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# Comprehensive Plan for the Town of Smithfield

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PROPOSED PLAN UPDATE FOR TOWN MEETING MARCH 14, 2026  
TOWN OF SMITHFIELD, MAINE

## **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

<b>Chapter Title Page</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Chapter 1: Smithfield: An Historical Perspective</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Chapter 2: Recent Growth and Development</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Chapter 3: Smithfield's Local Economy</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Chapter 4: Government Facilities and Services (Including Capital Investment Plan)</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Chapter 5: Natural Resource Conservation and Management</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Chapter 6: Land Use and Development (Including Land Use Plan)</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>Chapter 7: Cooperation with Neighboring Towns</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>Chapter 8: Smithfield's Action Plan</b>	<b>37</b>

## **APPENDIX**

**Public Opinion Survey Tabulated Results**

## **Chapter 1: Smithfield: An Historical Perspective**

### **Introduction**

The character of a community is shaped by its people and its surroundings. Smithfield has evolved from Native American hunting grounds to a farm town to a tourist resort and a bedroom community. Understanding this community's history and heritage and making efforts to preserve it is one of the surest ways to keep Smithfield the way its residents desire.

### **An Historical Snapshot**

Prior to European settlement, the area that would become Smithfield was inhabited primarily by the Norridgewock band of the Abenakis. Not situated along a major river course, there were few full-time residents; some came here to farm in the summer, others to hunt deer and moose in the winter.

Following a period of unrest in the early 1700's, when French and English colonial powers skirmished nearby with their respective Native American proxies, settlement began in earnest. The Plymouth Company had patent to most of the land in the area and actively solicited homesteaders in the Sandy River Settlement, today known as Mercer and Smithfield. The first record of permanent settlement comes from 1799 when Joshua Newcomb purchased 300 acres of timberland and set up a sawmill between East and North Ponds. In 1801, he sold it to Joseph Greeley, and the area around present-day Smithfield Village was, for many years, known as Greeley's Mill.

By 1840, Mount Tom, located in easternmost Mercer, had been settled for nearly twenty years. Nathaniel Grant, William Hartford, Aaron Bigelow, Nathaniel Perkins, and Michael Groves had established homesteads on Mount Tom in 1821. This section of Mercer, plus Dearborn, and East Pond Plantation were combined by the Maine Legislature to form the new town of Smithfield on February 29, 1840. Mercer contained a thriving community, Dearborn was a struggling town, and East Pond Plantation fell somewhere in between. It's unclear where the name Smithfield originated, but today, Smithfield residents proudly proclaim it to be Maine's only leap year town.

Smithfield's Nineteenth Century population peaked in 1850 at 873. However, the combination of the Civil War, westward expansion, and the Industrial Revolution combined to shrink Smithfield's population over the next century like so many other small towns in rural Maine. Its low point came in the 1940's when the population hovered around 350 residents.

### **Industries:**

Agriculture was the primary industry in the nineteenth century. Local farmers transitioned from subsistence farming, to grains, to potatoes and apples. Dairy farming, once an

important piece of commerce in Smithfield, no longer exists; only one cattle farm remains active.

The town's population doubled between 1960 and 1980 and now hovers just under 1,000. But there has not been a similar increase in the local economy or commerce. Fewer than five percent of working residents have their jobs in Smithfield, compared to 20% in 2004.

### **Structures of Note**

The Smithfield Baptist Church, built in 1897, survived a major fire in 1913 that burned many buildings in the village, including the Simonds Hotel, Sawyer's General Store, and the Grange Hall, as well as many historical records.

Several dozen homes in Smithfield are over one hundred years old. A few farms remain close to their original grandeur; Town Line Farm, on Route 137, and the Stevens' Homestead one-half mile south of the village. Located on East Pond Road, the Kromberg Barn, constructed in 1810, was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 2009. There are no longer any public schools in Smithfield; however, the remains of eight older

Many cellar holes from homes built in the 1800s are present throughout the town. Four cellar holes, remnants of the first homesteads on Mount Tom, have been surveyed by the Smithfield Maine Historical Society. Numerous stone walls on Mount Tom have also been mapped. Granite quarries off East Pond Road and on the top of Mount Tom have also been located.

### **Recreation:**

Smithfield began to develop a reputation as a summer resort in the late 1800's, as the attraction of the lakes became evident to the growing numbers of people within and outside the state. The lakes were renowned for sailing and fishing.

The Symonds hotel, mentioned above, was rebuilt as the North Pond Hotel but lasted only until the late 1940's. More enduring has been Sunset Camps, begun around 1914 and still thriving today.

There are presently two active youth girls' camps located on East Pond in Smithfield; Camp Matoaka and Camp Somerset. Pine Tree Camps, situated on North Pond, caters to children and adults with developmental and physical disabilities. Camp Eastwood and Lake Ridge camps, popular in the latter half of the 20th century, are no longer in business. The Roller Rink, which originally operated as a casino and dance hall in the 1920's, still survives.

## Present Day:

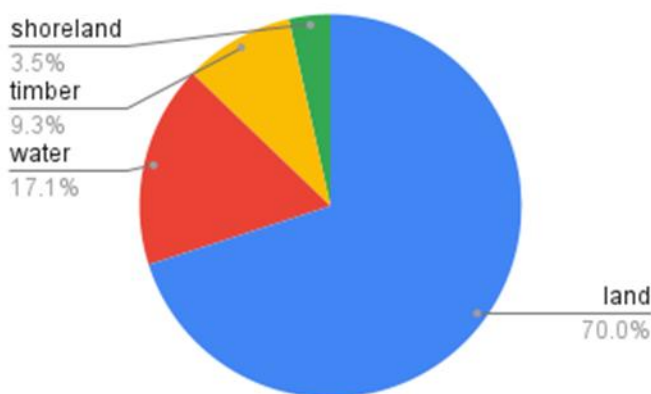
Smithfield has evolved into an attractive bedroom community, offering ideal hideaways for residents to live quietly and commute to their jobs in nearby cities and towns. Visitors continue to flock to East and North Ponds – mostly in the summers – to enjoy the beauty and recreation on the two remote beautiful lakes.

The Smithfield Maine Historical Society was established by a group of residents in 2009 and is dedicated to capturing and preserving the long and fascinating history of the town. The informative *History of Smithfield* written by Debra Campbell and Dean Ferm in 1990 has been augmented by *The Making of Smithfield*, written in 2014 by members of the Smithfield Maine Historical Society. Much has been learned about the history of Smithfield, but secrets remain to be unearthed about the sleepy – but charming – town of Smithfield.

## Chapter 2: Recent Growth and Development

Smithfield remains a small residential town of primarily single-family homes. The town is home to more than 30 businesses, including numerous small in-home enterprises. Some of the larger commercial ventures in the town are seasonal vacation and recreational businesses that have called the town home for many decades, including Camp Matoaka and Camp Somerset, which recently reopened after being closed for over twenty years. Alden Camps and Sadulsky Camps, other businesses in this category, have been longstanding contributors to the community's economic landscape.

Most recently, Smithfield has seen commercial growth in the expansion of the existing convenience store, two new self-storage facilities, a cannabis store, and a hair salon. Overall, the majority of the businesses in town are service related, be it accounting, pest control, or mechanics of various varieties. About nine businesses in Smithfield have at least five employees, and three—among them the two biggest employers with roughly 100 staff each—operate seasonally.



The area of Smithfield is 17% water and 83% land. Roughly 1700 acres of land in Smithfield are owned by timber companies, making up 9.3% of the land area, with 3.5% of the land area being designated as shoreland zone. This means 30% of the town area is either land that will remain undeveloped, land with limited commercial and residential use as it falls into shoreland zone regulations, or marshland or lakes.

After COVID there has been a surge in renovations of older seasonal homes into larger year-round homes, and the use of individual seasonal properties for vacation rentals. The character of the town as a summer vacation destination continues to evolve as consumer trends change. Internet and air conditioning have become standard amenities many vacationers seek in private rentals although the commercial camps still stay with the rustic charm of basic camps, mostly unchanged for 50 years.

The number of households in Smithfield increased from 372 in 2000 to 451 in 2010 but declined to 421 in 2020. Overall population is mostly stagnant over the 20-year trend, growing from 930 in 2000 to 1033 in 2010 but falling to 925 in 2020. Average household size shrank from 2.5 people per household to 2.29 in 2010 and to 2.1 in 2020. In 2020, 91% of households were single unit structures.

