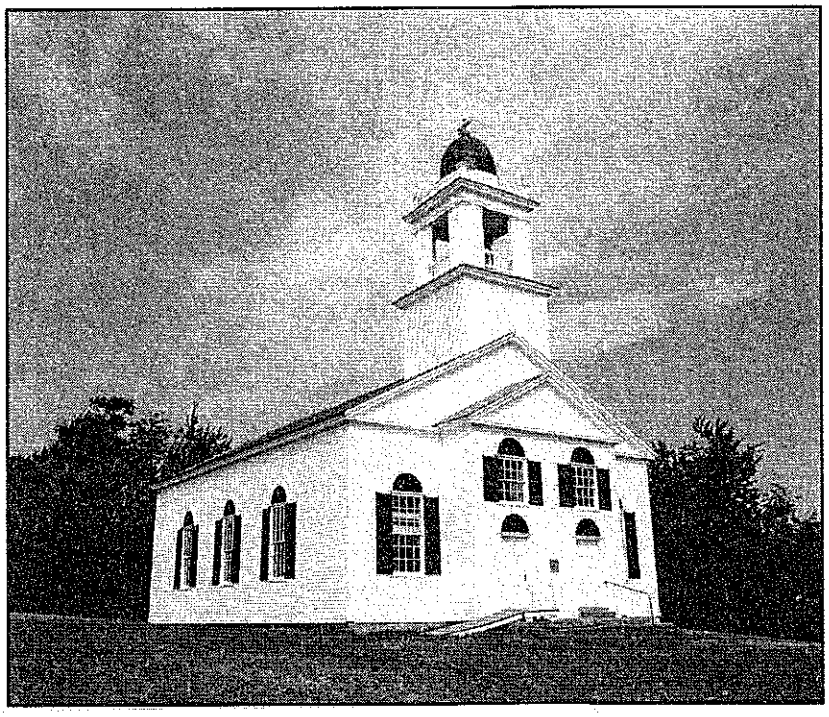
Otisfield Comprehensive Plan Update



I certify this to be a true copy of the Official Comprehensive Plan for the Town of Otisfield, as approved at the annual town meeting, March 6, 2004.

Attest: Sharon A. Matthews
Sharon A. Matthews, Town Clerk

March 2004

Town of Otisfield
Comprehensive Plan

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INTRODUCTION AND HISTORICAL ASSESSMENT

(An update to the Historical information contained in the 1991 Comprehensive Plan)

Introduction

The 2003 Otisfield Comprehensive Plan has been developed as an update and revision to the 1991 Comprehensive Plan. Although that Plan had provided a solid planning foundation for the past 10-12 years, there was a definite need to broaden and strengthen the document.

After obtaining a Planning Grant from the State of Maine, the Town of Otisfield Selectmen appointed members to a committee in the summer of 2001. In addition, they contracted with AVCOG to provide technical support in developing the Plan.

The committee has been meeting during the past two years, at least twice a month not including special sessions and Public Forums. The process has included discussions over inventory data as well as meetings with knowledgeable people on key topics of interest. These sessions included the following: 1) State Planning Officer; 2) Town Managers from Casco, Harrison, and Norway; 3) Biologists from the State of Maine and the Audubon Society; and 4) the Otisfield Selectmen.

Two other very important sources of information were the Public Forums attended by 85 residents in January 2002 and by over 100 residents in October 2002. This enabled the public to provide active participation in the process.

The information gathered sharpened our focus on the areas of Natural Resources, Maintenance of Rural Character, Growth and Governance. The Plan Update deals in a large part with new and revised Policies and Strategies to strengthen these areas.

Historical Assessment

Otisfield's origins go back to 1736 when the Massachusetts General Court granted a township to the heirs and descendants of a military company headed by Captain John Gorham which participated in a 1690 military expedition against French-held Canada. When the New Hampshire-Massachusetts line was run, it was discovered that most of the granted land fell behind into New Hampshire; therefore, the grant was invalid. On June 15, 1771, the General Court made a second grant of land to the heirs of Gorham's company. Twenty Boston businessmen, most of whom had no connection to the original grantees, acquired rights to the land and became its proprietors. This land constitutes the present Town of Otisfield as well as the eastern half of what is now Harrison and parts of Naples and Casco. In 1803, Phillips Gore, which fell between Oxford and Otisfield, was added to Otisfield.

On October 16, 1776, at a meeting in Watertown, Massachusetts, the proprietors voted to name their town Otis Field, presumably to honor Col. James Otis, one of the major property holders.

The 1771 grant required the proprietors to settle at least 30 families in Otisfield within six years, to build a meetinghouse for worship, and to employ "a learned Protestant Minister." One sixty-fourth of the town's area was to be awarded to the first minister, one sixty-fourth to the general support of the ministry, one sixty-fourth to support a grammar school, and one sixty-fourth for the support of Harvard College (where ministers were educated). This last provision resulted in the naming of College Swamp.

The required meetinghouse was not constructed until 1797 on Bell Hill, the second highest spot in town (Scribner Hill is the highest) where settlers had built early because the higher ground was less prone to early frost in the late fall and late frost in the spring, which would destroy their crops. There have been two meetinghouses at this location. The second, built by Nathan Nutting, Jr., in 1839, still survives and, although no longer used as a Congregational Church, is preserved by the Bell Hill Meeting House Association, which holds an annual service there on the last Sunday of each July. There have been three other church buildings in Otisfield: the Spurrs Corner Church of the Christian and Missionary Alliance (formerly a Congregational Church), the East Otisfield Free Baptist Church (originally a union church used by both Methodists and Baptists), and a Free Baptist Church in South Otisfield which disintegrated about 1940 after a long period of disuse.

Otisfield has always been a rural town with few concentrations of population. The names and popular nicknames of the various areas are (from east to west): the Gore, Wardwellville (upper end of Bean Road); the Canada Hill area, East Otisfield (Pugleyville), Cobb Hill Road (formerly the New Road), Rayville (after Dr. David Ray, who built an early grist mill and sawmill at the outlet of Saturday Pond), Scribner Hill, Swampville, Bell Hill, Nutting Hill, Hancockville (area north of Seeds of Peace Camp), South Otisfield (Dunkertown), Bolster's Mills (partly in Harrison), Otisfield (Spurrs Corner), Tamworth, Jugtown, and Oak Hill. The earliest settlement in Otisfield was at Edes Falls, which became part of Naples in 1848.

Over the years, Otisfield has had a variety of organizations besides its churches to enrich the social life of its citizens. Balls, corn huskings, quilting bees, singing schools, sewing circles, and 4th of July picnics and fireworks made things livelier in the nineteenth century. Until about 1930, organized singing groups met in various homes. Square dances were held in the two halls of the National Grange: one on the Gore and one at Spurrs Corner. Later dances were held in Otisfield's Community Hall. An agricultural fair was held in Spurrs Corner as late as the 1920s. In recent years, the Firemen's Association and Auxiliary has been active in promoting recreational activities. The Snowmobile Club, Parent-Teacher Organization, Lake Thompson Senior Citizens (jointly with Oxford), and 4-H Club are other important recent community groups. In 1981 the Otisfield Historical Society was formed.

At one time there were fourteen named school districts in Otisfield, each with a one-room building. Only one of these schoolhouses is left in its original form, the brick schoolhouse on Bell Hill built in 1839 and last used in 1940. It is now owned and preserved by the Bell Hill Meeting House Association. Now part of School Administrative District 17, Otisfield's junior and senior high school students travel to Norway to attend school. The Otisfield Community School on Powhatan Road, which includes students from kindergarten through sixth grade, opened its doors in 1990.

The population of Otisfield reflects its original settlement by English colonists from Massachusetts. From 1910 to 1920, a considerable number of families of Finnish background arrived in town, in many cases buying up the old farms which the earlier settlers had given up on. Hard-working families named Heikkinen, Tikkanen, and Jaakkola settled on Bell Hill, bringing not only new blood into town but also new customs, traditions, and novelties like saunas and skis. A number of families of French Canadian heritage also enriched the town's population in the early twentieth century. Like most other rural Maine communities, Otisfield lost heavily in population in the years after the Civil War. The westward migration, the drift of younger people to the cities, the change from small industry to large industry, all tolled heavily on the farm population. From a peak of 1,307 people in 1840, the population declined in the next 100 years to only 488 in 1940. In the year 2000, it had risen to all-time high of 1,560.

In the days before the general use of fossil fuels and insulation, a great deal of hard work went into supplying firewood for the winter. The oldest houses have multiple fireplaces around a single chimney, replaced by cast-iron stoves beginning in 1840. From its earliest days, Otisfield took responsibility for its poor. Until 1847, the usual method was to auction each pauper off at the annual town meeting to the lowest bidder who promised to house and care for that person for a year. Later, following the example of most other Maine towns, Otisfield maintained a poor farm on Swampville Road. The town farm lasted from 1865 to1927.

In earlier years, Otisfield's principal source of cash income was its sawmills; the earliest one was built in 1812. The largest and longest lived of these was located in East Otisfield, operated before 1900 by Stephen Jillson and later by the Kemp Brothers until 1930. Another large mill was located at Bolsters Mills on the Otisfield side, last operated by Fred Clark, who closed the mill in the 1920s. The second largest industry was the "corn shop" (or cannery), of which there were two in town. The larger of these, for canning sweet corn, was established in 1890 in South Otisfield and operated by Ephraim and George Jillson until 1925. The second, which operated early in the twentieth century, was Harry M. Stone's small shop in East Otisfield which canned apples, vegetables, and jellies. At various times, Otisfield had grist mills, blacksmith shops, a tannery, a pants factory and shoe shop, a cider mill, a tin shop, a cooper shop for making barrels, a shingle mill, a carding machine to prepare wool for spinning, even a hat shop. Although most of these early mills and factories were gone by 1900, as late as the 1950s, Glenn C. Henry, an inventor and engineer and sometimes called "the folding man," ran a small shop in Spurrs Corner where he produced collapsible record albums, notebooks, and even

folding boats. Commercial apple growing, hop production, and chicken production, once important parts of the town's agricultural industry, have all disappeared. Some timber is still sold to sawmills. Many still have vegetable gardens and a few raise meat-animals for their own use. Only one retail store survives in Bolsters Mills.

These small industries have been replaced in part by today's tourist industry: camps and cottages on Pleasant Lake, Thompson Lake, and Saturday and Moose Ponds. Today, most Otisfield residents commute to work outside of town, and Otisfield has become quite popular with retired citizens who enjoy the rural environment. A number of these newcomers have purchased and restored some of Otisfield's old farmhouses.

Perhaps the most striking event in Otisfield's recent history was its "secession" from Cumberland County in 1978, a change which brought the town nearer to its county seat and made more logical its inclusion in SAD 17. Now legally part of Oxford County, Otisfield remains a pleasant residential town. Here, where the present is closely linked with the past, Otisfield remains a small town with pride in its natural surroundings, its relaxed way of life, and its tradition of independence.

Historic Resources
Buildings and Architecture

In 1980 a number of Otisfield residents participated in an architectural survey of the town. The process of conducting the survey resulted in the organization of the Otisfield Historical Society in 1981; and the results of the survey were incorporated in Randall Bennett's *Oxford County, Maine: A Guide to Its Historic Architecture* (1984), from which much of the following information is drawn.

Otisfield has at least five structures of unusual architectural significance. The Ryefield Bridge, which spans the Crooked River between Harrison and Otisfield, was built in 1912. It is the only double-intersection Warren through-truss bridge in the state. In 2002 the State of Maine included this bridge in its list of 14 Historic Bridges of Maine, making it eligible for the extensive repairs and repainting which were completed in November 2002.

The Lyman Nutting House at 804 State Route 121, where members of the original Nutting family still live, is listed on the National Register of Historic Buildings. Nathan Nutting built the story-and-a-half section in 1795; his son, Nathan Nutting, Jr., built the Federal style northern half of the house in 1825. It has been said that the detached barn near the house was a model for other Otisfield barns, and the nearby three-level granary is an unusual example of historic outbuildings.

Nathan Nutting, Jr., who studied architecture in Boston, was also responsible for constructing the Bell Hill Meeting House, completed in 1839. Located near the top of Bell Hill, this Federal style building has become a town landmark and has been nominated for the National Register. So has the brick building located next to it, the Bell Hill Schoolhouse, Otisfield's only remaining one-room schoolhouse, a plain building also

completed in 1839. For many years, the large field surrounding the Meeting House was used as the town's muster ground where the militia drilled annually.

The remaining Otisfield structure of unusual significance is the Levi Sargent House at 747 Gore Road, now owned by Dan and Marsha Brett. Also known as "Little Green Acres," this house has been called "a remarkable survival of a building type closely associated with the settlement period in northwestern Maine." Architectural historians believe it was built about 1812. The two-story house was constructed of squared, hewn logs averaging some ten inches high by eight inches wide. It is the only surviving example of such a log structure in Oxford County.

Throughout the town, there are many other examples of structures representing early nineteenth-century rural Maine architecture at its best. While the one-and-a-half story Cape was the predominant type of early building form in town, Otisfield has a number of examples of early two-story houses, in addition to the Lyman Nutting house mentioned above.

One of the earliest and most impressive of these is the house built by mill-owner David Ray in 1795 near the outlet of Saturday Pond. This large two-and-a-half-story house is one of Oxford County's few remaining examples of a "plank frame" house, which uses thick vertical planking instead of studding between sill and plate. The Jonathan Sawyer House, thought to have been built between 1785 and 1789, still stands on East Andrews Hill Road. It features eight working fireplaces off a massive center chimney. At 720 State Route 121, the Sawyer-Stone House, built about 1810 and now owned by Jim Bowden, immediately catches one's attention because of its symmetrical, foursquare design with hip roof, an unusual style for this area. Owned by members of the Stone family after 1847, it served as an inn and post office for many years. The Levi Patch House, another two-and-a-half story house built about 1810, is located at 123 Bell Hill Road and is now owned by John S. Pottle. Although dating from the Federal period, it impresses one as Colonial. Of special interest are its eyebrow windows and arched doorways. In the Bolster's Mills section of Otisfield, there are two noteworthy examples of Federal style houses built between 1825 and 1835. The earlier of these is the Cook-Weston House at 6 Big Hill Road, owned by Dwight and Pat Burkard. This house has been attributed to Nathan Nutting, Jr., architect of the Bell Hill Meetinghouse. Its cornices and doorway are particularly noteworthy. A final example of Federal style is the Haskell House at 30 Big Hill Road, owned by Chester Barker, which features another handsome doorway.

