

Town  
OF  
Rangeley, Maine



# COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

ADOPTED AT TOWN MEETING  
September 16, 2025

CONSISTENCY WITH THE GROWTH  
MANAGEMENT ACT  
August 14, 2025

# ***Table OF Contents***

***1. INTRODUCTION***

***2. VISION FOR RANGELEY***

***3. POPULATION AND DEMOGRAPHICS***

***4. HISTORIC, ARCHAEOLOGICAL, AND CULTURAL RESOURCES***

***5. ECONOMY***

***6. HOUSING***

***7. TRANSPORTATION***

***8. NATURAL AND WATER RESOURCES***

***9. PUBLIC SECTOR: FACILITIES AND CAPACITY***

***10. HEALTHCARE***

***11. CLIMATE***

***12. FUTURE LAND USE PLAN***

***13. REGIONAL COORDINATION PROGRAM***

***14. PLAN IMPLEMENTATION AND EVALUATION***

***15. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION SUMMARY***

## ***INTRODUCTION***

This Comprehensive Plan (the Plan) is an update of the Plan adopted in 2012. It aims to define how the people of Rangeley want their Town to grow and develop over the next 10 years. Thus, it is a vital public document.

The Comprehensive Review Committee (CRC) was created and authorized by the Board of Selectmen to undertake this project. The CRC consists of Chris Farmer, chair; Wendyll Caisse; Steve Hewins; Cynthia Egan; Breck Parker; Jake Beaulieu; and Town Manager Joe Roach as an ex-officio member. The CRC developed the Plan through public meetings with year-round and seasonal residents, visitors, businesses, nonprofit organizations, and other stakeholders, and also used data from trusted sources. Although the Committee may have differing views on items, it agreed that the Plan presents a realistic direction for Rangeley over the next 10 years.

Town officials, boards, committees, and organizations will use the Plan to guide financial and policy decisions. By state law, any changes to local land use regulations must be consistent with the Comprehensive Plan. Also, many state grant programs give preferential treatment to projects in a Town's Plan.

It comprises a Vision for Rangeley, background information and data, policies, action strategies, and regional coordination.

## ***VISION FOR RANGELEY***

If you are to read only one part of the Plan, let it be Chapter 2—Vision for Rangeley. The Vision discusses Rangeley's character, special places, and trends, and how they relate to current and future community needs. At the beginning of the process, the CRC held meetings in Rangeley and Oquossoc to identify existing deficiencies and new needs and set a future course of direction. Toward the end of the two-year project, the public was invited to a public hearing to provide final comments on the proposed plan before it was submitted to the State of Maine for its review of consistency.

## ***BACKGROUND INFORMATION***

The comprehensive planning process requires an accurate and thorough understanding of the community. In planning terms, the "community" means its people, infrastructure, services, and natural features. LK Planning guided the project, and the Androscoggin Valley Council of Governments provided the best available data and natural resources mapping. Many individuals, businesses, and organizations contributed insight and suggestions, so the people of Rangeley developed the Plan.

The Plan includes chapters on historical, cultural, and archaeological resources; population; economy; housing/affordable housing; transportation; water resources; natural resources;

forestry and agriculture; outdoor recreation; public facilities and services; fiscal capacity; climate change; and land use and development patterns.

Any forecasts included in the Plan are based on past trends and accepted forecasting techniques. The background information is a snapshot of Rangeley based on the best information available in 2020-2024. The Town's blueprint for the future includes lists of issues to be addressed over the next 10 years and various ideas to consider as solutions.

## ***GOALS, POLICIES, AND IDEAS***

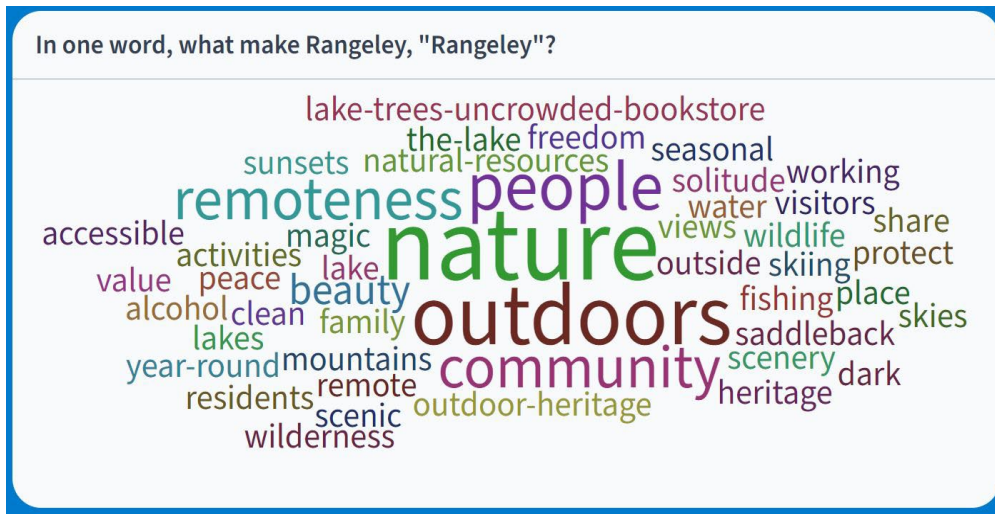
State rules require Plans to include policies and action strategies (ideas) and address the State's goals (found in italic type) for comprehensive plans. Goals, policies, and ideas to address policies are integral to the Plan. They present the community's directions to achieve its Vision.

The Plan includes many ideas and spending priorities intended to be a guide rather than a specific proposal. It does not mandate action by the Town but instead outlines the direction and actions that the community may take based on the public input given during its development and tailored to meet Rangeley's needs.

Implementation of ideas will require additional review and fine-tuning by local boards and committees. During that review, new ideas may emerge that could have been included in the plan. If they are the best solution, they should be considered and adopted if they are consistent with the Vision.

This Plan is a living document that will require review and revision as time passes.

## 2. *V*ISION FOR *R*ANGELEY



**Source:** January 31, 2024, Public Visioning meeting

## VISION STATEMENT

**Rangeley Maine: Where stunning natural resources, outdoor activities, and our remote heritage surround our vibrant, creative town. Nestled in the heart of the western Maine mountains, we welcome visitors and embrace and serve our year-round community**

## CHARACTER AND SPECIAL PLACES

A strong sense of community, where people know and look out for each other coupled with the beauty and recreational opportunities of the outdoors are a big part of what makes Rangeley, “*Rangeley.*”

Our remote location is an asset and a challenge. The social and cultural character of Rangeley is supported by a robust collection of municipal and nonprofit organizations. Large tracts of undeveloped forest provide economic and recreational opportunities. The Villages of Rangeley and Oquossoc help to create a real small-town feel. Well-kept historic buildings and "sporting camps" are reminders of Rangeley's past.

Rangeley has a long history as a destination for enjoying the outdoors. For some Rangeley is home, for others it can be a home away from home. Regardless, many visitors to Rangeley have come to the region for several years.

## RANGELEY'S VISION FOR THE FUTURE

In many ways, the future of Rangeley will be like it is today: with clean water and air, large tracts of undeveloped forests, scenic views of lakes and mountains, a sky that is dark at night, peace and quiet, world-class fisheries, and bountiful wildlife. The well-established systems of family and

neighbors looking out for and caring for each other will stay strong. Tourism will continue to be the life blood of the economy. Outdoor recreation opportunities will be maintained and expanded. Rangeley will continue to be a "real small town." Year-round residents, seasonal residents, and employees will be able to find adequate housing. Community health will improve with more healthcare services, active living options, and opportunities for safe aging in place. A variety of businesses will provide goods and services to residents and visitors. The Town will assess and take action to adapt to the impacts of climate change. Public infrastructure will be maintained and public services will meet growing needs.

- **Rangeley as a town and as part of a region:** Rangeley will continue to be the Service Center for the Rangeley Lakes Region. The Town and the Region are dependent on each other economically; in many ways, they function as one unit. Many services provided by the Town will continue to be shared throughout the Region. In the future, the connections between the Town and the Region will grow.
- **Rangeley Village:** Rangeley Village will continue to be a great place to live, work, and play with the added benefit of being surrounded by water. Aesthetic improvements to the village will enhance our sense of place and we will encourage residential and commercial in-fill development where public services are available. Our housing inventory will be varied and we will work to reduce barriers to new housing and business opportunities.
- **Oquossoc Village:** Oquossoc Village will also continue to be a great place to live, work, and play, but on a smaller scale than Rangeley Village. In the future, this Village will support a mix of retail, restaurants, services, housing, lodging, marina and water-dependent sports, and boat tours. This Village may be more walkable with a variety of same-grade sidewalks, increased public parking, and improved public water access
- **Visitor experience:** Visitors are the cornerstone and an essential piece of Rangely's economy. In the future tourism may be expanded with a performing arts or community center for concerts and theatrical performances, music festivals, theater, and artist retreats. A variety of lodging options will accommodate visitors, including more traditional hotels and motels, as well as innovative and non-traditional lodging options, lower-cost dorm style rooms or hostels, short-term rentals of second homes, and campgrounds. Outdoor recreation will continue to be the primary reason visitors come to Rangeley—from boating to skiing, heritage pursuits to innovative organized sports, exploring our outdoor options will add to the quality of life for residents and an enhanced experience for visitors.
- **Housing:** Rangeley will work to increase a varied inventory of housing options, including rental and ownership options; housing for first-time home buyers, seasonal; and year-round employees; senior housing; and other seasonal options. The Town will continue to explore creative solutions to providing a diversity of housing types at a variety of price points. That may include increasing housing density where sewer lines exist, securing grants, exploring public/private partnerships, considering ways to subsidize the cost of construction—especially in ways that don't impact the taxpayer in the long term, and ordinance amendments that will reduce the cost of housing.