Over the past 5 years, Smithfield has seen a significant increase in the total evaluation of the real estate in town of 51.71%. The tax burden on the residents have increased 27.16% over this same period. No single factor accounts for the dramatic increase in property value. Some is market demand, pushing prices higher; some is recent construction of higher valued properties. Smithfield falls in the median of property value increases among the neighboring towns of Oakland, Rome, Mercer, Belgrade, and Norridgewock. These increases range from 2.24% to 96.13%. When looking at the tax burden, however, Smithfield leads the other towns whose tax burdens increased from between 10.3% and 19.54%.

### **Chapter 3: Smithfield's Local Economy**

The economy of Smithfield is tied very much to the two lakes within it. There are over 30 businesses that call Smithfield home, many not much more than a sign alongside the road. The two significant employers in town are summer camps with over 100 seasonal employees each. The average business in town employs fewer than 5 people each. With the nature of the small service-style business that has no need for a storefront, it is impossible to get an accurate count of how many businesses actually call Smithfield home as the physical address of these businesses is merely a mailing address.

Over the last 20 years, the median age in Smithfield has risen significantly, from 40 to 56 years old. The percentage of residents over the age of 65 has increased from 13.4% to 32% while the number of people under the age of 18 has dropped from 24.3% to 10%. The most recent data shows that around 8% of people over 65 live alone, with this trend rising. Roughly half of the residents of Smithfield have lived here for over 20 years.

The average per capita income has increased from \$21,492 in 2000 to \$39,718 in 2010 to \$53,925 in 2020, with household income increasing from \$37,045 to \$105,695. Ten percent of the households in 2020 had an income of over \$200K while 20% had incomes of under \$50K.

The average home value in 2020 was \$231,300. This was the average of shorefront and non-shore front homes, seasonal, year-round and mobile homes. Census data from 2020 show 60% of the homes as vacant. The US Census Bureau lists seasonal and vacation homes as vacant, providing a good estimate of the number of vacation homes in Smithfield. These figures show approximately 230 vacation homes in 2000, 270 in 2010, and 280 in 2020. This reveals the strength of the vacation destination for Smithfield, as even though population and households decline, the number of vacation homes increased.

Recent data show that 2.6% of Smithfield's residents were unemployed in 2020. As for educational levels, 38% had a high school diploma or less; 26%, some college; 26%, a 4-year degree; and 10%, a post-graduate degree. The vast majority of residents are either retired or work in the Smithfield/Waterville area. Businesses that have a structure for dealing with customers fall mostly into two categories: recreation and local services. These include a restaurant and ice cream shop that cater mostly to the local people; a convenience store which, due to its strategic placement, serves not only the people in Smithfield but commuters passing through; a hair salon; and independent auto repair garages. Other than recreation, the local economy does not offer services to draw people in but provides necessities and conveniences for tourists once they arrive.

One aspect of the economy that may be lacking for the local residents is the outdoor recreation activities that draw vacationers. With the closing and selling off of Sunset Camps on North Pond, a large number of residents lost their only access to swimming in the lake that does not require a boat. The aging population and increase in number of retired people means more residents are looking for social activities to fill their day and activities to keep them fit. Swimming access to the lakes, walking trails, and ball courts are a few of the recreation resources the residents have expressed a desire for. These facilities would also help the tourism economy since many families look to vacation with their children. Local activities are often at the top of the list they check out when determining where to stay.

Building on the vacation trade, Smithfield would be investing in its strongest industry while preserving its character. Resident feedback and history has shown that Smithfield is not an industrial town where people come to work. Smithfield is prized for its two lakes and open spaces. As access to these open spaces is being limited, residents see it as something that will change the character of the town, but there must be a balance between residential growth; the services to support that growth; and access to and protection of the natural resources, land, and water.

## **CHAPTER 4: Government Facilities and Services**

The Town of Smithfield, like many other rural Maine communities, relies on a combination of in-house services, regional agreements, and citizen volunteerism to meet its public service demands.

### **I. State Goal and Legislative Requirement**

The State of Maine's Growth Management Act mandates that comprehensive plans address the provision of essential public services. The relevant state goal is to plan for, finance, and provide an efficient system of public facilities and services to accommodate anticipated growth and to support the natural resource-based economy. Consistent with this goal, this chapter includes an inventory and analysis of Smithfield's public facilities and services, identifies current and future needs, and proposes policies and implementation strategies to ensure cost-effective delivery and proper maintenance of these services over the planning period.

### **II. Inventory and Analysis of Facilities and Services**

The quality and capacity of public facilities and services are key factors in determining a community's growth and development patterns. For a rural town like Smithfield, the focus is on maintaining high-quality essential services while managing costs.



## **A. Municipal Administration and Facilities**

The primary municipal administrative facility is the Town Office, which houses the Select Board, Town Clerk, Tax Collector, and other administrative functions.

**Current Status:** The Town Office serves as the central hub for local government activities, including elections, town meetings, and tax collection. Regular public meetings, such as the Select Board and Planning Board, are held here.

**Issues:** Evaluation of the facility's condition, accessibility (ADA compliance), and ability to accommodate future staffing needs or secure vital records is necessary. The 2025 Smithfield Comprehensive Plan Survey will provide current public sentiment on the adequacy of town facilities.

## **B. Emergency Services**

### **1. Fire Protection**

**Current Status:** Fire protection is typically provided by a volunteer Fire Department with a central fire station. The Town relies heavily on these volunteers and mutual aid agreements with surrounding towns.

**Issues:** The town must assess the adequacy of the fire station structure, the age and condition of fire-fighting apparatus, and the capacity to recruit and retain volunteer personnel. Future growth, particularly along the pond shorelines (North Pond and East Pond), requires ensuring adequate response times and water source access.

### **2. Emergency Medical Services (EMS)**

**Current Status:** Smithfield generally contracts for or relies on regional ambulance services for emergency medical response, as is common in rural Maine. This is typically provided by a service based in a nearby, larger community.

**Issues:** A key concern is maintaining adequate funding for high-quality, timely regional EMS service and exploring regional coordination opportunities to control costs and ensure rapid response.

### **3. Police Services**

**Current Status:** The Town relies on the Somerset County Sheriff's Department for primary law enforcement. Smithfield employs a Code Enforcement Officer

(CEO), and an Animal Control Officer (ACO) to handle local regulations and non-emergency matters.

**Issues:** The town must ensure sufficient local coordination and funding for the Sheriff's Department coverage to address traffic, seasonal population increases, and property concerns, especially around the lakes.

## **C. Waste Management and Utilities**

### **1. Solid Waste and Recycling**

**Current Status:** Smithfield's current household waste management system primarily relies on a transfer/disposal contract and private haulers:

- **Contracted Disposal Services:** The Town of Smithfield has a contract with Waste Management Disposal Services of Maine, Inc., for "back-gate services." Residents utilize this service at a location on the Airport Road in Norridgewock.
  - o Use of this service by residents and non-resident property owners requires a disposal sticker from the town office.
- **Private Haulers:** Residents also have the option to hire one of the private garbage haulers serving the area.

**Issues:** The town must address rising disposal costs, compliance with state recycling goals, and the potential need for future upgrades or regionalization of solid waste facilities.

### **2. Water and Sewer**

**Current Status:** Smithfield, being a rural town, relies overwhelmingly on private wells and septic systems for water and wastewater disposal. There is generally no public sewer or public water system outside of small, localized utility districts if they exist.

**Issues:** The reliance on private systems necessitates strict adherence to state and local regulations for septic system placement, particularly in the environmentally sensitive Shoreland Zones (around North Pond and East Pond) to protect water quality.

## **D. Education**

**Current Status:** Smithfield is part of a School Administrative District (MSAD/RSU#54) that provides educational services for PreK-12 students in the towns of Canaan, Cornville, Mercer, Norridgewock, Skowhegan and Smithfield with school facilities located in Canaan, Norridgewock, and Skowhegan.

For the academic year ('24/'25) Smithfield had 109 students enrolled in MSAD#54 schools and an additional two students attending schools outside the district on Superintendent Agreements, and two students enrolled at the Charter School in Cornville. Like many rural, regional school districts, MSAD54 is experiencing downward pressure on enrollment. Down 12.5% in the past decade, in recent years enrollments have stabilized to less than 1% annually.

