

TOWN OF STARKS

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

PART I. RECOMMENDATIONS



Part II. The Inventory and Analysis is a separate document and contains the information used to develop these recommendations.

November 6, 2012

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Acknowledgements and Introduction

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many Starks citizens contributed to the development of this Comprehensive Plan. The Comprehensive Plan Committee was charged with developing the details of the plan and met one to two times a month over a two-year period in that effort. All three of the town's Selectmen participated on the Committee, which was remarkable given their other commitments to the town. The Planning Board also played an important role in reviewing those recommendations applicable to the town's land use regulations. Throughout the process many other town officials and citizens were involved in providing information, and in participating in public meetings, the visioning forum, the public opinion survey, the business survey, and in generally voicing their opinions on the future of the town. The community's involvement in the plan has been instrumental to its development and is greatly appreciated. The following is a list of those most involved in the development of this Plan.

Comprehensive Plan Committee: Gwen Hilton (Chairperson), Paul Frederic (Selectman), Joe Miller (Selectman), Sterling Doiron (Selectman), Carol Coles, Liz Frederic, Melissa Frederic, Jim Murphy, John Newsom, and Gary Vantol.

Mapping: Liz Frederic and Kennebec Valley Council of Governments

Planning Board: Kerry Hebert, Joe Hartigan, Jamie Doiron, Irene Fenlason, Gwen Hilton

Compilation of Public Opinion Survey Results: Trapper LeMay

Others who assisted: Jennifer Zweig Hebert (Town Clerk, Tax Collector, School Board Member), Erin Norton (Treasurer), Julie Costigan (Fire Chief), Terry Davis (former Road Foreman), Bob Clark (Budget Committee), Joe Hartigan and Anne Marie Simone (Water District), Cindy Kimball (former Selectperson and Food Cupboard), Elizabeth Smedberg (Chair, Starks Enrichment and Education Society (SEEdS), Ernie Hilton (President, Starks Historical Society), Stacy Benjamin (Maine Farmland Trust), and Gail Chase, Chris Huck and Joel Greenwood (Kennebec Valley Council of Government).

Acknowledgements and Introduction

INTRODUCTION

TOWN MEETING DIRECTIVE

Starks began updating its 20+ year old comprehensive plan in 2010. The Town raised \$8,000 at the 2009 town meeting, and obtained a state grant of \$10,000 to help complete the project.

PURPOSE OF THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

The Comprehensive Plan represents:

- A vision, or blueprint, for the future - for the next 10 to 20 years
- The townspeople taking charge of their future
- A way to control town costs and increases in property taxes
- A way to access grant funds, such as for roads, bridges, housing rehabilitation, or Community Center improvements
- A practical guide to managing growth and directing public policy
- A legal foundation for local regulations

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION SUMMARY

The recommendations in this Plan were developed based on extensive public participation. The Comprehensive Plan Committee consisted of about ten members who met one to two times a month to develop the comprehensive plan including the recommendations. The Committee conducted a town-wide public opinion survey, a business survey, a visioning forum, a presentation by the Maine Farmland Trust, and interviewed representatives of various groups and organizations to gather information and formulate recommendations. There were also articles on the planning effort in the town's newsletter (*The Voice of Starks*) and in the annual town reports. The Committee also conducted a joint meeting with the Planning Board, and distributed a newsletter and held a public meeting in August. The final Plan was made available for public inspection in early October, and two hearings were held later in the month in accordance with state law. The Plan was then voted on as a referendum ballot on November 6, 2012.

REGIONAL COORDINATION SUMMARY

The most significant regional coordination and collaboration recommendations are summarized below. The approach taken to address each will vary depending on priorities, specific timeframes and integration with the other towns and entities involved.

Economic Development:

- Participation in the development of First Park;

Acknowledgements and Introduction

- Advocacy for town-wide high-speed internet, access to cheap and clean energy alternatives and an adequate transportation system (state highways);
- Collaboration with nearby communities and others to promote agriculture and forestry.

Public Services and Facilities:

- Participation in current regional and inter-local coordination activities (recycling, ambulance, etc.)
- Potential regionalization or inter-local agreement for fire protection
- Potential opportunities for shared administrative functions
- Partnerships with neighboring towns in road construction and maintenance work (sharing of road crew and/or equipment)
- Shared purchase of sand and gravel resources
- Advocacy for adequate maintenance of state highways, particularly with respect to providing school bus transportation to/from RSU 9 schools
- Collaboration with the Greater Somerset Public Health Collaborative, Somerset Heart Health and District Public Health Infrastructures

Housing: Participation in regional housing coalitions to promote affordable housing, as needed.

Natural Resources: Collaboration in the conservation and protection of natural resources, such as the Atlantic Salmon fisheries in the Sandy River and its tributaries.

Land Use: Coordination with adjacent towns to assure compatibility of land use designations and regulatory and non-regulatory strategies, as needed.

MONITORING IMPLEMENTATION AND PLAN EVALUATION

The Comprehensive Plan's success in attaining Starks vision for the future is dependent on the people of Starks implementing the recommendations of this Plan. Nothing will be achieved unless town officials and others, mostly through volunteer efforts, follow through with the recommendations.

Monitoring progress in implementing the Plan should be accomplished as follows: The Comprehensive Plan Committee should meet each year in early January to develop a Comprehensive Plan progress report to be included in the town's annual report. A more detailed evaluation of the Plan should be conducted within five years to determine the degree to which the Future Land Use Plan strategies have been implemented including progress in promoting agriculture, steps toward implementing the Capital Investment Plan, and assessment of overall development trends. If the Committee's evaluation concludes that portions of the current plan and/or its implementation are not effective or desired, the Committee should propose changes as needed.

VISION FOR STARKS TO THE YEAR 2022

In the year 2022 Starks will be a small, rural community with a year-round population of around 700. Starks will still be a bedroom community, but more people will work in town due to telecommuting and a vibrant local economy. Even with more people, homes, businesses, and traffic, Starks will maintain its authentic rural character and community of socially and civically engaged citizens. The primacy of agriculture, shown by public opinion, will figure prominently in many areas of Starks' future: community character, economy, resource preservation, education, land use, and regional role. These assets will foster an exceptional quality of life based on pride, shared connection, and love for this special place with outstanding farmland and abundant river and stream frontage.

There will be people of all ages - families with children, young adults, middle-aged and older folks - all working and living together to make Starks a unique and interesting community. It will be a superb place to raise children who know life's rhythms and coherence. Its membership in an excellent school district, plus the wealth of child and adult education programs will promote many modes of life-long learning. The town's non-profit SEEdS organization will be providing many of these programs and others with assistance from outside grants and donations. The community will also honor its elders, valuing their experience and lore. Assistance for folks struggling will be aided by groups like the Progressive Club and its thrift store, East Parish Housing Ministry and its food cupboard, churches, and caring neighbors. A community garden and other efforts will also meet local needs and further civic pride and spirit. It will be a friendly, welcoming community with a wide-spread culture of volunteerism: self-sufficient, ethically and environmentally wise, and economically responsible.

Economic prosperity will have both self-sufficient and interlinked aspects. Resource-based businesses will be paramount, as always. The local food and fiber movement will grow and new uses for underused farm fields will lead to more production. Associated trades will emerge to link growers, markets and suppliers. Cottage industries and cooperative business models will multiply, aided by high-speed internet and the stay-at-home logic. Never to be forgotten is the big role that the unforeseen can play. If climate trends continue, the quality of life, land availability, and warming winters may attract significant entrepreneurial interest in resource-based businesses. All of this spells more income and jobs for local people, and greater prosperity for the town overall.

The Village will be a small, attractive, and vibrant place which will have expanded to include more homes and small businesses. Businesses will be busy providing goods and services, such as car repair, a grocery, an eatery, and a health center. The Starks Community Center, church, food cupboard and thrift shop will be part of the fabric of the Village. Lemon Stream and the 'Village Green' will enhance the ambiance. Having an identity all its own and nearby services and amenities will serve its future desirability well.

The Starks Community Center will be a welcoming place for people to obtain government services, and will be bustling with a variety of community uses. It will have a library, classrooms

Vision for Starks

for educational programs and social activities, Historical Society exhibits, an area for businesses to list their services and much more. The gym will be a busy place with community gatherings, volleyball, plays, dances and other activities. This in turn will spark an upturn in local arts and culture, and town pride. People will be using the grounds of the Community Center. Beyond the ball field and playground will be a trail for snowshoeing, walking, or exploring the area's wetlands. A community garden will exhibit easy, smart-gardening techniques to young and old.

Roads and facilities in Starks will be well-maintained through qualified employees and careful financial management, creative financing and grant funding. This will enable the town to keep taxes affordable. Most of the town's roads will be well-maintained gravel roads, while state and paved town roads will serve the majority of traffic in town. An active volunteer Fire Department aided by the Auxiliary will provide immediate emergency response backed-up by larger departments in the area. The popular recycling program and large item pick-up will reduce solid waste and lower costs.