- **Public infrastructure and services:** Rangeley provides public safety, recreational, and educational services to the region. In the future, the Town will monitor the cost of providing services to the surrounding Plantations, study options to improve emergency response, fire and public safety, and ways to improve the ISO rating for the region. Rangeley will study ways to effectively and efficiently improve public safety services.
- **Community health:** Rangeley’s remoteness is an asset in many ways; however, it can be an obstacle when it comes to maintaining a healthy community. In the future, Rangeley will work with health professionals to create ways to improve healthcare services and promote active living and overall community health.
- **Economy:** Industries and businesses not connected to tourism are a necessary component to the local economy. Recently upgraded internet service has allowed remote working to continue and expand. These workers bring their own jobs and industries to Rangeley, which adds to the local economy and provides opportunities for spin-off businesses and technology that support and expand the work being done remotely. Manufacturing currently plays a small role in the Town’s economy but that could be expanded in the future. Renewable energy facilities such as solar farms, wind farms, and energy storage are new industries for the Town to explore.
- **Transportation:** Rangeley is a car-dependent community, yet not all residents and employees have cars or are able to drive. Saddleback recently received a grant to start a van service to primarily accommodate employees. In the future, transportation services will be analyzed with hopes to connect the Villages of Rangeley and Oquossoc with Farmington and Saddleback.
- **Forestry:** Rangeley has a long history of logging which supports many local families with good paying jobs. That industry will continue. Rangeley is known for its woods. Not only is timber valuable for many different wood products, but the land also provides significant recreational opportunities for snowmobiling, hunting, and fishing. Stewardship of these timber stands is crucial to Rangeley’s future. Most of the timber cut is transported elsewhere to be processed and add more value to it. In the future Rangeley has the opportunity to allow commercial operations that add value to the wood before it leaves Rangeley.
- **Natural resources:** Rangeley’s natural resources—its clean water, clean air, wildlife, fisheries, and woods—are a tremendous asset. In the future, natural resources will continue to be a significant part of the economic, social, and cultural heritage of the town. Where necessary, standards will be considered to protect significant natural resources during development through regulations and acquisitions.
- **Climate adaptation:** Rangeley has recently experienced extreme storms that did significant damage to roads and cut off transportation in the region. In the future, the town will assess its vulnerability to extreme weather events and make changes accordingly, to encourage energy conservation, consider investing in renewable energy, and analyze possibilities to incorporate low-impact development standards into the development review process.

### 3. *POPULATION AND DEMOGRAPHICS*

#### DATA RELIABILITY

The data contained within the population chapter of this Comprehensive Plan consists of figures reported by the U. S. Census Bureau in the *2022 American Community Survey (ACS) Five-Year Estimates* and the *2020 Decennial Census*. To calculate ACS estimates, the Census Bureau selects a sample of addresses to fill out questionnaires and includes data collected over a 60-month period.

It should be noted that the Five-Year Estimates often have a large margin of error due to the small size of the sample subset. This creates less reliable data, especially for small geographic areas. For example, the estimate provided in the *2022 ACS Five-Year Estimates for Means of Travel to Work* estimated those who work from home in Rangeley at 20 people, with a margin of error of +/-19. It is important to keep in mind that **all ACS data are estimates** and that the data contained within the *2022 ACS Five-Year Estimates* should be interpreted through the lens of an estimate. It should also be noted that **the accuracy of the 2020 Decennial Census may have been affected by the COVID-19 Pandemic**.

#### POPULATION TRENDS AND FLUCTUATIONS

The population chapter provides the figures that underpin the goals, policies, and strategies throughout the entirety of this Comprehensive Plan. Analysis of population data serves as the basis for various components of the plan, such as housing, transportation, and land use. Population data is critical in understanding the composition of the town and subsequently, planning for future need.

Population trends depend on various characteristics. Some of these characteristics are more society based: the decision to have children, advances in medicine and longer lifespan, familial ties, and social attributes. At times of crisis and upheaval such as on September 11, 2001, and more recently during COVID in 2020, people have come to Rangeley as a safe haven. Some stay and some don't stay. Other characteristics are more physical in nature: opportunities for employment in various occupations, availability of housing in various price ranges, access to resources and a variety of leisure activities, and the community's natural resources that contribute to overall quality of life. Through examining population characteristics, forecasts, and trends, Rangeley can appropriately address the current needs of its citizens, strategize for future demand on services and utilities, and plan for future changes in land use within the Town.

The year-round population in Rangeley, and all of Franklin County, was fairly consistent from 1980 to 2000, as seen in Table 1 below. This was due to limited business development and changes in the forestry industry. The year-round population in Rangeley has continued to increase since 2000, increasing by 116 people from 2000-2010 and by 54 people from 2010-2020. The increase in population from 2000 to 2010 was largely due to people moving to Rangeley in their retirement.

The increase from 2010 to 2020 can be attributed to the conversion of seasonal dwellings to year-round and in-migration.

| <b>Table 1. Total Population, Region</b> |              |              |              |              |              |              |
|------------------------------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| <b>TOWN</b>                              | <b>1980</b>  | <b>1990</b>  | <b>2000</b>  | <b>2010</b>  | <b>2020</b>  | <b>2022*</b> |
| <b>Rangeley</b>                          | <b>1,023</b> | <b>1,063</b> | <b>1,052</b> | <b>1,168</b> | <b>1,222</b> | <b>1,270</b> |
| <b>Dallas Plantation</b>                 | 146          | 161          | 250          | 309          | 304          | 312          |
| <b>Rangeley Plantation</b>               | 69           | 103          | 123          | 189          | 184          | 183          |
| <b>Sandy River Plantation</b>            | 50           | 64           | 93           | 133          | 128          | 128          |
| <b>Franklin County</b>                   | 27,447       | 29,088       | 29,467       | 30,768       | 29,456       | 30,474       |

Data Sources: *U.S. Census Bureau Decennial Census* and

*\*US Census Bureau Five-Year Estimates from American Community Survey Table S0101*

The three Plantations, Dallas, Sandy River, and Rangeley, experienced significant year-round population increases from 1980 to 2010. This can be attributed, at least in part, to land costs and tax rates in the Plantations as compared to those in Rangeley. Factors such as the COVID-19 Pandemic, broadband internet access, the closure of Saddleback Mountain in 2015, and reopening in 2020, have also attributed to change in population trends, as those living in the surrounding plantations have come to rely on Rangeley for services.

### **AGE DISTRIBUTION**

The population in Rangeley is predominantly composed of an older demographic group, with 71.8% of the population over 30 years old, and 52.8% over 50 years old. The largest gains between 2010 and 2020 were in the 60-69 age group, as shown in Table 2. The percentage of school-aged children (ages 5-17) increased from 12.8% in 2010 to 13.9% in 2020. The age distribution

| <b>Table 2. Population by Age in Rangeley</b> |                 |                        |               |                        |
|-----------------------------------------------|-----------------|------------------------|---------------|------------------------|
| <b>AGE GROUP</b>                              | <b>2010</b>     |                        | <b>2020</b>   |                        |
|                                               | <b># People</b> | <b>% of Population</b> | <b>People</b> | <b>% of Population</b> |
| <b>Under 5</b>                                | 39              | 3.3%                   | 55            | 4.5%                   |
| <b>5 - 9</b>                                  | 60              | 5.1%                   | 68            | 5.6%                   |
| <b>10-14</b>                                  | 56              | 4.8%                   | 66            | 5.4%                   |
| <b>15-17</b>                                  | 34              | 2.9%                   | 35            | 2.9%                   |
| <b>18-21</b>                                  | 34              | 2.9%                   | 32            | 2.6%                   |
| <b>22-29</b>                                  | 57              | 4.9%                   | 88            | 7.2%                   |
| <b>30-39</b>                                  | 116             | 9.9%                   | 114           | 9.3%                   |
| <b>40-49</b>                                  | 161             | 13.8%                  | 118           | 9.7%                   |
| <b>50-59</b>                                  | 226             | 19.4%                  | 180           | 14.7%                  |
| <b>60-69</b>                                  | 191             | 16.4%                  | 262           | 21.4%                  |
| <b>70-79</b>                                  | 114             | 9.8%                   | 134           | 11%                    |
| <b>80+</b>                                    | 80              | 6.8%                   | 70            | 5.7%                   |

Data Source: *U.S. Decennial Census Table DP1*

in Rangeley indicates a need for additional services for aging populations, as shown by the upward trend in age in Table 3. Such services could include access to medical services, assistance with transportation needs, and accessible housing.

