, while it is optional for smaller towns.

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### **SUMMARY OF LAND USE REGULATIONS IN STARKS**

The following tables contain summaries of Starks’ existing land use ordinances, including the date of adoption, and descriptions of key ordinance provisions.

Table 12-6: Summary of Land Use Ordinances in Starks	
Ordinance	Description
Building Ordinance (adopted March 1988)	<p>Administered by the Code Enforcement Office.</p> <p>Minimum lot size: one acre.</p> <p>Minimum setback from centerline of public rights-of-way: 60 feet.</p> <p>Minimum side yard width: 15 feet from any adjoining property line.</p> <p>Minimum Residential off-street parking: 400 square feet per dwelling unit.</p> <p>Minimum Commercial off-street parking: 200 square feet per 1,000 square feet of gross floor area.</p> <p>Direct Access to currently maintained Town road, unless there is written agreement between the lot owner and Town officials specifying the construction and maintenance of any road to the building site.</p> <p>Alerts Road Commissioner to need for approval for a driveway culvert.</p>
Shoreland Zoning Ordinance State Mandated Ordinance (Adopted March 2007, originally enacted in early 1970s)	<p>Administered by the Code Enforcement Office and Planning Board.</p> <p>Permits required for activities in shoreland zones, which include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Areas within 250 feet of rivers (Kennebec River, Sandy River, Lemon Stream).</li> <li>• Areas within 250 feet of unforested wetlands at least 10 acres in size and wetlands associated with rivers.</li> <li>• Areas within 75 feet of streams flowing from below the confluence of two perennial streams (Hilton Brook, Joshua Brook, Pelton Brook, Falls Brook, and upper reaches of Lemon Stream).</li> </ul> <p>Four zones: (1) Limited Residential (residential/recreational uses); (2) Limited Commercial; (3) Resource Protection; and (4) Stream Protection (both #3 and #4 limit most types of development).</p> <p>Dimensional requirements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Residential - minimum lot size of 40,000 sq. ft. and shore frontage 200 ft.</li> <li>• Governmental, institutional, commercial or Industrial per principal structure – minimum lot size of 60,000 sq.ft. and shore frontage 300 ft.</li> <li>• Building/structure setback from water bodies is 75 ft; road frontage 100 ft.</li> </ul>

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Table 12-6: Summary of Land Use Ordinances in Starks (continued from prior page)	
Ordinance	Description
Starks Site Plan Review and Subdivision Ordinance State Mandated Subdivision Review (Adopted March 1990)	<p>Administered by the Planning Board.</p> <p>Permit required for subdivisions as defined by state law (generally defined as the division of a parcel into 3 or more lots/units within any 5-year period, with a few exceptions).</p> <p>Permit required for multifamily developments, commercial, industrial and public/semi-public uses.</p> <p>Exemption for home occupations, agricultural and forestry uses.</p> <p>Standards designed to address noise, air emissions, odors, water quality, stormwater and erosion control, storage of materials, refuse storage and disposal, road access and design, landscaping buffers, impacts on public facilities and services, etc.</p> <p>40 acre lots included in subdivision review.</p> <p>Subdivisions - the ratio of lot length to lot width shall not be more than three to one.</p>
Road Ordinance (Adopted March 1988)	<p>Administered by the Planning Board.</p> <p>Requirements for roads to be presented to town meeting for acceptance as town ways. Includes dimensional standards (road and ditch widths, etc.), base and surface materials, drainage specifications, and signage.</p> <p>A professional engineer's plan can be required.</p> <p>Subdivision Regulations require that all subdivision roads comply with the Road Ordinance.</p>
Floodplain Management Ordinance (Adopted 2007)	<p>Administered by the Code Enforcement Officer and Planning Board.</p> <p>Requires a permit for structures in the mapped floodplain. Structures must be designed to minimize flood damage, such as building elevations above flood levels and flood proofing.</p> <p>Currently in compliance with Federal Floodplain Management Program.</p>
Mass Gathering Ordinance (Adopted June 1995, amended 2001)	<p>Administered by the Planning Board.</p> <p>Requires a permit for gatherings of 750 or more people for 6 or more hours during any 72-hour period.</p> <p>Addresses refuse and sanitary disposal, traffic and parking, water supplies, noise, security and protection for surrounding areas, etc.</p>

The Hazardous Materials Ordinance and the Sludge Spreading Ordinance are two other little-used ordinances on the books that should be reviewed and amended or repealed as appropriate.