Far more prevalent in Otisfield are the early nineteenth-century Cape style houses which are distributed throughout town. A few are worth special mention. The oldest of these may be the Spurr-Knight House at 1182 State Route 121. Near the Spurrs Corner section of town, this double Cape dates back to about 1790 when the first section was built. The house at 483 State Route 121, built about 1800 by Nathan Wight and until recently owned by Fred and Sue Traill, has been called "one of the finest surviving examples" in Oxford County of a broad-roofed, low-posted Cape with a center chimney. Near the house is the Wight Family Cemetery, one of the town's oldest. The Holden Farmstead at 303 Oak Hill Road, owned by Mr. and Mrs. James Johnston, was built about 1812, is notable for

its early nineteenth-century interior wall stenciling attributed to Moses Eaton, an itinerant New Hampshire stenciler. Finally, the Holden-Knight House (c. 1825-26), originally located at Spurrs Corner but recently moved to 126 Abi Road, is a well-maintained example of a high-posted, center chimney Cape.

A recent program of the Otisfield Historical Society featured nine old brick buildings scattered throughout town. These were all built in the short period between 1834-1870. One of these, the Bell Hill Schoolhouse, has already been mentioned. Most of the others, such as the Asa Andrews House (1853) on West Andrews Hill Road, the Samuel Knight House (1835) and James Sampson House (1839), opposite one another at 353 and 354 Bell Hill Road, and the Elisha Lombard House, 675 Gore Road, are Cape style. However, the two-and-a-half story Levi Mains House at 33 Bishop Road, now owned by Daniel and Susan Giancarlo, deserves special mention. It was built by town official Levi Mains in 1868 and is considered "a fine example of a large Greek Revival side-hall-plan house" of considerable architectural sophistication. What makes the Mains house particularly unusual is its remote hillside location on a narrow road branching off from Oak Hill, "far away from the few county locations where such substantial residences were commonly built."

Cemeteries, Stone Walls, and Mill Sites

The town's fourteen known cemeteries are an obvious, enduring historical record, which should be protected and cared for to the best of our ability. Cemeteries maintained by the town are the Bell Hill Cemetery, located across from the Meetinghouse; the Cedarcrest Cemetery on State Route 121 south of Spurrs Corner; the East Otisfield Cemetery; the Highland Cemetery on the Swampville Road; the Oak Hill Cemetery on Oak Hill Road; the two cemeteries on Scribner Hill, sometimes designated Lower Yard and Upper Yard; the Wight Family Cemetery on State Route 121, and the Cobb Hill Road or Winship Cemetery on Cobb Hill Road. Elmwood, the largest of the town's cemeteries, is opposite the East Otisfield Free Baptist Church on Rayville Road; it is maintained by the Elmwood Cemetery Association. The Merrill Memorial Cemetery on Gore Road, the Oakdale Cemetery on Jesse's Road near Scribner's Mills, and the South Otisfield Cemetery on the Powhatan Road near Mayberry Hill are also all maintained by private cemetery associations. The Reuben Keene Cemetery, located on the Coon Road, a discontinued town road, is no longer maintained by anyone and is difficult to find.

The stone walls, which once indicated property boundaries and limits of pastures, are still much evident throughout the town. However, because they have been a convenient source of raw material as well as an impediment to snow plows, they are less evident than in former years.

Stone remnants of the town's old mill sites, a solid reminder of Otisfield's brief industrial period, are still present in Bolsters Mills, Rayville, East Otisfield, and quite possibly other locations. Stone house and barn foundations abound in a number of town locations such as the now remote Jugtown Road. These cellar holes serve to remind us of our nineteenth-century predecessors and possibly contain information of value to future archaeologists.

Archival and Historic Records

The Town of Otisfield has been fortunate in regard to its town records. The town has luckily avoided losing these irreplaceable resources to fires, floods, or overzealous housecleaning. The most important of these, including the early Proprietor's Book of Records, which dates back to 1771, and the records of Otisfield Plantation, 1787-1798, were microfilmed in 1976. An archival copy of this microfilm is stored in the Maine State Archives, Augusta. All the town's records and archives, including most of the documents collected by the Otisfield Historical Society, are well protected and organized in the town vault.

The Otisfield Historical Society has been responsible for creating some new archives which merit mention. Chief among these is the ten boxes which contain individual photographs of nearly every building in town. These photographs and accompanying information are the result of the Society's "Otisfield in the Year 2000" project, completed in 2002.

SECTION I
INVENTORY AND ANALYSIS

Introduction

This section updates some of the information presented in the Comprehensive Plan prepared and adopted in 1991. In particular, it provides the updated U.S. Census data for 1990 and 2000. It analyzes some of the changing trends in the community and provides an overview of information presented in the 1991 plan.

Population

The characteristics of the population will lend insight to understanding future growth and demands for community services.

The population of Otisfield has been growing rapidly for the past thirty years, increasing at a much faster rate than the surrounding communities.

The population distribution has aged since 1990. The aging population indicates the potential need for accessibility to medical and transportation services and for public safety improvements.

Year-Round Population Change 1970-2000

	1970	1980	1990	2000	Change 90-00	Rate of Change 90-00
Otisfield	589	897	1,136	1,560	424	37.3%
Oxford	1,892	3,143	3,705	3,960	255	6.9%
Poland	2,015	3,578	4,342	4,866	524	12.2%
Norway	3,595	4,042	4,754	4,611	-143	-6.9%
Casco	1,256	2,225	3,018	3,469	451	14.9%
Harrison	1,045	1,648	1,951	2,315	364	18.6%
Naples	956	1,833	2,860	3,274	414	14.4%
Oxford County	43,457	48,958	52,602	54,755	2,153	4.1

Source: U.S. Census

Age Distribution

	Otisfield 1990		Otisfield 2000		Oxford County 2000	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Under 5	101	8.9%	82	5.3%	2,895	5.30%
5-17 yrs.	231	20.3%	350	22.4%	11,527	21.10%
18-44 yrs.	449	39.5%	509	32.7%	17,598	32.10%
45-64 yrs.	210	18.5%	429	27.5%	13,942	25.50%
65+ yrs.	145	12.8%	190	12.2%	8,793	16.10%

Age categories changed slightly from the 1990 to 2000 Census.

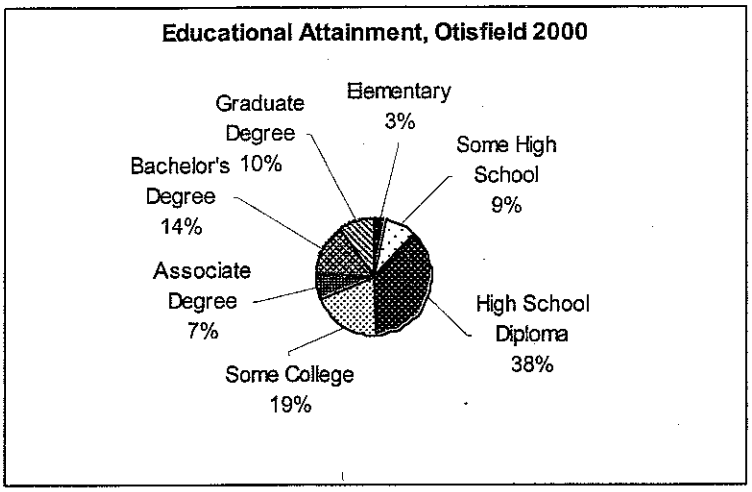
But it may also mean that there will be fewer children to educate in the future.

The population is aging with a decrease in the under 5 and the 18 to 44 age groups. There was a 9% increase in the 45 to 64 age category. In 1990 the population was considerably younger than that of Oxford County, but it is now similar to the county except that there are fewer people in the over 65 age group which probably reflects a lack of appropriate housing and services for the elderly population.

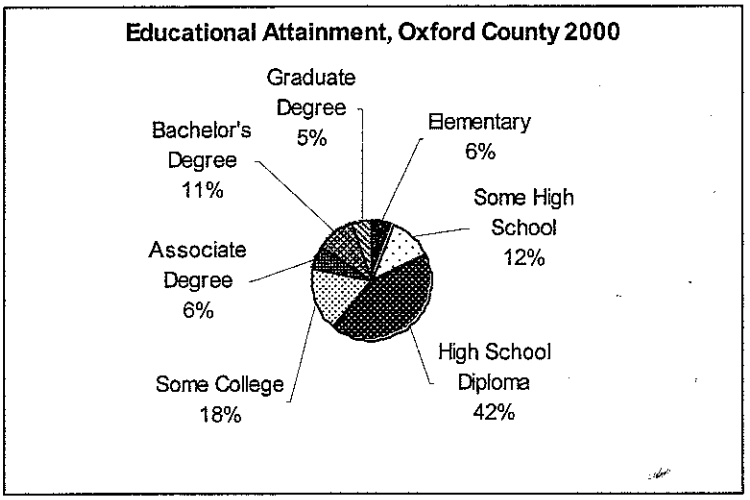
The older population may purchase more expensive homes and add to the tax base while having fewer children to educate.

Education

Otisfield has a higher percentage of Bachelor and Graduate Degrees than Oxford County as a whole.



The higher educational attainment for Otisfield compared to the County relates directly to the fact that there is a much higher percentage of residents holding managerial and professional jobs than in Oxford County.



Employment & Economy

Employment by Occupation 1990

Occupation	Otisfield 1990		Otisfield 2000		Oxford County 2000	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Managerial, Professional and related	100	20.4	246	32.3	6,835	26.6
Technical, sales, and administrative support	149	30.4	163	21.4	5,459	21.3
Service occupations	67	13.7	129	16.9	4,509	17.6
Farming, forestry, and fishing occupations	15	3.1	5	0.6	403	1.5
Precision production, repair and transportation	86	17.5	123	16.1	5,157	20.1
Operators, fabricators, and laborers	73	14.9	96	12.6	3,323	12.9

Categories vary from the 1990 Census to the 2000 Census

The fact that more people are employed in professional careers in Otisfield than in Oxford County also supports the higher income levels in Otisfield as shown on the following page.

As seen in the preceding table, there has been a significant increase in the number of residents that work in managerial and professional jobs over the past decade. There has been a slight increase in the number working in service occupations and there have been decreases in those working in production, as laborers, or in farming and forestry. This is typical of Maine and the nation, but the table does show that the number of residents working in managerial and professional occupations exceeds that in Oxford County. The decrease in the technical, sales and administrative support grouping may be due to a realignment of definitions between the 1990 and 2000 census. This decrease is somewhat unexpected, but some of the decrease is probably being reported as professional and managerial.

Otisfield is part of the Norway-Paris Labor Market Area. The employment of Otisfield shows trends common to the County, the State and the Nation with increases in Construction, Services and the Finances, Insurance and Real Estate sector. The manufacturing sector has been on a steady decline over the past few years.

Norway-Paris Labor Market Area
Non-Farm Wage and Salary Employment 1996-1999

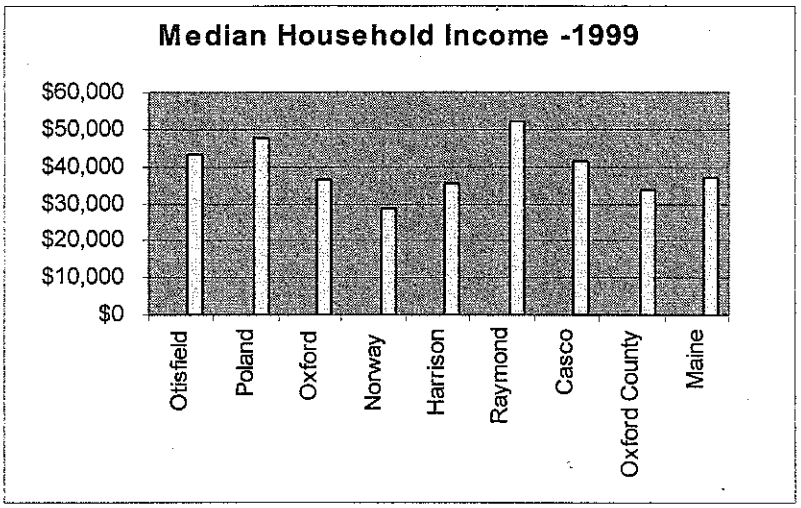
	1996	1997	1998	1999	% Change from 1995-1999
Total	7,230	7,410	7,430	7,890	9.13%
Total Manufacturing	**1,320**	**1,360**	**1,380**	**1,250**	**-5.30%**
Durable	1,050	1,030	1,060	940	-10.48%
Lumber & Wood	840	820	830	630	-25.00%
Logging	20	30	20	10	-50.00%
Non-Durable	280	330	320	310	10.71%
Printing/Publishing	70	*	60	40	-42.86%
Leather & Leather Products	*	*	*	*	*
Total Non-Manufacturing	**5,910**	**6,050**	**6,040**	**6,640**	**12.35%**
Construction	430	400	400	570	32.56%
Transportation/Utilities	370	360	400	390	5.41%
Wholesale Trade	70	80	60	70	0.00%
Durable Goods	20	30	20	20	0.00%
Retail Trade	1,670	1,710	1,710	1,790	7.19%
Finance, Insurance, Real Estate	220	230	240	230	4.55%
Services and Mining	2,100	2,100	2,000	2,330	10.95%
Health Services	910	870	860	890	-2.20%
Government	1,060	1,130	1,190	1,270	19.81%

Source: Maine Dept. of Labor Employment Earnings Statistical Handbook
*Data not available

The median household income is higher in Otisfield than in Oxford County and many of the surrounding towns.