In 2022, the age of Rangeley's population was older than both Franklin County and the State. The median age of Rangeley's residents increased from 51.4 years to 53.3 years between 2010 and

2020. The American Community Survey estimated the median age in Rangeley at 56.5 years in 2022. The median age was over ten years older than that of Franklin County and the State.

| Table 3. Median Ages in the Region, 2010 to 2022 |          |      |       |                 |      |       |                |      |       |
|--------------------------------------------------|----------|------|-------|-----------------|------|-------|----------------|------|-------|
|                                                  | RANGELEY |      |       | FRANKLIN COUNTY |      |       | STATE OF MAINE |      |       |
| Year                                             | 2010     | 2020 | 2022* | 2010            | 2020 | 2022* | 2010           | 2020 | 2022* |
| Median Age                                       | 51.4     | 53.3 | 56.5  | 43.4            | 46.9 | 46.3  | 42.7           | 45.1 | 44.8  |

Data Source: U.S. Decennial Census Table P13 and

\*American Community Survey 2022 Five-Year Estimate Table S0101

## **NATURAL CHANGE IN POPULATION**

Population change is the result of two primary factors: natural change and migration. Natural change is derived from the number of births minus the number of deaths over a specific period. Migration is the number of people moving into or out of a community over a period of time. Any increase in year-round population is the result of in-migration (people moving to Rangeley) rather than natural change (the number of births minus deaths).

Recent trends in natural change have been negative, meaning that there have been more deaths than births in Rangeley on an annual basis, as seen in Table 4 below. This is further supported by natural change figures presented in Rangeley’s *Annual Report for 2023*, which shows a negative natural change of 11 births and 16 deaths.

| Table 4. Natural Change in Population in Rangeley, 2013-2022 |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |
|--------------------------------------------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Year                                                         | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 |
| Rangeley                                                     | +4   | +1   | -14  | -19  | -10  | -6   | -7   | -10  | -22  | -8   |

Source: Maine Department of Health & Human Services

## **EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT**

According to the 2022 American Community Survey, Rangeley had a smaller percentage of its population 25 years of age and older with more than a high school education than did Franklin County. The population in Rangeley with some college education or a degree is estimated at 54.8%, while the population in Franklin County with some college education or a degree is estimated at 57.9%, as indicated in Table 5 below. The population 25 years of age or older with a high school diploma was similar in Rangeley and Franklin County. In Rangeley, 38% of the population graduated from high school and in Franklin County, 36% of the population graduated from high school.

| Table 5. Educational Attainment in Rangeley 2022 (Persons 25 years and older) |             |                   |                   |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| EDUCATION LEVEL ACHIEVED                                                      | RANGELEY    |                   | FRANKLIN COUNTY   |
|                                                                               | # Residents | % Total Residents | % Total Residents |
| Less than 9th grade                                                           | 0           | 0.0%              | 0.9%              |
| 9th to 12th grade, no diploma                                                 | 57          | 7.2%              | 5.2%              |
| High School Graduate or equivalency                                           | 303         | 38.0%             | 36.0%             |
| Some college, no degree                                                       | 212         | 26.6%             | 19.3%             |
| Associate's degree                                                            | 75          | 9.4%              | 9.8%              |
| Bachelor's degree                                                             | 66          | 8.3%              | 18.8%             |
| Graduate or Professional degree                                               | 84          | 10.5%             | 10.0%             |

Data Source: *American Community Survey 2022 Five-Year Estimate Table S1501*

## **HOUSEHOLD SIZE**

In 2019, the American Community Survey estimated average household size in Rangeley at 2.32 people for year-round residents. The average household size has continued to decrease each year, with an estimated average household size of 1.86 people in 2022. This small average household size is reflective of the higher level of retirees and aging demographics

that comprise the population in Rangeley. It is important to remember that a small average household size requires more housing units for the same number of people. Housing availability and quality will be discussed further in Chapter 6—Housing, later in this Plan. Average household size will be discussed further in the seasonal population section below.

| Table 6. Average Household Size in Rangeley, 2019-2022 |                        |
|--------------------------------------------------------|------------------------|
| Year                                                   | Average Household Size |
| 2019                                                   | 2.32                   |
| 2020                                                   | 2.10                   |
| 2021                                                   | 2.04                   |
| 2022                                                   | 1.86                   |

Data Source: *American Community Survey 2022 Five-Year Estimate Table S1501*

## **INCOME**

Rangeley's 2022 median household income at \$56,723 was similar to that of Franklin County at \$56,890. Median income was less than Maine as a whole, as shown in Table 7.

In 2022 the largest number of households, 21.6%, were in the \$15,000 to \$24,999 income bracket, followed closely by households in the \$50,000 to \$74,999 income bracket at 21.2%, as shown in Table 8 below. This is likely the reflection of

households on fixed incomes, and two-worker households. Thirty-three residents lived below the poverty level in 2022, with 31 people in poverty being aged 60 or older.

| Table 7. Median Household Income, 2022 |               |
|----------------------------------------|---------------|
| LOCATION                               | ANNUAL INCOME |
| Rangeley                               | \$56,723      |
| Dallas Plantation                      | \$65,893      |
| Sandy River Plantation                 | \$49,511      |
| Franklin County                        | \$56,890      |
| Maine                                  | \$68,251      |

Data Source: *American Community Survey 2022 Five-Year Estimate Table S1901*

| Table 8. Income (In Inflation-Adjusted Dollars) in Rangeley, 2022 |       |       |       |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------|-------|-------|-------|
| INCOME<br>(INFLATION-ADJUSTED)                                    | 2018  | 2020  | 2022  |
| Less than \$10,000                                                | 4.0%  | 0.4%  | 1.0%  |
| \$10,000 to \$14,999                                              | 2.8%  | 0.8%  | 1.3%  |
| \$15,000 to \$24,999                                              | 12.8% | 20.1% | 21.6% |
| \$25,000 to \$34,999                                              | 9.1%  | 2.6%  | 6.6%  |
| \$35,000 to \$49,999                                              | 15.2% | 18.7% | 11.0% |
| \$50,000 to \$74,999                                              | 17.7% | 28.1% | 21.2% |
| \$75,000 to \$99,999                                              | 18.9% | 18.5% | 17.0% |
| \$100,000 to \$149,999                                            | 10.3% | 7.4%  | 15.0% |
| \$150,000 to \$199,999                                            | 3.0%  | 2.0%  | 1.7%  |
| \$200,000 or more                                                 | 6.3%  | 1.4%  | 3.7%  |

Data Source: American Community Survey 2022 Five-Year Estimate Table S1901

### **EMPLOYMENT BY OCCUPATION**

In 2022, the greatest number of workers in Rangeley were employed in management, professional, and related occupations. An equal number of workers in Rangeley were employed in natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupations (inclusive of fishing, farming, and forestry occupations) and sales and office occupations, as seen in Table 9 below.

| Table 9. Employment by Occupation, 2022                                                                        |                 |               |                 |               |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|---------------|-----------------|---------------|
| OCCUPATION                                                                                                     | RANGELEY        |               | FRANKLIN COUNTY |               |
|                                                                                                                | # of<br>Workers | % of<br>Total | # of<br>Workers | % of<br>Total |
| <b>Employed Population 16+</b>                                                                                 | <b>525</b>      |               | <b>14,000</b>   |               |
| Management, business, science, and arts occupations                                                            | 135             | 25.7%         | 4,659           | 33.3%         |
| Service occupations                                                                                            | 103             | 19.6%         | 2,814           | 20.1%         |
| Sales and office occupations                                                                                   | 124             | 23.6%         | 2,760           | 19.7%         |
| Natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupations <i>*Includes farming, fishing &amp; forestry*</i> | 124             | 23.6%         | 1,763           | 12.6%         |
| Production, transportation, and material moving occupations                                                    | 39              | 7.4%          | 2,004           | 14.3%         |

Data Source: American Community Survey 2022 Five-Year Estimate Table DP03

### **SEASONAL POPULATION FLUCTUATIONS**

Seasonal population is a measure of the number of people in town who are not year-round residents. This includes people staying for extended periods of time in second homes and people staying in transient accommodations (hotels, motels, inns, bed and breakfasts, and campgrounds) and day trippers. This seasonal population is the mainstay of the local and regional economies.

The distribution of seasonal population increase throughout the year has changed. Historically, the summer months and fall have been the primary period of significant seasonal population increases. The summer months of July and August attract the most significant numbers of the seasonal population, though December also faces a smaller population surge resulting from the skiing and snowmobile industries.

The Public Affairs Research Center (Bowdoin College, 1972) estimated that the seasonal population for Rangeley (that is, non-year-round persons) was 3,530 in 1970. This number represented the total number of people if all seasonal dwellings, campgrounds, and lodging facilities were at capacity. The 1987 Comprehensive Plan estimated Rangeley's seasonal population to be between 3,900 and 5,700 people. The seasonal population in the 1997 Plan was set at a low of 2,000 and a high of 4,100 people, and the seasonal population in the 2012 Plan was estimated at approximately 4,000 people. The seasonal population has continued to grow significantly over time, bringing vibrancy to the area.

According to the American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates, there were 1,188 units listed as vacant for seasonal, recreational, or occasional use, as seen in Table 10.

Seasonal population also includes transient occupants who may stay at hotels, campgrounds, inns, or rental properties in the short-term. The Rangeley Lakes Chamber of Commerce recognizes 16 options for vacation lodging in Rangeley and Oquossoc. When combined, these accommodations offer 675 additional rooms for seasonal occupants.

In adding the number of units that are vacant for seasonal, recreational, or occasional use, and the additional rooms provided through hotel style accommodations, there is an estimated 1,863 units available for seasonal occupants. In multiplying the number of seasonal units by the average household size, we can estimate figures for the seasonal population in Rangeley.

While the average household size in Rangeley is roughly two people, as seen in Table 7, seasonal units often include families or groups of visitors. To account for this, seasonal population estimates have been made using a three-person household size for a more realistic representation. Using a three-person household size, the seasonal population can be estimated at 5,589 people. Given that it is unlikely for all units will be 100% occupied, it is estimated that the seasonal population in Rangeley could swell to 5,300 people in peak season, creating a total population of 6,570 people in Rangeley at its highest point.