**Issues:** Future planning must consider the capacity of school facilities, regional coordination to ensure fair cost-sharing, and the need for safe and efficient student transportation.

### **E. Public Road System**

Smithfield's public road system is a vital part of the town's infrastructure, connecting residents and supporting local commerce. The Maine Department of Transportation (MaineDOT) has a work plan for 2025-2027 that includes maintenance projects in Smithfield. For fiscal year 2025, the town is scheduled to receive \$20,800 in Local Road Assistance. In 2024, maintenance accomplishments included:

- 2 washed bridges
- 18 shoulder miles of mowing
- 3 miles of striping
- 4 shoulder miles of sweeping
- 50 linear feet of brush removed
- 90 square feet of pavement legend applied
- 28 shoulder miles of herbicide applied
- 10 minor signs installed or maintained

Since Smithfield does not have a Public Works Department, the Road Commissioner oversees the contract for snow removal and ice treatment for all public ways.

### **Other Transportation Elements**

While the town's road system is a primary focus, Smithfield also has other transportation-related infrastructure. The Smithfield Moonshiners Snowmobile Club maintains over 30 miles of snowmobile trails, connecting the town to nearby communities like Oakland, Mercer, Rome, and Belgrade.

## **F. Other Services**

- **Cemeteries:** Smithfield's Sexton manages and maintains five town cemeteries. The Gould Cemetery on Village Road has ample plots available due to recent expansion efforts.
- **Community Center/Recreation:** The Town Office Complex with its on-site Library and Community gathering space provides diverse programming and connection for all ages. It is also home to the local Food Pantry and Community Garden that ensures community members' basic needs are met. Additionally, the Norridgewock Recreation Department provides sports-based youth activities for children. The Fairview Grange and Smithfield Moonshiners Snowmobile Club contribute to local recreation and host community-wide events regularly.

## **III. Issues and Implications**

Based on the inventory and current trends, the following are key issues for Smithfield's public facilities and services:

1. **Water Quality Protection:** The lack of public sewer and water systems makes the Town's ponds highly vulnerable to contamination from failing or improperly located private septic systems. This is particularly critical in Shoreland Zones.
2. **Maintaining Emergency Response Capacity:** Smithfield relies heavily on volunteers for fire service and on regional contracts for EMS. Maintaining the financial and personnel resources for these critical services will become increasingly difficult with population aging and limited municipal resources.
3. **Capital Improvements:** The Town lacks a formal, regularly updated Capital Improvement Program (CIP) to plan and budget for the maintenance or replacement of major assets, such as fire trucks, public works equipment, and the Town Office structure.
4. **Technology and Communication:** Modern administrative functions require robust internet and communication infrastructure. The Town Office and emergency services need to ensure they have adequate broadband access.

## **IV. Policies**

The Town of Smithfield adopts the following policies to guide decisions regarding Government Facilities and Services over the next 10-12 years:

## **A. Administration and Public Safety**

Maintain Service Quality: The Town will maintain high public service standards in fire, EMS, and road maintenance, while seeking cost savings through efficiency and regional partnerships.

1. Facility Assessment: The Town shall conduct a comprehensive assessment of the Town Office and Fire Station to determine long-term needs for maintenance, renovation, or replacement, prioritizing accessibility and energy efficiency.
2. Support Volunteers: The Town shall actively support and promote volunteer efforts for the Fire Department and other committees through **public recognition**, training opportunities, and modern equipment.

## **B. Infrastructure and Utilities**

3. Protect Water Bodies: The Town shall prioritize the protection of North Pond and East Pond water quality by strictly enforcing septic system ordinances, especially in Shoreland Zones, and promoting regular septic system maintenance.

4. Long-Term Waste Management: The Town shall ensure the long-term viability and efficiency of the Transfer Station by participating in regional solutions and promoting resident participation in recycling and waste reduction programs.

## **C. Fiscal and Capital Planning**

5. Capital Improvement Program (CIP): The Town shall establish a formal, annually reviewed Capital Improvement Program (CIP) to forecast and budget for major facility and equipment expenditures over a 5-to-10-year horizon.

6. Regional Cooperation: The Town shall actively seek and maintain cooperation with neighboring communities (such as Belgrade and others in Somerset County) to share resources, services, and costs for public facilities and services where mutually beneficial.

## V. Implementation Strategies

The Town of Smithfield will undertake the following actions to implement the above policies:

Policy	Implementation Strategy	Responsible Party	Timeline
<b>A. Maintain Service Quality</b>	<b>5.1. Volunteer Recruitment Plan:</b> Develop and launch a targeted campaign to recruit and retain volunteer firefighters, offering incentives such as stipends for training or equipment.	Select Board, Fire Chief	Ongoing
<b>B. Facility Assessment</b>	<b>5.2 Select Board:</b> Hire a consultant to assess the structural condition, energy efficiency, and functional capacity of the Town Office and Fire Station, with a focus on ADA compliance and space for record	Select Board	Year 1-2
<b>C. Protect Water Bodies</b>	<b>5.3. Septic System Maintenance Education:</b> Collaborate with the North Pond and East Pond associations to educate property owners on the importance of inspecting and pumping septic systems every 3-5 years.	Planning Board, Code Enforcement	Ongoing

<b>C. Protect Water Bodies, cont.</b>	<b>5.4. Shoreland Zone Enforcement Review:</b> Review and, if necessary, strengthen the local Shoreland Zoning Ordinance criteria for new and replacement septic systems in sensitive areas, seeking consistency with updated state regulations.	Planning Board, Code Enforcement	Year 2
<b>D. Capital Improvement Program</b>	<b>5.5. CIP Establishment:</b> Form a subcommittee of the Budget Committee to draft a formal, five-year rolling Capital Improvement Program (CIP) for municipal facilities, fire apparatus, and public works equipment.	Budget Committee, Select Board	Year 1-2 (Draft), Annually (Update)
<b>E. Regional Cooperation</b>	<b>5.6. Regional Service Review:</b> Meet with officials from neighboring towns and the Somerset County government to identify potential new interlocal agreements for sharing services (e.g., road equipment, bulk purchasing, regional grant applications).	Select Board, Town Manager	Year 1, then Biennially

<b>F. Fiscal and Capital Planning</b>	<b>5.7. Grant Application Prioritization:</b> Prioritize state and federal grant applications (e.g., CDBG, USDA Rural Development) for public safety equipment and facility upgrades identified in the CIP.	Select Board, Town Manager	Ongoing
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## Chapter 5: Natural Resource Conservation and Management

Smithfield consists of 19.9 square miles (12,700 acres) of land area. Included within the town's boundaries are excellent scenic views, forested mountainsides, and wonderful lakes. Adding in the area of the lakes, Smithfield's total area is over 25 square miles. The population density, using 2000 figures, is about 46.7 people per square mile (about 14 acres per person).

Smithfield residents appreciate the natural beauty of the town as its greatest asset. Not only does it provide a classic rural setting, but it also attracts seasonal residents and tourists. These resources can also be managed for their wealth in agriculture, forestry, or gravel extraction. The conservation and wise management of natural assets will enable the community to thrive.

This plan helps assess competing priorities for these resources, guides decisions to sustain the environment, and shapes strategies for sustainable growth.

This chapter is organized into three sections: water resources, land resources, and farm/forest resources.

### Water Resources:

Smithfield's water resources are perhaps the town's most valuable assets, both as the foundation of the local economy and as a public health need. Water resources can be divided into surface waters (lakes, ponds, and streams), and Groundwater (aquifers).

### Surface Waters:

Smithfield's most prominent natural features are its two ponds: East Pond and North Pond. These are part of the Belgrade Lakes chain, at the top end of the grouping. Both lakes have



had water quality problems in the past decade and will need special attention to maintain them as an attractive asset to the community.

### **Comprehensive Plan:**

**East Pond (EP)**, located in Smithfield and Oakland, Maine being a part of the Kennebec River Basin, is the first of the chain of seven lakes known as the Belgrade Lakes. East Pond covers 1,717 acres with a mean depth of 18 ft. and maximum depth of 27 ft. (Lake Stewards of Maine, data from ME DEP, IF&W and Office of GIS). It is a relatively shallow, wind-driven, slow-flushing, spring-fed, groundwater seepage lake with no permanent flowing inlets, thus it takes 2.5 years to flush and is heavily dependent on snowpack and rain to maintain its water level.

East Pond empties through the Serpentine, a 2.86-mile stream meandering through a floating bog which flows over a dam into Old Mill Stream past Sunset Condominiums and into North Pond.