While Otisfield was slightly below the Oxford County median household income in 1980, it now exceeds it by 30 percent.

The median household income in Otisfield has grown more than that of Oxford County and surrounding Oxford County towns since 1980. A review of the 1991 plan indicates that Otisfield's median household income was slightly below both the Town of Oxford and Oxford County in 1980. Since then it has grown faster so that it now exceeds that of Oxford County and the neighboring towns in Oxford County. Of the surrounding towns, only Poland and Raymond have higher household incomes. The relatively high income levels are again reflective of the educational levels and job types held by Otisfield residents.



The table below shows the growth by income category. Unfortunately, the income ranges are different in the two census years. However, the table does reflect the continued income growth in Otisfield.

Otisfield Median Household Income – 1989 to 1999

	Households 1989		Households 1999
Less than $9,999	49	Less than $9,999	25
$10,000 to $14,999	30	$10,000 to $14,999	31
$15,000 to $19,999	46	$15,000 to $24,999	81
$20,000 to $29,999	94	$25,000 to $34,999	85
$30,000 to $39,999	81		
$40,000 to $49,999	50	$35,000 to $49,999	152
$50,000 to $74,999	55	$50,000 to $74,999	133
$75,000 to $99,999	5	$75,000 to $99,999	51
More than $100,000	6	More than $100,000	38

Fiscal Capacity

Fiscally, Otisfield is in good shape. The mill rate is average for Oxford County. The town's fiscal capacity is such that the town can borrow to finance major capital expenditures. By financing large expenditures, existing residents are able to share costs with future residents who will also benefit from the new facilities.

Otisfield's largest source of revenue is property tax. Other sources include excise tax, federal and state revenue sharing, and a variety of fees.

Property Tax Revenues

Year	Assessed Valuation	Increase from Prior Year	Property Tax Revenue	Increase from Prior Year
1996	$100,128,524		$1,466,759	
1997	$103,892,494	3.7%	$1,522,464	3.8%
1998	$106,322,218	2.3%	$1,571,881	3.2%
1999	$108,613,651	2.1%	$1,637,240	4.2%
2000	$114,076,951	5.0%	$1,718,345	4.9%

Source: Otisfield Town Reports

Otisfield's property tax base is made up largely of residential property and land base. The Portland Pipeline goes through the town from north to south and is the single most significant tax payer. A major Central Maine Power transmission line also runs through the town almost parallel to the pipeline. Between that transmission line and other CMP lines in town, CMP is also a significant tax payer.

The residential shoreline development on Thompson Lake and the town's other ponds are a significant part of the tax base. This is particularly true since many of these properties are seasonal or owned by retirees who have no significant demand for educational services.

Revenues and Expenditures, Otisfield Maine

Category	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
Valuation					
Land	$52,331,624	$54,709,602	$55,316,566	$63,318,006	$63,318,006
Buildings	$45,640,230	$46,990,722	$48,755,412	$48,552,240	$48,551,645
Personal Property	$2,156,670	$2,192,170	$2,250,240	$3,227,050	$2,247,300
Total	**$100,128,524**	**$103,892,494**	**$106,322,218**	**$115,097,296**	**$114,116,951**
Revenues					
Property Tax Mill Rate	0.0159	0.0159	0.0162	0.0155	0.01585
Property Tax Collection	$1,466,759	$1,522,464	$1,571,881	$1,637,240	$1,718,345
Excise Tax	$112,846	$123,616	$137,177	$155,622	$183,191
Revenue Sharing	$52,768	$56,737	$66,010	$77,561	$91,476
Other Revenues	$158,758	$207,906	$138,442	$472,914	$278,350
Total	**$1,791,131**	**$1,910,723**	**$1,913,510**	**$2,343,337**	**$2,271,362**
Expenditures					
Municipal Oper. & Mgt.	$117,043	$108,249	$102,873	$112,923	$114,049
Municipal Capital	$123,054	$208,420	Unknown	$151,251	$131,877
Education	$823,816	$888,031	$926,535	$953,243	$985,781
Roads and Bridges	$310,449	$363,202	$350,278	$604,215	$365,442
County Tax	$69,449	$71,902	$69,401	$72,319	$74,205
Other	$322,100	$314,299	$434,605	$334,404	$302,970
Total	**$1,765,911**	**$1,954,103**	**$1,883,692**	**$2,228,355**	**$1,974,324**
Excess / Deficit	**$25,220**	**($43,380)**	**$29,818**	**$114,982**	**$297,038**

( ) represents deficit

Source: Otisfield Town Reports

Town Government

Otisfield has three Selectmen who also act as Assessors and Overseers of the Poor, a part-time Code Enforcement Officer who is also the Plumbing and Building Inspector, an elected Road Commissioner, an elected Town Clerk who also is the Treasurer, Tax Collector, and Registrar of Voters, and a full-time Administrative Assistant who is also Welfare Director. The town also has School Board Members, a Fire Chief, Planning Board and Board of Appeals, Constable, Recreation Director, Health Officer, and Animal Control Officer. The public forums have raised concerns about the efficiency of town government. This is discussed further in the section entitled Additional Analysis.

Housing

The number of housing units is rising at a much faster rate than the population.

One factor is decreasing household size which in 1990 was 2.75 and in 2000 was 2.61.

Over the past century, Otisfield has evolved from a community based on farm and forestry to a residential community. Most residents work out of town. There are a variety of housing types in town including mobile and manufactured homes, older homes in varying conditions, old farmsteads, new moderate homes, camps that are mostly near lakes and the river, and expensive lakefront properties for both seasonal and year round use.

In addition to the significant population increase previously noted, Otisfield has one of the highest rates of housing growth in the immediate area. Some of the growth is based on the demand for lakefront property, but combined with the year-round population increase, it indicates that Otisfield has become a desirable place to live. One reason may be the availability of relatively inexpensive land in some areas of town.

Housing Growth for Towns in the Area

	1980 Housing Units	1990 Housing Units	2000 Housing Units	Number of New Units	Growth Rate 1990-2000
Otisfield	587	816	1011	195	24%
Norway	2017	2440	2551	111	4.5%
Oxford	1486	1781	1926	145	8%
Poland	1509	1895	2316	421	22%
Casco	1222	1677	1958	281	16.7%
Harrison	964	1193	1430	237	19.9%
Naples	1462	1946	2381	435	22.3%

Another factor is the increase in seasonal homes during the past decade.

Otisfield Household Units

	1980	1990	2000	Change*	% Change*
Single-Family	331	374	487	113	30.2%
Multi-Family	7	13	8	-5	-38.5%
Mobile Home	16	76	124	48	63.6%
Total Year-Round	354	463	619	156	33.6%
Seasonal	233	353	392	39	11.0%
Total	587	816	1,011	229	23.8%

The housing stock in Otisfield is considerably younger than that of Oxford County due in large part to the many new homes constructed in the past two decades.

Housing Stock by Age

	Otisfield		Oxford County	
Year Built	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
1990-2000	341	33.5	5318	16.5
1980-1989	186	18.3	5346	16.5
1970-1979	151	14.8	4838	15.0
1960-1969	44	4.3	2686	8.3
1940-1959	122	12.0	4403	13.6
1939 or Earlier	173	17.0	9839	30.5

Affordability of Housing

It is important for towns to have a mix of housing types and cost ranges. Having housing that is affordable goes hand in hand with economic growth. Workers needed by start up businesses and those employed by the service sector, a growing part of the regional economy, often need affordable housing. Without it, workers may not be available for business start-ups and expansions, and municipal employees may not be able to live in the community.

Further, the quality of the affordable housing is important to the community. Having housing that is reasonably energy efficient and has adequate facilities such as hot water and bathrooms prevents low income families from being forced to live in substandard housing which can lead to blight and further impoverishment of the families.

The State Comprehensive Planning Goal for affordable housing is to have 10 percent of the new housing in a community be affordable based on the County median income. Affordability means that a household uses no more than 30 percent of its income for housing needs including mortgage and interest payments, insurance and taxes. Housing should be affordable to three income levels:

Very Low Income - Households with 50% of the median income.
Low Income - Households with 51-80% of the median income.
Moderate Income - Households with 81-150% of the median income.

Affordable Housing Rent and Selling Prices for Oxford County, 2000

Median Household Income for Oxford County	Household Income Group	Annual Income Limit	Affordable Monthly Rent	Affordable Selling Prices
$33,435	Very Low Income	Up to $16,717	Up to $417	Up to $37,239
	Low Income	Up to $26,748	Up to $668	Up to $68,750
	Moderate Income	Up to $40,122	Up to $1003	Up to $106,625

Otisfield does not have an affordable housing problem at this time.

The average selling price of houses in Otisfield, as reported by the statewide multiple listing service, is slightly above the affordable level for moderate-income households - $110,135 vs. $106,625. However, a review of the property transfers at the town office indicated considerably more sales than reported by the multiple listing service. With 54 documented house transfers in 2001, sale prices ranged from $22,400 to $331,920. It is assumed that the lowest prices were for older mobile homes and that the higher prices were for homes located on lake frontage. There were 6 sales of homes under $37, 239 which would be affordable to the very low income. There were 21 sales, including the previously mentioned six, under $67,750 which would be affordable to the low income range, and there were 34 sales, including those noted, below $106,625. With more than 33 percent of the housing stock in the town being built since 1990, the numbers would indicate that many of these the new homes are being sold in an affordable range. The housing market in Otisfield is affordable to a wide range of income levels.

There are also documented land sales of $10,000 for buildable lots. Set up with well, septic, driveway, and pad, such lots would support a new mobile home and be in the range of $62,000 complete. There are documented sales of lots set up for mobile homes for $30,000 per lot. With a new mobile home, these lots would be close to the affordable range for low income households and well within the reach of the moderate income households. The town allows mobile homes and mobile home parks in all locations in town.

The 2000 Census reported 27 rental housing units in Otisfield. Seven percent rented for between $200 and $299 per month, and 33 percent rented for between $300 and $399 per month. Even with heat and utilities, over 40 percent of the rental units would be affordable to low income households and at least seven percent would be affordable to the very low income households.

Otisfield clearly does not have an affordable housing problem at this time.

Average Selling Price

	Otisfield		Oxford County	
Year	Number of Sales	Average Selling Price	Number of Sales	Average Selling Price
2000	13	$110,135	420	$93,316
1999	14	$93,357	393	$85,755
1998	16	$87,950	405	$80,380
1997	17	$80,847	265	$77,425
1996	17	$70,071	152	$77,179

Source: Statewide Multiple Listing Services (MREIS)

Transportation

Private vehicle is the primary method of transportation in Otisfield, so the road system is very important to the community. There are two state maintained numbered routes in town: Route 121 runs from Casco in the southwest through the center of town to Oxford on the east, and Route 117 located in the northwesterly corner of Otisfield runs from Norway to Harrison.

Aside from Route 121 there is only one other state aid road, the Bolsters Mill Road, that runs from Route 121 at Spurrs Corner to Bolsters Mills. The town provides winter maintenance of these roads while the State Department of Transportation is responsible for road maintenance and improvements.

Private vehicle is the primary mode of transportation in Otisfield. For that reason the road network is very important to the economic and social well being of the town.

The conditions of the roads will help determine future development patterns in the town. Generally, development occurs on roads that are well maintained. However, over the past 20 years, there has been development on roads in poor condition, unimproved town roads, and on poorly maintained private roads. The town maintains approximately 20 miles of gravel roads and 24 miles of paved roads. Most roads are two lanes and of adequate width for the traffic they handle, but some are narrow and a few are even one lane width. A pavement and ditch condition inventory accomplished in 2000 found that approximately 8 miles of the gravel roads need substantial repairs including ditching, adding gravel and reshaping. Of the paved roads, 5.6 miles required significant repairs while15.8 miles needed some work including ditching and preventive repairs such as patching and crack sealing.

The capacity and conditions of the roads will help determine future development in the town.

There is minimal public transportation in the region. Western Maine Transportation provides a "demand response" service to the Oxford, Norway, and Paris area once each week and provides Medicaid trips for qualified residents. Community Concepts also provides some special transportation services for its clients. If rides are needed, these agencies must be contacted in advance of the need.

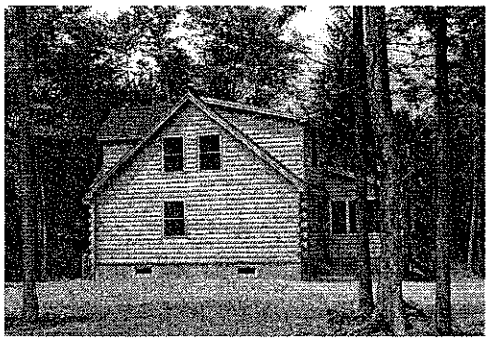
There are no "park and ride" services in town, but lots at several public buildings are informally used for "park and ride" purposes. Usage is minimal and is well within the capacity of the lots.

Otisfield's historic settlement pattern was not conducive to significant pedestrian movement. Villages were quite small and spread out. With very limited services and the established development pattern, it would be difficult to establish significant pedestrian traffic in any of the villages.

Bicycle traffic is becoming more prevalent. Paved shoulders are minimal to non-existent; conflicts between bicycles and automobiles are expected to present some concerns in the future.

Land Use

Residential



Over the past decade, residential development has continued the patterns established over the past 30 years; however, as noted in the Housing section, the number of houses built has increased dramatically. Residential growth has been scattered throughout the town. Some growth has occurred in two of the designated growth areas in the northwesterly corners of the community, but there has also been substantial growth in the entire northerly section of town. Another area having significant growth is the southeasterly part of Otisfield. Shoreline development along the lakes, especially Saturday Pond has also been significant. The southwesterly corner of town has experienced the least amount of development. This area is poorly served by roads. On the west it is bordered by the Crooked River, an area rich in natural resources.