Seasonal population increases have a significant impact upon Rangeley and the surrounding Unorganized Territories of Dallas, Rangeley, and Sandy River plantations. AirDNA reported 500 active short-term rentals in the Rangeley Lakes Region in August 2023, the month with the greatest number of short-term rentals available in all of 2023. If we multiply the number of units by an estimated household size of three, we can estimate an additional 1,500 people staying at

| Table 10. Housing Vacancies in Rangeley, 2022 |       |
|-----------------------------------------------|-------|
| Total Housing Units                           | 1,837 |
| Occupied                                      | 519   |
| Vacant                                        | 1,318 |
| For seasonal, recreational, or occasional use | 1,188 |

Data Source: American Community Survey 2022 Five-Year Estimate Table DP04

short-term rentals throughout the region during peak season. Based on estimates, the regional peak seasonal population, including Rangeley, may reach over 10,000 people.

According to the American Community Survey Five-Year estimates, there were 7,234 seasonally vacant units in Franklin County in 2022. This means that the seasonal stock of housing units in Rangeley makes up 16.4% of all the seasonally vacant units in Franklin County.

### **POPULATION PROJECTIONS**

The *Maine State Economist* projects a steady increase in population in Rangeley over the next 20 years; see Table 11 below. This trending increase is also reflected in Franklin County, which is projected to see population increase until the year 2040. The population in the surrounding unorganized territories is projected to remain relatively consistent. There has been evidence of an influx of new residents due to pandemic-related shifts and the rise of remote work opportunities.

| Table 11. Population Projections for the Region |        |        |        |        |
|-------------------------------------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| YEAR                                            | 2025   | 2030   | 2035   | 2040   |
| Rangeley                                        | 1,264  | 1,321  | 1,357  | 1,387  |
| Dallas Plantation                               | 307    | 313    | 315    | 316    |
| Rangeley Plantation                             | 183    | 185    | 185    | 182    |
| Sandy River Plantation                          | 128    | 129    | 128    | 126    |
| Franklin County                                 | 29,330 | 29,603 | 29,414 | 29,102 |

Data Source: *Maine State Economist*

### **FUTURE DEMAND FOR HOUSING AND TOWN SERVICES**

The senior population in Rangeley has continued to increase, while natural change remains negative. This indicates a need for smaller, accessible housing and access to medical services. The school-aged population has increased slightly over the past 10 years, indicating a slight uptick in the number of children in school.

Rangeley is identified as a Specialized Service Center Community by the Maine Department of Agriculture, Forestry, and Conservation's *Municipal Planning Assistance Program*. This means that Rangeley hosts a variety of resources that serve its residents and the surrounding area, including options for work, places to shop, the ability to obtain medical care, and/or enjoy a cultural experience.

The local economy is highly dependent on the outdoor recreation industry. Rangeley's unique natural resources have attracted seasonal residents and tourists for over 150 years, creating the Specialized Service Center that Rangeley is today. In the 20-year review of the Rangeley Region Prospective Zoning Plan, which includes Adamstown Township, Dallas Plantation, Lincoln Plantation, Magalloway Township, Rangeley Plantation, Richardsontown Township, Sandy River Plantation, Township C, Township D and Township E, the Land Use Planning Commission identified "relying on the Town of Rangeley as an economic center" as a key goal, furthering Rangeley's role as a service center.

## 4. *HISTORIC, ARCHAEOLOGICAL, AND CULTURAL RESOURCES*

### Reference Maps included in Appendix A

1. Known Prehistoric Archaeological Sites, Areas Sensitive for Prehistoric Archaeology

### **RANGELEY'S HISTORY**

Little is known of the first humans to see the Rangeley Lakes region, but local historian Edward Ellis in *A Chronological History of the Rangeley Lakes Region* cites research showing that nomadic aborigines hunted herds of wild animals at the edge of the receding glaciers here roughly 11,000 years ago. These early people, known as Paleo Indians, likely migrated from Asia, but their true origins remain a mystery. Evidence of their time here was discovered in 1980 when over 4,000 artifacts were found during an archaeological exploration of the “Francis Vail Site” located on the eastern shore of Aziscohos Lake. At that time, this was the oldest known human-inhabited site in the eastern United States.

More recent Indigenous inhabitants were the Abenaki, a tribe of the larger Wabanaki Federation. These people lived in the upper Androscoggin River region for several thousands of years and their ancient encampment sites, portage routes, and many of their place names are still in use or have been changed to the modern Penobscot and English languages.

The Wabanakis first encountered white explorers in the 1700s, and the initial settlers to Rangeley arrived in 1815-17, when Luther Hoar and his family cleared land for a farm near the present-day Mingo Springs Golf Course. Known as the Lake Settlement, the site was on the shore of Rangeley Lake (then called Oquossoc Lake). The Lake Settlement began to grow shortly after this with the arrival of the John Toothaker and John Dill families.

Englishman James Rangeley Jr. inherited over 30,000 acres of land in the area, which he divided into lots in 1822 and sold to various settlers for \$.50 an acre. During this time, the Daniel Quimby family settled on Bonney Point; Daniel's sons Daniel and David Quimby received land from Rangeley which became the start of the Quimby Pond and Quimby School District.

In 1825, Squire Rangeley, as he was then known, built a home for his family "on the hill overlooking the lake but to the east of the Hoar and the Toothaker farms." In 1833, Rangeley built a grist mill to grind grain for the growing community and a shingle mill located at the outlet of Oquossoc (Rangeley) Lake. In 1838, the squire started building a new road in addition to those leading to the Quimby district and to the mill at Long Pond outlet. This new road started at the outlet and proceeded to Madrid over Beech Hill in order to avoid seasonal valley snow and washouts, constituting a major improvement over the single-horse trail.

New surveys in 1837 placed the Lake Settlement in Franklin County and, for the first time, it received the name of Rangeley. It would be 25 years later before Oquossoc Lake was changed to

Rangeley Lake. By 1840, 20 years after Maine became a state, Squire Rangeley reported a total of 39 families in the territory, which enabled it to be recognized as a township. It was also the year that the large size of the local trout was noted, a discovery which would have a profound effect on an area where the economy, up to this point, was centered mainly on farming and lumbering.

The earliest sport fishermen are reported arriving in the 1840s, tenting at Indian Rock. This trend would eventually lead to the establishment of a guiding industry. Metallak, a St. Francis Indian living in the Rangeley area, was one of the first and most well-known guides, along with the celebrated Cornelia “Fly Rod” Crosby and later renowned master fly tier Carrie Stevens. The Rangeley region was publicized worldwide for fishing.

The Town of Rangeley, incorporated in 1855, had a Board of Selectmen and two established schools, one near the village and another in the Quimby District. On the south shore of the lake, Mathias Haines was clearing land for a huge farm in what is now Rangeley Plantation. In 1858, the first stage began to run regularly from Phillips over the Beech Hill Road to Burke's Tavern at the junction of Dallas Hill and Route 4. By 1861 Rangeley had a population of 236 people.

The village continued to grow with increasing numbers of fishermen. Steamboats plied the lake from Greenville to the village wharf. Private and public camps were built by sportsmen throughout the entire Rangeley Lakes region. H. T. Tibbetts was building the Indian Rock Boat, ancestor of the Rangeley Boat. Three members of the Oquossoc Angling Association built camps and a trout hatchery known as Camp Bema in the area that later came to be known as Bemis. In 1876, a disastrous fire struck—fires were historically a problem in Rangeley. The 1876 fire burned much of the eastern part of the village, but rebuilding began immediately and by the next year John Burke's Rangeley Lakes House had been built on the site of the present Rangeley Inn.

Sportsmen and vacationers began to clamor for better access to the region, and the earliest steamboats began operating by 1876. The Sandy River Narrow Gauge Railroad was built between Phillips and Rangeley in 1891. A few years later in 1901, the Rumford Falls and Rangeley Lakes Railroad ran from Bemis to Oquossoc (as we now know it), also bringing in vacationers and people who enjoyed the outdoors. Ellis notes that "Rangeley recognized itself as a summer resort" and for the first time began advertising in New York and other big city newspapers. Harry and Elliot Dill began publishing Rangeley's own newspaper, *The Rangeley Lakes*, in 1895.

By 1909 Rangeley's population was reportedly over 1,300 people, roughly similar to its population today, with most of its working inhabitants involved in vacation-related trades. As historian Gary Priest explains in his recent book *Rangeley's Historic Legacy*, the arrival of the railroads launched a hotel and resort building boom and by 1924 there were over 2,000 beds available in the Rangeley area—many more than exist today.

These golden years of large hotels and camps were short-lived however, ending with the Great Depression of the 1930s. Following World War II, cars replaced the railroads, while more visitors came for shorter stays rather than long summer vacations. By the 1960s most of the grand hotels were gone, either having been dismantled or destroyed by fire, and replaced by smaller motels and cabins.

Rangeley continued developing its tourist business with the hopes of establishing itself as a four-season destination. This hope moved closer to realization in 1958, with the formation of the Rangeley-Saddleback Ski Corporation and Bald Mountain Ski Area. Bald Mountain eventually closed, while Saddleback struggled off and on with several ownership groups before finally being purchased by Arctaris Impact Investors in 2019, after being closed for five years. Alongside skiing, snowmobiles became a major contributor to the winter economy, with a well-regarded trail system ably managed by the Rangeley Snowmobile Club.