Central Maine Power Co. (CMP) built the earthen concrete Coffin Dam in 1947-48 to create an impoundment for recreation, fire control, and maintenance of the water level in East Pond. The East Pond Association (EPA), formed in July of 1948, paid taxes on the dam from 1949 to 1965 when CMP sold the dam and surrounding properties to the East Pond Association who continue to pay Smithfield taxes.

By 1975, the Maine Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) was monitoring Smithfield's water quality. Recurring algal blooms started in 1993, and Colby College began ongoing studies of East Pond by 1999. Following years of research by Colby College, water quality monitoring by certified Volunteer Lake Monitor Program (VLMP) trainees, water sampling by 7 Lakes Alliance, and data collected by the Maine DEP, a water quality specialist was brought in to evaluate the information. A biomanipulation project that involved removing large numbers of white perch was carried out, but it resulted in only minor changes to the water quality. It was clear that phosphorus from roads, shoreline erosion, agricultural areas, and other sources was harming the lake. While encouraging the planting of buffer zones and adopting Best Management Practices to reduce runoff, these measures alone were not sufficient.

The difficult and very costly decision to move forward with an Alum Treatment was made. In 2018, the East Pond Association with the support of 7 Lakes Alliance hired a science-based environmental water quality treatment company to complete a two-stage Alum Treatment on 67% of the deepest areas of the lake. A floc(blanket) of Alum covered the sediments creating a barrier that retards the release of the phosphorus that had accumulated over the years. The response was immediate with the water quality visibly improving. In 2018 East

Pond was the largest New England lake to be treated with Alum. The duration of the Alum Treatment is unknown. The water is still diligently monitored and studied year-round as it is known that future treatment will be needed. The North American Lake Management Society (NALMS) which focuses on the management and protection of lakes continues to be interested in East Pond's story.

The East Pond Association pays to have Courtesy Boat Inspectors (CBIs) at the Oakland Public Boat Launch owned by the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife (IF&W) to inspect boats, trailers, fishing equipment, and dry wells for plants as boaters enter and leave EP. Dedicated volunteers cover additional hours. In 2021, Curly-leaf Pondweed, a highly aggressive invasive aquatic plant, was discovered by a resident. Dive teams have been pulling plants every summer as that is the preferred method for containment. This plant drops turions (seeds) which can grow under the ice or remain dormant for up to five years. The 7 Lakes Alliance divers have made great strides in reducing the number of plants and will continue working on this infestation. The East Pond Association also participates in annual Plant Paddles inspect shorelines for invasive plants and has numerous residents involved in the Adopt-A-Shore program which encourages residents to do 2 annual visual inspections of designated shorelines. A Non -Point Source (NPS) Watershed Survey was conducted in 2024 by 7 Lakes Alliance and the East Pond Association in conjunction with the DEP to document erosion sites that could contribute to poor water quality and to make it possible to apply for grants to help with projects like repairing erosion damage and upgrading camp roads. Identified issues will be addressed and suggested remediation will be offered. The East Pond Association continues to provide free property evaluations with recommendations for keeping storm water pollutants out of the lake and strives to educate property owners on Safety and Best Management Practices.

The East Pond Association's goal is to "Keep East Pond Picture Perfect" for future generations.

**North Pond** is located on the western side of Smithfield and is second in the seven-lake Belgrade chain. Including Little North Pond, the lake encompasses 2,531 acres. North Pond is shallow with a maximum depth of 19 feet and with a flushing rate of 1.6 per year. The watershed is located in the towns of Smithfield (57%), Mercer (28%), Rome (14%), and Norridgewock (1%). On the north end of the lake the major tributaries include Leech Brook, Bog Stream, and Pattee Brook. East Pond drains into North Pond through the Serpentine. Water level management is via the Mill Dam between the Serpentine and North Pond and a dam at the outlet of North Pond on Great Meadow stream which flows into Great Pond. The North Pond Association communicates to the town of Smithfield when the dam beams on

Great Meadow Stream are raised or lowered. The water level is also controlled by natural precipitation and evaporation.

North Pond has suffered algal blooms each year since 2018. The Maine Department of Environmental Protection (MDEP) lists North Pond as Threatened and the pond is likely to be listed as Impaired at the next evaluation by Maine DEP. North Pond has a comprehensive 9-Element Watershed Plan (2024-2033) based on scientific studies which provides best practices to manage the health of North Pond. Key elements of the plan include aluminum (Alum) treatment to address the internal phosphorus load from the sediments as well as erosion control strategies to minimize phosphorus runoff into the water. The Alum treatment is expected to cost in excess of \$3 million. The North Pond Association (NPA) has partnered with 7 Lakes Alliance (7LA) to raise money for the North Pond Remediation Fund which will address the internal and external phosphorus loads that feed the algal blooms. The significant decline in water quality has made North Pond unsuitable for recreational use for weeks at a time. Blue-green algae (cyanobacteria) has been found in North Pond. This alga has the ability to produce microcystin, a harmful toxin that could pose a health risk to watershed residents. 7LA scientists regularly test North Pond during blooms and to date toxic levels of microcystin have not been found.

Approximately 350 of the 465 shoreline lots around North Pond are developed. Ninety percent of the developed lots are within 100 feet of the water. Public access is via a state owned boat launch in Smithfield at the northeastern part of the lake. The towns of Smithfield, Mercer, and Rome help the North Pond Association fund its Invasive Aquatics Program which includes the Courtesy Boat Inspection Program (CBI) at the boat launch checking vessels for invasive plants. Unfortunately, in 2024, North Pond was found to have a significant infestation of the invasive aquatic plant, curly-leaf pondweed (CLPW). A paddle survey organized by 7LA and the North Pond Association (NPA) identified the infestation at the northern end of the lake near Pomerleau Island. Specially trained divers from 7LA working with the Maine DEP removed 505.6 gallons of plants and their turions (buds that germinate) in 2024; however, these turions can remain dormant for up to 5 years. Ongoing remediation will be needed for years to come. The estimated expense for CLPW removal for 2025 is \$10,000.

### **Groundwater:**

Underground water resources are, if anything, more important than surface water. Groundwater provides fresh drinking water for the vast majority of Smithfield residents. While a decent supply of water can be obtained from wells almost anywhere in town, especially when drilled into bedrock, appreciable volumes are most likely within what is termed Sand and Gravel Aquifers. These volumes are necessary for some commercial uses and public water supplies such as schools or mobile home parks on central wells.

The aquifers located in Smithfield and shown on the map of water resources are significant sand and gravel aquifers. Contrary to popular opinion, low density residential development does not pose a threat to sand and gravel aquifers (the sandy soil allows rapid infiltration of rainwater, which easily dilutes sanitary residential wastes). With commercial development, on the other hand, there is the threat of chemicals which are toxic at much lower concentrations being spilled or poured onto the ground. All petroleum products, as well as chemicals used in pest control, wood- and metal-finishing, dry cleaning, and other industrial processes fall into this category. Unfortunately, the aquifers depicted encompass a good portion of Routes 8 and 137 and Smithfield Village. This suggests that, short of prohibiting commercial development in those areas, a strict review and regulation of chemical-using businesses might be more effective.

Located within Smithfield are five wells designated as Public Water Systems. The five water supplies (defined as serving 25 or more people) are shown on the Water Resources Map:

**Sunset Camp:** on North Pond, is a transient water system, served by a 21= well point. Although in the village area in close proximity to potential contamination sources, it annually passes testing, as required by state law.

**Sadulsky's Camp:** a transient water system with a bedrock well, serves private and commercial camps on East Pond. The water supply has experienced no problems, and the property is large enough to encompass a reasonable recharge area.

**The Smithfield Elementary School:** prior to its closure in 2008 and conversion to town offices and fire department in 2009, was served by a bedrock well. The school had installed a filtration system in approximately 2003.

**Camp Matoaka:** located on the southwest shore of East Pond, is a transient water system serving a girls camp. It is a bedrock well located on a large enough parcel to encompass a reasonable recharge area.

**Camp Somerset:** Well HD 1 Inell was hydro fractured on February 20, 2018, by Weeks & Sons Well Drilling.

Well HD 2 is a 7-in. diameter, 102-ft. gravel well with a safe yield of 30-g.p.m. The well was drilled on July 12, 2022, by Weeks and Sons Well Drilling.