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### **REGIONAL CONSIDERATIONS**

Land use and development activity in the region has, and will continue to have, considerable impact on Starks. The town will continue to function as a bedroom community to service centers, such as Madison and Farmington. Population projections suggest that communities to the west of Starks will grow more quickly than those to the east of town. Starks' town officials should monitor these growth trends because they will be indicators of what is to come for Starks.

None of the towns adjacent to Starks have town-wide zoning. Planning and land use regulation in neighboring towns is primarily limited to state mandated subdivision and shoreland zoning.

Regional planning will become increasingly important as the population spreads out into more rural areas. Aligning future zoning districts, including shoreland zoning, to be consistent with neighboring communities is important for orderly growth and development. Consistent protection of critical natural resources across town lines is also important, particularly for conserving wildlife habitat and protecting water quality. The provision of municipal services should also be consistent, such as policies regarding road improvements and maintenance.

*Public Opinion about Land Use Regulation and Enforcement:*

*A majority (52%) of residents indicated existing regulations are adequate, while only 14% indicated stronger regulations are needed.*

- *83% supported providing incentives to encourage agriculture and the retention of important farmland.*
- *48% supported providing incentives to encourage growth in certain areas of town, as opposed to other areas.*
- *54% opposed allowing smaller lot sizes in the village.*
- *77% supported enacting stronger junkyard regulations.*
- *69% supported enacting a noise ordinance.*
- *60% supported enacting an adult business ordinance.*
- *70% support increased enforcement of the mass gathering ordinance.*
- *54% support increased enforcement of other town regulations.*
- *40% oppose enacting a town-wide land use ordinance, 36% are neutral, and 24% support enacting a town-wide land use ordinance.*

*Regarding enforcement:*

- *39% rated enforcement of local ordinances as good or excellent, while 41% indicated needs improvement.*
- *45% rated enforcement of state/federal laws as good or excellent, while 30% indicated needs improvement.*

## Appendix

### APPENDIX A. PUBLIC OPINION SURVEY RESULTS

The public opinion survey was conducted during the fall of 2010 as a part of the Comprehensive Plan project. The 4-page survey was mailed to approximately 240 year-round households, with the intent of giving all residents an opportunity to participate. A total of 128 completed surveys were returned to the town. This is a very good response for this type of survey. The results of the survey are displayed below – both the total number of responses to each question and the percentage of the total of responses to each question. Written comments to the survey have been compiled and are available upon request.

1. What is the status of your residency? ( <i>Circle the response that most closely matches your situation</i> )	A. Year-round resident – 118/92% B. Seasonal resident (own camp/second home) – 2/2% C. Other- please explain: - 4/3%
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2. How would you rate the overall quality of life in Starks? ( <i>Circle the response that most closely matches your opinion</i> )	A. Excellent – 23/18%      D. Poor – 5/4% B. Good – 62/48%          E. No opinion – 1/1% C. Fair – 25/20%
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3. How would you rate each of the following services? ( <i>Check one response for each.</i> )					
Service/Facility	Excellent	Adequate	Needs Improvement or Is Needed	Not Needed	No Opinion
A. Town government	14/11%	68/53%	40/31%	0/0%	2/2%
B. Public school system	5/4%	17/13%	81/63%	5/4%	17/13%
C. Ambulance service	16/13%	61/48%	24/19%	2/2%	23/18%
D. First responder/rescue service	17/13%	54/42%	26/20%	3/2%	24/19%
E. Police protection	3/2%	56/42%	44/34%	8/6%	12/9%
F. Fire protection	14/11%	66/52%	39/30%	2/2%	5/4%
G. Summer roads - maintenance	19/16%	70/55%	33/26%	1/1%	2/2%
H. Winter roads - snow removal	32/25%	68/53%	22/17%	0/0%	3/2%
I. Household trash disposal	26/20%	55/43%	30/23%	6/5%	8/6%
J. Recycling	37/29%	54/42%	21/16%	3/2%	6/5%
K. Large item pick/up and disposal	65/51%	52/42%	6/5%	3/2%	0/0%
L. Recreational facilities	4/3%	20/16%	64/50%	10/8%	22/17%
M. Enforcement of local ordinances	5/4%	45/35%	53/41%	4/3%	16/13%
N. Enforcement of state/federal laws	5/4%	52/41%	38/30%	4/3%	24/19%
O. High speed Internet access	1/1%	10/8%	89/70%	8/6%	14/11%
P. Cell phone reception	10/8%	47/37%	57/45%	2/2%	8/6%
Q. Town communications: newsletter, e-mail	50/40%	58/45%	14/11%	1/1%	1/1%
R. Access to health, dental and other services	8/6%	49/38%	38/30%	4/3%	23/18%
S. Food cupboard	20/16%	46/36%	10/8%	7/5%	39/30%
T. Animal control	16/13%	61/48%	19/15%	4/3%	23/18%