Today, Rangeley continues to evolve and change. Traditional forest products are still important; however, the region is witnessing a resurgence of tourism due to its historic reputation for pristine mountains, clean and clear lakes, and abundant remote scenery. Hiking, hunting, swimming, skiing, fishing, golf, camping, and other outdoor pursuits remain popular, just as they were 100 years ago. While the grand hotels and public camps of the past are largely gone, there are now many smaller hotels, lodges, and condos, with short-term home rentals adding significantly to the mix of accommodations. High-speed internet, a wide array of dining options, and a friendly welcoming environment have attracted new residents, many of whom work remotely from home.

Rangeley's residents have continually supported the preservation of its historic past, but an even stronger effort must be considered going forward, as the community feels the pressures of development and growth expected over the next 10 years.

## **HISTORICAL RESOURCES**

**National Register Sites:** Rangeley contains many historic structures and sites of significance. Four structures are currently recognized on the National Register of Historic Places:

- **The Rangeley Public Library**—Lake Street. Built in 1909 with major donations from seasonal residents, the fieldstone structure is virtually unchanged except for the addition constructed in 2003.
- **The Rangeley Trust Company**—Main and Richardson streets. Beginning as the Rangeley Trust Company (the Town's first bank), it served as the Town Office for several decades prior to its current iteration as Historic Rangeley Museum.
- **The Oquossoc Log Church**—Carry Road. Built in 1916, this unique structure's walls and major interior fixtures are all built out of spruce logs.
- **The Orgonon Energy Observatory** (including the Wilhelm Reich Museum)—Orgonon Circle. Built during the 1940s on the original site of the old Ross Farm, the unique multi-

level stone structure has commanding views of Dodge Pond and the surrounding mountains.

Listing on the National Register of Historic Places does not guarantee preservation, protection, or alteration by private action. These places should be preserved through a combination of public and private initiative, support, and direction. Moreover, there may be other structures and sites worthy of National Register status in Rangeley that should be identified, categorized, and potentially nominated for this designation.

**Present Sites of Historical Significance:** This current list of sites of historical significance (in no particular order) was compiled in conjunction with Historic Rangeley. Some of the structures are relatively unchanged, however many have been altered, some significantly, over the years.

- **The Ellis Farm**—Wood frame farmhouse on Route 4. For many years, this was the largest dairy farm in Rangeley; today, its farmland lies in Dallas and Sandy River Plantations. The building's structure has not been altered drastically, it has been modernized and includes rooms for guests
- **Loon Lodge**—A log structure on Rangeley Lake that currently operates as a restaurant and inn
- **Episcopal Church**—Originally sited in a barn on the lot behind today's Skowhegan Savings Bank
- **Rangeley Free Baptist Church**—Prominent building in the center of town. Its 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary is in 2027
- **Railroad beds**—The sites of the narrow-gauge railroad into Rangeley Village and the broad gauge into Oquossoc have left railroad beds that currently have impact on the region as they have been adopted/adapted as snowmobile trails
- **Marble Station**—A private home
- **Maneskootuk Island**—Also known locally as Doctor's Island
- **South Bog-Dickson Island structures**
- **Townhouse building**—School Street and possible other unidentified school buildings
- **Squire Rangeley House**—A private home
- **Anna Maria Wheatland House**—A private home
- **Mingo Springs House**—A private home
- **Buena Vista House**—A private home
- **Brackett Farm**—A private home
- **The P. Alton Quimby Farm**—A private home
- **The Pillsbury Farm/"Grasshopper Hill"**—A private home
- **Niles Brook Cemetery**—and possibly three other cemeteries to consider
- **Oquossoc Community Center—River's Edge Shop**

- **Our Lady of the Lakes Church**—Original funding effort led by Cornelia “Fly Rod” Crosby
- **St. Luke’s Church**
- **The Oquossoc Fish Hatchery**—Structures and dam on the Rangeley River
- **Indian Point/Indian Rock**—At junction of the Rangeley and Kennebago rivers
- **Oquossoc Angling Association compound**
- **Bald Mountain Camps**
- **The Richard Home**
- **The Furbish Home**
- **The Herbie Welch House and Store**—A private home
- **Russell’s Camps**
- **Sagamore Camps**
- **North Camps**
- **Quimby Pond Camps**
- **Haines Landing**
- **Badgers Dodge Pond Camps**
- **Clearwater Camps**
- **Allerton Lodge**
- **The Ledges**
- **U.S. Senator William Frye’s log camp**, located on the Narrows between Mooselookmeguntic and Cupsuptic Lakes

More research into Rangeley’s buildings and sites should be considered, including gathering historic information from the present occupants, both businesses and private individuals. The community will need to decide on the level of oversight required to preserve Rangeley’s historic past and consider consulting with Historic Rangeley or other statewide organizations involved in historic preservation.

### **ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESOURCES**

These are the historic and prehistoric sites, as well as other physical remains of the past, often buried in the ground or difficult to see on the surface. Prehistoric sites may date thousands of years before written records. In Maine, these sites are mostly located within 25 yards of an existing or former shoreline, and along early roads and pathways.

The Maine Historic Preservation Commission has noted four archaeological sites in the Rangeley area. Three are in the area around Indian Rock, near the confluence of the Rangeley and Kennebago rivers. The fourth site is farther south, on the eastern shore of Mooselookmeguntic Lake. Just outside Rangeley on Aziscohos Lake, the largest prehistoric archaeological site was discovered. The so-called Vail site has yielded thousands of artifacts from the Paleo Indian

period some 10,000 years ago. Some of these are on exhibit at Historic Rangeley's Outdoor Heritage Museum.

Rangeley's land use, zoning, and subdivision ordinances do not contain specific standards to protect historic resources. Current shoreland zoning does address archaeological resources, but not sites that might be discovered farther away on land.

## **CULTURAL FACILITIES AND PROGRAMS**

A variety of cultural facilities and programs are available in Rangeley and the surrounding area. The growing population of residents, both permanent and second homeowners, combined with the expanding visitation in the region have increased the use and popularity of the programs offered by these organizations. These include:

- **Rangeley Friends of the Arts (RFA)**—RFA operates the Lakeside Theater, now the center of the arts in the western mountains of Maine, providing movies and live theater—including musicals, plays, comedians, and storytelling—for residents and visitors. The RFA also runs an art gallery onsite that hosts workshops, along with drama camps for various age groups. The theater sponsors community theater and chorus programs and offers its space rent-free for local nonprofit events. The organization involves over 100 community volunteers and welcomes over 6,000 visitors through its doors every year and has grown dramatically in annual revenues since the last comprehensive plan.
- **The Rangeley Public Library**—The Library, already on the National Register of Historic Places, offers a wide variety of programs and services for all age groups. With 23,000 materials onsite and access to 1.5 million materials through other libraries across the state, along with free internet, the library provides much to the community.
- **Historic Rangeley**—Formerly the Rangeley Lakes Regional Historical Society, the organization's mission is to "Preserve the region's history and engage the public through its museums, collections, programs, exhibits and events." It operates the Outdoor Heritage Museum in Oquossoc and the Rangeley History Museum in downtown Rangeley.
- **The Wilhelm Reich Museum**—On the site of the Orgonon Energy Observatory, also on the National Register of Historic Places, the museum is the former residence of the famed scientist and inventor, and houses his library, laboratory, and artifacts. The spacious grounds feature walking trails open to the public year-round.
- **Maine Forestry Museum**—Located just outside Rangeley in Dallas Plantation, the museum houses many artifacts important to Rangeley's past. There is a collection of large logging equipment viewable on the grounds and the museum offer hiking and cross-country trails on its property.
- **Rangeley Lakes Heritage Trust (RLHT)**—The RLHT conserves and manages more than 21,000 acres of land, 40 properties, 35 miles of trails, and 17 islands. The

organization offers programs in birding, night sky viewing, flora and fauna tours, and more, using both paid staff and volunteers.

- **Rangeley Lakeside Park**—Provides swimming, boat launching and a panoramic vista. It also hosts festivals and celebrations for non-profit organizations.
- **Other Cultural Facilities** include several churches that host musical events and fraternal lodges that support fundraisers.

## ***LOOKING TO THE FUTURE***

Historic structures and sites are important reminders of Rangeley's past. They help us to understand the present and shape the future. Archaeological sites offer a deeper exploration into the origins of the region before recorded history. Both historic and archaeological sites should be considered for preservation and protection, or risk being lost forever. These cultural attractions offer the community enrichment and entertainment, as well as education for all age groups. Looking forward, preserving and promoting historic, archaeological, and cultural resources are suggested to meet the following policies.

- a. Protect and preserve known, and not yet known, archaeological resources;
- b. Protect and preserve historic resources on the list included in the plan and seek to identify additional structures that may be considered for protection;
- c. Actively support Rangeley's cultural resources for the educational and entertainment benefit of the community, local businesses, and to support tourism and visitation growth; and
- d. Recognize that the preservation and promotion of historic, archaeological, and cultural resources is important to Rangeley's economic development goals.

## ***HISTORIC, ARCHAEOLOGICAL, AND CULTURAL RESOURCES***

**GOAL: To preserve the State's historic, archaeological, and cultural resources**

### **IDEAS TO CONSIDER**

**Identify, catalog, survey, and document all structures, sites, and locations in Rangeley that require preservation, conservation, rehabilitation, protection, or support by:**

1. Identifying and marking all sites of significance, and requiring landholders to protect them from development;
2. Working with *Historic Rangeley* and the *Maine Historic Preservation Commission* to continually update the current list of historic structures and sites; and
3. Identifying and seeking to register more historic sites for listing on the *National Register of Historic Places*.