The shoreline of Thompson Lake has been divided into small lots for many years. Over the past twenty years, much of the shorelines of Moose Pond and Saturday Pond has also been subdivided into small lots. Many have been developed and many more are ripe for development.

Commercial

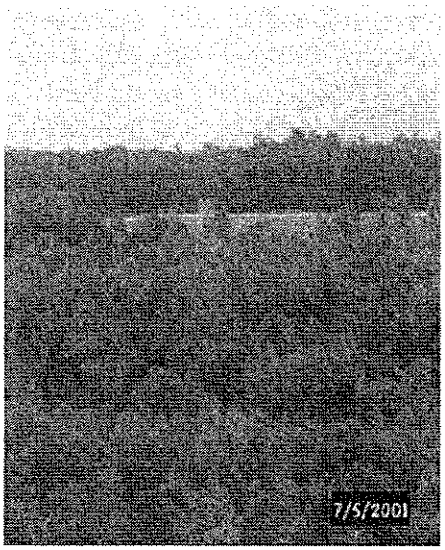
Otisfield does not have a commercial center and does not have the resources to support one. There is one year-round variety store in Bolster's Mills and another store by Thompson Lake; no gas stations are located in the town. Most businesses are small and in-home based.

Agriculture

There are presently few working farms in Otisfield. Although agriculture is not a significant part of the town's land use pattern, there are fields scattered throughout the town that are mainly used for hay. This green, open space contributes to the rural atmosphere of Otisfield.

Another aspect of farming that has become significant in recent years is small farm operations as a source of second income for some residents.

Woodlands and Forests



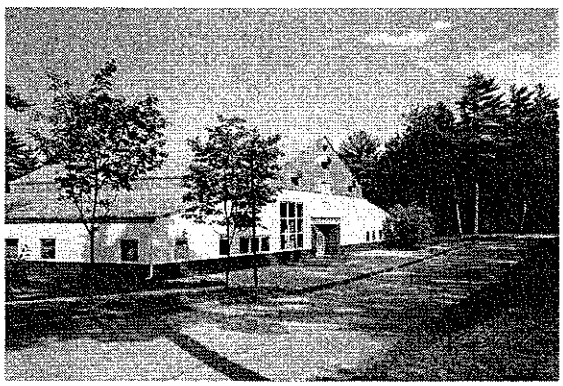
The vast majority of Otisfield is forested. The land is divided into tracts ranging in size from 10 acres to 1,500 acres. One hundred thirty-two (132) parcels of approximately 2,400 are over 50 acres; 80 of these range in size from 50 to 100 acres. Many of the forested parcels have been actively worked during the past two decades. A trend that has become particularly noticeable over the past decade has been the tendency to do extensive "liquidation" harvesting prior to development of the parcels for house lots. Some lots are subdivided while others have two residential lots cut out of them every five years as is allowed by the state subdivision law. With a change in state law that now requires the original lot to be counted toward subdivision for review purposes, there may be a slowdown of the creation of individual lots. Previously, lots over 40 acres were exempt so no review was required when two house lots were created from a lot over 40 acres.

There are approximately 100 lots under the Tree Growth tax law. These lots are concentrated in two areas, one area along the Crooked River in the southwest corner of the town and another area in the central to northwest corner of town. In addition to the lots in the Tree Growth program, Hancock Lumber has placed a large parcel in the southwest corner in a conservation easement.

Public Facilities

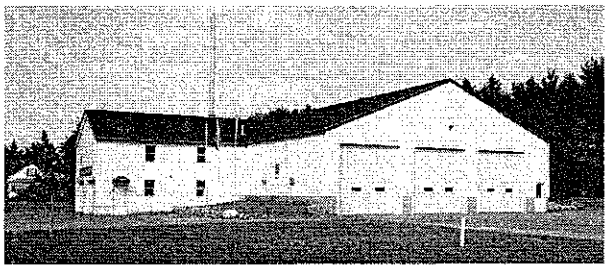
Schools

Otisfield belongs to School Administration District (SAD) # 17. The town has an elementary school, K-6 grades, located on Powhatan Road. This facility was built in 1990, and is accompanied by an outdoor playing field, basketball court, and playground. Grades 7-12 attend Oxford Hills Junior High and the Comprehensive High Schools.



Fire and Rescue

Otisfield has a paid call fire department with about 30 members. The town has three fire stations located on Spurrs Corner, which is the largest of the three, the Gore Road, and East Otisfield. The town has no rescue department; it depends on PACE for these services.

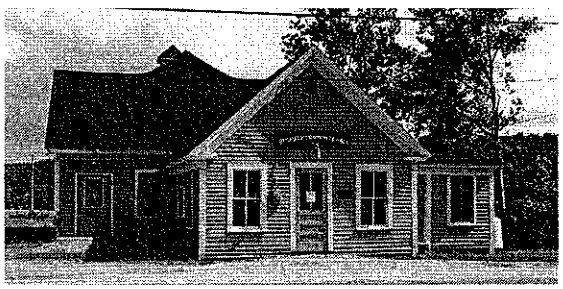


Town Government Facilities

Otisfield has a central town office located on Route 121 that houses all municipal government facilities. There is also a community hall located on Route 121 that is used for public meetings and social gatherings. These facilities are located less than one mile apart near the area traditionally considered the East Otisfield village.

The town office was converted from the old school and is reasonably adequate for the services offered. There is a meeting room on the main floor which is accessible by a ramp built soon after the building was converted. There is a large meeting room in the basement but it is not handicapped accessible from the upper floor or the primary parking area. It is accessible from the outside. A vault for the storage of town records was recently added on the basement level of the town office.

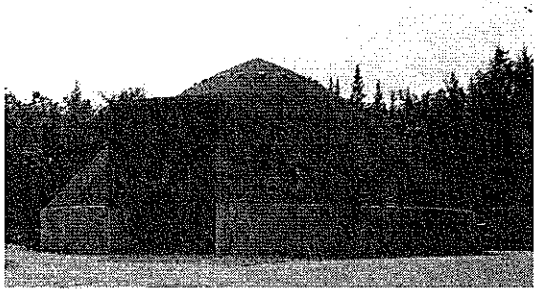
Voting occurs at the old Otisfield Town House on Bell Hill Road, which is a historic structure owned by the town. It lacks adequate facilities, including heat and restrooms.



The community hall is in need of substantial work. There is no foundation; the building has an old furnace system that does not provide adequate heat. Water is piped from the Fire Station across the street. The building has marginally adequate handicapped access. Due to the foundation, heat and water problems, it is not used during the winter months.

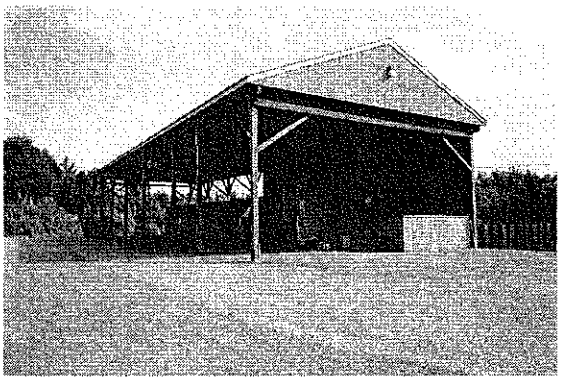
Public Works

The town has a salt/sand shed located off Oak Hill Road, near the transfer station. The town also owns two small dump trucks which are used for various road projects and plowing. The town elects a Road Commissioner who supplies other equipment on an as-needed basis.



Solid Waste

Otisfield's transfer station is located off Oak Hill Road. For recycling, the town works with Oxford County Regional Recycling. Individuals are responsible for transporting bulky waste to the Casco solid waste site that is owned jointly by Casco and Naples. Otisfield generally participates in AVCOG's annual household hazardous waste disposal day. HHW is brought to the transfer station and town workers transport it to the Lewiston-Auburn area for handling and disposal by a licensed hazardous waste disposal contractor. Currently, the town has limited disposal options for fluorescent bulbs and other mercury containing devices.

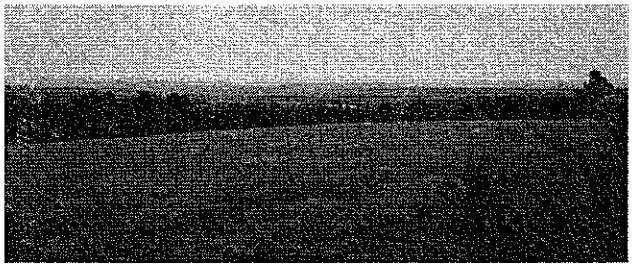


Outdoor Recreation Facilities

Along the northwestern shore of Thompson Lake in Otisfield Cove there is a small area suitable for boat launching. An easement over a small piece of land provides Otisfield residents with access to the Lake. There are only three parking spaces at the site. There is, however, a boat ramp on Thompson Lake in Oxford that is accessible to Otisfield residents. There is a beach and boat launch site on the northerly shore of Pleasant Lake that the town owns and maintains. There is limited access to both Saturday Pond and Moose Pond. Both are minimally maintained with most of the work done by people who use them. The access on Moose Pond has significant winter use by snowmobilers.

The Town has a tee-ball field behind the town office. There is a need for additional recreation facilities, especially for youth activities such as baseball, softball and soccer. Horses, bicycles, snowmobiles, and ATVs all use trails that have been carved along the pipeline that stretches the length of Otisfield from north to south. There is a field at the community school; these are used for various youth recreation groups when they do not conflict with school activities.

Scenic Resources



When one travels the roads through the small community of Otisfield, they will see the many attractive hills and valleys. On the top of almost every hill, the surrounding hills and distant mountains, including Mt. Washington in New Hampshire, can be seen. If views are to be preserved, there are two important aspects to consider: first, the location from which the view is seen, and second, the area that is viewed. Views of note were mapped for the original comprehensive plan. Participants at the public forums noted the many views and, in particular, were interested in preserving the view from Peaco Hill.

Land Base

Otisfield is made up of 28,705 acres or 44.85 square miles of land. In the year 2000, Otisfield contained 1,011 housing units, which at one acre each would consume 1,011 acres or 3.5% of the total acreage. Therefore, the town is approximately 96% open space.

Topography – Relief and Steep Slopes

Topography refers to the general landform of an area. Relief and slope are the two most important factors when considering topography. Relief reflects the height above sea level, relative to the surroundings. Local relief in Otisfield ranges from around 300 feet above sea level along the Crooked River to 890 feet above sea level on top of Scribner Hill. There is a 560-foot difference between the highest and the lowest points. Most of Otisfield is quite hilly, ranging between these two elevations. The flat areas consist of mainly floodplains, wetlands, and the sand and gravel aquifers.

The steepness or flatness of the land is called slope. Development on steep slopes can cause environmental degradation, and construction and maintenance of development becomes quite expensive on them. Slopes over 8% present both environmental

and cost constraints. Slopes over 20% are extremely sensitive and present even greater cost constraints. Over 2,700 acres, approximately 10% of the town land area, of slopes greater than 15% are found in Otisfield. Notable areas of steep slopes include The Pinnacle, Nutting Ledge, portions of Scribner Hill and Canada Hill, and the ridge that runs from Porcupine Mountain north along the Crooked River nearly to the northern border of town. Several of these areas have slopes in excess of 20%.

Soils and Geology

Soils/Geology: The soils in Otisfield and the region were formed by glaciers that covered the areas thousands of years ago. The vast majority of soils in Otisfield are glacial tills; these are soils formed by the glacial actions of grinding and pulverizing of the surface as the glacier moved across the area. The soils range from poorly drained to well drained. Most are capable of supporting a variety of development depending on the slope; the somewhat poorly drained and poorly drained soils having limitations for on site septic systems. Many of the very poorly drained soils exist in mapped wetlands. There are also areas that are shallow to bedrock. These soils usually occur on the top of hills and on steep slopes.

Along the Crooked River there is an extensive sand and gravel deposit that is mapped by the Maine Geological Survey as an aquifer. These soils are deep sands and gravels that were deposited by flowing water as the aquifer receded from the area. They range from very coarse to fine silts. Close to the Crooked River there are pockets of alluvial soils deposited by floods over thousands of years. These deposits are not extensive and have no significant value to the town.

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) has mapped soil types in Otisfield, and the information is presented in a Soil Survey Report by that agency. The soil types found in Otisfield are Hermon, Paxton, Peru, Windsor, and the wetlands consist of mainly Sebago Mucky Peat. These soil types were formed by glacial activity in the past, along with all soils found in Maine.

Water Resources

Wetlands

Wetlands: Wetlands provide numerous natural benefits including waterfowl and fish breeding and habitat and wildlife habitat, flood control, natural water purification, and recreation.

Otisfield has a number of wetlands with the two largest being College Swamp and Coon Road Swamp; several others are associated with Moose and Saturday Ponds and the rest are associated with various brooks. The two largest wetlands in Otisfield play significant roles in wildlife habitat as well as water quality for the surface water in the town and region. They protect and buffer the lakes into which they drain. They help to buffer the potential fluctuation of water quantity on a seasonal basis. They provide significant flood protection for the region, and in addition, they protect fish and wildlife habitat and also maintain recreational values.

Floodplains

Floodplains: The major floodplains border parts of the Crooked River, Smith Brook, Sucker Brook, and College Swamp. There are narrow, less significant floodplains bordering other parts of these water bodies as well as the other wetlands and the ponds and lakes in town.