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- 4.** Currently a 3-member Board of Selectmen administers the Town without any staff support. The Town also has 3 Tax Assessors, a Tax Collector, Clerk and Treasurer (all are elected officials). What changes in Town government, if any, would you like to see considered in the next ten years. (*Circle as many as you like*)
- A. Increase Town Office hours (Office is currently open 8 hours/week) – 56/44%
  - B. Appoint officials instead of electing them (such as Clerk, Tax Collector, Treasurer) – 11/9%
  - C. Provide staff assistance to Selectmen to open mail, prepare draft agendas and warrants, etc. – 19/15%
  - D. Combine positions (such as Clerk/Tax Collector), keeping checks/balances (separate Treasurer) – 25/20%
  - E. Establish a professional administrative assistant position – 21/16%
  - F. Town structure is good; don't change it – 38/30%
  - G. Do you have any other suggestions? - 6/5%

Public School System – The Town voted recently to research options for leaving the RSU 59 school district (Madison based) and joining another school district.

<p><b>5.</b> Do you currently have school-age children, or will you have school-age children within the next 5 years? (<i>Circle one.</i>)</p>	<p>A. Yes – 30/25%                      B. No – 90/75%</p>
<p><b>6.</b> If “no” to #5 above, skip to #7. If “yes” to #5 above, which of the following best represents your situation with respect to your children? (<i>Circle the most applicable responses.</i>) <u>Total of 35 responses to this question.</u></p>	<p>A. Currently attend RSU 59. – 21/60% B. Will attend public school within next 5 years. – 4/11% C. Goes to private school. – 2/6% D. Will go to private school within next 5 years. – 2/6% E. Are and/or will be home-schooled – 4/11% F. Other, please explain – 2/6%</p>
<p><b>7.</b> What is your opinion about leaving RSU 59 and joining another district? (<i>Circle one response.</i>)</p>	<p>A. Strongly support - 70/58% B. Somewhat support – 14/12% C. Neutral/No Opinion/Not Sure – 23/19% D. Somewhat oppose – 4/3% E. Strongly oppose – 10/8%</p>

**8.** Which school district(s) would you prefer to have Starks children attend? Please rank the following in order of preference with “1” the most preferable and “4” the least preferable.

	1 (Most Preferable)	2	3	4 (Least Preferable)
RSU 59 (Madison Based)	17	15	20	12
RSU 9 (Farmington Based)	<b>77</b>	9	10	6
RSU 74 (Anson Based)	7	38	16	8
Other Options	4	3	9	15
No Opinion/Not Sure	16	2	3	6

<p><b>9. Starks Elementary School Building</b> The Town now owns the Starks Elementary School Building. Which of the following uses should the Town consider for this building? (<i>Circle those you think the Town should consider</i>) <u>Total of 124 responses.</u></p>	<p>A. Town office (relocate from current location) -74/60% B. Town meeting hall – 88/71% C. School (day and/or after school programs) – 59/48% D. Food Cupboard – 54/44% E. Library – 70/56% F. Regional community center – 60/48% G. Community building for multiple uses – 86/69% H. School should be sold. – 23/19%                      Other – 9/7%</p>
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<b>10. <u>Starks Village</u> - Indicate your level of support or opposition for the following changes in the village. (Check one for each.)</b>	Strongly Support	Somewhat Support	Neutral or No Opinion	Somewhat Oppose	Strongly Oppose
A. More homes	17/14%	22/18%	38/32%	21/18%	22/18%
B. More businesses	62/49%	48/38%	8/6%	4/3%	4/3%
C. Community recreation/park	46/38%	37/31%	25/21%	5/4%	7/6%
D. Safer pedestrian walkways along roads	26/22%	20/17%	40/34%	14/12%	17/15%
E. More street trees and landscaping	24/20%	17/14%	40/34%	19/16%	19/16%
F. Better lighting	20/17%	24/20%	42/35%	16/13%	19/16%
G. More off-street parking	12/10%	13/11%	54/46%	21/18%	17/15%
H. Speed limits	40/32%	20/16%	47/38%	6/5%	12/10%
I. Improved/expanded public water supply	3/2%	9/7%	65/54%	15/12%	29/24%
J. Shared privately-owned septic systems	1/1%	19/16%	55/45%	9/7%	37/31%
K. Public sewer system	5/4%	9/8%	39/33%	21/18%	46/38%
L. Enhanced private property maintenance	35/30%	26/22%	30/26%	7/6%	18/16%
M. Do you have any other suggestions?					