**Adopt or amend land use ordinances to:**

1. Require subdivisions or developers to take appropriate protection measures of historic, archaeological, and cultural resources;
2. Require modifications to site design, construction timing, and the extent of excavation allowed near archaeological sites;
3. Establish historic districts to protect the built infrastructure in targeted areas, improve property values, and qualify for grants; and
4. Create design requirements on new structures to match Rangeley's existing historic built infrastructure, especially within commercial areas.

**Consider creating an educational program to inform the public of historic resources by:**

1. Developing a municipal or private signage and plaques program to identify historic sites or locations; and
2. Offering education and training programs for residents and property owners on historic preservation, architectural style, and guidance that complements Rangeley's vintage appearance.

**Consider support from the Town to:**

1. Incorporate historic, archeological, and cultural resources into the Town's economic development strategy;
2. Support and assist nonprofit organizations that advance cultural resources for the educational and entertainment benefit of the community, local businesses, and to support tourism and visitation growth; and
3. Calculate and promote the economic value of these resources to the community and businesses.

## 5. *Economy*

### Reference Maps included in Appendix A

#### 1. Agricultural Resources

### **REGIONAL ECONOMY**

In previous Comprehensive Plans, the Regional Economy was identified by the Farmington Labor Market Area (LMA). While this information is interesting, it fails to address the remote nature of our region in terms of transportation and ready access to labor, as well as goods and services. Significant public input prioritized examining our regional economy on a closer regional level, due to considerable growth in new residential construction. Therefore, this Plan is focused on the Rangeley Region and the Western Mountain Region.

Rangeley and the surrounding Plantations share a unique economy because of the remote, mountainous nature of the region's location. This is a boon to protecting our natural resources and a challenge to our regional economy—both, because of the impact of isolation. The region's impressive natural features—lakes, ponds, rivers, and mountains—have kept long-time Rangeley families living in Rangeley for generations, and attracted new residents, visitors, and outdoor enthusiasts throughout the year. The northern portion of Franklin County is primarily dependent upon tourism, recreation, building services, and forestry for employment.

Since 2020, the region's economy has seen significant change. First, the reopening of Saddleback Mountain in Sandy River Plantation has brought more winter visitors along with plans to expand to a 10-month resort. Second, the region saw an increase in year-round residents trying to avoid urban COVID-19 restrictions. And third, the installation of high-speed internet in much of the region has allowed residents and visitors the opportunity to work remotely. All of these impacts have provided new opportunities to visit the region and made it easier for visitors to prolong their stays.

The combined impact of these changes has had a positive economic effect on Rangeley. Most notably, according to data from Maine Revenue Services, taxable sales income in 2019 and 2023 for the building industry has more than doubled, and the restaurant and lodging industry has experienced a 78% increase. In those same two years, the average weekly wage in the region has gone up 42%. (*NOTE: During this time, the state minimum wage increased by 25%.*)

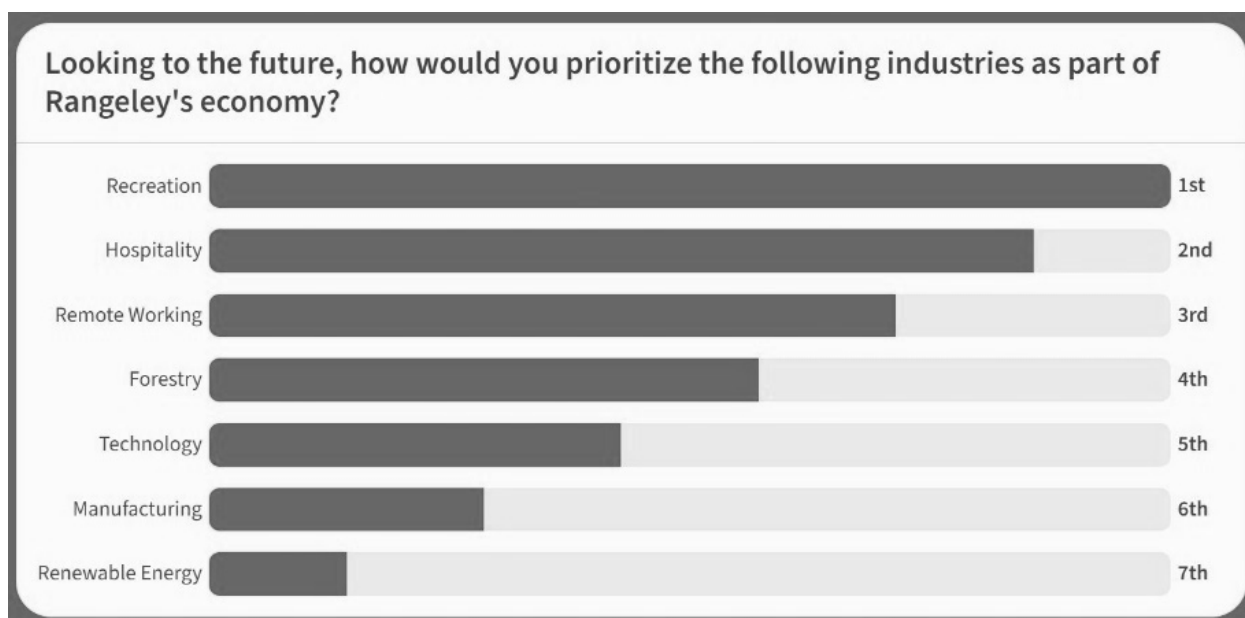
### **LOCAL ECONOMY**

In the early days of Rangeley's settlement, farming and lumbering were the mainstays of income for local residents and the local economy. A grist mill and a lumber mill were built to serve the community. Around 1840, the large size of local brook trout was noted and led to the growth of a recreation/visitor industry. Today, local jobs and businesses are predominantly dependent on the recreation/visitor industry, the building industry and forestry, and to a lesser,

but important extent, agriculture. While no actual data exists, it is believed that remote working since the installation of high-speed internet is a new economic driver with salaries earned in other places being spent in Rangeley businesses.

Rangeley is a Specialized Service Center in Maine and serves as the economic, educational, recreational, and cultural center for the Region, and it provides convenience goods and services to meet the day-to-day needs of year-round residents and visitors. According to federal North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) data and a local count, in 2024 Rangeley had 120 businesses in town, many of which offer multiple services.

Rangeley Village, and to a lesser extent, Oquossoc Village, are the retail and service centers of the Region. Both Villages have been the center of community discussion for revitalization. The 2019 Downtown Revitalization Plan offers recommendations for both Villages. Implementation of the Plan is ongoing. A meeting was held on June 25, 2024, in Oquossoc Village. The results of that meeting are included in **Appendix B, Public Input**. That report can provide guidance when determining the most effective infrastructure to invest in, as demonstrated by the following poll.



Source: Rangeley Visioning meeting 1-30-2024, using *Poll Everywhere* software

Since 2019, many Rangeley business and shop owners have improved their facades and buildings and new businesses have opened. That trend is expected to continue.

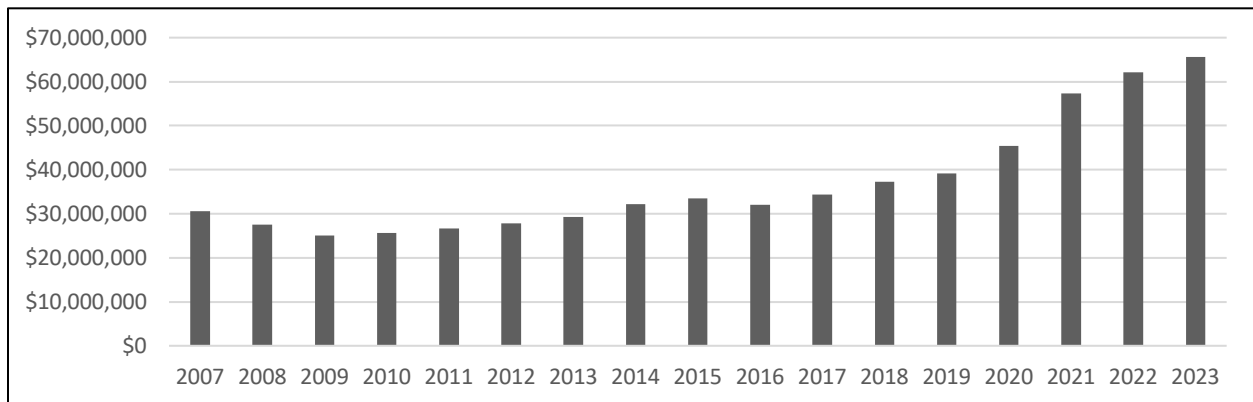
At a townwide meeting in January 2024, those present expect the economy to grow as shown in this chart. For more details, see the full report in **Appendix B**.

At a follow-up meeting in Oquossoc in June 2024, those attending agreed unanimously that tourism and housing continue to be very important to the Town. For more details, see the report in **Appendix B**.

The chart below shows total annual consumer sales tax revenue generated in Rangeley in the years 2007 through 2023. “Consumer sales” includes building supplies, food stores, general merchandise, other retail, auto, restaurant, and lodging sales. The totals show steady increases, even during the COVID years. In December 2020, Saddleback Mountain reopened, most likely a big part of the increase between 2020 and 2021.