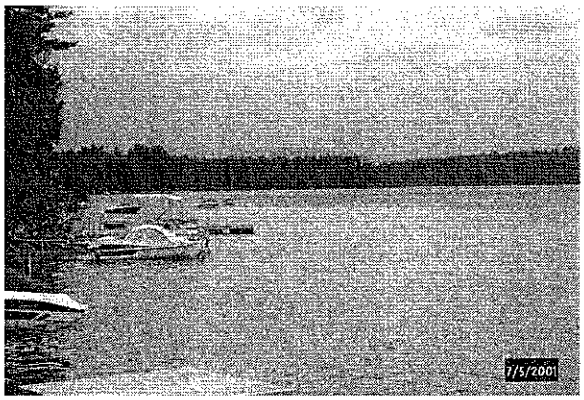
Within the floodplains, development is limited to single-family residences and roads and bridges. Any construction must comply with the flood hazard ordinance which uses a state model as its basis. The flood hazard ordinance is based on the mapping supplied by the Federal Emergency Management Agency's floodplain control and insurance program.

Surface Waters

Surface Water: There are numerous streams draining the hills and valleys of Otisfield. All streams flow into area lakes or the Crooked River. Four major lakes are located wholly or partly in Otisfield. These lakes are located in the central and easterly portions of town. The westerly part of town drains into the Crooked River, which is a major tributary of Sebago Lake, one of the State's premiere lake resources and the source of drinking water for Greater Portland. All of the land in Otisfield drains to lakes either located in Otisfield or nearby towns.

One result of land disturbance is erosion of soil. In order to protect lakes and all water bodies, erosion control during and after development is very important. Sediment resulting from erosion can

clog streams and culverts and cover feeding and breeding habitat with layers of silt. Erosion and sediment can destroy the natural uses of all water bodies. Thus, any land clearing and development in Otisfield has the potential to impact streams, rivers and lakes both in Otisfield and surrounding towns.



Lakes are one of the town's most important water resources. They provide habitat for fish and wildlife and recreation for residents and visitors. Shoreline development is also an important part of the town's tax base. The Maine Department of Environmental Protection monitors water quality. Data is collected on clarity and related chemical data. Each lake monitored is given a Trophic State Index (TSI) number. The TSI scale is based on the range of Chlorophyll a occurring in Maine Lakes. Chlorophyll is a green pigment and major chemical involved in photosynthesis. Chlorophyll is a good estimator of algae production. Algae production adversely impacts oxygen levels especially at lower depths of deep lakes that support cold-water fish such as trout and salmon. It also reduces water clarity. The lower the chlorophyll levels the lower the TSI number will be. The following table indicates the range of the TSI for the various lake status categories.

TSI Range	Status
0-30	Oligotrophic- Unproductive, generally deep, clear lakes
33-60	Mesotrophic- Intermediate phosphorus, chlorophyll and aquatic plant growth
61+	Eutrophic- Productive, high phosphorus and chlorophyll and abundant aquatic plant growth

Phosphorus is a naturally occurring element. In an undisturbed environment, it will tightly bind to soil and organic matter for plant use. Natural systems conserve and recycle nutrients and water. Runoff from an undisturbed, healthy forest is relatively low in quantity and high in quality. Land development changes the natural landscape in ways that alter the normal cycle. The removal of vegetation, smoothing the land surface, compaction of soils and creation of impervious surfaces, combine to reduce the amount of precipitation stored and retained, and drastically increases the amount of water running off the land. The increased runoff from disturbed lands carries higher concentrations of nutrients including phosphorus. The increased runoff also exacerbates erosion and sedimentation problems.

To control phosphorus, the Maine Department of Environmental Protection has created a methodology for controlling phosphorous

input into lakes. The methodology, explained in the 1991 comprehensive plan, results in the following table of allowable phosphorus loading to the various lakes, the watersheds of which are located in Otisfield.

	Drainage Area in Otisfield	Area Available for Development	Growth Factor	Area Likely to be Developed	Pounds of Phosphorus Allowed from Otisfield	Water Quality Category	Level of Protection	Acceptable Increase in P concentration	Phosphorus Allocation (#/acre)
	DDA	AAD	GF	AAD*GF	F	WQC	LOP	C	P
Little Pond	340	315	.25	79	2.6	mod – sen	m	1.0	.033
Moose Pond	1,153	1,053	.25	263	10.18	mod-sen	m	1.0	.039
Pleasant Lake	2,851	2,541	.25	889	55.89	outstanding	h	.5	.031
Saturday Pond	835	765	.25	191	9.17	mod-sen	h	.75	.036
Sebago Lake	11,986	10,986	.3	3,296	357.7	outstanding	h	.5	.054
Thompson Lake	8,806	8,056	.3	2,417	143.6	outstanding	h	.5	.030

Areas in acres

In addition to using the above phosphorus allocation table to review development under the site plan review ordinance and the subdivision ordinance, other protection measures can be implemented to protect lakes, rivers and streams. Important measures include buffers around all water bodies, and both temporary and permanent erosion control for all construction and land disturbance activities.

Groundwater

Otisfield has three sand and gravel aquifers either in the town or crossing the town's lines. One of the three is located at Otisfield Cove. The development on this aquifer is fairly heavy due to the location, although there are no apparent sources of ground water contamination other than subsurface disposal systems. Another aquifer crosses the Otisfield/Oxford line in the northeastern edge of Otisfield. This is part of the large aquifer that runs from West Paris to Gray and is associated with the Little Androscoggin River. Little development has occurred on this aquifer in Otisfield. The other aquifer in Otisfield runs nearly the entire western border along the Crooked River. Within Otisfield, there are no apparent sources of contamination. However, just south of Otisfield in Casco and Naples there are several potential sources, but these do not pose a threat to Otisfield. There is some development on this aquifer from Bolsters Mills toward Twin Bridges, but the remaining portion in Otisfield is relatively undeveloped.

Significant Natural Areas

There are two known Rare and Endangered Natural Areas in Otisfield that are listed on the Maine Natural Heritage Program. They are the Small Whorled Pogonia (Isotria Medeolodies) and the Pitch Pine Heath Barrens. Information provided from the Department of Conservation lists the Smooth Winterberry Holly (Isotria Laevigata) on the Rare or Exemplary Botanical Features. These areas should be protected from disturbance.

The occurrence of the Small Whorled Pogonai is in an area where relatively significant development has occurred. However, the Pitch Pine Heath Barrens appear less likely to be disturbed.

Cultural Resources

Historic Resources

Historic sites provide insight to a community's past as well as help answer broader questions about history. The Historical Assessment provides further insight into the historical and cultural resources. Below are three noted examples of buildings that are important to Otisfield's roots.

Nutting Hill Homestead on Route 121 was erected circa 1796 by Nathan Nutting as a story-and-half cape on his 130-acre homestead. The farm has been well preserved and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

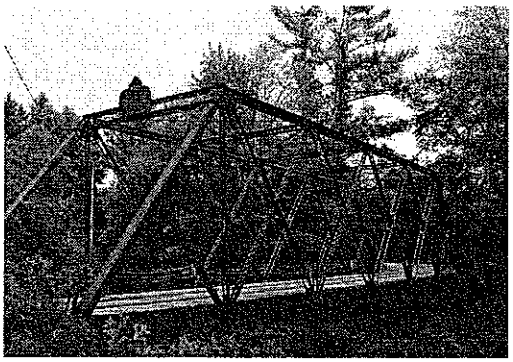
The **1839 Bell Hill Meetinghouse** was completed from designs by master builder Nathan Nutting, Jr. It is located on Bell Hill Road, north of Route 121. South of the Meetinghouse stands the only one room schoolhouse remaining in Otisfield, built in 1839 out of brick.

The **Levi Sargent House**, circa 1812, is of major historic and architectural significance. It is located on the Gore Road and is one of the few remaining log structures from the 18th century.

Other historic resources include the recently restored Ryefield Bridge, a registered historic bridge, and several cemeteries. The Introduction and Historical Assessment contains additional information.

Archeological Resources

The majority of prehistoric sites are located near watercourses that served as a source of food and transportation. This complies with the prehistoric sites found on Thompson Lake's shores by amateur archeologists; no professional archeological survey has been conducted in Otisfield.



Historic Ryefield Bridge

Civil War Monument
in Elmwood Cemetery

SECTION II
ADDITIONAL ANALYSIS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Public Participation: First Public Forum

The following paragraphs provide information on the public forums and input. There was an extensive public participation effort during the development of the plan update. In January 2002, the committee held its first public forum. It was designed to determine what the residents felt were the priority items that the town needed to address over the next ten years. The forum, attended by over 85 residents, identified the following priorities.

- **Growth and Loss of Rural Character**
- **Environment and Natural Resources**
- **Community Spirit and Sense of Community**
- **Town Government**
- **Public Safety and Law Enforcement**
- **Elderly Services**
- **Economic Development**
- **Roads**
- **Recreation**

A second forum was held in October 2002 and was attended by approximately 100 residents. This forum was designed to address the growth in the community and the protection of natural resources.

Growth, Loss of Rural Character, and Natural Resources

Growth, Loss of Rural Character, and Natural Resources: These three topics are inextricably intertwined when considering the future of any town in Maine. In Otisfield, the interdependence is particularly significant because the area is so rich in natural resources, and the growth rate is extremely high.

With a growth rate exceeding all of the surrounding towns, Otisfield is changing in ways not predicted by the comprehensive plan that was adopted in 1991. The new development is changing the character, increasing the demand for services and creating the potential to degrade the natural resources.

Character

Character: The character of Otisfield can be defined as having low density clusters of housing in several locations in town (the villages of East Otisfield, Spurrs Corner, and Bolsters Mills) with scattered housing along many of the roads. This development pattern is changing with the development of more and more two-acre lots with 200 feet of frontage along many of the town's roads and some private roads. Lake shores are also experiencing significant development.

Services

Services: Residents were concerned that the growth is outstripping the town's ability to provide services. In particular, schools, town administrative services, road maintenance and improvements, and recreational programs and facilities are all over extended. The school has had to install mobile classrooms to keep up with the increasing number of students and the need for new and expanded programs. Residents noted the desire for more efficient service at the town office, and the code enforcement program was noted to be very ineffective. Road maintenance is a concern to many residents. Residents are demanding better roads for commuting to work and getting to services in other communities. Additional discussion of the roads is provided in the Town Government section. There are only two small ballfields in town; not enough to support a growing youth population, and plans to develop a better recreational complex have been stalled for several years.

Natural Resources

Natural Resources: The natural resources that may be impacted are numerous. All precipitation falling within Otisfield's boundaries flows to a lake or pond: one of the five lakes in the town or Sebago Lake. There are two large, significant wetlands in the town, and there are nine wetlands of significance as waterfowl and wading bird habitat. There are also four deer wintering areas, an endangered species, located along the Crooked River, and a unique natural area that are shared with bordering Casco.

Currently, the natural resources are protected with criteria in the Subdivision, Shoreland Zoning, and Site Plan Review Ordinances. The criteria for subdivision and shoreland zoning reflect the state requirements for those ordinances. The Subdivision Ordinance includes a phosphorus analysis as part of the water quality

requirements. The Site Plan Review Ordinance has locally generated criteria but is only applicable to commercial development and multi-family residential units to which the Subdivision Ordinance does not apply. Lakes are protected by criteria that consider phosphorous runoff from subdivision and commercial development. Outside the Shoreland Zone, there is no control over individual lots upon which the majority of development has occurred during the past decade. Erosion and phosphorous runoff from such lots can have significant impacts on lakes and other water bodies.

The ordinances insure that major wetlands are not encroached on, but aside from shoreland zoning around several of the largest wetlands, the criteria do not provide for buffers and wildlife corridors necessary to insure the continued existence of the ecosystems associated with the resources. Streams outside of the shoreland zoning, deer wintering areas, and waterfowl and wading bird habitat are only minimally protected by criteria in the ordinances, and again, there are no local protections for these resources from the development of individual lots for residential construction.

Second Public Forum

The second forum focused on land use and environmental issues. The participants were divided into groups of 10 to 12 people. They were given two tasks. The first session was to work on a map of the town to identify what resources they wanted to protect and where they thought the town should grow. It was presented as their opportunity to build a town.

The second session was to explore options for protecting the valuable resources and reaching the vision established by that group's map.

The results of the first session, the one that asked groups to use maps to define how they would like the town to grow, are summarized on the next page. Several groups were reluctant to place any information on the map due in large part to a concern for property rights and the differentiation of land value that could result from drawing lines on a map. The summary follows.

First Session Results

- **Protecting Water Resources including Lakes, Wetlands and Aquifers.**
- **Protecting large tracts for wildlife habitat was noted by most groups, but did not seem to be a high priority.**
- **Protecting views, especially views from Peaco Hill, Scribner Hill, Cobb Hill, and Bell Hill. Peaco Hill was mentioned the most.**
- **Decreasing the number of mobile homes being located in town.**
- **Developing a village center.**
- **Having growth areas around the current villages including along sections of Rt. 121.**

Second Session Results

The results of the second session are noted below.

- **Better Code Enforcement**
- **Providing Incentives for the Preservation of Land**
- **Need for Logging Regulations**
- **Provide a better housing mix – Concerned with the increasing number of mobile homes**
- **Need for Zoning or Land Use Controls**
- **Zoning or Land Use related topics included:**
  - **Increased lot sizes**
  - **Increased setbacks and buffers from roads and resources**
  - **Need for a Building Code or Life Safety Code**
  - **Building Moratorium or Limitations on number of Building Permits**
  - **Developing a Village Center**
  - **Limit Road Lengths**
  - **Changing TIF locations**

Natural Resources

Lakes

Lakes: Lakes in Otisfield are one of the town's most important resources. They are an integral part of the town's and the region's ecosystem; they provide extensive recreational opportunities for residents, they attract visitors who add to the economy of the area, and they form a substantial portion of the town's property tax base. To determine the potential tax impact, a comparison can be made to two other towns for which data is available and which have four or more lakes within their boundaries. In 1997, lake front property in the neighboring towns of Poland and Norway accounted for 31 and 25 percent of the town's tax base. These figures only include property having frontage on lakes and do not include property that may have increased value because of other access to a lake. It would be reasonable to assume that lake front property in Otisfield accounted for over 25 percent of the property tax base.