<p><b>11. <u>Housing</u></b> – Overall, is there a need to improve housing in Starks? (For example, plumbing, weatherization-insulation, safety, wiring, heating, construction, aesthetics, abandoned structures, etc. (Circle one response)</p>	<p>A. Yes – 83/65%            B. No – 17/13%            C. No opinion/Not sure – 24/19%</p>
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<p><b>12. If you think there is a problem with housing, which of the following would you favor as ways for the Town to improve housing? (Circle as many responses as you favor)</b></p>	<p>A. A housing rehab program to provide grants or low interest loans to residents – 67/52%            B. A building code to address health and safety issues – 48/38%            C. Require that mobile homes meet federal standards (applicable to units moved into town in the future). – 48/38%            D. Provide information on available programs –KVCAP programs, energy audit assistance, etc. – 64/50%            E. Do nothing – 12/9%            F. No opinion/not sure – 7/5%            G. Do you have any other suggestions? 2</p>
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<p><b>13. If there were grants or low interest loans to renovate your home, how likely is it that you would take advantage of them? (Circle one response.)</b></p>	<p>A. Very likely – 19/15%            B. Somewhat likely – 37/29%            C. Not likely – 63/49%            D. Don't know/not sure – 6/5%</p>
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## Appendix

<b>14. Thinking about the <u>next ten years</u>, what do you think about each of the following? (Check one response for each.)</b>	Need a lot more	Need some more	Stay the same	Need some less	Need a lot less	Neutral/ no opinion
A. Year-round population	14/11%	31/24%	50/39%	1/1%	3/2%	22/17%
B. Single family homes	7/5%	31/24%	54/42%	1/1%	5/4%	21/16%
C. Multifamily housing	3/2%	16/13%	59/46%	7/5%	11/9%	20/17%
D. Homes in the village area	3/2%	19/15%	66/52%	9/7%	5/4%	16/13%
E. Homes in rural areas	11/9%	37/29%	48/38%	2/2%	5/4%	13/10%
F. Seasonal homes - camps	6/5%	21/16%	50/39%	11/9%	12/9%	20/16%
G. Affordable housing, in general	18/14%	32/25%	37/29%	2/2%	4/3%	26/20%
H. Senior housing	15/12%	40/31%	35/27%	2/2%	4/3%	25/20%
I. Businesses- availability of goods/services	51/40%	49/38%	15/12%	0/0%	2/2%	2/2%
J. Industrial development	31/24%	41/32%	30/23%	4/3%	8/6%	7/5%
K. Job opportunities	57/45%	42/33%	13/10%	0/0%	2/2%	7/5%
L. Paved town roads	22/17%	25/20%	58/45%	1/1%	4/3%	9/7%
M. Transportation options for those who don't drive or have a car	30/23%	43/34%	25/20%	0/0%	3/2%	18/14%
N. Locally grown food	41/32%	53/41%	12/9%	0/0%	1/1%	14/11%
O. Agriculture	38/30%	47/37%	22/17%	1/1%	1/1%	12/9%
P. Forestry	29/23%	25/20%	48/38%	1/1%	2/2%	16/13%
Q. Recreation areas – parks/playgrounds	27/21%	38/30%	36/28%	1/1%	4/3%	14/11%
R. Public and emergency access on unmaintained roads	21/16%	25/20%	51/40%	3/2%	5/4%	14/11%
S. Public access to open space	16/13%	23/18%	55/43%	2/2%	6/5%	16/13%
T. Public access to rivers and streams	25/20%	33/26%	49/38%	1/1%	3/2%	9/7%
U. Recreation for youth	32/25%	52/41%	19/15%	1/1%	4/3%	14/11%
V. Recreation for young adults	33/26%	46/36%	23/18%	1/1%	4/3%	14/11%
W. Recreation for seniors	30/23%	37/29%	27/21%	2/2%	6/5%	17/13%
X. Trails for ATVs	22/17%	24/19%	43/34%	6/5%	17/13%	11/9%
Y. Trails for Snowmobiles	24/19%	19/15%	59/46%	3/2%	10/8%	8/6%