Starks will retain its rich historical and cultural landscape, and will protect its many natural features including its outstanding scenery and recreational opportunities. With preservation of oral histories of its elders and through its well-preserved town records and documents, the townspeople will appreciate the best of their past, and will continue to preserve and protect important Native American and early European settlement sites. The historically significant Sandy River and Lemon Stream with outstanding fisheries, outdoor pursuits, and fertile intervale land will be prized by all. The town's forests, streams, wetlands and other open spaces will continue to provide outstanding vistas and essential habitat for many native species.

Spanning all the above is the priority of agriculture. Crucial growth areas will be vegetable farms, grain fields, cattle and other livestock operations, maple sugaring, improving pastures, fields and cropland, and niche farms. All of these will be highly valued for both their economic importance and scenic perspectives. More people will launch farm stands, farm shares, food buying clubs and edible landscapes.

Our forestlands will continue to support the agricultural community and others. Woodlot owners will harvest firewood and lumber for personal use, derive income from sustainable forestry, and prize their forest as habitat for wildlife, places of beauty and solitude, and an appreciating asset. Forestry and agriculture will use "best management practices" to prevent the decline of ponds and other water bodies. Much land will be open to the public for passive uses and to sportsmen for hunting and fishing. New homes and businesses will be sited to avoid impacting productive soils. Large tracts of forest with important habitat will remain intact. Some farm and forestland may be protected long-term through conservation easements.

Starks will be a wonderful place to live, work and play in the year 2022. Positive changes will have occurred as a result of a caring community of actively involved citizens and neighbors. It will exemplify a bustling, integrated rural town creating resilience toward the uncertain future by cherishing and adapting its past.

Recommendations

I. RECOMMENDATIONS AS TO HISTORY AND ARCHAEOLOGY

GOAL:

Preserve Starks’ historical and archaeological resources and cultural heritage.

POLICIES:

1. Protect to the greatest extent practicable the significant historical and archaeological resources in the community.
2. Provide adequate preservation and storage of historically important town documents.
3. Encourage landowners of historical and archaeological sites to preserve the historic or archaeological integrity of their buildings or sites.
4. Support and encourage the Starks Historical Society in its endeavors to preserve the cultural heritage of the community.
5. Require identification and protection of historical and archaeological resources in major developments.

RECOMMENDED IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES:

Implement the Goals and Policies as follows:	Responsible Party	Time-frame
1. Preservation of Important Town Documents:		
a. Continue efforts to preserve historically important town documents. Provide proper storage and preservation of these documents.	Town Clerk	Ongoing
b. Continue to convert important town documents into PDF files on diskette so they can be more accessible to the public.	Historical Society, Town Clerk	Ongoing
2. Starks Historical Society: Support the Society, as appropriate, in pursuing the following:		
a. Establish a joint Society and town municipal website that highlights town historical information as well as current affairs.	Historical Society, WEB master	2013
b. Continue to make the town history and other important historic books available to the public. c. Clarify and highlight 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. d. Evaluate and improve, if necessary, the condition of the many town cemeteries as displayed on the Cultural Resources Map.	Historical Society, Library Committee	Ongoing

Recommendations

Implement the Goals and Policies as follows:	Responsible Party	Time-frame
3. Starks Historical Society: Support the Society, as appropriate, in pursuing the following:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Videotape the town's roads to establish a baseline for future viewing of what the town's environs look like now. b. Transcribe the U.S. Federal Census data for Starks. c. Complete an inventory of Starks Historical Society items. d. Sponsor field-trips to historically significant sites in the town. e. Work to preserve historically significant sites, such as the Native American Burial Ground along Lemon Stream, and the Oxbow Cemetery in Norridgewock, formerly in Starks. f. Continue to monitor and support the preservation of National Register sites and other potentially eligible sites in and adjacent to Starks. 	Historical Society	Ongoing
4. Maine Historic Preservation Commission Recommendations: Pursue the following recommendations, as opportunities arise:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Conduct professional surveys of un-surveyed portions of the Sandy River floodplain and Lemon Stream to identify significant archaeological sites (See Maine Historic Preservation Map). b. Identify significant historic archaeological sites through professional surveys - focus on agricultural, residential, and industrial settlement of the town beginning in the 1770s; include cellar holes, such as those associated with the first homesteads, remnants of the Sandy River Dam, remnants of the ferry crossings, mill/bridge works, and quarries. See Cultural Resources Map. 	Historical Society	Ongoing
5. Conservation: Encourage the Somerset Woods Trustees or other similar conservation organizations in their efforts to preserve significant properties in Starks.	Selectmen	Ongoing
6. Regulatory Measures to preserve Historic and Archaeological Resources:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Adopt or amend land use ordinances to require the planning board to incorporate maps and information provided by the Maine Historic Preservation Commission into their review process. b. Continue to provide protection through shoreland zoning including resource protection zoning along most of the Sandy River and Lemon Stream. Encourage Madison, Mercer and Norridgewock to provide similar protection to sites on the opposite shore important to Starks. c. Continue to include consideration for the preservation of cultural resources, and historic and archaeological resources in the Starks Site Plan and Subdivision Ordinance. 	Planning Board, Town Meeting	2012 and ongoing

Recommendations

Implement the Goals and Policies as follows:	Responsible Party	Time-frame
6. Regulatory Measures to preserve Historic and Archaeological Resources:		
<p>d. For known historic archeological sites and areas sensitive to prehistoric archeology, through local land use ordinances require subdivision or non-residential developers to take appropriate measures to protect those resources, including but not limited to, modification of the proposed site design, construction timing, and/or extent of excavation.</p>	<p>Planning Board, Town Meeting</p>	<p>2012 and ongoing</p>

II. CRITICAL NATURAL RESOURCE RECOMMENDATIONS

GOALS:

1. Retain Starks’ scenic landscape and important natural resources to provide a healthful, attractive, thriving, and productive natural environment for current and future generations.
2. Protect the quality and manage the quantity of Starks’ water resources, including public water supplies, aquifers, ponds, rivers, and streams.
3. Protect Starks’ other critical natural resources, including without limitation, wetlands, wildlife and fisheries habitat, shorelands, vernal pools, scenic vistas, unique natural areas and promote, establish and/or retain access to those resources.

POLICIES:

1. Protect current and potential drinking water sources.
2. Protect significant surface water resources from pollution and improve water quality where needed.
3. Protect water resources in the Village area while allowing more intensive development in the Village area.
4. Conserve critical natural resources in the community.¹

¹ “Critical natural resources” those which under federal and/or state law warrant protection from the negative impacts of development: (1) Resource Protection Districts within Shoreland Zoning; (2) significant wildlife habitat (wading bird and waterfowl habitat); threatened, endangered and special concern animal species (bald eagles, mussels); significant freshwater fisheries spawning habitat (salmon fisheries); threatened and rare plant species.

Recommendations

5. Maintain healthy populations of native plant and animal species by conserving critical natural resource areas including: large blocks of wildlife habitat, deer wintering areas, habitat for threatened or rare species, shoreland areas, waterfowl and wading bird habitat, heron rookeries, fisheries – including salmon and brook trout spawning streams, and other important habitats.
6. Cooperate with neighboring communities and regional/local advocacy groups to protect water resources, as applicable.
7. Coordinate with neighboring communities and regional and state resource agencies to protect shared critical natural resources, as applicable.

RECOMMENDED IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES:

Implement the Goals and Policies as follows:	Responsible Party	Time-frame
1. Education: Conduct education activities on the following, as appropriate:		
<p>a. Encourage landowners to protect natural resources. Provide information at the Town Office/Community Center for resource agencies such as the U.S. Natural Resources Conservation Service, County Soil and Water Conservation District, State agencies (Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, Department of Environmental Protection, etc.), University of Maine Cooperative Extension, Maine Forest Service, and Small Woodlot Association of Maine.</p> <p>b. Distribute or make available information to those living in or near critical natural resources about current use tax programs and applicable local, state, or federal regulations.</p> <p>c. Provide educational materials at the Town Office/Community Center regarding aquatic and other types of invasive species. Encourage property owners to eradicate invasive species, and introduce only native or non-invasive species. (note: invasive species displace native species and can also negatively impact agricultural land)</p>	Town Office staff, Library staff Brochures/ WEB page links	Ongoing
2. Conservation: Conserve critical natural resources (See Critical Natural Resources and Water Resources Maps) as follows:		
a. Pursue public/private partnerships to protect important natural resources such as through purchase of land or easements from willing sellers to the extent practicable.	Selectmen	Ongoing
b. Encourage the Starks Water District in their efforts to protect the public water supply.	Selectmen, Water District	Ongoing
c. Encourage the Somerset Woods Trustees or other similar conservation organizations in their efforts to preserve significant critical natural resource areas in Starks.	Selectmen	Ongoing