The water quality of a lake is highly dependent on the uses and activities occuring in the entire watershed. The 1991 plan provides an assessment of potential water quality impacts and, in particular, of the phosphorus loading from potential land uses. Soil erosion and phosphorus laden runoff are the two most significant threats to the water quality of the town's lakes. Erosion results from soil disturbance from agriculture, silviculture, and construction activities. It can also result from unstablilized soils that remain after these activities have ceased. One of the major threats to lakes identified in recent years is inadequate road and road ditch maintenance. In Otisfield, private roads, inadequately maintained gravel town roads and improperly ditched town roads, both paved and gravel, pose significant threats to area lakes.

Development of subdivisions, including road construction, and commercial activities is reviewed for erosion control and phosphorous runoff. Agriculture, silviculture, road construction and maintenance, and residential development on individual lots outside of the shoreland zone is not reviewed. Some state laws and voluntary programs apply to agriculture and silviculture, and most towns do not have any local controls on these activities. The only erosion controls on individual lots are based on state law that has not been enforced at either the town or state level except in the most egregious cases.

Many of the streams and wetlands in Otisfield flow into the town's lakes. Protection of the streams and wetlands forms an essential ingredient in protecting the lakes. Likewise, adoption of some basic lake protection methods will also enhance the protection of streams and wetlands.

Lake Recommendations

Actions that are necessary to protect the town's lakes include:

- *Standards for both private and public road construction for residential and commercial development.*
- *Planning board review of private road construction to insure that water quality of all surface waters is protected.*
- *Standards for the control of erosion during and after construction on individual lots and review of plans for construction.*
- *Establishment of buffer areas, of at least 75', around all perennial streams as indicated on the most recent USGS maps.*
- *Requiring buffer areas of varying widths around all streams and wetlands as part of the review process for subdivisions, site plans and individual lots.*
- *Include the phosphorous loading table in the Subdivision, Site Plan Review and Building Ordinances, and continue to update the table as better information and updates from the State DEP become available.*
- *Include phosphorus control review for individual house lots as part of the Building Ordinance.*

Stream, Wetlands and Rivers

Stream, Wetlands and Rivers: Streams and wetands are important resources that deserve special protection. They are an important part of the hydrologic cycle and provide the headwaters for the area's lakes and rivers. They also provide feeding and breeding habitat for both fish and wildlife. The Crooked River is an important tributary to Sebago Lake, but it is also an important local resource. In addition to the wildlife benefits, it provides an outstanding recreational resource. The small amount of development along its course in Otisfield makes it unique for the region.

Stream & Wetland Recommendations

Special protection should be afforded to the lakes and numerous wetlands by creating buffers from development. Ordinances should require 75-foot natural buffers to both sides of the streams, and ordinances should require buffers adjacent to wetlands with the width of the buffer dependent on the size and value of the wetland.

The shoreline of the Crooked River is unique and should be protected from development by placing it in a Shoreland Zoning Resource Protection District. Points of public access with minimal amenities may be allowed.

Elderly Services

Elderly Services: There are limited services for the elderly available in Otisfield. When most residents reach the point in their lives that they can no longer maintain their residence, they are faced with moving out of town or depending on relatives for help.

There are limited transportation services available to bring elderly residents to nearby shopping areas and medical appointments. There is a hospital available in nearby Norway.

Another problem that has been identified is that elderly residents often do not know what services are available to them either in Otisfield or in nearby towns.

There has been some interest in developing improved services for the elderly. Housing opportunities in the form of apartments and possibly assisted living quarters would be a primary need. Additional needs might include senior recreation programs and better transportation opportunities.

Elderly Services Recommendations

The town should evaluate the potential to provide a volunteer elderly advocate who would be available through the town office. The person would have knowledge of programs and regulations and would assist all elderly residents and their families to access programs and understand program rules. The advocate would not be involved with legal actions or recommending any legal procedures.

Through the advocate or other means, the town should encourage the formation of a volunteer program to provide assistance to the elderly, including minor house maintenance, shopping and transportation.

The town should consider the development of transitional housing for the elderly including apartments and assisted living quarters.

The town should consider the development of an adult activity center.

Economic Development

Economic Development: Currently, the non-residential tax base consists of the Portland Pipeline. It runs through the town from south to north. While it pays a fair share of property taxes, it does not offer any employment opportunities within the town.

Otisfield has limited opportunities for economic development. There are no public water and sewer systems and the transportation network is limited. The State highways (Routes 121 and 117) passing through the town are classified as minor collectors by the Maine Department of Transportation. These highways are not considered to have any potential to support significant economic development. The town has identified two town-owned parcels as potential development sites; these were identified as part of a Tax Increment Financing District (TIF) adopted when the pipeline was expanded several years ago. However, the actual potential to use these parcels for development is very limited by other constraints on the property. The town has used a portion of the TIF funds to join a regional economic development program with the Growth Council of Oxford Hills. They are planning a business park to be located in Norway. This would offer employment opportunities within easy commuting distance and would also provide tax sharing of the property tax revenues.

There is some potential for outdoor recreation related development. Both summer and winter use trails are possibilities as is water sports including swimming, canoeing, kayaking, boating, sailing, and fishing. There is the potential to develop service businesses either centered

around these activities or to support the people that would come to avail themselves of the opportunities. Commercial camps and campgrounds are both possibilities.

Services

Services: Currently, the town supports a general store located in Bolsters Mills. Another store, located on Route 121 just east of the East Otisfield village area, has been closed for extended periods several times over the past decade. As growth continues, there may be a potential to support an additional or expanded store and possibly gasoline pumps. A general store is probably best suited to the needs of the area and best able to be sustained financially by the residents of the town. Precooked food, canned goods and staples, small hardware items, seasonal sporting goods, and clothing accessories are some of the items typically found in stores in rural Maine that are supported by populations the size of Otisfield's.

Surveys and public forums indicated interest in other services including day care, an adult activities center, and a public library. At the forums, residents were also interested in having their own post office; however, with the financial problems currently being faced by the U.S. Postal Service, development of one in Otisfield appears unlikely at this time.

Public forums also indicated an interest in the development of a village area that would be a location for public services and private commercial services. Forums also indicated an interest in a joint use community hall, or the rehabilitation of existing structures into such a hall that could house adult activities, child care, indoor recreation activities, and special functions.

Town Government

With town government identified as a high priority by the public at the first forum, the committee decided to evaluate this topic further. They met with the selectmen as well as town managers and officials from some surrounding towns in order to learn more about town government functions.

Public Safety and Law Enforcement

Public Safety and Law Enforcement: Otisfield has three fire stations, located to effectively serve most of the town. All are paid call departments. While there is adequate equipment to serve the town, there is a growing need for firefighters. Many towns in the region are facing a similar situation, whereby, most residents work outside of the community and are, therefore, unavailable to respond to fire calls during the work week. Towns are also experiencing increasing difficulities recruiting new volunteers to keep their departments fully staffed. Otisfield is no different. The Fire Department is working to recruit additional members.

Law enforcement in town is provided by the County Sherriff and State Police. Coverage is sporadic due to the large areas these officers must patrol. With the increasing numbers of year-round and seasonal dwellings in the town, the need for police protection is becoming more important.

Public Safety Recommendations

Within the planning period, the town will need to consider developing a policing program. It may be possible to do this by contracting with the County Sheriff's department, the State Police, or another town, or hiring a full-time qualified constable.

The town should develop road standards for new private roads that provide for all season access by all types of emergency vehicles.

Town Administrative Functions

Town Administrative Functions: An analysis of the comments from the forum indicated that town management, town office services, code enforcement and road management could all be improved. There were also indications that town government should be more "open." While selectmen meet on a regular basis, there are no published agendas for their meetings, and minutes are not posted for review. Residents cannot stay informed about the events in the town without making an effort to talk to officials directly.

As the town grows and government becomes more complex due to new state and federal regulations, there will be more demand on the town office administrative operations. The current separation of powers and the election of some positions make sharing of duties difficult. The election of some positions means that there is no overall control and coordination of town government functions.

Further, some town staff report directly to the board of selectmen; but communication with the board can be difficult due to the fact that they meet only twice a month. The Comprehensive Plan Committee could not do enough detailed work to determine the changes that need to be made, although they were very interested in evaluating a town manager form of government and eliminating elected positions except for the selectmen. There was discussion about adding two selectmen to the board, thus making it a five-member board.

Town Government Study Committee Recommendations

The Town will appoint a study committee, which will evaluate the existing town government and further evaluate alternative types of town government that may be beneficial to the town. The committee will also evaluate the administrative organization of the town office. The committee will evaluate the potential for a town manager form of government, a five-member board of selectmen, and other alternatives. It will evaluate how town officials are elected and the potential for some positions to be appointed. It will also evaluate the organizational structure for supervision, the development of job descriptions, and review and improve, as needed, the town's personnel practices manual.

The committee will consist of at least nine (9) members. Elected officials will not be eligible for committee positions but could serve in an advisory capacity.

Code Enforcement

Code Enforcement received the most comments of any town function at both public forums, and most committee members were also concerned with it. There was an overwhelming feeling that code enforcement needed to be improved. The magnitude of the comments on the inadequacy indicated that this issue needs to be addressed. Discussions with the board of selectmen also indicated that they had not supported strong, proactive code enforcement in the past. Some incidents during the planning process also indicated that the code enforcement program was weak. It appears that some developers are not obtaining the proper permits before dividing lots and selling them, but building permits were issued for these lots. Thus, the poor code enforcement program may contribute to the high growth rate as developers seek towns with weak ordinances and code enforcement. The poor code enforcement may also contribute to environmental degradation.

Code Enforcement Recommendations

The code enforcement program needs to be further evaluated with the aim of developing a strong, proactive program. It may be necessary to increase the hours of the code enforcement officer. The officer should spend time in the field on inspections and determining compliance with local ordinances as well as state laws that regulate land use and environmental protection. The code enforcement officer should regularly report to the selectmen and the planning board, and the officer should work closely with the planning board and applicants for planning board permits to insure that ordinances are followed.

The town should evaluate the need to have an electrical inspector to inspect all electrical work.

Road Management

Road Management: The management of the town roads has been a concern that has been discussed in Otisfield for a number of years. Watershed inventories done for Thompson Lake have identified numerous areas on town roads that have erosion problems that are contributing to the pollution load, both sediment and phosphorus, on Thompson Lake. Further, a road and ditch inventory done several years ago found significant potential for road drainage systems to impact the lakes and other water resources in the town.

The town maintains 44.5 miles of roads, 24 paved and 20.5 gravel. The road inventory found that 78 percent of the paved roads need work including 14 percent that need either rehabilitation or reconstruction. Fifty-eight (58) percent of the gravel roads need work including 30 percent that need additional gravel or other substantial work.

There are also many roads in town that are inadequate to meet today's travel demands, regardless of the pavement condition and drainage needs. Of the 24 miles of paved roads, only 10.2 miles of road are 18 feet wide or greater, and only 5.2 miles are 20 feet wide. All but 0.8 miles of the gravel roads are less than 18 feet wide. Eighteen (18) feet is a standard that should be met for safe travel on any roads besides those serving a neighborhood, and even neighborhood roads need approximately 18 feet of travel way to insure safe emergency access.

Continued development on roads with inadequate surfaces and inadequate widths will place a strain on the municipal budget as residents pressure the town to upgrade their roads.

A review of several recently completed projects during the road inventory indicates that the work does not consistently meet currently used management practices for pavement management or erosion control. Erosion control projects completed with technical assistance and grant funds from the Thompson Lake 319 improvement project are not being properly maintained.

Inadequate road maintenance costs the town valuable tax dollars as roads deteriorate to the point of needing rehabilitation and reconstruction. Additionally, inadequate drainage causes environmental degradation of streams, wetlands, ponds and lakes.

There is some concern that the problems with road maintenance may stem, at least partially, from the organizational structure of the road "department." The first forum identified roads as a priority issue and several groups identified the organizational structure of the road department as a potential problem. It was identified by the committee as something that requires further consideration.

The town owns two small dump trucks, two sanders and three winged plows, and has three employees; the road commissioner is elected. The road commissioner owns and operates a private excavating business and provides equipment and some operators for the town. The lease arrangements are made by the board of selectmen. Because the road commissioner is elected, the selectmen have no direct oversight of the work. The selectmen feel that there is reasonable cooperation between them and the road commissioner since they have worked with each other for many years. Several years ago, the selectmen commissioned a pavement management inventory in order to determine priorities for road maintenance and improvements. They work with the road commissioner to implement the findings of the inventory. Additional study is necessary in order to determine the most efficient way of organizing the road department.

Issues that need to be addressed include:

- Operational efficiency
- Road crew supervision
- Renting equipment versus owning, or mix depending on equipment
- Methods used to rent equipment, if rental is appropriate
- Elected versus appointed road commissioner, and role of selectmen
- Road department versus contractual work or mix of both
- Potential and need for bonding to undertake a long-term road improvement program

Road Recommendations

The town should appoint a study committee to evaluate the organizational structure of the road department and determine the best methods to finance road improvements using the above issues as a guide to their activities. This may be a study appropriately assigned to the Planning and

Implementation Committee formed in the Policy and Strategy section.

There should be a standing Road Advisory Committee to develop a formal Road Improvement Program that should be presented to town meeting for approval. The program should contain a one-year improvement program that should only be changed if circumstances do not permit its completion. It should also contain a 4- to 5-year plan for further improvements. The plan should be flexible due to changes that can occur over time.

The town should improve training for the road commissioner and employees and use recognized current management practices to maintain and improve the roads.

The town should enact a Road Construction Ordinance with standards for public and private roads.

Recreation

Recreation: The town has limited recreation facilities for organized youth and adult recreation. While there are all or portions of four major lakes in town and a lengthy stretch of the Crooked River, there is only adequate public access to Pleasant Lake. The town owns several parcels of land and even started the development of additional ballfields at Heniger Park. However, the costs of development, due in large part to the soil conditions on the site, were more than the Board of Selectmen thought the town could afford. There needs to be an increased effort to develop appropriate recreational facilities for organized sports. There also needs to be an effort to improve public access to area surface waters.