<p><b>15. <u>Land Use Regulation</u> in Starks includes shoreland zoning, subdivision, site plan review for commercial and public uses, building permits, and a road ordinance. In general, which of the following best represents your opinion regarding these land use regulations? (Circle one response)</b></p>	<p>A. Existing regulations are adequate – 64/52%            B. Starks needs stronger regulations – 17/14%            C. Starks needs less regulations – 10/8%            D. Some regulations are ok, but others should be changed. Please explain – 3/2%            E. No opinion/not sure - 26/21%</p>
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**16. Natural Resources** - How well are the following areas/resources currently protected from the impacts of future development? (*Check one for each.*)

Area/Resource	Too Much Protection	Adequate Protection	Inadequate Protection	No opinion/ Not sure
A. Groundwater resources	2/2%	58/49%	15/13%	44/37%
B. Sandy River	6/5%	61/51%	19/16%	33/28%
C. Streams	6/5%	62/52%	19/16%	32/27%
D. Wetlands	5/4%	61/51%	19/16%	34/29%
E. Wildlife habitat	3/3%	60/50%	24/20%	33/28%
F. Farmland	3/3%	62/52%	23/19%	31/26%
G. Forestland	3/3%	64/54%	21/18%	30/25%
H. Scenic views	2/2%	54/45%	20/17%	43/36%

**17. Indicate your level of support or opposition for the following:** (*Check one for each.*)

	Strongly Support	Somewhat Support	Neutral or No Opin.	Somewhat Oppose	Strongly Oppose
A. Providing incentives to encourage agriculture (retention of important farmland)	80/65%	22/18%	14/11%	4/3%	3/2%
B. Providing incentives to encourage growth in certain areas of town, as opposed to other areas.	24/20%	35/28%	43/35%	8/7%	10/8%
C. Allowing smaller lots sizes in the village if served by public water supply and adequate septic. (Town currently has a town-wide 1 acre minimum lot size)	12/10%	22/18%	24/19%	28/23%	38/31%
D. Enacting a Town-wide land use ordinance	12/10%	17/14%	43/36%	16/13%	32/27%
E. Enacting stronger junkyard regulations	68/55%	27/22%	13/10%	5/4%	11/9%
F. Enacting a noise ordinance	53/43%	32/26%	20/16%	7/6%	12/10%
G. Enacting an adult businesses ordinance	50/42%	22/18%	30/25%	6/5%	12/10%
H. Increased enforcement of mass gathering ordinance	69/56%	17/14%	22/18%	6/5%	10/8%
I. Increased enforcement of other town regulations	39/33%	25/21%	36/31%	5/4%	12/10%
J. Are there any other regulations the town should consider?( <i>use back of mailer</i> )					

**The following questions will help us better understand the results of this survey.**

<b>18.</b> What is your present age? ( <i>Circle one category</i> )	A. 18 to 24 – 2/2% B. 25 to 44 – 33/26%	C. 45 to 64 - 64/50% D. 65 to 74 – 25/20%	E. 75 or over – 4/3%
<b>19.</b> What is your employment status? ( <i>Circle as many as apply</i> )	A. Self-employed - 37/29% B. Employed – 63/49% C. Unemployed, looking for work – 8/6% D. Unemployed, not looking for work (18 retired) – 19/15% E. Attending school or college – 1/1% F. In the military - 0/0%	G. Full-time parent/guardian – 5/4% H. Disabled – 5/4%	
<b>20.</b> Where do you do <u>most</u> of your shopping? ( <i>Circle as many as apply</i> )	A. Farmington – 71/55% B. Madison - 85/66% C. Skowhegan – 55/43%	D. Waterville – 24/19% E. Augusta – 20/16% F. On-line – 5/4%	G. Other – 4/3%
<b>21.</b> Where do you do work? ( <i>Circle as many as apply</i> )	A. Farmington – 23/18% B. Madison – 25/20% C. Skowhegan – 11/ 9%	D. Waterville – 4/3% E. Augusta – 9/7% F. Starks – 29/23%	G. Other – 55/43%