Recommendations

Implement the Goals and Policies as follows:	Responsible Party	Time-frame
3. Regulatory Measures: Amend land use regulations, as necessary to address the following:		
<p>a. Continue to provide a high level of resource protection to rivers, streams, ponds and high value wetlands through shoreland zoning.</p> <p>b. Amend land use ordinances as applicable to incorporate stormwater runoff performance standards consistent with the Maine Stormwater Management Law and regulations.²</p> <p>b. Consider amending local land use ordinances to incorporate low impact development standards.³</p> <p>c. Maintain, enact or amend public wellhead and aquifer recharge area protection mechanisms, as necessary.</p> <p>e. Ensure that land use ordinances are consistent with applicable state law regarding critical natural resources.</p> <p>f. Designate critical natural resources as Critical Resource Areas in the Future Land Use Plan.</p> <p>g. Amend the Site Plan Review and Subdivision Ordinance as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. to require developers to look for and identify critical natural resources that may be on site and to take appropriate measures to protect those resources, including but not limited to modification of the proposed site design, construction timing, and/or extent of excavation. ii. to require the Planning Board (or other designated review authority) to include as part of the review process, consideration of pertinent Comprehensive Plan Maps (Beginning with Habitat) and information regarding critical natural resources. <p>h. Amend the Shoreland Zoning Ordinance to include consideration of g. above, as appropriate.</p>	<p>Planning Board, Town Meeting</p>	<p>2012/13</p>

² Title 38 M.R.S.A. §420-D and 06-096 CMR 500 and 502

³ Low impact development standards focus on maintaining and replicating the natural hydrogeologic cycle of rainfall, runoff, infiltration, evaporation and plant transpiration to minimize impacts on water bodies (pollution, flooding, damage to fisheries, etc.). Designs involve keeping stormwater on site by maintaining natural vegetation, utilizing porous pavement, and other techniques designed to prevent runoff.

Recommendations

Implement the Goals and Policies as follows:	Responsible Party	Time-frame
4. Public Works Practices and Responsibilities: Protect water quality as follows:		
<p>a. Adopt water quality protection practices and standards for construction and maintenance of public and private roads and public properties and require their implementation by contractors, owners, and community officials and employees.</p> <p>b. Conduct an annual inventory to identify and correct any erosion and sedimentation problems associated with roads, bridges, culverts and other town facilities.</p> <p>c. Install culverts that allow fish passage in locations with high value fisheries, where practicable. Maintain vegetation and shade along water bodies to protect fisheries and other aquatic species. Consult with the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife in these efforts.</p>	Selectmen, Road Foreman	Ongoing
5. Regional Collaboration: Monitor opportunities; participate as appropriate in the following:		
<p>a. Participate in local and regional efforts to monitor, protect and, where warranted, improve water quality.</p> <p>b. Initiate and/or participate in interlocal and/or regional planning, management, and/or regulatory efforts around shared critical and important natural resources.</p> <p>c. Monitor and participate where practicable in efforts to restore Atlantic salmon and other native fisheries to the Sandy River and its tributaries.</p>	Selectmen, Planning Board	Ongoing

III. AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY RECOMMENDATIONS

GOALS:

1. Assure the long-term viability of agriculture and forestry in Starks.
2. Safeguard Starks' agricultural and forest resources from development which threatens these resources.

POLICIES:

1. Safeguard lands identified as prime farmland, farmland of statewide importance, or capable of supporting commercial forestry.
2. Actively support farming and forestry and encourage their economic viability.

Recommendations

3. Assure that land use regulations, property taxation and other town policies support the growth of agriculture and forestry.
4. Promote best management practices to assure conservation of important farmland and forestland soils, and protection of water quality.
5. Take advantage of opportunities to collaborate with adjacent/nearby communities and others to promote agricultural and forestry viability.

RECOMMENDED IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES:

Implement the Goals and Policies as follows:	Responsible Party	Time-frame
1. Agricultural Commission:		
Appoint an Agricultural Commission charged with identifying options for encouraging and supporting agriculture and forestry in Starks, and with implementing many of the following strategies.	Selectmen	2012/13
2. Education, Information and Promotion:		
<p>a. Include agriculture, commercial forestry operations, and land conservation that supports them in local or regional economic development plans. (Also see the section on Economy)</p> <p>b. Support SEEdS in its endeavors to encourage and educate about agriculture and gardening, including the community garden, seed sales, field trips, etc.</p> <p>c. Provide information on farm service providers such as the Maine Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service and Farm Services Agency (USDA), Maine Farmland Trust, University of Maine Cooperative Extension, Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association (MOFGA), Coastal Enterprises and others.</p> <p>d. Provide information on forestry service providers, such as the Maine Bureau of Forestry, Small Woodlot Owners Association, Natural Resources Conservation Service and Farm Services Agency (USDA), and others.</p> <p>e. Provide information on conservation easements and other forms of land conservation, and the organizations such as the Somerset Woods Trustees and Maine Farmland Trust who provide these services.</p> <p>f. Sponsor workshops with the above agencies and others for farmers and forestland owners. Notify the community of workshops and field trips happening in the region.</p>	Agricultural Commission and SEEdS, as applicable	Ongoing

Recommendations

Implement the Goals and Policies as follows:	Responsible Party	Time-frame
2. Education, Information and Promotion (continued from prior page):		
<p>g. Explore other ideas, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Community meals programs with veggies for all. ii. Providing local farmers with production assistance, business planning and shared-use equipment. iii. Developing gateway signage to promote agriculture. iv. Community events to promote local farms and products, such as an Agricultural Fair in the fall (combine with Pumpkin Fest) <p>h. Seek grant funding for initiatives to promote, educate and protect sustainable agriculture and forestry in Starks.</p> <p>i. Provide information on local, regional and world markets.</p>	Agricultural Commission and SEEdS, as applicable	Ongoing
3. Property Taxation:		
a. Encourage owners of productive farm and forestland to enroll in the current use taxation programs, such as Tree Growth and Farmland and Open Space Programs, as mutually beneficial.	Tax Assessors	Ongoing
b. To the extent allowed by state law continue to maintain property tax values on farmland at affordable levels to support agricultural viability.	Tax Assessors	Ongoing
c. Consider Voluntary Municipal Farm Support program as allowed by new state law to lower property taxes on participating farms to ensure land continues to be farmed for at least 20 years and goes beyond the reduction available through the current use tax program (see 3.a. above).	Agricultural Commission, Town Meeting, Tax Assessors	2015
4. Conservation: Encourage the Somerset Woods Trustees or other similar organizations in their efforts to preserve significant farmland and/or forestland in Starks.	Selectmen	Ongoing
5. Inventory and Mapping:		
Conduct a survey of current and potential farmers, and other landowners with farmland soils (prime farmland and farmland of statewide importance) to better understand needs and future plans. Use this information to identify and map areas suitable to be included in the Agricultural Enterprise Area. (See Forest and Farmland Map, Existing Land Use Map and Future Land Use Map.)	Agricultural Commission	2012/2013 and ongoing

Recommendations

Implement the Goals and Policies as follows:	Responsible Party	Time-frame
6. Resolve and/or Regulatory Measures:		
<p>a. Enact a Resolve that Starks is an agricultural community actively promoting and protecting important farmland. The purpose of the “resolve” would be to identify what is important and then provide both voluntary and/or regulatory approaches to promoting agriculture and protecting farmland.</p> <p>b. Develop the Agricultural Enterprise Area and, as appropriate, incorporate policies and/or land use regulations into it.</p>	Agricultural Commission, Planning Board, Town Meeting	2013 and ongoing
<p>c. Amend land use ordinances to require commercial or subdivision developments in the Agricultural Enterprise Area to maintain areas with prime farmland soils and farmland soils of statewide importance as open space to the greatest extent practicable. This would entail amending the Site Plan/Subdivision Ordinance to allow/encourage open space subdivisions.</p> <p>d. Limit non-residential development in the Agricultural Enterprise Area to natural resource-based businesses and services, nature tourism/outdoor recreation businesses, farmers’ markets, and home occupations.</p> <p>e. Encourage land use activities that support productive agriculture and forestry operations, such as roadside stands, greenhouses, firewood operations, sawmills, log buying yards, and pick-your-own operations.</p> <p>f. Amend land use ordinances to require that developers put buffers between new residential and commercial uses and existing farm operations to protect farmers from perceived nuisances.</p>	Planning Board, Town Meeting	2013
<p>g. Research existing state, federal and model local ordinances with a view towards enacting ordinances to protect agricultural activities and the right to farm. Such ordinances might: (i) protect agricultural activities from complaints about perceived nuisances (such as manure/livestock smells, noise, etc.) provided best management practices are followed; and (ii) establish a registry by which the integrity of all alternative forms and methods of agriculture, particularly organic and so-called ‘natural’ agriculture would be protected.</p>	Agricultural Commission, Planning Board, Town Meeting	2013/14