According to Maine Revenue Services, restaurants and lodging consistently account for the largest portion of total consumer sales, with a 176.6% increase over 2010. Overall taxable sales in 2023 amounted to 177.1% over 2010 total, a significant increase.

**Annual Taxable Sales in Rangeley, 2007-2023**



Source: MDAFS Maine Revenue Service

Over the 10-year planning period, Rangeley's economy is expected to continue centering on visitation and second- home-associated activities. To maintain and further expand this economic base, it will be vital to identify community priorities and maintain those things that attract second-homeowners and visitors. Local services will be increasingly important to Rangeley as the year-round population expands and community members, many of whom are retired, desire the convenience of close access to healthcare, pharmacy, recreation, and varied retail options. “Local services” may include businesses such as a car wash, pharmacy, redemption center, food store, and construction materials including a local cement plant.

As needs and wants for goods and services change over time, broad zoning land-use definitions—provided that certain standards are met—can allow the Town to stay nimble and meet evolving trends. Additionally, as development and redevelopment occur, regulations to ensure appropriate architectural, environmental, utility, site design, and other standards will allow for growth and expansion while protecting and honoring what is important to the community.

## **LABOR FORCE**

According to the U.S. Census, in 2021, it was estimated that 631 workers were employed in Rangeley. Of that total, 224 lived and worked in Rangeley, and the remaining 407 workers lived

outside of Rangeley. Another 198 Rangeley residents work as far as Portland and Bangor. Close to 30% of the Rangeley workforce lives more than 50 miles away. As a comparison, in 2010, approximately 50% of Rangeley’s labor force traveled less than 10 minutes to work.

Rangeley's unemployment rate has been decreasing over the years as shown in the chart at right. Businesses and organizations consistently report the need for more workers. That trend is expected to continue as Saddleback works to become more of a four-season resort. See Table 1.

Rangeley’s economy reacted to post-COVID and the reopening of Saddleback positively.

According to the Maine Center for Workforce Research, total wages paid by Rangeley area businesses shows an 88% increase in wages paid 2019(\$17,547,426) over 2023(\$32,945,113), with the biggest gain in the construction industry. In the same period of 2019-2023, the state minimum wage increased from \$11 dollars/hr to \$13.80 dollars/hr. These numbers do not reflect wages paid to Rangeley workers who work outside of Rangeley, nor to remote workers. For more information visit the Maine Center for Workforce Research <https://www.maine.gov/labor/cwri/home>.

| Table 1. Average Annual Labor Force, Town of Rangeley, 1994 -2021 |             |              |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|--------------|
| YEAR                                                              | Labor Force | Unemployment |
| 1994                                                              | 556         | 10.8%        |
| 2007                                                              | 524         | 7.4%         |
| 2010                                                              | 580         | 12.3%        |
| 2021                                                              | 631         | 3.2%         |

Source: Maine Department of Labor

In 2021, according to the U.S. Census, 62% of workers in Rangeley lived within 10 miles of their job. Thirty percent lived more than 50 miles away from their job, with some driving as far as Portland, South Portland, and Bangor. The remainder fall in between 10 miles and 50 miles.

Rangeley is home to a significant number of retired people. Many don’t want to work full-time but might be willing to work on an as-needed basis, such as in the case of an employee who gets sick, or if a higher than usual number of visitors are in town, or if a business is busier during certain times. It was suggested that a pool of able-bodied but not working individuals could fill in gaps of worker shortages. One example is that the Town and/or the Chamber could work to put businesses with workers. The businesses would train the workers and agree on a rate of pay. Then when they need someone to fill in on a temporary basis, they would have available staff.

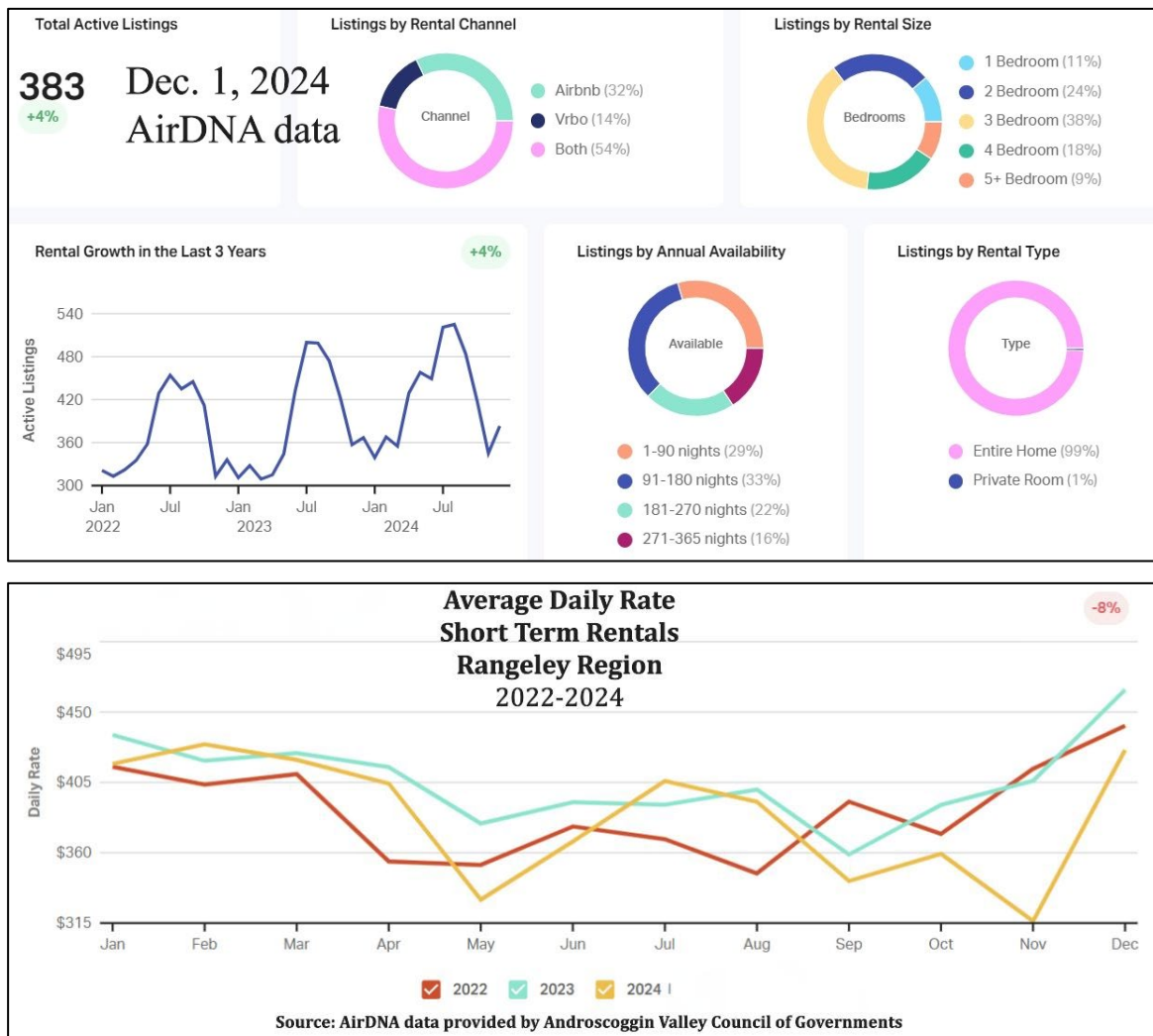
## **VISITOR LODGING**

Rangeley has a variety of lodging options available, including motels, hotels, bed and breakfast inns, lodging houses, lakeside cabin rentals, and time-share units. These units are required to be licensed by the Maine Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) in 2025, Division of Environmental and Community Health (DECH) pursuant to 22 MRSA§2501. Within the Town of Rangeley, DECH reported the following breakdown:

- Two campgrounds, with a total of 37 sites
- Rangeley Lake State Park (partly in Rangeley, partly in Rangeley Plantation), with 50 single sites and two group sites

- Two bed and breakfast establishments with a total of nine rooms
- Seven lodging establishments with a total of 194 rooms, four of which businesses also serve food
- One time-share development of 43 log cabins, and
- One rental facility with 14 log cabins.

Short-term rentals (STR) in the region have been providing a different option for visitor housing. Whether STRs such as Airbnb and VRBO will continue to grow is unknown. Androscoggin Valley Council of Governments (AVCOG) uses AirDNA software to track STR active listing, their locations, average rental, and so on. See the graphs below.



Source: AirDNA data 2022-2024, provided by Androscoggin Valley Council of Governments

While the Land Use Planning Commission (LUPC) does not have authority in Rangeley, surrounding Plantations are regulated by the LUPC. On December 11, 2024, the LUPC Commissioners decided to draft rules that would require a one-time, no-fee notice for short term rentals operating within the Commission's area. An automated online system is expected.

Contact information will be required. Those rules are expected to be ready in 2025.

One local business manages rental units for owners when they are not using the unit. While the number of units fluctuates, this company usually has approximately 250 units available for rent within the Rangeley region.