### **APPENDIX B. STARKS BUSINESS SURVEY RESULTS**

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A Starks Business Survey containing 5 questions along with a request for specific information about individual businesses was mailed to all residents as an insert in the quarterly town newsletter. The survey was also emailed and/or sent by regular mail to known businesses.

Survey responses combined with local knowledge of home-based businesses indicate that there are at least 54 businesses, full and part-time, in Starks and a possible total of 60 scattered throughout the town. Thirty-six business owners representing 67% of the town's identifiable businesses responded to the survey. Some residents own more than one home-based business.

Based on the number of confirmed businesses (not all of which responded to the survey), the most predominant are home-based businesses, 61% of the total, and their numbers include: agriculture (20), contractors/construction (8), Forestry/Forest Products (5) and Crafts-Maine Made (4). All remaining categories consist of 3 or fewer businesses. Table 6-1 in Chapter 6. Economy contains information regarding each business that responded to the survey and the Starks Business Map displays their physical locations.

Responses to the business survey were as follows:

**Question 1. "Which of the following town actions would be most beneficial to your business? Check each that applies."**

For the first action "A. Making the information about your business available on a Town web page," 56% responded favorably. 36% responded favorably to "B. Publishing feature articles in the Starks Newsletter." Action "C. Placing business information and/or a business map on a bulletin board at the Town Office" received favorable responses from 47% of the business owners. Only 22% were interested in "D. Establishing a Starks Business Alliance." Section "E. Providing information on where businesses can apply for grants and technical assistance" was supported by 28% of the businesses. The least favorable action, receiving only 14% of the responses, was "F. Having the Town find ways to seek grants to promote business activity."

Other ideas from respondents included: establishing a yahoo email group of Starks residents for general communication; feature articles in newspapers; business displays at special events on Town property; having a town calendar with trade show or business related events forecasted 1 year in advance with groups car-pooling; seminars on financial consulting-how to read, analyze and utilize financial information to grow and expand businesses and how to develop sub-contracting opportunities. One business noted a need for road improvements.

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**Question 2 asked: “Would you be interested in attending a meeting to discuss ideas to promote Starks businesses?”**

47% responded yes to this question and 16% said no. Comments included existing businesses yes; future businesses only agriculture or forest based or infrastructure to support/expand them. Traffic impact was one concern with new, non-resource based businesses.

**Question 3 asked: “Would you be interested in being on a business sub-committee of the Comprehensive Plan Committee?”**

This question received the most unfavorable response with 42% saying no, 14% yes and 1 maybe.

**Question 4 asked: “Do you think there is any way the school building might be used to promote/support/expand businesses activity in Starks?”**

42% responded yes, 8% responded no, 6% were no sure and 1 individual didn't know. For those businesses that answered yes, 22% had suggestions. 14% strongly favored making business information available on a community bulletin board. Placing business cards, barter opportunities and job postings on the bulletin board and having access to a file cabinet, meeting space, a cubical and copier for Ag-based Economic Development were also suggested. A variety of ideas were recommended for bringing the public and businesses together. These included: a career center day to promote local businesses; seminars and/or guest speakers on financial planning; informational meetings on grants or cost sharing opportunities from state/federal agencies; organizing an annual conference with guest speakers for local businesses and those from outside the area, advertised/promoted well in advance; free seminars to help citizens establish short/medium/long range goals toward retirement; and seminars for town residents including business owners to address local concerns/issues.

**Question 5 asked: “Would you provide financial support or technical expertise for a Town web page?”**

Although 56% of the business owners are in favor of a Town web page as noted in Question 1 A., only 28% of the businesses answered this question in the affirmative. The remaining responses varied: 11% said no; 1 business offered minimal support; 1 noted support depended on the cost; 1 said maybe; 1 said possibly; 1 responded it would be difficult at this time; and 1 offered some support.