Recommendations

Implement the Goals and Policies as follows:	Responsible Party	Time-frame
6. Resolve and/or Regulatory Measures (continued from prior page):		
<p>h. Investigate state and federal law as well as agricultural trends to determine the need and public support for protection for organic and non-GMO agriculture and food product consumers. If necessary and appropriate, enact ordinances and resolves to address issues of: (i) the burden of responsibility and liability for GMO and hybrid pollen drift; and (ii) the burden or thresholds of proof and responsibility as to agricultural activity libel, and food libel suits and actions.</p>	<p>Agricultural Commission, Planning Board, Town Meeting</p>	2013/14
<p>i. Monitor development trends and loss of productive farmland, and, if warranted, consider the enactment of an “Agricultural Enterprise Zone” that respects landowner needs and opinions.</p>		2017/18
7. Consultation with State Agencies: When developing any land use regulations:		
<p>a. At a minimum consult with Soil and Water Conservation District staff when developing any land use regulations pertaining to agricultural management practices.</p> <p>b. At a minimum consult with the District Forester from the Maine Forest Service when developing any land use regulations pertaining to forest management practices as required by state statute (12 M.R.S.A. §8869).</p>	<p>Agricultural Commission, Planning Board</p>	Ongoing

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS AS TO THE ECONOMY

GOAL:

Promote an economic climate that increases job opportunities and overall economic well-being.

POLICIES:

1. Support the type of economic development activity the community desires, reflecting the community's role in the region.
2. Support a vibrant rural economy with small business enterprises including home occupations, businesses that provide local goods and services, agriculture and forestry, and other endeavors compatible with the town's rural quality of life.
3. Make policy and financial commitments to support desired economic development, including needed public improvements.
4. Seek grant funding to support business development, particularly for the Village and for agriculturally-related businesses.
5. Coordinate with regional development corporations and surrounding towns as necessary to support desired economic development.

Recommendations

RECOMMENDED IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES:

Implement the Goals and Policies as follows:	Responsible Party	Time-frame
1. Economic Vitality: Support local economic well-being, including local business vitality, employment, and access to local goods and services through the following actions:		
a. Continue to maintain an inventory of local businesses based on periodic surveys and ongoing updates to the list.	Selectmen	Ongoing
b. Continue to feature local businesses in the <i>Voice of Starks</i> Newsletter. Also, continue to encourage business advertisements to help fund the production and distribution of the Newsletter.	Newsletter Editor	Ongoing
c. Develop a town WEB page and include information about local businesses, and WEB links to other sources of business assistance and employment information, such as the Kennebec Valley Council of Governments, Maine Career Center in Skowhegan.	Webmaster	2012 and ongoing
d. Continue to provide a space (bulletin board) and/or display rack at the Starks Community Center for local businesses to post business cards and to provide information about sources of business and employment assistance.	Selectmen, Town Office staff	Ongoing
e. Continue to provide access to business and employment information by allowing public access to the internet via computers and wi-fi at the Starks Community Center (Library).	Library Committee, Selectmen	2013 and Ongoing
f. Consider other opportunities to promote businesses at the Starks Community Center.	Selectmen	Ongoing
g. Provide workshops and training opportunities for the business community.		
2. Land Use Regulations:		
Enact or amend local ordinances to reflect the desired scale, design, intensity, and location of future economic development. Assure that regulations are not unnecessarily hampering desired economic activity.	Planning Board/Town Meeting	2013 and Ongoing
3. Public Investment to Support Economic Development:		
a. Include in the Capital Investment Plan public investments in the town's infrastructure designed to support economic development. b. Continue to maintain and improve the town's roads and bridges with funding from the Maine Department of Transportation, Community Development Block Grants and other grants, to the maximum extent possible. Investigate other creative financing approaches to support this infrastructure.	Selectmen, Budget Committee, Town Meeting	Ongoing

Recommendations

Implement the Goals and Policies as follows:	Responsible Party	Time-frame
4. Grants to Support Economic Development:		
Seek grants to support economic development, including support for businesses in the Village, for agricultural and forestry related enterprises, and others as needed.	Selectmen, Budget Committee, Town Meeting	2013 and ongoing
5. Regional Economic Development Planning Efforts:		
<p>a. Continue to support and monitor the development of First Park.</p> <p>b. Monitor and participate, as appropriate, in any regional economic development initiatives, such as those associated with state and regional entities (Somerset County Economic Development Corporation and Kennebec Valley Council of Governments), and other towns.</p> <p>c. Support regional initiatives that improve the town’s infrastructure, such as high speed internet, access to cheap and clean energy alternatives such as natural gas, and an adequate transportation system.</p>	Selectmen, Town Meeting	Ongoing

V. RECOMMENDATIONS AS TO HOUSING

GOAL:

Encourage and promote affordable, decent housing opportunities for all citizens.

POLICIES:

1. Support economic prosperity in the community and region by working to ensure that there is decent, affordable housing for people with modest incomes.
2. Ensure that land use controls support the development of quality affordable housing including rental housing, manufactured housing and accessory apartments in single-family homes.
3. Access opportunities to support housing that is safe, sanitary, energy efficient and well-built.

Recommendations

4. Monitor regional housing trends including affordability and housing for an aging population, and participate in collaborative efforts, as needed.
5. Seek to achieve a level of at least 10% of new residential development built or placed during the next decade be affordable to low and moderate-income households, including young adults/families and seniors on fixed incomes.

RECOMMENDED IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES:

Implement the Goals and Policies as follows:	Responsible Party	Time-frame
1. Land Use Controls: Review and amend land use controls as follows:		
<p>a. Assure that land use regulations allow a wide range of housing including affordable housing types such as accessory apartments in single family homes (subject to site suitability), rental housing, mobile homes and mobile home parks.</p> <p>b. Continue to require a minimum lot size of one acre, except for lots in mobile home parks in accordance with state law, and lots in cluster subdivisions as specified below.</p> <p>c. Consider updating subdivision regulations to encourage clustered house lots to permit more affordable development designs, with smaller lots, shared septic systems, and shorter roads and utility lines.</p>	Planning Board, Town Meeting	2013 and ongoing
2. Housing Conditions: To improve housing conditions, consider the following:		
a. Continue to provide a periodic curb-side large item trash disposal service, as needed.	Selectmen, Town Meeting	Ongoing
b. Encourage property owners to maintain housing and property in safe and sanitary conditions, and if necessary, take enforcement action to protect the health, safety and welfare of citizens.	Health Officer, Code Enforcement, Selectmen	Ongoing
c. Encourage non-profit organizations, such as the East Parish Housing Ministry, in their efforts to improve housing.	Selectmen	Ongoing
d. Publicize the housing programs available through public agencies, such as the Kennebec Valley Community Action Program, Maine State Housing Authority, Maine Department of Environmental Protection, and the Efficiency Maine Program.	Selectmen, Town Office Staff	Ongoing
e. Explore grant funding opportunities to provide financial assistance to low income residents for upgrading substandard housing and/or constructing new housing. Appoint a Housing Committee, if needed.	Selectmen, Housing Committee, Town Meeting	2014-2015

Recommendations

3. Monitor Housing Affordability:		
a. Monitor housing affordability based on building permits, property transfers, and housing costs on an ongoing basis and address issues as needed.	Assessors, Code Enforcement	As needed
b. Monitor housing affordability in neighboring towns and the region, and participate in coalitions as appropriate.	Selectmen	

VI. RECOMMENDATIONS AS TO OUTDOOR RECREATION

GOAL:

Promote and protect the availability of outdoor recreation opportunities for all citizens, including access to surface waters.

POLICIES:

1. Maintain/upgrade existing recreational facilities as necessary to meet current and future needs.
2. Preserve publicly owned open space for recreational use as appropriate.
3. Support public access to privately owned land for recreational use that respects landowners' desires for their property.
4. Seek to achieve or continue to maintain public access to major water bodies, including the Kennebec and Sandy Rivers, Lemon Stream, and Josiah, Pelton and Hilton Brooks, for boating, fishing, and/or swimming, and work with adjacent property owners to address concerns.
5. Coordinate with area land trusts, neighboring communities, state agencies, and others to preserve open space and provide recreational opportunities.
6. Identify and preserve high value scenic resources essential to maintaining the unique character of the town. High value scenic resources are those visible to the general public from a public road, public waters, public recreation area or other public location.
7. Require consideration for open space, recreation areas, and scenic views in new developments.