## **Land Resources:**

This section covers land-based resources in Smithfield, including topography, soil types, wetlands, wildlife, and scenic assets. The subsequent section covers the cultural land-based resources of farm forest land.

### **Topography and Soils Profile:**

Smithfield's landscape is dominated by its two large ponds but, nevertheless, manages to have some admirable topography. It varies from the low elevation of about 250 feet (Great

Meadow) to 742 feet at the peak of Mt. Tom. Other prominent hills in town include Dodling Hill (674 feet), Oak Hill (673), and Green Hill (547). As might be expected, all of these hills exhibit some extent of slopes too steep for development. There are also stretches of the esker (a long, winding ridge made of stratified sand and gravel, formed by meltwater flowing through tunnels beneath or within glaciers.) south of Smithfield Village and along Route 8/137 that exceed the rule-of-thumb 20 percent slope. Much of the remaining land in Smithfield is gently sloped and contains soils that are appropriate for agriculture or development. The best examples may be along East Pond Road, at the intersection of East Pond Road and Route 8, between Routes 8/137 and East Pond, and Route 137 north of Oak Hill Road. The actual extent of good soil is shown on the Soil Map.

Poor soil is much easier to find in Smithfield, and consists of wetland soil, those with a high water table, and soils too steep/erodible. Poor soils do not inhibit development by their nature (except flooded wetlands). The constraint comes in attempting to design a functioning subsurface waste disposal system; the cost is almost prohibitive. A considerable portion of the North Pond shoreline falls into this category (even though it is already developed), as well as the Serpentine and land along Route 8 and Route 225.

### **Floodplains:**

A floodplain is an area adjacent to a water body which is expected to be inundated by flood at least once every hundred years, or that has a one-in-one-hundred chance of flooding on any given year. Obviously, this is the area where one would not want to place a lot of valuable property. Because there are state and federal regulations restricting private activities in floodplains, as well as a federally mandated local ordinance, Smithfield must be aware of their locations within town.

The map depicting floodplain areas in Smithfield shows that most of the floodplain is restricted to the bogs scattered through town. Streams have a floodplain extending from 50 to 200 feet from stream banks, more in the case of the upper Serpentine. For planning purposes, the primary interest is in where floodplain impinges on developing areas. The

three places where floodplain areas are in the vicinity of roads are: 1) The bog at the western end of North Shore Drive, 2) the Serpentine as it passes through the village (approximately 150-200 feet on each side of the stream), and at the south end of town, where Routes 225, 8, and 137 join.

### **Wetlands:**

Smithfield has quite a few wetlands associated with its pond system and the Serpentine, including East Pond Bog. There is also a large wetland area east of East Pond Road. Wetlands play a valuable role in absorbing excess rainwater (moderating floods), filtering out phosphorous and other nutrients and pollutants, and incubating fish, waterfowl, and other wildlife. But wetland areas make poor development sites, being expensive to engineer septic systems, roads, and foundations.

Smithfield wetlands of significant size are shown on the accompanying map. Most of these are covered to some extent by shoreland zoning regulation. Since these regulations exclude smaller wetlands, the only way to protect them may be through case-by-case review of development proposals.

### **Wildlife Habitat:**

Wildlife in Smithfield is diverse and abundant. The town's priorities should be: first, to preserve habitat for endangered species, second, to encourage species which may provide economic benefit to the towns (e.g. fish, big game), and third, to permit new development in such a way as to be compatible with wildlife habitat.

**Fisheries:** North Pond and East Pond have long-standing reputations for being excellent warm-water fisheries, although now more in demand for ice-fishing than open water. North Pond is the site of the record-sized pike for Maine but is no longer stocked by the State. East Pond has no pike but does support very good bass fishing. Since the boat landing was built in Oakland, the State has been stocking East Pond.

**Endangered Species:** The state Department of Conservation has a Natural Areas Program that identifies and tracks any reports of endangered plant or animal species. The Natural Areas Program has no record of endangered species being sighted in Smithfield. However, bald eagles have been sighted at irregular intervals over both ponds, and there is an identified eagle nesting site on the Rome shore of North Pond.

**Waterfowl-wading bird habitat:** The accompanying map illustrates wetlands that have been identified by the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife (IFW) as wetlands of moderate or high value for habitat. Not all wetlands are rated. Waterfowl require a variety of

conditions, including open water and emergent plants, so predominantly shrub or forested wetlands would not be considered of value.

The Serpentine Stream-East Pond Bog area is the largest area of prime waterfowl habitat. There are six other, smaller waterfowl habitats scattered throughout town.

**Deeryards:** Winter deeryards, or deer wintering areas, are considered by the state to be a critical element of deer habitat. The worst season for deer is the winter, and good habitat at that season which consists of enough cover to reduce snow depths, and a good food supply is most essential to their survival. The IFW has mapped areas of deeryards but has cautioned that the existence of a deeryard will not necessarily preclude forest management or residential development. Smithfield has extensive areas with this designation. The map shows the areas designated by IFW.

### **Scenic Areas:**

Because of its topography, Smithfield can boast of several scenic vistas in town. The overlooked aspect of a scenic vista is not the view itself, but the foreground. In terms of development, some forms of architecture in the foreground contribute to the aesthetics of the view, while other forms do not. Also, such things as junkyards, gravel pits, and high board fences detract from views.

The most classic and easily accessible vistas of the lakes are located along Route 8/137 on the esker south of the village. Countryside views are also common along Route 8 between the village and Norridgewock. The view from the top of Mount Tom is panoramic, but the viewpoint can only be reached on foot. Lakefront views are also impressive, but very little lakefront is accessible by the public.

### **Farm and Forest Resources:**

#### **Agriculture in Smithfield:**

Farmland serves multiple functions: it can contribute to the local economy, offer environmental benefits, and typically has a higher tax-to-cost-of-service ratio compared to residential subdivisions. Because the best land for agricultural production is quite often the best land for development as well, the future for continued prosperous farms is threatened. There are fewer farms in Smithfield than in the past and they are not oriented to commodity production. Because tractors and cows in the fields are rarely seen, farming is often overlooked. Even growing hay, providing pasture, or selling produce at a roadside stand (all of which happen in Smithfield) provide income to keep the farm from being developed.

For the moment, prices for land in Smithfield are still reasonable, so the existing farms are able to survive on land that is not the most productive. There are some prime farm soils

located in town, but they overlap with the ideal for development areas on the soils map. Pockets of the best soil exist along East Pond Road and at its intersection with Route 8, along Route 8 beginning on the ridge about a mile south of the village and continuing to the Belgrade town line, and at the western end of Sand Hill Road.

There are only two parcels enrolled in the agricultural tax program, which allows farmland owners to receive a break on their property taxes. One parcel is over 100 acres, and the other is just ten. This does not reflect the number of farms, because some may be too small to qualify, or the difference in value is not enough to cause a problem. The agricultural tax program is not as popular as the tree growth program, in part because the state does not reimburse the lost local revenue.

Despite the wealth of tradition and land, agriculture as a large-scale resource in Smithfield no longer exists. As an economic niche, however, it is being re-invented as small-scale, part-time family enterprises. A partial list of farm economy can be found on page 19.

The key to success of the micro-farm, though, is not the availability of tracts of prime farmland nor extensive infrastructure or commodity markets, but simply the ability to engage an appropriate customer base.

### **Forest Land:**

Forests cover most of Smithfield -- well over 75 percent of the North Pond watershed alone. Forests are managed B if at all B for long-term prospects. Therefore, a particular stand of trees may go untended for 60 years, then cut and replanted (or developed) in a very short time. This makes it difficult to visualize long-term trends.

The town has enrolled 4,449 acres in Tree Growth, the tax program which give forest owners with management plans a break on their property taxes. Tree growth parcels are broken down into three categories: 1,022 acres in softwoods, 1,355 acres in hardwoods, and 2,072 acres in mixed growth. Though these parcels represent only a fraction of total wooded acres, they are probably representative of the type of forest throughout town. For the most part, forest land is held by private individuals. The exception is approximately 1,200 acres belonging to the Bessey Development Company (a family-owned forest management company) east of East Pond Road.

The Maine Forest Service has reported to Smithfield on the progress of timber harvesting over the past nine years. Between 1991 and 2000, loggers have taken an average of 461 acres per year, for a total of 4,160 acres. The vast majority of land harvested was by selective cut, in which only a small percentage of the trees are cut in any given year. Only 49 acres were clearcut.