In conclusion, 56% of Starks business owners support the idea for a Starks web page containing business information but only 28% appear to be currently in a position to support such a project. Owners are, for the most part, in favor of promoting their businesses on a well-organized Town business bulletin board. Approximately one-third feel newspaper feature articles might be beneficial

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for the business community. Twenty-two percent of businesses are interested in information about applying for grants and technical assistance but only 14% are in favor of having the town find ways to seek grants to promote business activity. While 47% of business owners would be interested in attending a meeting to discuss Starks businesses, only 22% are interested in forming a business alliance and an even smaller percentage (14%) would be interested in becoming involved with a business sub-committee of the Comprehensive Plan Committee. Using the newly acquired school building to promote/support/expand business activity in Starks had a 42% approval rating. Because planning for the building's multi-varied use is in its infancy stage, ideas offered by 22% of the business owners may help guide the community in formulating future goals to enhance local businesses.

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### APPENDIX C. VISIONING FORUM RESULTS

Approximately thirty people participated in the Visioning Forum held on January 8, 2012. The forum consisted of an introduction and group sessions to (1) identify hopes and fears; (2) identify top priorities for the future; and (3) create a town-wide vision for the town by the year 2022. The following are the results of the forum.

<b>Starks Visioning: Greatest Fears (# indicates rank in order of priority)</b>			
Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4
1. Cost of town government causes significant tax hike	1. Not changing school districts	1. Weak sense of community as bedroom town	1. Loss of rural character, peace & quiet
2. Rapid growth alters quality of life	2. Losing sense of community	1. Village involvement less (Wal-Mart, jobs)	2. Tax hikes make people leave
3. Children's health and welfare may suffer	2. Losing sight of the human value	1. Few residents involved. Especially young people	3. Too much traffic, too many people
Expectations may be Unrealistic	2. Lose social focus of community (school, store)	1. Loss of family farms	4. Retreat from community
Split community	3. Losing younger generation	No change (no improve. in jobs, etc)	5. Big noisy development
	4. Unable to earn a good income	Changes Starks cannot control	5. Lose our agricultural heritage
	4. Less public safety, e.g. fewer Fire Department volunteers	Lose too much agricultural land	6. Lose our dark skies
	5. More paved roads	Loose forestry/logging, especially economically, environmentally responsible	
	6. Higher taxes	Unaffordable high taxes	
		Insufficient meeting of elders' needs and loneliness	
		Can't provide shared socialization & activities for youth	
		Not value physical beauty of environment, especially agriculture	
		Communication gets worse	
		Loss of landowner rights	

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<b>Starks Visioning: Greatest Hopes (# indicates rank in order of priority)</b>			
Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4
1. Build & maintain sense of community	1. Maintain agricultural Base	1. Bring more farms & agriculture here	1. Ag & forestry grow (community-supported)
2. Improve property maintenance and community pride	1. Keep momentum of old-fashioned sense of community	1. Sense of community grows – all ages, all welcome	1. Quality of life continues to improve
3. Economic improvement – business to survive	1. Develop pride of ownership	2. 12 acres at Community Building used (skating, snowshoeing)	2. Rural character continues
4. Switch school districts	1. Community Center fully used & appreciated	2. What’s good stays in place	2. Close-knit community
5. Help neediest to improve life in community	1. Acquire outside funding for infrastructure	Stabilize and advance Village area	3. Wide-spread spirit of volunteerism
	Business growth which meets community needs	Less screen time, more nature, outdoors time	4. Honesty in town government
	1. Attract capable candidates to help and to run local government	Bring community back together	4. More young people and families
	2. Improve volunteerism	Good discussion without hatred, screaming	4. Vibrant village
	2. Best education available for youth	Strong connection and love for where we live	5. Change school districts
		New school/ RSU	
		End to class warfare	
		School for young kids in Starks	
		More productive, innovative, sustainable community	
		Ethically, environmentally, economically responsible town	
		Supplies, demands met in town	
		Coffee shop at Community Center “Starksbucks”	
		Thrift store – Gently-used clothing	

## Appendix

Numbers under Priority Columns are the number of people that chose that ranking.