Recommendations

RECOMMENDED IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES:

Implement the Goals and Policies as follows:	Responsible Party	Time-frame
1. Town Parks and Recreation Plan:		
Create a list of recreation needs or develop a recreation plan to meet current and future needs. Assign a committee or community official to explore ways of addressing the identified needs and/or implementing the policies and strategies outlined in the plan.	Selectmen, Community Center Building Committee, SEEdS	2013 and ongoing
2. Village Area Parks and Recreation:		
<p>a. Create a parks and recreation facility at the Community Center which will include improvements to the playground and ball field, and the development of new facilities, such as trails, a picnic area, community garden and orchard, etc.</p> <p>b. Encourage continued maintenance and public use of the Village Green.</p> <p>c. Enhance public access to Lemon Stream in/near the Village.</p> <p>d. Maintain a green space at the corner of Route 43 and the Locke Hill Road (former Town Office site).</p> <p>e. Seek a community group to adopt and maintain green space for purposes of Village beautification, such as the local Scout Troop, community service through the schools, etc.</p>	Community Center Building Committee, Community Building Superintendent, SEEdS,	2013 and ongoing
3. Pedestrian, Equine, and Bicycle Paths, and Trails:		
<p>Work with public and private partners to extend and maintain a network of paths and trails for motorized and non-motorized uses. Connect with regional trail systems where possible. Consider the following:</p> <p>a. Village amenities – advocate for, maintain and improve wide road shoulders and other improvements to make walking around the Village including to the Community Center safer and easier. Also consider options for decreasing traffic speeds.</p> <p>b. Continue to work with the snowmobile and ATV clubs to promote responsible use of trails on private property and town ways.</p> <p>c. Consider opportunities for other trails, such as use of abandoned/discontinued road right-of-ways.</p> <p>d. Consider opportunities for non-motorized trails, such as river and/or stream corridor trails.</p>	Selectmen, Town Meeting	2013 and ongoing

Recommendations

Implement the Goals and Policies as follows:	Responsible Party	Time-frame
4. Public Access to Major Water Bodies:		
a. Village: Improve public access to Lemon Stream for fishing, kayaking, canoeing, swimming and overall enjoyment.	Selectmen	Ongoing
b. Support the continued maintenance of the boat launch facilities accessed by Arnold Lane to the Kennebec River.	Selectmen	Ongoing
c. Maintain and where desirable reactivate all existing public accesses to the Kennebec and Sandy Rivers, Lemon Stream, and Hilton, Joshua, and Pelton Brooks. Support adjacent/abutting landowners in their efforts to prevent degradation of the sites.	Selectmen, Town Meeting	Ongoing
5. Open Space Partners:		
Work with an existing local land trust or other conservation organization to pursue opportunities to protect important open space or recreational land.	Selectmen	Ongoing
6. Landowner Outreach and Education:		
Provide educational materials regarding the benefits and protections for landowners allowing public recreational access on their property. At a minimum this will include information on Maine’s landowner liability law regarding recreational or harvesting use, Title 14, M.R.S.A. Section 159-A.	Town Office staff	Ongoing
7. Land Use Regulations:		
Amend land use ordinances as needed to allow for consideration of the following: a. Minimization of impacts to high value scenic resources b. Consideration of outdoor recreation assets – existing trails, water accesses, etc.	Planning Board, Town Meeting	2012/13
8. Funding Recreation:		
a. Utilize state snowmobile and ATV registration reimbursements to support maintenance of and improvements to trails. b. Utilize grant funds from the state and others to improve recreation facilities and areas.	Selectmen, Town Meeting	Ongoing

Recommendations

VII. RECOMMENDATIONS AS TO TRANSPORTATION

GOAL:

Plan for, finance and develop an efficient system of public facilities and services to accommodate anticipated growth and economic development.

POLICIES:

1. Prioritize community and regional needs associated with safe, efficient, and optimal use of transportation systems.
2. Safely and efficiently preserve and improve the transportation system.
3. Promote public health, protect natural and cultural resources, and enhance livability by managing land use in ways that maximize the efficiency of the transportation system and minimize increases in vehicle miles traveled.
4. Meet the diverse transportation needs of residents (including children, the elderly and disabled) and of through-travelers by providing a safe, efficient, and adequate transportation network for all types of users (motor vehicles, pedestrians, bicyclists).
5. Promote fiscal prudence by maximizing the efficiency of the state and local road network.
6. Prioritize maintenance and capital improvements to the town's roads based on location, amount of use and available funds.

RECOMMENDED IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES:

Implement the Goals and Policies as follows:	Responsible Party	Time-frame
1. Transportation System Maintenance Plan and Priorities:		
a. Develop and update annually a prioritized improvement, maintenance, and repair plan for Starks' transportation network. b. Maintain the transportation system in the Village area (roads, road shoulders suitable for walking and biking, and parking), and state thoroughfares (winter maintenance) as the highest priorities. c. Monitor traffic speeds based on citizen input and state data. Address the issues as practicable, including advocacy for any indicated changes with the Maine Department of Transportation. d. Develop a plan to protect roads and culverts from flooding and road washouts due to beaver activity. Consult with the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife.	Road Foreman, Budget Committee, Selectmen, Town Meeting	2013 and ongoing

Recommendations

Implement the Goals and Policies as follows:	Responsible Party	Time-frame
2. Anticipated Capital Projects and Major Maintenance Projects: The following capital/major projects are anticipated within the next decade:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Complete replacement of Lemon Stream (Sawyers Mills Road) and Pelton Brook (Mayhew Road) bridges b. Replace Josiah Brook bridge (Brann’s Mills Road) c. Continue ongoing maintenance of existing paved roads d. Continue ongoing rebuilding and maintenance of gravel roads e. Undertake roadside ditching and brush removal f. Continue culvert replacements g. Explore opportunities to acquire sand and gravel resources h. The Transportation System Maintenance Plan (1 above) will identify and prioritize specific needs. 	Selectmen, Road Foreman, Budget Committee, Town Meeting	2013 and ongoing
3. Transportation Options:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Provide information at the Town Office on the availability of KVCAP transportation services. b. Post information at the Town Office about any other transportation services available in the area, such as taxis or resident ride-share opportunities, where appropriate. 	Town Office staff	Ongoing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> c. Take advantage of any opportunities to provide and/or improve pedestrian and bicycle facilities, such as wider road shoulders and bridges, particularly in the Village area. d. Stay informed and take advantage of evolving technologies as appropriate; such as new paving materials, more efficient road machinery, more environmentally friendly winter road treatment materials, and charging stations for electric cars. 	Selectmen, Road Foreman	Ongoing

Recommendations

4. Land Use Regulation:		
<p>a. Amend ordinance standards for subdivisions and for public and private roads as appropriate to foster transportation-efficient growth patterns and provide for future street connections.</p> <p>b. Review and update as appropriate the town’s Site Plan, Subdivision, Building and Road Ordinances to assure consistency with this Plan.</p> <p>c. Amend local ordinances to address or avoid conflicts with state laws, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Overall policy objectives of the Sensible Transportation Policy Act (23 MRSA §73); ii. State access management regulations – Driveway/entrance Permitting (23 MRSA §704); and iii. State traffic permitting regulations for large developments (23 MRSA §704-A) 	<p>Planning Board, Town Meeting</p>	<p>2013 and ongoing</p>
5. Regional Coordination and Collaboration:		
<p>a. Initiate or actively participate in regional and state transportation efforts, as appropriate.</p> <p>b. Advocate for adequate maintenance of state highways, particularly with respect to providing school bus transportation to/from Regional School Unit 9.</p>	<p>Selectmen, Road Foreman</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>

VIII. RECOMMENDATIONS AS TO PUBLIC FACILITIES AND SERVICES

GOALS:

1. Plan for, finance and develop an efficient system of public facilities and services to accommodate anticipated growth and economic development.
2. Provide community services and facilities to assure the health, safety and welfare of all residents.

POLICIES:

1. Efficiently meet identified public facility and service needs.
2. Provide public facilities and services in a manner that promotes and supports growth and development in identified growth areas.