Additional information on farming and forestry as contributors to the local economy is in Chapter 3.

**General Public Opinion:**

Water quality and other indicators of the rural environment are concerns of residents. Respondents overwhelmingly favor the following statements:

- The town should work with lake associations to get grants to fix existing problems,
- The town should develop an education and publicity program for homeowners, and
- The town should impose strict erosion and runoff controls on new development in lake watersheds. In contrast, almost no one thinks that the town should let someone else deal with it.

People also support other activities to try to preserve open space. There is strong support for getting developers to set aside open space in new subdivisions (clustered housing), for keeping tax-acquired land for open space, and for assisting in promoting conservation easements for open space.

## **Chapter 6**

### **Land Use and Development**

#### **Introduction**

Private property and its various functions hold significance for both individuals and the broader community. While there is generally little desire to intervene in private affairs, concerns arise when an individual's actions on their property have implications for neighboring residents, property values, or municipal expenditures.

That can happen when development results in, for example, degradation of water quality, dangerous driveway entrances onto public roads, or noise and dust generated by heavy truck traffic. Over the years, the land has evolved from farming to summer resort and lakeside development to ordinary, everyday homes.

#### **Physical Constraints on Development in Smithfield**

There are some natural limits to development in town, and there is no need to regulate development which is already limited by environmental barriers or state and federal regulations accomplishing the same thing. The following are recognized areas where constraints are placed.

#### **Wetland Areas**

Wetlands make poor building sites. Even when filled, they exhibit poor drainage for septic systems and poor support for foundations and roads. Significant wetland locations in Smithfield are:

- East Pond Bog, including the Serpentine, north of East Pond. This is classified as a high-value wildlife area and is not very accessible, despite its proximity to the village.
- The wetland east of East Pond Road, referred to on some maps as East Pond Bog, though not even in a lake watershed. This wetland is mostly forested but has a couple of open areas of value for waterfowl, and some of the forested area is deer-wintering area.
- The wetland on the north end of North Pond, drained by Bog Stream (partly in Mercer). This, too, is a waterfowl habitat and deeryard. Portions of North Pond shore frontage are in the wetland, as is the town boat launch. It is accessible by North Shore Drive.

- Great Meadow Stream, south and west of the intersection of Routes 8, 137, and 225. This occupies an area that otherwise might be prime development location at the intersection and along 225. Only a small portion of this wetland is valuable wildlife habitat.

### **Aquifers**

A sand and gravel aquifer provides relatively high quantities of groundwater close to the surface. Smithfield has two significant aquifer areas. The largest originates in the north of town around Little Pond, and runs southward, crossing Route 8, skirting the village on the south, and wrapping around North Pond from the village south to the town line. The other runs along the south side of Route 137 from Oak Hill Road westward into Mercer.

### **Steep Slopes**

Land with slopes of 25 percent or more poses challenges for construction. Septic systems are prohibited under the state plumbing code. Development on steep slopes leads to greater risk of erosion or stormwater management problems. Smithfield recognizes several areas of steep slope.

### **Poor Soils**

In addition to the clearly damp soils found in wetlands, Smithfield also contains large areas where challenges like soil composition or shallow groundwater make building foundations and septic systems costly, though still feasible.

### **Lake Watersheds**

In addition to shorefront and streamside construction, any new development within a lake watershed may contribute to increased runoff, ultimately resulting in higher pollution levels in the lakes. Within the past 10 years, East Pond received alum treatment to reduce algae blooms. North Pond is currently more vulnerable than East Pond with recurring algae blooms.

The East Pond watershed is considerably smaller than North Pond. Only about 2 miles of the western side of East Pond Road drains into East Pond. On the west side, the watershed boundary is well east of the development along Route 8/137. The North Pond watershed includes most of the land along Route 8/137 from Whitehouse Cemetery north, including all of Route 137, Oak Hill Road, Mt. Tom, and Route 137 as far north as the East Pond Road junction.

## **Land Use Plan**

A Land Use Plan is a required part of local comprehensive plans under Maine law. The purpose of a Land Use Plan is to identify the pattern of development that will meet the community's goals, and mechanisms to move towards that pattern of development. At a minimum, towns like Smithfield need to identify Growth and Rural areas. Growth areas are locations where public services are cost-effective and environmental barriers to development are minimal. Growth areas need to be big enough to accommodate predicted future development.

### **Considerations in Designating Growth Areas:**

Smithfield currently exhibits two trends in housing choice: high-end homes (whether or not on shore frontage) and mobile homes. There need to be an increase in choices for affordable housing, whether it is in quality mobile home parks, small apartments, or senior housing.

Smithfield's development relies heavily on seasonal recreation, which affects local land use in two major ways. First, it is essential to protect and ideally enhance the quality of the lakes by controlling pollution from developments around the watersheds. Additionally, there is a need to revitalize both the village center and surrounding neighborhoods, using walking paths to promote foot traffic and improve the area's atmosphere.

Portions of Smithfield are subject to various levels of development constraint by their nature. Under federal, state and local law, wetlands cannot be developed. The state plumbing code, enforced locally, prohibits septic systems on steep hillsides or land with a high water table. But important wildlife habitats, the sand-and-gravel aquifer, and much of the land within lake watersheds are not currently protected from the impacts of development but should be. Also, some parts of Smithfield are restricted by choice: tree growth, farm and open space, and land subject to conservation easements.

### **Enforcing Growth and Rural Areas**

Once a growth/rural distinction is established, one must determine a method of encouraging growth in one and restricting it in the other. Land Use Regulation, and in particular the zoning label, has proven to be a contentious issue for many towns in Maine. Residents have become accustomed over the years to a gradual rate of new development throughout the town.

## **Low-income Housing**

There is currently no data available regarding the need for low-income housing in Smithfield. However, the Planning Board has addressed this topic by adopting the State's ADU (Accessory Dwelling Units) law into the Town's ordinances. Bill LD1829 allows homeowners to build at least four dwellings on their property, provided it is an approved residential lot and meet subsurface wastewater standards. The law aims to increase housing options and streamline the permitting process, while local municipalities can set specific design and size requirements.

## **Balancing Individual Rights and Community Welfare**

One of the most contentious topics in land use regulation is determining the extent to which government can restrict individual rights to safeguard the broader interests of the community. This issue centers on the challenge of balancing a landowner's right to develop their property with the government's responsibility to protect the welfare of its citizens. As towns consider regulations, they must weigh the interests of private property owners against the need to maintain environmental quality, public health, and overall community well-being. The choices made in this balancing act shape the character of development and influence the long-term sustainability of the town.

Points to consider are:

A land-use regulation governs only future development, not current activities.

There are two sets of values that the town may seek to protect: the effect on neighbors (measured as property values) and the effect on the cost of government (required services and infrastructure).

A regulation may prohibit a given development or permit it but only after the developer compensates for the public and private costs he brings on.

Conventional land use regulation, such as old-fashioned zoning, relies on the prohibition of certain types of development as a way to avoid negative impacts. Performance regulation is a different type of regulation which addresses the impact itself. Consider, for example, a commercial development in a residential neighborhood. A conventional approach would say business would be prohibited.

The performance approach says that the problem is not the business but the noise, traffic, and aesthetic impacts. If those impacts can be neutralized by fences, trees, or road improvements, the use may be permitted. This makes the ordinance look a lot more lenient, but what it really does is make the developer pay to neutralize the costs to neighbors and the community.

There are plenty of reasons why conventional zoning is not appropriate for many small towns in Maine. Zoning was born in the cities and works best in an active real estate market where there is little undeveloped land.

Extra protection for productive rural land: Smithfield's growth areas are designed to exclude active farms and managed forest land. Open space development is encouraged in the growth areas outside the village, and it promises support to landowners outside growth areas in efforts to obtain conservation easements.

## **Chapter 7: Cooperation with Neighboring Towns and Agencies**

In developing Smithfield's comprehensive plan, the town needs to understand and respond to the many influences outside of its borders. Economic and environmental trends do not recognize town boundaries, nor does Smithfield function in a vacuum. The actions taken by neighboring towns as they deal with development and public service issues give Smithfield opportunities for mutually beneficial cooperation. The following is a list of towns and other entities which may have an influence on Smithfield.