Suggestion (%=support/favorable in the public opinion survey, if applicable)	High Priority	Medium Priority	Low Priority
Improve public education: 63%	25	3	1
Improve high speed internet: 70%	18	6	6
Form a grants committee	17	7	6
Improve maintenance of gravel roads	17	11	2
Improve fire protection: 30%	12	16	1
Improve financial planning (roads, other capital projects)	12	9	9
Improve response to unanticipated events (examples: new CMP facility, wind farm, change in school district, un-anticipated state mandate)	14	5	10
Improve recreational facilities: 50%	6	8	15
Improve cell phone reception: 45%	6	3	21
More transportation options for those who don't drive or have a car: 57%	5	2	22
Improve town government: 31%	3	7	20
Improve access to health, dental and other social services: 30%	2	7	20
Improve police protection: 34%	0	1	29
Improve public access and emergency access on unmaintained roads: 36%	0	1	29
Increase town office hours: 44%	0	0	30
Pave more town roads: 37%	0	0	30
<b>Starks Community Building:</b>			
Library at the Starks Community Building: 56%	25	4	0
Information on Local businesses at the Community Building	23	6	1
School (day and/or after school programs) at the Starks Community Building: 48%	18	10	2
Regional community center at the Starks Community Building: 48%	18	9	3
Public access to computers and assistance in using the computer and Internet at the Starks Community Building	17	4	9
Adult education/community college courses	14	11	5
Place to provide social services in coordination with other agencies (information and office space) at Community Building	11	9	9
<b>Recreation:</b>			
Recreation areas – parks/playgrounds: 51%	20	5	5
Recreation for youth: 66%	20	4	5
Recreation for young adults: 62%	19	8	3
Recreation for seniors: 52%	16	8	4
Recreation for families and mixed age groups	8	11	11
Public access to rivers and streams: 46%	3	9	18
Public access to privately owned open space: 31%	3	1	26
Trails for ATVs: 36%	1	0	29
Trails for Snowmobiles: 34%	1	0	29

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Suggestion (%=support/favorable in the public opinion survey, if applicable) Housing:	High Priority	Medium Priority	Low Priority
Provide information on available programs, such as KVCAP housing rehabilitation/renovation programs, etc.: 50%	21	5	4
Housing rehabilitation program to provide low interest loans/grants: 52%	19	8	4
Improve housing (plumbing, weatherization, safety, wiring, heating, construction, aesthetics, abandoned structures, etc.: 65%	17	9	4
More senior housing: 43%	1	11	18
More affordable housing, in general: 39%	1	6	22
<b>Starks Village:</b>			
A community recreation/park in the Village: 69%	21	2	7
More businesses in the Village -87%	21	4	5
Enhance private property maintenance: 52%	16	6	8
Speed limits in the Village: 48%	10	8	12
More street trees and landscaping in the Village: 34%	8	6	16
More homes in the Village: 32%	3	6	21
Safer pedestrian paths along roads in the Village: 39%	6	2	17
Improvements to the public water supply (replace house connections)	0	1	15+n/a
Better lighting in the Village: 37%	0	1	29
<b>Development:</b>			
More agriculture: 67%	29	0	1
More locally grown food: 73%	27	2	1
More job opportunities: 78%	22	5	1
More forestry: 43%	21	8	1
More businesses to increase availability of goods/services: 78%	19	9	2
More homes in rural areas: 38%	5	4	21
More industrial development: 56%	1	6	23
More people living year-round in Starks: 35%	0	4	26
<b>Incentives, Regulation and Enforcement:</b>			
Incentives to encourage agriculture (retention of important farmland): 83%	25	5	0
Require that mobile homes moved into town meet federal health and safety standards: 38%	25	1	4
Encourage conservation of important land/structures (wildlife/fisheries habitat, farmland, historic/archaeological, recreation/public access, scenic)	23	4	3
Improve enforcement of town ordinances: 41%	15	11	4
Enact an adult businesses ordinance: 60%	13	5	12
Enact stronger junkyard regulations -77%	12	6	12
Increase enforcement of other town regulations: 54%	10	11	8
Increase enforcement of mass gathering ordinance: 70%	10	9	11
Improve enforcement of state/federal laws: 30%	8	4	13
Enact a noise ordinance: 69%	8	5	17
Incentives to encourage growth in certain areas, as opposed to others areas: 48%	6	8	16
Enact a building code to address health/safety issues: 38%	2	11	17

**APPENDIX D. MAPS**

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See Part I Appendix