Recommendations

RECOMMENDED IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES:

Implement the Goals and Policies as follows:	Responsible Party	Time-frame
1. Town Government:		
<p>a. Periodically, review and evaluate town governance and make improvements as needed.</p> <p>b. Consider the need for written job descriptions; bylaws for committees; town charter; adopting a code of ethics; security policies for information technology (computers, internet), administrative staffing; shared staffing with another town.</p>	Selectmen, Town Meeting	2013 and ongoing
<p>c. Require department heads to attend town meeting to present their budgets and answer questions.</p>	Town Meeting	Ongoing
<p>d. Continue to elect a Budget/Finance Committee to work with and advise the Selectmen in developing the annual budget and on other financial matters.</p>	Town Meeting	Ongoing
<p>e. Continue to improve communications with citizens through the <i>Voice of Starks</i>, town-wide e-mail, a town web page, public signage and a community bulletin board.</p>	Town Clerk, Volunteers	Ongoing
<p>f. Seek opportunities to facilitate more cost-effective and efficient delivery of municipal services and facilities through volunteerism to the extent feasible and appropriate.</p>	Selectmen	Ongoing
2. Data Management and Technology:		
<p>Continue to upgrade the town's technology (computers and other equipment, software, internet, etc.) to make information more accessible, user friendly and cost effective. Examples – computerization of property tax information and maps to be consistent with Comprehensive Plan maps, an LCD projector for presentations, etc.</p>	Town Office staff, Assessors, Planning Board, Town Meeting	Ongoing
3. Capital Investment Planning:		
<p>a. Identify capital investments needed to maintain or upgrade public facilities to accommodate anticipated growth and changing demographics. (See Capital Investment Plan)</p> <p>b. Initiate an ongoing Capital Investment Plan (CIP) to prudently finance capital needs by maximizing efficiencies, utilizing a variety of funding mechanisms, and spreading costs out over time. Include capital needs identified in this Plan. Update the CIP for review by the annual Town Meeting.</p>	Selectmen, Budget Committee, Department Heads	2013 and ongoing

Recommendations

4. Town Office/Community Center:		
<p>a. Maintain a reserve account for capital improvements to the Starks Town Office/Community Center.</p> <p>b. Consider the following Town Office improvements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Finalize town office configuration to adequately serve town government functions (design and space considerations); make necessary improvements. ii. Ensure safe storage of important records including fireproof storage <p>c. Consider the following Community Center improvements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Conduct an energy audit, and investigate options to improve efficiency, including alternative energy sources. ii. Make exterior improvements, such as a new roof iii. Make interior improvements, such as handicapped accessibility to the second floor, new flooring in the gym, new carpeting, improved acoustics in the gym, etc. iv. Consider other improvements associated with the Library, recreation, exercise and educational uses, etc. v. Make site improvements, such as the playground/athletic fields, community garden, landscaping, etc. 	<p>Selectmen, Building Committee, Town Staff, other organizations (as appropriate), Town Meeting</p>	<p>2013 and ongoing</p>

Recommendations

Implement the Goals and Policies as follows:	Responsible Party	Time-frame
5. Waste Disposal/Recycling:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Continue to provide recycling pick-up on a regular basis. b. Continue to provide a periodic curb-side large item trash disposal service, as needed. 	Selectmen, Budget Com- mittee, Town Meeting	Ongoing
6. Emergency Preparedness:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Continue to improve emergency planning and preparedness including provisions for emergency shelter, communications, equipment, training and other needs. Seek grants where possible. b. Continue to work with the Somerset County and state Emergency Management Agencies and area emergency services, as needed. 	Fire Chief, Selectmen, Health Officer	2013 and Ongoing
7. Fire Protection:		
a. Provide adequate fire protection and improve the town's fire insurance rating by making necessary improvements (e.g., adequate equipment, dry hydrants, training, E-911 system and road signage). Include capital needs in the Capital Investment Plan.	Fire Chief, Selectmen, Budget Committee, Town Mtg.	Ongoing
b. Encourage citizens to volunteer for and support the Fire Department and Auxiliary.	Fire Department	Ongoing
c. Continue to request input from the Fire Chief during reviews of major subdivisions and other developments, and strive to assure that town roads and subdivision roads are constructed and maintained to allow adequate access by emergency vehicles.	Planning Board	Ongoing
d. Work collaboratively with area towns to provide more efficient and cost-effective fire protection.	Selectmen, Fire Chief	Ongoing
e. Explore with other towns possible regionalization or inter-local agreements as an alternative to Starks having its own Fire Department.	Selectmen, Fire Chief, Budget Committee, Town Mtg.	2013/14

Recommendations

Implement the Goals and Policies as follows:	Responsible Party	Time-frame
8. Ambulance:		
Continue to actively participate as a member of the Anson Madison Starks Emergency Service.	Selectmen	Ongoing
9. Police Protection:		
Continue to utilize the services of the Somerset County Sheriff's Office and the Maine State Police for police protection.	Selectmen	Ongoing
10. Water District:		
<p>a. As appropriate assist the Water District in making improvements. Support the District's efforts to improve shut-off valves at each service, install hydrants at the end of two lines (Chicken Street and Lemon Stream Bridge), and in cleaning/servicing of the storage tank. (Town support may be needed for the District to obtain grant funding.)</p> <p>b. Encourage the District to consider adding new services where possible.</p>	Selectmen, Water District, Town Meeting	2012/13 and ongoing
c. Continue to work with the District to protect the public water supply, such as through land use permitting.	Planning Board	Ongoing
11. Health and Safety:		
Direct the Health Officer and the Code Enforcement Officer to identify health and safety issues, develop a plan, and work together to address the issues throughout the town, and particularly in the Village where houses are located closer together.	Selectmen, Health Officer, Code Enforcement Officer	2012/13 and Ongoing
12. Regional Coordination:		
<p>a. Continue current regional and inter-town coordination activities.</p> <p>b. Explore new options for regional delivery of local services to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Greater Somerset Public Health Collaborative Somerset Heart Health and District Public Health Infrastructures ii. Consolidation of services where possible and cost-effective - fire and rescue; town administration. 	Selectmen, Department Heads and others, as appropriate	Ongoing

IX. RECOMMENDATIONS PERTAINING TO A CAPITAL INVESTMENT PLAN

OVERVIEW:

The Capital Investment Plan establishes a framework for long-range scheduling and financing for the replacement and expansion of public facilities, including roads. The primary goal is to anticipate major expenditures, and to prioritize and schedule the funding of these projects in a fiscally sound manner that minimizes drastic changes in tax levels. By anticipating future needs, the town is better able to take advantage of outside funding opportunities as they arise.

A capital investment is a major construction project or purchase which requires funds from sources other than normal operating expenses (general fund). Capital investments are usually relatively expensive (\$8,000 to \$10,000 or more), don't reoccur annually, last a long time- 10 years or more, and usually result in fixed assets. This plan also includes major expenditures that do not necessarily fit this definition, but do constitute major expenditures for the town.

There are three general approaches to paying for capital needs: (1) Pay Out Now 100 Percent of Costs, usually through a town meeting appropriation; (2) Borrow and Pay Debt Service through a loan or bond; and (3) Save Ahead and Buy through reserve accounts. A balanced capital investment program may use all three of these approaches, plus other funding mechanisms, depending upon circumstances, such as lease-purchase agreements, grants, trust funds, donations and user fees. Starks has used many of these approaches to pay for capital projects.

The town currently maintains the following reserve accounts:

- Capital reserve account – While this account has been used to purchase major pieces of public works equipment, it is not restricted and could be used for other capital projects. As of 4/19/12 there was \$40,000 in this account.
- Revaluation Reserve Account – As of 4/19/12 there was \$41,000 in this account.
- Community Center Reserve Account – As of 4/19/12 there was \$4,500 in this account.
- URIP Road/Bridge Account – State Urban-Rural Initiative Program (URIP). The town usually receives around \$40,000 per year from the state. The money must be used for road and bridge capital projects (including salaries and materials) with a projected life of at least 10 years. As of 4/19/12 there was \$167,000 in this account.

The following Capital Investment Plan is designed to dovetail with the other recommendations of this Comprehensive Plan. The capital projects listed were identified in the inventory and analysis and are a key part of planning for the next ten years.

Recommendations

GOAL:

Plan for, finance and develop an efficient system of public facilities and services to accommodate anticipated growth and economic development.

POLICIES:

1. Finance existing and future facilities and services in a cost effective and fiscally sound manner to minimize drastic fluctuations in property taxation, prudently manage debt, and adequately maintain the municipal infrastructure and assets.
2. Explore grants and other financing mechanisms to support funding of capital improvements thereby reducing reliance on property taxes.
3. Seek to maintain adequate funding in reserve accounts for ongoing capital projects to keep from falling behind in maintaining and improving the town's roads and other capital assets.
4. Strive to reduce the town's tax burden by staying within LD 1 spending limitations.⁴

⁴ LD 1. An Act to Increase the State Share of Education Costs, Reduce Property Taxes and Reduce Government Spending at All Levels (enacted 1/20/05). The purpose is to keep the percentage growth in taxes below the percentage increase in personal income. The tax cap is applicable to state, county, and local governments.