**Waterville** is the principal urban area serving Smithfield, the center of commerce and employment for local residents. Almost one-quarter of Smithfield's workforce commutes to Waterville or Winslow (1990). Growth in Waterville's commercial sector benefits Smithfield residents by offering more employment opportunities but is bad for local businesses that may be in competition. Though only indirectly affecting Smithfield, a lack of housing in Waterville contributes to a general increase in development in surrounding areas.

**Skowhegan** is another commercial center patronized by many residents, especially in the northern half of town. Approximately 20 percent of the workforce commutes to Skowhegan. Skowhegan is also the location of the middle school, high school, and administrative offices of Smithfield's school district, RSU/MSAD 54.

**Oakland** borders Smithfield to the southeast and provides some service and employment activities for Smithfield residents.

Oakland shares a portion of East Pond and its watershed with Smithfield, one of four lakes in that town. Route 137 connects Smithfield and Oakland and is used by about 2,300 vehicles per day. While this volume is well below the capacity of the road, a substantial fraction are trucks hauling wood products, gravel, and solid waste. The road is in only fair condition, though portions are being upgraded. Maintenance responsibility lies with the state.

Oakland and Smithfield have a history of cooperation on regional issues. The Belgrade Lakes watershed fosters collaboration on some topics. The towns also share some services, including policing East Pond. Other possibilities are being discussed on a regular basis.

Oakland has several individual land use ordinances, and their lot-size requirements differ from Smithfield's.

**Norridgewock** borders Smithfield to the north. It provides some commercial services to town residents, particularly those on Route 137 north of the village. Norridgewock hosts the Crossroads Landfill, Smithfield's solid waste disposal facility as well as the destination of a large percentage of the truck traffic through town.

Norridgewock, Maine is currently undertaking an update to its comprehensive plan.

The current comprehensive plan was last updated in 1997.

The update process involves a **Comprehensive Plan Update Committee** tasked with developing a new plan that reflects the desires of the community for future development in areas such as:

- **Housing**
- **Economic development**
- **Land use**
- **Natural resource preservation**
- **Recreation**
- **Transportation**

The committee aims to engage residents, businesses, and stakeholders through public meetings, surveys, and workshops. They will also analyze data related to demographics, the economy, the environment, and land use to inform the plan's development.

The updated plan will include goals, policies, and strategies to guide Norridgewock's development over the next 10-15 years. Once adopted, the comprehensive plan will provide the legal foundation for the town's land use ordinances and decision-making processes. It will also help the town to qualify for certain state grants and funding.

**Fairfield** borders Smithfield to the east. The two towns have very little interaction because of a lack of shared roads and excess of topography.

**Rome** and **Mercer** border Smithfield to its west and share the frontage and watershed of North Pond. The two towns are listed together here because they share a common approach to land use issues. They have done nothing outside of state mandates, at least on the municipal level. Like residents of Smithfield, children in Mercer attend middle and high school in Skowhegan but attend elementary school in Canaan. Students in Rome attend elementary school in Belgrade and middle and high school in Oakland.

Mercer, Maine, does not currently have an up-to-date comprehensive plan. The town is in the process of developing one, with a committee formed in 2024 to guide the effort. The process will involve public input and collaboration to shape the plan's direction, focusing on natural resources, capital investment priorities, and land use/development.

The town of Rome, Maine, has a comprehensive plan that was accepted at the Town Meeting on March 11, 2023. The plan is designed to guide the town's future, encouraging orderly growth while protecting its rural character and natural resources. A [Comprehensive Plan Implementation Committee](#) (CPIC) was established to oversee the plan's implementation

**Belgrade** adjoins Smithfield along a very small portion of its southern border. Belgrade and Smithfield are joined by Route 8, a collector corridor which carries a relatively small volume of traffic but a high proportion of gravel and wood-hauling freight. Belgrade is downstream from North Pond, so not within that watershed, but a portion of Smithfield is within Belgrade's Great Pond watershed. Belgrade is the most active neighboring community when it comes to protecting lakes.

Belgrade has a strong comprehensive plan and is working on a land use ordinance, both very focused on preserving water quality in the chain of lakes. Belgrade's plan shows three separate land use districts along the immediate boundary with Smithfield, but this is likely to change as their ordinance is developed. NOTE: Belgrade is currently building a \$7 million firehouse. On the strength of Belgrade's comprehensive plan, Susan Collins provided a grant to cover 75% of the cost.

### **Regional Systems:**

Smithfield participates in many cooperative regional endeavors, some as a result of geography and others by choice. Listed below are some of the instances of regional cooperation currently ongoing:



**Belgrade Chain of Lakes:** This natural feature encompasses seven major lakes, all well developed, with the chain commencing at East Pond and reaching its lowest point at Messalonskee Lake in Oakland. Several of the lakes in the chain have experienced declining water quality in recent years, most seriously phosphorous, and most recently milfoil. These threats will have an impact on all the towns in the chain. They include reductions in fish and wildlife habitat, the local economy, and property values.

Belgrade Regional Conservation Alliance is the organization covering the entire watershed complex and acting in some roles as an umbrella group for local lake associations. BRCA engages in conservation projects such as the Conservation Corps. and watershed protection planning. It is attempting to form a lakes commission, to exchange information on lake management between communities. It also participates in other conservation projects which directly affect the lakes, such as erosion control projects on Mt. Tom Road.

**The Transportation System:** The transportation system is, by definition, a regional system. In Smithfield's case, the transportation system consists fundamentally of roads, with the principal ones being Routes 8 and 137. Both of these roads are classified as major collectors by the state, with maintenance responsibility at the state level. Improvement projects are underway, since most portions of these roads are in serious need to support increased traffic, and in particular usage by trucks hauling solid waste, gravel, and wood products. Public transportation is limited to on-call service to needy individuals through Kennebec Valley Community Action Program.

**RSU/MSAD 54:** As mentioned above, Smithfield is included in the RSU/MSAD 54 school district. Smithfield's current enrollment is 113 primary and secondary students, down from the 2000 enrollment of 97 elementary students and 64 secondary students.

The elementary grades are served primarily by Mill Stream Elementary in Norridgewock and the Margaret Chase Smith Community School in Skowhegan. Middle and high school students attend classes in Skowhegan.

In addition, the Somerset Community Technical School (SCTC) is the fastest growing technical center in the state. It offers training in EMT, CNA, CDL, Cosmetology (2026), and pre-engineering. It also offers retraining for adults in the community.

Finally, Skowhegan offers a thriving adult education program to the local communities.

**Solid Waste:** The town has an agreement with the Crossroads Landfill in Norridgewock. This facility is located about three miles north of town. Residents take their trash to the back gate, which is a transfer station used by municipal customers. The facility has a complete service for all types of waste although there have been discussions locally as to whether to have a local composting/recycling program to boost recycling rates. In 2024, this facility was completely overhauled and restyled.

**FirstPark:** FirstPark, a business and technology park located in Oakland, is a regional economic development effort, one of the first of its kind and recognized nationally as a model for regional cooperation. The unique element is that, for participating members, such as Smithfield, as the park develops, sales and tax revenue from the park will be allocated to members, paying for the cost of services. In 2000, it was projected that over the next ten years, 2,500 - 4,000 new employees were expected to move in. Unfortunately, FirstPark has not seen that type of growth, and employees are currently in the 1,000 person range.

**Fire Protection:** Each town provides its own fire protection, but Smithfield has mutual aid agreements with Norridgewock, Oakland, Belgrade, and Rome to access additional resources for larger emergencies. Norridgewock and Oakland can often reach some areas of Smithfield before the town's fire protection team, offering faster first response service in those zones.

**Public Safety:** Smithfield utilizes the law enforcement services of the Somerset County Sheriff's Department and the Maine State Police. Although response time is an issue, the cost of maintaining a police force would be prohibitive. Somerset County also handles 911 emergency dispatching services. The Town contracts with Delta Ambulance, a private company, located in Waterville.

## **Section 8: Action Plan**

It is important to remember this plan is not law. Adopting this plan will not force the town to follow the plan as suggested. It is simply a guide to consider in order to meet the expected changes the town will face in the next 10 years and how the town can best prepare for those changes.

The population has remained relatively flat over the past 20 years. The number of homes have increased slightly, with a distinct increase in the number of seasonal properties. The largest trend has been in the aging of the town. The percentage of residents over the age of 65 has tripled while those residents under 18 have decreased by 50%. Where forecast growth may not see a great need for more housing, the need for new housing to meet the changing needs of the residents seems more significant.