Recreation Recommendations

A Recreation Committee should be formed to plan and implement recreation programs and facilities. The committee should give particular attention to town-owned lands including Heniger Park.

The town should obtain and develop access to Thompson Lake for a boat launch, swimming beach, and picnic area with adequate space for parking. The area should be provided exclusively for Otisfield residents. The town should also provide improved access to Saturday Pond, Moose Pond, and the Crooked River in such a manner that it preserves water quality and the environment.

The town should insure that development does not degrade or remove existing recreational opportunities and facilities including trails. Where possible, through ordinances and other means, the town should encourage the establishment of greenbelts, parks and open spaces, and trails.

Heniger Park

Heniger Park: An area located between Route121 and Pleasant Lake was donated to the town over 40 years ago. The large area was donated with the intent that the Selectmen use it in whatever manner they deemed to be in the best interest of the town. No land could be sold. Beginning in early to mid 1960s and continuing into the early 1970s, the town designated a road close to the shoreline and divided the shore frontage and a small strip of land on the other side of the road into lots to be leased for camps. Leases were for ten-year periods but could be renewed four times, meaning that the leases will expire starting soon after 2010. The leases are now greatly undervalued. There apparently were no provisions in the leases to increase the rental amount. Some leaseholders do pay tax on the leasehold interest. However, the town is losing a large property tax base or losing prime access to Pleasant Lake. Some owners have converted the camps into year-round homes at this point. Determining how to handle the leases when they expire will be difficult. In addition, there is considerable available land in the remaining portion of the "park" that may be better used to benefit the town and its citizens. The town did start to develop recreational fields on the land, but, as noted earlier, the project has been stopped due to ledge.

Heniger Park Recommendations

A committee should be formed to evaluate the park land, determine the best uses, including recreation, and evaluate how to handle the leases before they expire. The committee should evaluate the leases at this point so that a coordinated plan for the use of the entire area can be developed. The committee will coordinate with the

Recreation Committee. The committee may be a "temporary" committee; its duties may be assumed by the Planning and Implementation Committee formed in the Policy and Strategy section.

In no case should the town wait until after 2008 to make a determination on how the leases will be handled after their final renewal date has expired.

SECTION III
POLICIES AND STRATEGIES
AND
LAND USE PLAN

INTRODUCTION

The Policies and Strategies herein supercede those of the 1991 plan. New Policies and Strategies and those revised from the 1991 Plan are noted as such. The Policies and Strategies are based on the Existing Comprehensive Plan from 1991, the Inventory and Analysis, and the Additional Analysis, Conclusions and Recommendation sections of this plan. The Additional Analysis, Conclusions and Recommendations section addresses the highest priorities as determined by the public input and the committee. In implementing the strategies, reference may be made to the detailed recommendations in that section.

MUNICIPAL SERVICES

Financial Planning and Capital Improvement Programming

Policy (revised): To plan for and oversee the finances of the town to insure fiscal accountability and efficiency.

Strategy 1 (new):
Establish a Finance Committee by ordinance. The committee will replace the Budget Committee. It will participate in the development of the annual budget, *financial management of the town,* and the development of long range financial plans, including a Capital Improvement Plan.

Strategy 2 (revised):
To aid in planning for municipal expenditures, the Town will initiate a Capital Improvement planning process. The Finance Committee, comprised of interested citizens, will be tasked with completing the plan *in consultation with town staff and the Board of Selectmen.* The CIP should be developed for a six-year period.

Strategy 3 (revised):
The Capital Improvement Plan should include the following, at a minimum: A preliminary plan and additional information is provided on Page III-13.

- -- Fire Department Facilities
- -- Fire Department Equipment
- -- Road Equipment and Facilities
- -- Road Construction and Maintenance
- -- Municipal Offices and other Town Buildings and Property
- -- Solid Waste
- -- Recreation Facilities

Fire Department

Policy (existing): To maintain the paid call fire department so it will be responsive to resident's needs and not overburden municipal finances, and

To include the department facilities and equipment improvements in the Capital Improvement Plan.

Strategy 1 (new):
Continue to recruit new fire fighters through various forms of outreach.

Strategy 2 (new):
Encourage participation in the department by providing pay for training and response.

Strategy 3 (new):
Evaluate further regionalization of fire services over the next several years.

Education Facilities

Policy (existing): To maintain a sound relationship between the community and the school system so as to provide services such as a library and recreational access.

Municipal Facilities and Officials

Policy (new): To provide a cost effective government that serves the citizens and property owners efficiently and effectively, and

To provide for town facilities that are adequate to efficiently and effectively operate town government, and serve the citizens and landowners in Otisfield.

Strategy 1 (new):
Form a government study committee by to evaluate the existing government structure and administration and recommend changes and improvements as necessary. (See comments under the Additional Analysis section for a description of the scope of the work to be accomplished.)

Strategy (new):
A town land and facilities study committee should evaluate the existing town land and facilities and make recommendations for their use and improvement. (The Building Committee appointed in the spring of 2003 could assume this broader role.)

Transportation Systems

Policy (revised): To ensure that existing roads are maintained and improved in a cost effective manner so that they are capable of serving current uses, and

To assure that new development takes place where transportation systems are able to sustain the increased traffic volume.

Strategy 1 (new):
Appoint a Road Department Study Committee to evaluate the management and organizational structure of the Road Department.

Strategy 2 (new):
Appoint a Road Advisory Committee, as a Standing Committee, to prepare a five-year Road Improvement Program and provide such other input to the Road Commissioner and Selectmen as they deem necessary.

Strategy 3 (revised):
Enact a Road Construction Ordinance to control the development and construction of public and private roads to insure the roads are adequate for public health and safety, meet the needs of residents, and do not create environmental degradation. Proposed privately owned roads should be constructed to such standards as to provide safe passage of all vehicle types, including emergency vehicles.

Strategy 4 (new):
Ordinances should require that no new building lot may be created unless it has frontage on an existing town maintained public road or a private road constructed in accordance with the proposed Road Construction Ordinance.

Code Enforcement/Construction Standards

Policy (revised): To impartially and strictly enforce land use and building ordinances and assure that new construction and renovations conform to acceptable building practices.

Strategy 1 (revised):
Application fees should be set at a level which reflects the cost of their administration and enforcement.

Strategy 2 (new):
Develop a job description for the Code Enforcement Officer.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Policy (new): Cooperate with towns in the region on economic development ventures by which the town may improve the quantity and quality of jobs in the area and improve the tax revenues to Otisfield.

Strategy (new):
Continue to cooperate with organizations and other towns in the region to develop regional economic development ventures.

Business and Industry

Policy (revised): To locate businesses of all types in areas which are appropriate for the intended use in order to:

- ***Protect the environment, natural resources, and water quality of Otisfield, neighboring towns and water resources that receive drainage from Otisfield,***
- ***Insure that they are compatible with the character of abutting uses and existing nearby residential areas,***
- ***Insure that they fit harmoniously with the town's identified rural character, and***
- ***Insure that they do not create a burden on municipal facilities and services.***

Strategy 1 (revised):
The Site Plan Review Ordinance, and other pertinent ordinances, should contain provisions regulating businesses in accordance with the stated policy. Each application should be reviewed with regard to its impact on existing municipal services, including roads and solid wastes and its impact on the character of the area. Existing standards in the ordinance should be updated and new standards added to achieve the policy.

Home-Related Businesses

Policy (revised): To provide for home-related businesses throughout the community, and to insure their compatibility with residential uses and existing abutting uses.

Strategy 1 (new):
Amend the Site Plan Review Ordinance to require Planning Board review of residence based businesses using an abbreviated procedure. The review shall include standards similar to those in the current ordinance with additional standards for sound, lighting, and, if necessary, hours of operation.

Strategy 2 (new):
The Site Plan Review Ordinance should require existing residence based businesses to meet the standards, but such businesses shall not be required to obtain a permit unless they expand or change the type of business.

NATURAL RESOURCES POLICY

Surface Waters

Policy (existing): To maintain and improve the surface water quality of individual lakes, ponds, and rivers,

To allow sport fishing, boating, swimming and any other outstanding recreational opportunities which will not negatively affect the water quality of surface waters, and

To maintain the Crooked River's high values which include scenic, fishery, and recreation resources.

Strategy 1 (revised):
The Shoreland Zoning Ordinance should be amended to include a Resource Protection District adjacent to the Crooked River so that the recreational and scenic values of the river are maintained. The Resource Protection District should extend 250 feet or to the extent of the 100 year floodplain, whichever is greater. Single-family residential development should be allowed on existing lots contained wholly within the district; setbacks from the river shall be as great as possible.

Strategy 2 (revised):
All land use ordinances should include provisions for strict erosion and sedimentation control standards, water quality protection, and storm water management features.

Strategy 3 (revised):
Measures should be taken to acquire, improve, and maintain continual access to the town's lakes and ponds and to the Crooked River for recreational activity. The Capital Improvement Plan should consider acquisition of new and expanded areas and improvements to existing areas and facilities. Note: The town should consider land swaps and soliciting donations as means of obtaining suitable lands. Additionally, the town should consider accepting private roads in return for permanently obtaining suitable access to these waters.

Lake Watersheds

Policy (existing): New or expanded development in lake watersheds be conducted in such a manner that lake water quality is protected.

Development in lake watersheds does not alter the "character" of the land surrounding the lakes.

Strategy 1 (revised):
The Subdivision and Site Plan Review Ordinances should be continually updated to reflect updated phosphorous control methodologies and export limits.

Brooks and Streams

Policy (revised): To control development along shorelines of brooks and streams so that the natural quality, wildlife habitat, natural flood control features and recreation potential are maintained.

Strategy (revised):
The Subdivision, Site Plan Review, and Building Code Ordinances shall require natural buffers, at a minimum of 75 feet wide on each side of the stream, adjacent to all perennial streams.

Ground Water

Policy: To protect and preserve ground water resources from activities which could limit their quality or quantity.

Strategy 1 (revised):
The Subdivision and Site Plan Review Ordinances should include groundwater impact and performance standards for developments throughout the town. Performance standards should provide particular attention to activities that are potentially harmful to groundwater resources such as waste handling, chemical and fuel storage and handling, as well as sand and gravel extraction.

Wetlands

Policy (revised): To protect wetlands from being filled or from encroachment so that their benefits and values are maintained.

Strategy 1 (revised):
The Shoreland Zoning Ordinance should continue to include significant wetlands and adjacent buffer areas in a Resource Protection District to protect them from degradation or destruction.

Strategy 2 (revised):
The Shoreland Zoning Ordinance should continue to require that proposed developments adjacent to wetlands maintain an undisturbed buffer area.

Strategy 3 (new):
The Subdivision and Site Plan Review Ordinances shall provide for natural buffers adjacent to wetlands in order to protect their environmental benefits and values on each side of the stream, adjacent to all perennial streams. Buffers may range from 10 to 150 feet or more and should be based on the characteristics and values of the wetland. This should not be construed to prevent the filling of incidental wetlands providing hydrologic changes caused by such filling are mitigated.

Floodplains

Policy (revised): That development in floodplain areas be limited to improvement/reconstruction of existing structures, and no new buildings should be constructed in the floodplains. New development in floodplains should be limited to activities that do not disrupt the flood flows and that will not be significantly damaged by flooding such as trails and boat ramps.

Strategy (existing):
All 100-year floodplains should continue to be included in the Resource Protection District of the Shoreland Zoning Ordinance.

Topography

Policy (revised): To assure that development and other activities upon steep slopes are undertaken in such a manner so as to minimize environmental degradation and municipal costs.

Strategy (revised):
The Subdivision and Site Plan Review Ordinances should include provisions that require development on steeper slopes to retain trees and other natural vegetation to stabilize hillsides, and to reduce erosion, siltation and runoff.

Soils

Policy (revised): To insure that development does not cause erosion of soils or degrade the ability of the land to hold water.

Strategy 1 (revised):
The Subdivision, Site Plan Review, and Building Ordinances should be amended to include soil erosion standards for new development. The Subdivision and Site Plan Review Ordinances should reference acceptable erosion control practices such as those contained in the Maine Erosion and Sediment Control Handbook for Construction: Best Management Practices by the Cumberland County Soil and Water Conservation District and the Maine Department of Environmental Protection.

Strategy 2 (new):
The Building Ordinance should contain requirements for both temporary and permanent erosion control measures on individual house lots and other structures covered by the ordinance.

Forest and Agricultural Resources

Policy (existing): To safeguard the forestland, open space, and agricultural land from inappropriate development which may threaten those resources;

To encourage forest management that will maintain the economic, recreational, and aesthetic values of the forestland, and

To encourage preservation in areas necessary to maintain surface water quality.

Strategy 1 (existing):
Forest management practices including harvesting should comply with all pertinent state and local regulations.

Strategy 2 (revised):
The Shoreland Zoning Ordinance should continue to regulate timber harvesting practices adjacent to surface waters and designated wetlands in accordance with state guidelines.

Strategy 3 (existing):
Develop a program to educate landowners on taking advantage of conservation programs to preserve undeveloped land.

Critical Areas

Policy (existing): To protect areas identified by the Maine Natural Heritage Program as Rare or Endangered Natural Areas.

Strategy (revised):
The Town's Subdivision and Site Plan Review Ordinances should contain development review standards, which would insure that the natural areas are maintained and rare or endangered species are not threatened.

CULTURAL AND RECREATIONAL RESOURCES

Scenic Resources

Policy (revised): That development and other activities in significant scenic areas should be undertaken in such a manner as to minimize any obstruction of views and interruption of scenic vistas.

Strategy 1 (revised)
The Subdivision and Site Plan Review Ordinances should be amended to include criteria, which minimize the obstruction of significant views and interruption of scenic vistas.

Recreation Resources

Policy (existing): To support and provide additional recreational opportunities in the community.

To encourage the continued survival of children's camps, undeveloped woodlands, and shorelands as major components in Otisfield's character.