Recommendations

RECOMMENDED IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES:

Implement the Goals and Policies as follows:	Responsible Party	Time-frame
1. Capital Improvements Planning and Programming:		
<p>a. Utilize this Plan as a basis for developing an ongoing Capital Investment Plan (CIP). Include projects that have been identified in this Comprehensive Plan.</p> <p>b. Continue to use annual appropriations, reserve accounts, borrowing, state road subsidies, trust accounts, etc. for capital improvements.</p> <p>c. Proactively pursue grant funding for projects.</p> <p>d. Explore other options for financing capital investments, such as lease-purchase agreements and tax increment financing, as appropriate.</p> <p>e. Maintain adequate funding in existing reserve accounts, and consider new accounts as necessary.</p>	<p>Department Heads, Treasurer, Budget Committee, Selectmen, Town Meeting</p>	<p>2013 and Ongoing</p>
2. Regional Coordination and Collaboration:		
<p>a. Explore opportunities to work with neighboring communities for shared financing of common or adjacent capital improvements to increase cost-savings and efficiencies. Consider the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Regionalization of fire protection ii. Sharing of town administrative functions (code enforcement, health officer, etc.) iii. Collaboration with neighboring towns in road construction and maintenance work (road crew and equipment) <p>b. Explore opportunities with other entities, both public and private, to maintain and improve capital infrastructure, such as the Community Center.</p>	<p>Selectmen, Department Heads, Budget Committee, Town Meeting</p> <p>Also the Building Committee</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>
3. Future Land Use Plan and Land Use Regulation:		
<p>a. Ensure that capital investments are consistent with the goals and policies of the Future Land Use Plan.</p>	<p>Budget Committee, Planning Board, Selectmen</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>
<p>b. Amend land use regulations as necessary to require that new development pays for associated capital needs such as roads arising out of the development and its future owners.</p>	<p>Planning Board, Town Meeting</p>	<p>2013 and ongoing</p>

Recommendations

A summary of capital projects anticipated for the next decade:

Town of Starks: Major Projects for the Next Ten Years			
Project	Estimated Cost (2012 dollars)	Timeframe	Source of Funding
Replace 87 Ford Truck	\$150,000	< 5 years	Reserve account/loan
Replace 95 GMC Truck	\$160,000	< 10 years	Reserve account/loan
Replace 92 JD Bucket Loader	\$160,000	< 8 years	Reserve account/loan
Fire Department Truck (pumper)	\$300,000	< 5 years	Reserve account/loan
Fire Station Improvements	\$20,000 - \$30,000	< 5 years	Grant/fundraising/ volunteers/general fund
Sawyers Mills Road Bridge	\$134,000	2012	*CDBG grant (\$100,000)/ URIP \$34,000)
Mayhew Road Bridge	\$172,000 - \$235,000	2012/13	*CDBG grant (\$100,000)/? URIP, bond, general fund)
Branns Mills Rd. Bridge	\$160,000	< 10 years	URIP/grant/loan
Road paving projects	\$650,000**	< 10 years	URIP/bond/reserve acct.
Major gravel road projects	\$325,000**	< 10 years	URIP/bond/reserve acct.
Paving of Public Works Lot	Unknown	< 10 years	Reserve account
Acquire sand and gravel resource	Unknown	< 10 years	Reserve account
Town Office (Interior): final configuration of office, fire proof storage	Needs further study	< 5 years	General fund/reserve account
Community Center (Interior and Exterior): energy efficiency improvements, new roof, 2 nd floor handicapped access, new gym floor, etc.	Needs further study (Roof replacement - \$45,000 - \$65,000)	< 10 years	Grants/fundraising, user fees, reserve account, general fund
Community Center Library	\$19,000	< 10 years	*Stephen and Tabitha King grant (\$15,000), other grants, fundraising (\$4,000)
Town-wide Property Revaluation	\$40,000+	< 10 years	Reserve account
Housing Rehabilitation	Further study	< 10 years	CDBG grant
Village Improvements	Further study	< 10 years	Grants, public/private participation
*The town has received these grants.			
**These are very rough ten-year estimates that require further study.			

Recommendations

Starks Water District: The town may want to assist the Water District in seeking grant funding to upgrade the water distribution system, including installation of risers (shut-off valves) for twenty services and installation of two hydrants (Cost < \$10,000)

AMS Emergency Services anticipates needing a new ambulance (\$140,000 to \$160,000) within the next decade, which would be funded through agency capital account and grants. There is currently \$90,000 in reserve for this purchase.

X. FUTURE LAND USE PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS

GOAL:

Encourage orderly growth and development in appropriate areas of the community, while protecting rural character, making efficient use of public services, and preventing development sprawl.

POLICIES:

1. Support the locations, types, scales, and intensities of land uses the community desires as stated in its vision.
2. Support the level of financial commitment necessary to provide needed infrastructure, particularly in the Village area where the Community Center, Town Garage, Fire Station, Public Water Supply and other facilities are located.
3. Establish efficient permitting procedures, especially in the Village area, to support continued enhancement of the Village as the center of community activity.
4. Assure the long-term viability of agriculture and forestry by protecting these critical rural areas from the impacts of development.
5. Coordinate the community's land use strategies with other local and regional land use planning efforts to the extent necessary to advance common goals.

Recommendations

RECOMMENDED IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES:

Implement the Goals and Policies as follows:	Responsible Party	Time-frame
1. Land Use Planning Responsibility:		
Assign responsibility for implementing the Future Land Use Plan to the Comprehensive Plan Committee, Agricultural Commission, Planning Board and others, as applicable.	Selectmen	2013 and ongoing
2. Land Use Ordinances:		
Using the descriptions provided in the Future Land Use Plan narrative on the next several pages, maintain, enact or amend local ordinances as appropriate to:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Clearly define the desired scale, intensity, and location of future development; b. Establish or maintain fair and efficient permitting procedures, and explore streamlining permitting procedures in the Village area and other areas where growth is most desired; c. Clearly define protective measures for critical natural resources (public water supplies, waterfowl and wading bird habitat, shorelands associated with rare plants and animals, and salmon fisheries, etc.). d. Clearly define protective measures for important farm and forestland. 	Planning Board/ Agricultural Commission/ Town Meeting	2013 - 2014
3. Future Land Use and Capital Investments:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Direct a minimum of 75% of new municipal growth-related capital investments into the Village area identified in the Future Land Use Plan. b. Include in the Capital Investment Plan anticipated municipal capital investments needed to support proposed land uses. (See Capital Investment Plan) 	Selectmen, Budget Committee, Town Meeting	2013 and ongoing

Recommendations

RECOMMENDED IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

4. Code Enforcement:		
<p>a. Provide adequate enforcement of Starks’ land use regulations.</p> <p>b. Provide the Code Enforcement Officer with the tools, training, and support necessary to enforce land use regulations, and ensure the CEO is certified in accordance with state statute (30-A MRSA §4451).</p> <p>c. Continue to provide adequate funding for enforcement of land use regulations.</p>	<p>Selectmen, Code Enforcement Officer, Budget Committee, Town Meeting</p>	<p>2013 and ongoing</p>
5. Monitor and Evaluate Development Trends; Adjust as Needed:		
<p>a. Track new development in the community by type and location. Include summary in Annual Town Report.</p> <p>b. Periodically (at least every five years) evaluate implementation of this Plan as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. The degree to which future land use plan strategies have been implemented; ii. Percent of municipal growth-related capital investments in the Village area; iii. Location and amount of new development in relation to the Village Area, the Agricultural Enterprise Area, the Rural Residential Area and the Critical Natural Resources Area (See Future Land Use Plan Narrative for Descriptions) iv. Amount of Critical Natural Resource Area and Agricultural Enterprise Area protected through acquisition, easements, or other measures. <p>c. If the evaluation (b above) concludes that portions of the current plan and/or its implementation are not effective, the Comprehensive Plan Committee should propose changes as needed.</p>	<p>CEO, Planning Board Comp. Plan Committee</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>No later than 2018</p>
<p>6. Regional Coordination: Meet with neighboring communities to coordinate land use designations and regulatory and non-regulatory strategies, as needed.</p>	<p>Planning Board, Agricultural Commission</p>	<p>As needed</p>

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FUTURE LAND USE PLAN NARRATIVE

Introduction⁵

The Future Land Use Plan is designed to implement the Vision for Starks through the year 2022 and beyond.

SUMMARY OF THE VISION - *Starks will be a small, rural community with a year-round population of around 700. Starks will still be a bedroom community, but more people will be able to work in town due to telecommuting and a vibrant local economy. Even with more people, homes, businesses, farms and traffic, Starks will maintain its authentic rural character and community of socially and civically engaged citizens. The primacy of agriculture, shown by public opinion, will figure prominently in many areas of Starks' future: community character, economy, resource preservation, education, land use, and regional role. These assets will foster an exceptional quality of life, based on pride, shared connection, and love for this special place with some of the best farmland in the region.*

Predicting the Future Based on Recent Trends

Based on the development trends of the past ten years, and projected population growth, this plan predicts there will be 60 to 80 new homes, including camps, built in Starks over the next ten years. As in the past, most of these new homes and camps will be built along existing roads where power is available. However, some camps may be built in more remote locations. New and expanded small businesses and home occupations will spring up in the Village and along state highways and town roads, perhaps at a faster rate than in the past due to technology and the desire for more local interaction. New and expanded agricultural endeavors will continue to develop, and forestry will continue to be important. The community will actively promote its vision for the future which will enable it to better respond to unanticipated changes and a sometimes uncertain future. The resurgence of community engagement, including active participation by young adults, suggests a bright future for the community.