Due to land use limitations, geography and traffic patterns, and the needs and desires of the residents of Smithfield, it is recommended that most of the town remain rural. It is a draw for many residents and visitors. The Planning board is identifying two areas in town which would be most suitable for growth from both an economical and environmental aspect:

- The stretch of Route 8 from the Norridgewock town line to the Smithfield Salt and Sand shed.
- The stretches of Route 8 and Route 137, 1500 feet from their intersection .

Providing recreation would help older adults stay active, draw younger people, and restore lake swimming access for those without shoreline or boats. It is suggested the town look into the following ways to improve recreational facilities in town:

- Allow for parking of food trucks at the ball field to help promote activities.
- Look at the old school ball field at the Municipal office for use for other outdoor activities.
- Try to identify areas where walking trails may be developed.
- Try to acquire funding through donations and grants to acquire land for public swimming access to East or North Ponds.

Lastly, improving the emergency services in town is recommended. The costs of ambulance services in town have increased dramatically in the past few years with no indication of a change in this trend. It is recommended the town look for alternatives, working with neighboring towns facing the same challenge.

## **Appendix**

### **Town of Smithfield 2025 Comprehensive Survey**

#### **1. How many years have you lived in Smithfield?**

6 0-5 7 6-15 16 16-30 13 31- more \_\_\_\_ Other (please specify)\_\_\_\_\_

#### **2. Where did you live prior to Smithfield**

27 In Maine

6 in New England

9 Elsewhere in the United States

0 Outside of the United States

#### **3. What best describes you?**

32 Year-round Resident and property owner

1 Year-round Resident Renting a Residence

6 Out of State Resident, who owns Property in Smithfield

1 Out of State Resident, Renting Property in Smithfield.

#### **4. Where in Smithfield do you live?**

16 On North Pond Waterfront 5 On East Pond Waterfront

19 Non- waterfront (please specify) Side Rd, Warren Hill, Village(2), Holly Hill, Groves Flat(2), Rt 8(5), Lake View(2), Quaker Ln, South Smithfield, East Pond Rd, Bickford Rd

#### **5. Where do you work?**

6 Smithfield/remote

3 Augusta Area

6 Waterville Area/Fairfield Area

1 Skowhegan/Bangor Area

1 Lewiston/Portland Area

24 Retired \_\_\_\_ Other: (Please specify) \_\_\_\_Boston, State of primary residence\_\_\_\_

**6. Please indicate how important each of the following categories are to you:**

**(Rank in order of importance, 1-7)**

**173** Active Recreation (sports fields & courts, organized teams)

**172** Protection of Wildlife Habitat

**174** Protection of Wetlands

**212** Protection of Town Aesthetics and Character

**204** Protection of Large Unfragmented Tract of Land

**187** Public Beach Access

**225** Protection of Scenic View

**7. Please indicate by checking one category for whether the following land use should be encouraged, limited or discouraged.**

	Encouraged	Limited	Discouraged
Single Family Residential	<u>34</u>	<u>4</u>	—
Multi-family Residential	<u>11</u>	<u>19</u>	<u>10</u>
Mixed-use (commercial/residential)	<u>16</u>	<u>20</u>	<u>2</u>
Seasonal Use	<u>23</u>	<u>16</u>	—
Recreational Facilities	<u>31</u>	<u>8</u>	—
Industrial/Light Industrial	<u>11</u>	<u>22</u>	<u>6</u>
Commercial	<u>11</u>	<u>24</u>	<u>1</u>
Municipal Facilities	<u>14</u>	<u>21</u>	<u>3</u>
Agriculture or Forestry Uses	<u>29</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>2</u>

**8. What type of business do you think would benefit Smithfield? Not all responded, some had multiple suggestions**

Convenience Store	15	27.27%
Restaurant	10	18.18%
Job Producing	9	16.36%
Tourism / recreational / camping	7	12.73%
Specialty / craft store	4	7.27%
Senior living	3	5.45%
Small Ag. Based	1	1.82%
Day Care	1	1.82%
Trails	1	1.82%
Farmers market	1	1.82%
Veterinarian	1	1.82%
Brewery	1	1.82%
Start-up Tech	1	1.82%
	55	100.00%

**9. Please check on answer to indicate how important each of the following capital improvements categories are to you**

	Very Important	Important	Neutral	Very Unimportant
Improve Municipal Buildings	<u>8</u>	<u>15</u>	<u>20</u>	<u>—</u>
Improve Emergency Services	<u>18</u>	<u>17</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>1</u>
Develop Recreational Facilities	<u>13</u>	<u>14</u>	<u>12</u>	<u>1</u>
Purchase Undeveloped Land	<u>11</u>	<u>12</u>	<u>10</u>	<u>4</u>

**10. What other topics would you like the town to address?**

Referenced by questionnaire response number.

6- Programs for elderly that would help with small issues like shoveling mailbox & steps.

7- Programs for elderly, service for individuals' information

11- Walking Trails, store with lunch counter

12- Making available programs for the elderly – transportation and social activities.

13- New grocery Store

14- We have a lovely location for a beach front on North Pond. It lost its open usage several years ago and residents do not have access to a beach.

20- More staff hours to assist the town Administrative Assistant. This means to increase citizen participation in town government and related resources.

21- The town needs to attract more people/tourists/business to help offset the rising costs of taxes and provide better access to its residents to enjoy the lake, something like a public park or something where people can swim or put a kayak in. The boat ramp is non useable for anything other than boats. It's a shame that we live in such a beautiful lake town and the residents have no access to the lake unless you own a waterfront property. There are a lot of residents who do not have school age children but are paying a big chunk of their property taxes for schools but don't get any real recreational benefits from the property tax.

22- Simple ordinance update to address RV's as permanent residences.

23- PFAS's

25- The Town should have input to the management of local lakes that border town property. Putting that responsibility in the hands of people who act out of personal preference is irresponsible. The water management and quality we experienced in the lakes this past summer should be a model for future strategies.

The Town should seek local lakeside property for a community park with walk-in access to the lakes, NOT a boat ramp.

26- Senior housing and recreational walking trails.

27- Enforcement of updating septic systems on the waterfront property along with banning new pavement that slopes towards the water.

28-Transitioning to appointed (versus elected) positions that expand cross training & coverage.

Code of Conduct implementation, transparency, accountability for all municipal officials appointed and elected.

Online document accessibility: agendas, drafts & corresponding documents two weeks prior to all public hearings (Planning Board included), Budget draft ahead of posted budget committee meetings & Ordinance drafts online one month prior to Annual Town Meeting. Noise/hours regulation for: fireworks, non-hunting-regulated gunfire, dog barking.

29- Unrestricted proliferation of short-term rental properties.

30- don't care



31- The Town of Smithfield should support NPA, and 7 Lakes Alliance since they have the best resources and knowledge to property care for the lake. Taxes should go down for North Pond Lakefront owners now that there is an invasive weed and an algae problem. Also require property owners to keep their property in respectable condition.

32- basketball, tennis courts/ pickle ball courts would be nice. Require no staff to run them. A local playground for kids would be great. I'm not interested in buying property if it means my taxes will continue to increase to cover town debt.

33- there are a few junk properties that need to be cleaned up (vehicles that don't run in the yard, junk in the yards, etc.)

34- general assistance aid to residents

37- Public beach for resident's minimum, kayak / paddleboard rentals, walking trail, wider road for bikers and pedestrians.

38- Health and vitality of Natural resources. Waterfront property has a higher tax rate than non-waterfront. Seasonal residents pay into the tax base using very little Town resources. Stop allowing year-round residential permits on waterfront. Year-round residential waterfront should pay higher and have funds available for health of waterfront.

39- I'd like to see people following EPA laws and quit building monstrous mansions in the beautiful quaint town.

40- food pantry reinstated.

41- Alum treatment for North Pond. Donation was made but there was no federal or state funding. Contact the legislature to use all means accessible to secure the remaining needed to save North Pond for the residents of Smithfield and surrounding towns.

42- Clean up the lake and tighten controls on boats from out of town to reduce weed infestations.

44- all is good

45- North pond remediation

46- Pave gravel roads that start as paved, also pave roads that really need it, better road maintenance in the winter.

47- People living year-round with no running water/no plumbing. (Where does the gray water go?) It is unhealthy and unsanitary for children/seniors etc. Sets town up for more people to do it. Perhaps strengthening ordinances in place already will stop this from becoming a trend or normalizing it.