To insure that new development does not threaten to degrade or remove existing recreation facilities.

Strategy 1 (revised):
A Recreation Committee should be formed for the purposes of planning, promoting, and maintaining present and future recreational opportunities and facilities. Special attention should be given to town-owned lands including Heniger Park.

Strategy 2 (revised):
Ordinances should include provisions to insure that development does not degrade or remove existing recreational opportunities and facilities including trails.

Strategy 3 (new):
Priority should be given to securing and developing shoreland on Thompson Lake to be used for a boat launch, swimming beach, and picnic area with adequate space for parking and exclusively for the use of Otisfield residents.

Strategy 4 (new):
The town should provide improved access to Saturday Pond, Moose Pond, and the Crooked River in such a manner that it preserves water quality and the environment.

Strategy 5 (new):
Where possible, through ordinances and other means, the town should encourage the establishment of greenbelts, parks and open spaces, and trails.

Historic Resources

Policy (revised): To encourage preservation of all structures designated as significant historic resources.

To encourage new development or redevelopment adjacent to a historic building(s) to be compatible with the existing historic structure(s).

Strategy 1 (revised):
Ordinances should contain provisions to discourage, whenever possible, the destruction or removal of designated historic resources.

Strategy 2 (revised):
The Subdivision and Site Plan Review Ordinances should include provisions which prohibit incompatible uses adjacent to historic sites and buildings and encourage adjacent structures to be compatible with the design and scale of the historic structures.

Strategy 3 (revised):
The Otisfield Historical Society should identify and attempt to register those historic and archeological resources suitable for listing on the Maine and National Registers for Historic Places.

Archeological Resources

Policy (existing): That development or other land use activities which would impact known or potential archeological resources should be adequately assessed to document significant archeological information, and that such resources should be protected if found significant.

Strategy 1 (revised):
Ordinances should insure that incompatible development is discouraged where known or potential archeological resources exist, and that such resources are adequately protected.

SHARED RESOURCES

Policy (existing): That new development or redevelopment of any of the shared resources be such that regional impact is minimized.

Strategy 1 (revised):
The Town of Otisfield should coordinate regularly with adjacent towns, the Pleasant Lake Association and the Thompson Lake Environmental Association to develop and implement coordinated approaches to protect the water quality and the environment of Pleasant Lake, Thompson Lake, the Crooked River, and shared natural areas, as appropriate.

IMPLEMENTATION (new)

Planning and Implementation Committee: By the adoption of this plan, the town will form a Planning and Implementation Committee to provide oversight to the implementation actions in the comprehensive plan, to take on such studies recommended in the plan that may be appropriate for the committee, and to review and update land use related ordinances in coordination with the Planning Board.

The Committee would be made up of five to seven members consisting of existing Comprehensive Planning Committee members who choose to continue, a selectman, a planning board member, and three-to-five members from the public who would be appointed to staggered two-year terms by the Board of Selectmen. The Planning and Implementation Committee members may recommend candidates for new members to the Board of Selectmen. The Code Enforcement Officer, the Administrative Assistant and the Road Commissioner would serve as ex-officio members.

The committee could take on the functions of temporary study committees recommended in the plan, if appropriate. The committee may provide input to other committees recommended in the plan, whether temporary or standing, in order to provide insight and background as developed during the planning process. For land use ordinance work, the

committee would coordinate with the Planning Board to determine the need for ordinance changes and would review proposed changes with the Planning Board before holding a public hearing or bringing them to town meeting.

Conservation Commission: An important function of protecting natural resources in the community is to educate the public about the values of the resources. Without knowledge of their importance, both year-round and summer residents may act in ways that disturb or destroy the resources. If regulation is needed, an educated public is essential since they are tasked with enacting the regulations. Therefore, in order to educate the year-round and seasonal residents and the landowners in Otisfield, the Town should form a Conservation Commission. The duties of the Commission will be for the sole purpose of educating the public on environmental issues. They will provide balanced information on a variety of issues facing the Town. They should have regular contact with the Selectmen, the Planning Board, and the Planning and Implementation Committee in order that all may stay informed.

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LAND USE PLAN

"In the Otisfield Community Survey, year-round residents selected plentiful forest areas, the feeling of open space, and scenic views as the three qualities which best define Otisfield. Seasonal residents identified the same first two choices as year-round residents, but their third choice was the lake front lands. Preserving the natural resource base of Otisfield can protect the amenities identified by the residents. Only in this way will residents feel satisfied that their small town way of life would survive. Without proper management of its natural resources, many of Otisfield's valued characteristics could be altered. Therefore, it is a goal of the community to maintain and/or enhance its natural resources and features." This is a paragraph from the Comprehensive Plan of 1991.

The Comprehensive Plan of 2003 for the Town of Otisfield will have two land use designations, Critical Rural and Rural (see Appendix B). Critical Rural are the areas designated in the table below and shown on the accompanying land use map. The remainder of the town is in the Rural area. However, within the Rural area there are resources requiring special protection in order to protect overall environmental quality and the character of the town. These resources are listed in the table in the column labeled Rural Areas Needing Special Protection.

This fits well with the 1991 land use plan. It identified two types of special protection areas: those areas which should be placed in the Shoreland Resource Protection District, now designated as Critical Rural and those resources which needed special attention in all land use ordinances so that they would be adequately protected. The table is similar to one in the 1991 Land Use Plan.

The Comprehensive Planning Committee found it was unable to follow the state strategy of a Growth and a Rural area. Following is an excerpt from MRSA 30A & 4326: Local growth management program sub paragraph 3.A: ...A municipality is not required to identify growth areas for residential growth if it demonstrates that it is not possible to accommodate future residential growth in these areas because of severe physical limitations, including, without limitation, the lack of adequate water supply and sewage disposal services, ...or limitations imposed by protected natural resources.

The Town of Otisfield is a part of the watershed for Thompson Lake which follows into the Little Androscoggin River, and is also part of the watershed for Pleasant Lake and the Crooked River which ultimately flows into Sebago Lake.

Critical Rural	Rural Areas Needing Special Protection
Floodplains	Steep slopes (in excess of 20%)
Wetlands which provide significant habitat or flood protection and land immediately surrounding them	Wildlife and waterfowl habitats
Fragile shoreland areas (steep slopes and floodplains)	Scenic vistas
Crooked River Shoreland	Public points of access to water bodies
	Significant ground water supply areas
	Lake Watersheds
	Sand and gravel aquifers
	Stream corridors
	Other wetlands

By taking several priority actions, the town can control the unfettered development that has occurred on individual lots and protect the important natural resources. These actions include:

> Placing the resources listed in the "Designate as Resource Protection" column in the above table in the Resource Protection district of the Shoreland Zoning Ordinance.

Amending all land use ordinances including the housing ordinance to require protection through the use of buffers and improved criteria to provide protection to the resources listed in the "Provide Special Protection" column of the above table.

Greatly improving the Code Enforcement Program.

Requiring all new construction to provide adequate temporary and permanent erosion and sedimentation control and phosphorous control.

Limiting the creation of new building lots to roads that are adequate to protect the environment and are suitable for emergency vehicle passage.

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PLANNING

The Capital Improvement Plan presented in the following two tables, is provided as guidance for development of a more detailed plan by the proposed Finance Committee. The plan was developed by meeting with department heads and the board of selectmen and by considering the implementation strategies and recommended actions in this plan. More detailed work by the Finance Committee and other recommended committees and events during the course of the six year planning period may have considerable impact on the development of a capital improvement program. This guidance provides rough cost estimates since it will be up to the Finance Committee and other committees to further evaluate costs and methods of financing the improvements. The plan presented here indicates the priority as either Necessary or Desirable. Necessary improvements include improvements that need to be done in order to protect the health and safety of residents or to prevent further deterioration of facilities so that the long term costs to tax payers would ultimately increase. Desirable improvements include items that residents appear to support or officials feel will help make Otisfield a more desirable place to live. Several higher priority improvements have been undertaken during the course of the plan preparation and are therefore, not considered.

Capital Improvement Plan

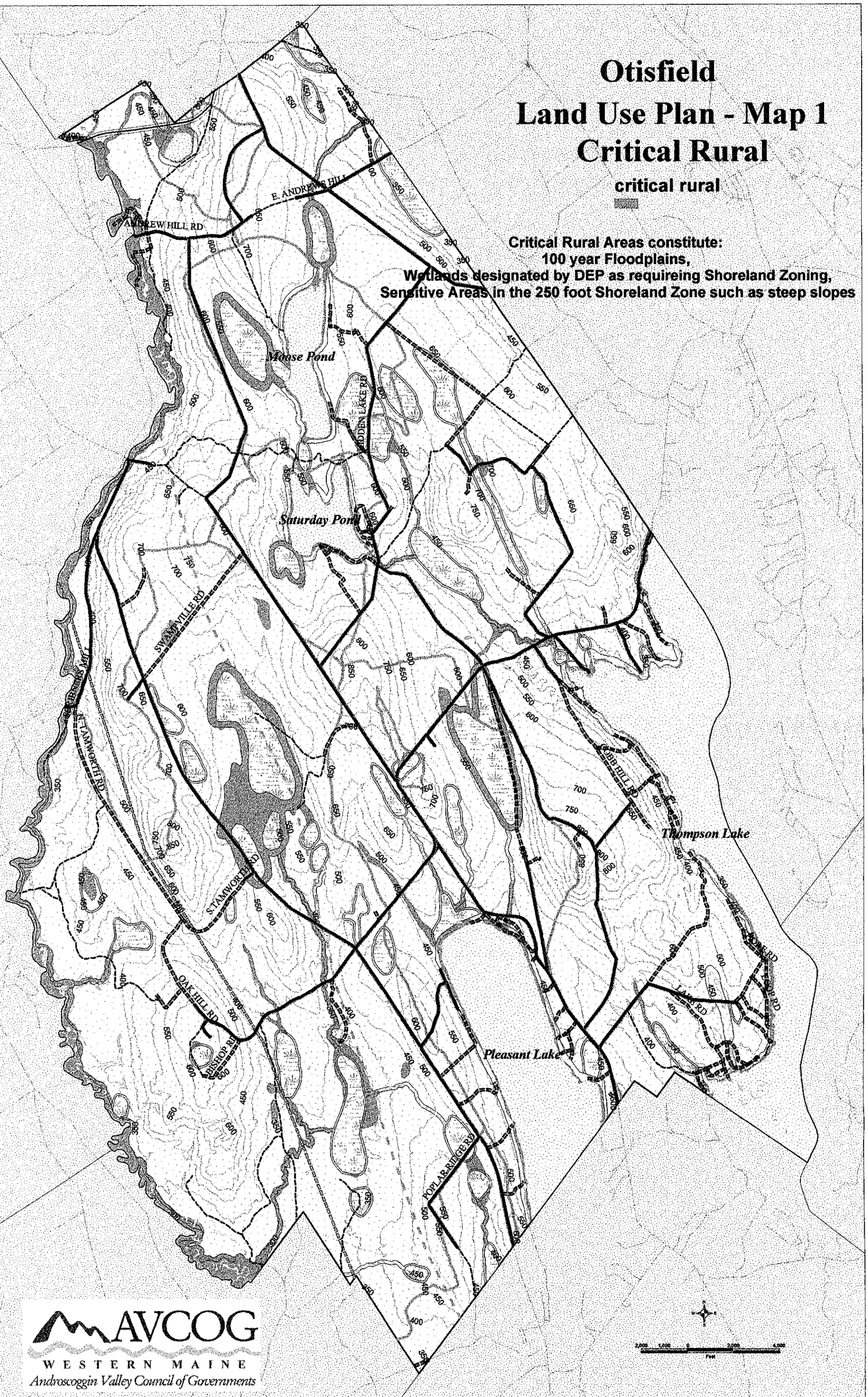
Category	Year	Cost	Item	Priority	Method of Financing
Fire Department					
	2008	$130,000	Tanker	Necessary	Bond
Road Department - pending outcome of study committee					
	2004	$ 20,000	study/design maintenance facilty	Necessary	Appropriation
	2005	$ 100,000	Public Works Garage	Desireable	Bond/Grants
	2006	$ 80,000	Plow truck	Desireable	Lease Purchase
	2006	$ 80,000	Plow truck	Desireable	Lease Purchase
Road Improvements					
	2004	$100,000	Paving	Necessary	TIF
	2005	$120,000	Road Rehabilitation	Necessary	Appropriation
	2006	$125,000	Road Rehabilitation	Necessary	Appropriation
	2007	$130,000	Road Rehabilitation	Necessary	Appropriation
	2008	$150,000	Road Rehabilitation	Necessary	Appropriation
	2009	$160,000	Road Rehabilitation	Necessary	Appropriation
Recreation					
	2005	$ 25,000	Pleasant Lake Rec Area	Desireable	Appropriation
Town Services Center - pending outcome of study committee					
	2004	$ 10,000	Develop Plan	Necessary	Appropriation
	2005	$ 100,000	Purchase land (40 acres)	Desireable	Appropriation
	2006	$ 50,000	Design facilities	Desireable	Appropriation
	2007	$ 500,000	Construct facilities - Phase I	Desireable	Bond

Summary by Year				
Year	**Total**	**Appropriation**	**Bond**	**Other**
2004	$ 130,000	$ 30,000		$ 100,000
2005	$ 345,000	$ 245,000	$ 100,000	
2006	$ 335,000	$ 175,000		$ 160,000
2007	$ 630,000	$ 130,000	$ 500,000	
2008	$ 280,000	$ 150,000	$ 130,000	
2009	$ 160,000	$ 160,000		

Otisfield
Land Use Plan - Map 1
Critical Rural

critical rural

Critical Rural Areas constitute:
100 year Floodplains,
Wetlands designated by DEP as requireing Shoreland Zoning,
Sensitive Areas in the 250 foot Shoreland Zone such as steep slopes



AVCOG
WESTERN MAINE
Androscoggin Valley Council of Governments