Influencing Future Development to Support the Vision

With the vision as its foundation, this Future Land Use Plan builds upon the existing land use pattern and the natural assets of the community – its valuable farm and forestland, and other important natural resources. In designing actions to promote the vision, this Plan establishes

⁵ *State Directive: The Future Land Use Plan must be consistent with the vision and other policies in the plan, and divides the community into geographical areas identified as either most suitable for growth or most suitable for rural uses. The Future Land Use Plan will be the focus of the Office (state) review for consistency with the Growth Management Act.*

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“areas” to allow for actions focused on the unique characteristics of each area. These areas are as follows: the Village Area, Agricultural Enterprise Areas, Critical Natural Resource Areas, and Rural Residential and Forested Areas.

Having established these areas, the town has a number of options for advancing its vision for the future – ranging from non-regulatory approaches such as education, promotion, and capital investments, to regulatory approaches such as amendments to existing ordinances, to enactment of new ordinances. No matter what approach the town takes, it is important to understand that the future will entail potential changes in policies and actions to respond to the ongoing changes taking place, including shifts in community desires.

These areas are depicted on the Future Land Use Map.

DESCRIPTION OF FUTURE LAND USE AREAS

Village Area

The vision for Starks’ Village is of a small, attractive, and vibrant place with homes, small businesses and public and semi-public facilities. With the Community Center and Town Office, the church, the food cupboard, thrift shop and public open space it will function as the civic and cultural center of the community. The town’s goal is to further enhance the Village by continuing to maintain and invest in public facilities such as the Community Center, which will make it a more attractive place to live and interact.

The Village has many assets that present opportunities for the town. The Village is located close to the geographic center of the community with two state highways, which makes it easily accessible to most residents allowing for a central focus. All of the town’s public facilities (other than roads and bridges) and most of the community’s other semi-public entities (church, food cupboard, thrift shop), and several businesses are located in the Village. Lemon Stream, the brooks and wetlands, open spaces and overall topography are attractive features. The public water supply system may also offer opportunities for future development. Constraints to further development in and around the area are primarily poor soils and wetland areas.

Enhancement of the Village through public investments, community support for improving Village character, and appropriate regulations can support residential and business improvements and growth. The current one acre minimum lot size and other dimensional requirements (60 foot front setback, 15 foot side and rear setbacks) might be adjusted for the area. While public water is available to parts of the Village (23 homes, town garage, fire barn); there is no centralized public sewer. Given the lack of public sewer, the state minimum allowed lot size would be 20,000 square feet (about a ½ acre) provided the soils would support an

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adequate septic system. The town could explore options to allow smaller lots sizes in the Village and modify other dimensional requirements while maintaining adequate sewage disposal and protecting water quality. Over the past decade, there have been at least two business applications in the Village where setbacks and minimum lot size were an issue. Depending on the Village area designation – if it includes undeveloped areas around the Village – allowing clustered development designs, including clustered/engineered septic systems could also be an option to provide more affordable housing and protection of critical natural resources.

Critical natural resources in the area include Lemon Stream, wetlands and small brooks, and the public water supplies at the Community Center and off Locke Hill Road. Lemon Stream and its potentially archaeologically significant riparian areas are protected through a 250 foot shoreland zone (along both sides). Regulations within other town ordinances and state laws provide protection to natural resources, as well. The town will want to review its regulations to assure adequate consideration for these areas.

Public investments and policies that would advance the vision for the Village include:

- Improvements to the Community Center to foster community interaction
- A high priority for maintenance of roads, bridges, road shoulders and other facilities in the Village, including public water supplies, street lighting, public open space (parks and access to Lemon Stream) and landscaping.

Other issues the town must address in the Village are substandard housing and the lack of private property maintenance. An equitable approach that addresses basic health and safety issues and impacts to adjacent properties, including property values and aesthetics is needed. Enforcement of existing state and local laws will be necessary to adequately address these issues. The town could also investigate local interest in pursuing grant funding to improve housing and for business assistance.

Agricultural Enterprise Area

The Agricultural Enterprise Area is a major focus of Starks' vision for the future. Its purpose would be to promote the long-term viability of agricultural activities in Starks. The area designation would build on existing agricultural operations and farmland with consideration for prime farmland soils and soils of statewide importance, including underutilized farmland. The area designation could also include associated forestland that contributes to agricultural viability.

As provided in more detail in the Agriculture and Forestry Recommendations, the overall approach to promoting agricultural viability would be to limit regulatory constraints, and use

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education and promotion to support agricultural activities. Property tax policies would also support maintaining land in agricultural production.

In general, current land use regulations could coincide with this area designation with some minor adjustments. The existing one acre minimum lot size would allow residential and other non-agricultural uses to occur on small lots as opposed to requiring larger minimum lot sizes that might take up important farm and forest land. Mechanisms such as clustering on small lots to minimize the impacts of non-agricultural uses on important farmland should also be encouraged (See Agriculture and Forestry Recommendations).

Given the importance of agriculture to the community, the town should evaluate the effectiveness of its approach in five years. If there appears to be a substantial loss of productive farmland, the town may want to take additional steps such as enactment of stronger regulations.

Other than maintaining an adequate transportation system to support agricultural activities, the town does not anticipate any major capital investments in this area. The town would, however, want to take advantage of any opportunities to further support agriculture, such as grant programs to enhance agricultural viability.

Critical Natural Resources

Critical natural resources, such as water resources and important plants, fisheries and wildlife habitat, are important to Starks' quality of life. Many of these areas are protected through state and local regulations and the fact that many areas are not developable due to environmental constraints, such as wetlands and shallow soils.

This Plan envisions that critical natural resources will continue to be protected through existing regulations, including the town's site plan and subdivision regulations, shoreland zoning, and state/federal laws. As provided in more detail in the Recommendations for Critical Natural Resources, mechanisms for conserving these resources include education, land conservation through easements and purchase, inclusion of new and better information (Beginning with Habitat information) in development reviews, strategies to protect public water supplies, and other steps to control erosion and sedimentation of water resources. The town should review its current regulations and make amendments as needed to improve protection for critical natural resources, including changes to encourage conservation of these resources in subdivision and development designs.

The town does not envision any capital investments in these areas.

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Rural Residential and Forested Areas

Rural Residential and Forested Areas would be all other areas of Starks (not included above). These areas are mostly forested, with homes, camps, home occupations and a few small businesses scattered along public roads. These areas are very much a part of the town's vision for itself as a quiet, rural community. While it is generally understood that people would like these areas to remain much as they are today, it is very likely that new homes and camps will continue to be constructed in these areas. The recent change in school district, from the Madison area schools to the Farmington area schools may affect where these new homes are constructed.

This Plan does not envision much change in the town's approach to these areas. Land use ordinances would continue to regulate subdivisions, and site plan review would be required for commercial and institutional uses. The one acre minimum lot size, lack of a minimum road frontage, and subdivision requirement that large subdivisions have lots with frontage on internal roads should guide future growth in these areas. The town could encourage conservation/clustered subdivision and development designs to promote the preservation of open space, forestland, and open fields and protection for critical natural resources.

Other than continuing to improve and maintain the town's roads and bridges, the town does not anticipate any other major capital investments in these areas.

GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS FOR LAND USE ORDINANCES

EXISTING REGULATIONS:

The recommendations of this Plan will require review and, in some cases, amendments to the town's existing ordinances, as follows:

- Shoreland Zoning Ordinance: no update anticipated, review/amend as needed
- Floodplain Ordinance: no update anticipated, review/amend as needed
- Building Ordinance: Amend to be consistent with the goals of this Plan, to be consistent with other laws, regulations and best practices, and to improve overall format and usability.
- Site Plan Review/Subdivision: Amend as recommended in the Future Land Use Plan, to be consistent with other laws, regulations and best practices, and to improve overall format and usability.
- Road Ordinance: Amend to be consistent with the goals of this Plan, to be consistent with other laws, regulations, and best practices, and to improve overall format and usability.

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- Mass Gathering Ordinance: no update anticipated, review/amend as needed
- Hazardous Waste Ordinance: review/amend as needed
- Sludge Spreading Ordinance: review/amend as needed

NEW REGULATIONS:

This Plan is designed to allow the town to move forward with a town-wide land use ordinance that is based on the area designations in this Plan, if it decides that more regulation is needed to effectively promote agriculture and protect important farmland. No matter what the decision, the town always has the option of amending this Comprehensive Plan in any way it deems appropriate, and any new ordinances or amendments to existing ordinances will require approval at Town Meeting.

There are several other issues identified through the opinion survey or other public comments that could be addressed through ordinances. All of these would require further research and public input prior to being presented to Town Meeting. These include the following:

- Tower/Cell Tower Ordinance
- Wind Farm/Turbine Ordinance
- Noise Ordinance
- Adult Business Ordinance
- Fireworks Ordinance

APPENDIX: MAPS

1. Cultural Resources
2. Archaeological Resources
3. Water Resources
4. Critical Natural Resources
5. Farms and Forest
6. Businesses
7. Transportation
8. Public and Semi-public Facilities
9. Development Constraints
10. Aerial
11. Existing Land Use
12. Future Land Use
13. Shoreland Zoning Map