Table 2 presents a summary of the various types of lodging available in Rangeley. This does not include units that are offered for rent by the owner, nor does it show seasonal and yearly fluctuation of short-term rental. This list is intended to provide a baseline for the approximate number and types of lodging available.

| Table 2. Types of Lodging in Rangeley |                                            |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|
| Type of Lodging                       | Number of Units                            |
| Campgrounds                           | 89 sites                                   |
| Bed & Breakfast Inns                  | One with four rooms<br>One with five rooms |
| Time-share log cabins                 | 43                                         |
| Rental log cabins                     | 14                                         |
| Single rooms                          | 194                                        |
| Short-term rentals (AirDNA)           | 383                                        |

Source: ME Department of Health and Human Services

### **MIXED USE**

Business owners consistently note the need for more housing to attract new employees. Housing needs include seasonal, long-term, and permanent housing, rental units, and homeownership, all at prices that the employees can afford. Some employers have started providing their own housing by purchasing properties and building new units to meet their demand; however, not all employers are able to do that.

Available and affordable childcare is another obstacle to getting more workers into the workforce. A new childcare facility with the capacity to care for approximately 70 children is under construction. The facility will offer subsidies for income-qualified families and will provide an extra stipend for childcare workers. The facility will also provide weekend and evening care to meet the needs of a visitor-oriented community.

Zoning regulations are important and they are intended to protect the community; however, sometimes their good intentions are barriers to desirable development. And each business has its needs, some of which may be non-traditional, such as dorm-type housing; lodging homes with shared kitchen and bathroom facilities; and lower-cost yurts, provided adequate sanitary facilities are provided. The Town may be able to help make such alternative options possible by removing, reducing, or changing some zoning regulations. One example, currently if a business owner wants to build housing units, commonly referred to as mixed-use, on their property, they have to have the land area to meet both the housing and the residential uses. Yet building housing close to jobs, on land that may already be developed, can be an efficient solution for business owners.

### **FORESTRY**

Large tracts of active forest land are part of Rangeley's heritage and economy. The region is a mix of soft wood types with smaller amounts of hard wood. Seven Islands is the fourth-largest landowner in the state, with over 180,000 acres and has an office in Rangeley. According to a

2023 *Trends and Transitions in Forestry and Lumber-Related Markets* report, prepared by Camoin Associates, Maine has the highest employment concentration of timber related jobs (6.1 compared to Oregon at 5.8) in the country. Concentration compares the employment in an industry within a state to the overall employment of the industry nationally. Values greater than 1.0 indicate that the industry is more concentrated in the state than on the national level.

Traditionally, logs were harvested in Rangeley and transported to other locations to be turned into higher-value products. For example, pulpwood tends to go to the Sappi mill in Skowhegan for paper and packaging material, soft wood logs tend to go to the lumber mill in Stratton, and hardwood tends to go to Rumford for milling into flooring and furniture. While logging for paper mills has dropped, the demand for lumber and construction wood products has increased.

The 2023 Camoin report referenced above also points to a variety of new wood products that provide exceptional strength and stability and offer a low-carbon alternative to concrete and steel. A wide range of often less-marketable or lower-value species can be sold to high-value applications at very attractive prices, representing a significant value uplift for local timber suppliers. Adding value to logs harvested in the region to such types of products could provide new economic opportunities for the region.

Actively managed forest land also provides a variety of other secondary uses. The natural beauty of large-scale forest is an integral part of Rangeley's visual character. Forests are essential habitat for game and non-game wildlife, and they protect the purity and cold temperature of surface waters. Forest landowners can grant permission to users for outdoor recreation such as fishing, hunting, snowmobiling, and ATV use. Forests can also provide opportunities for foraging for wild edibles and medicinal plants and for certain types of agriculture such as chaga (acknowledged and studied by the Maine Forest Service and the U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service).

The forestry industry is experiencing a variety of threats. Frequent extreme storm events have damaged logging roads that require emergency upgrades and repairs to roads and culverts. Native and non-native pests, spruce bud worm, and other invasive species continue to alter the forest. Markets fluctuate, especially for lower-value products like pulpwood and biomass. The workforce of loggers and truckers is aging. One of the biggest threats is the conversion of forestland to residential uses.

Trained forest workers are in short supply. In response to this shortage, three Maine Community Colleges partnered with the *Professional Logging Contractors of Maine* to create the *Mechanized Logging Operations & Forest Trucking Program* (MLOFT). Funded with a grant by the U.S. Department of Labor, Employment, and Training Administration, this hands-on, 20-weeklong programs teaches the skills necessary to operate modern forestry equipment and better understand the dynamic nature of the forest.

Table 3 below shows an increase in harvested acres in the years 2015-2020. The change in land use is another category to watch. If the amount of land converted from active forestry to other use starts growing at a rapid rate, the Town may want to consider taking some action to slow the

| <b>Table 3. Harvested Acreage in Rangeley, 1990 to 2020</b> |                                 |                                   |                                  |                                |                             |                          |
|-------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------|
| <b>Years</b>                                                | <b>Selection Harvest, acres</b> | <b>Shelterwood Harvest, acres</b> | <b>Change of Land Use, acres</b> | <b>Clearcut Harvest, acres</b> | <b>Total Harvest, acres</b> | <b>Number of Reports</b> |
| <b>1990-1994</b>                                            | 940                             | 70                                | 31                               | 183                            | 1,224                       | 33                       |
| <b>1995-1999</b>                                            | 1,895                           | 1,020                             | 584                              | 202                            | 3,701                       | 28                       |
| <b>2000-2004</b>                                            | 990                             | 129                               | 2                                | --                             | 1,121                       | 17                       |
| <b>2005-2009</b>                                            | 814                             | 144                               | --                               | 6                              | 964                         | 29                       |
| <b>2010-2014</b>                                            | 696                             | 1,246                             | 25                               | 19                             | 1,986                       | 44                       |
| <b>2015-2020</b>                                            | 800                             | 2,120                             | 42                               | 37                             | 2,999                       | 34                       |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                                                | <b>6,135</b>                    | <b>4,729</b>                      | <b>684</b>                       | <b>447</b>                     | <b>11,995</b>               | <b>185</b>               |
| <b>AVERAGE</b>                                              | <b>1,023</b>                    | <b>788</b>                        | <b>114</b>                       | <b>89</b>                      | <b>1.999</b>                | <b>31</b>                |

Data compiled from Confidential Year End Landowner Reports to Maine Forest Service  
Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry – Maine Forest Service

rate and/or to provide incentives to maintain the land as forest. Some ideas to consider include increasing the minimum lot size in the Woodland District, providing incentives for clustered residential developments with smaller lot sizes and road frontages, maintaining the remainder of the land as a woodlot; Town purchase of certain woodlots and creating a transfer of development rights program that would remove the development rights from woodlots and allowing those development rights to be purchased for higher density in the Village zone.

Shelterwood harvesting is a forest management technique that involves removing trees in a series of partial cuts over a 5-to-10-year period to create even-aged forests. In Maine, the shade provided by the larger trees minimizes white pine weevil attacks. Selection harvesting is where only specific trees within a forest are chosen for harvesting, based on factors like size, species, and health, leaving the majority of the stand intact. This maintains a diverse, uneven-aged forest structure, mimicking natural disturbances like individual tree deaths. Clearcutting harvesting is a forestry practice by which nearly all trees in a designated area are cut down at the same time, essentially removing most of the standing vegetation from a plot of land, often done to facilitate reforestation with new, even-aged trees.

One way for Rangeley to support the forest industry and to expand economic opportunities in the region is to consider flexible zoning that allows value to be added to logs before they leave the Town. For example, pulpwood logs could be chipped in Rangeley before they leave. Chipped logs have a higher value, and they are more efficient to transport. Other possibilities are turning waste wood into wood pellets or biomass fuels; and allowing the production of Mass Timber, Structural Round Timber, and Cross Laminated Timber. While the market will determine what secondary wood products, if any, will locate in Rangeley, removing barriers in zoning to allow for the changing demands in forest products will keep the Town current.

The high cost of living in Rangeley is another deterrent for forest workers. Traditional forestry operations included logging camps that provided basic housing such as shared bunkhouses,

shared cooking areas, living spaces, and bathrooms. Some logging camps were temporary and mobile, others were permanent. Modern day housing for loggers is still basic but tends to be more comfortable. Allowing a variety of housing types, permanent and temporary, in the Woodland, Commercial, and Industrial District will help to keep the industry strong.

## **OUTDOOR RECREATION**

Outdoor recreation is a powerful economic engine for the State of Maine. It is the dominant component of the economy and the general well-being of residents, for the entire Rangeley Lakes Region. Outdoor recreation has been a way of life for residents since the earliest settlers arrived in the region almost 200 years ago, and it was sport fishing in the mid-19th century that launched the Town's recreation and visitor economy. Outdoor recreation boosts the local economy in a variety of ways, as seen in the graphic below, prepared by *Headwaters Economics*. See also the press release for statewide Outdoor Economy growth at <https://myemail.constantcontact.com/Maine-s-Outdoor-Economy-Shows-Strong-Growth-in-2023.html?soid=1141200172121&aid=ShwN8e2bWJo>.



For the State of Maine, outdoor recreation represents 3.9% of the state's GDP and provides over 32,000 jobs. While there are no figures for the Town of Rangeley, it is the service center hub for all outdoor recreation activities in the region. In the State, the top activity contributing to the GDP is boating and fishing, followed by RVing, snow activities, guided tours, hunting, and motorcycling and ATVing. In Rangeley traditional pursuits like hunting and fishing continue to

thrive and have become more diverse to include hiking, biking, boating, birding, snowmobiling, ATV riding, night sky watching, golfing, skiing, kayaking and canoeing, along with other sports such as disc golf and backyard games such as corn hole. Even general sightseeing for the less mobile, such as scenic drives, encompasses the Rangeley region's outdoor recreation is the dominant component of the economy for the entire Rangeley Lakes Region. The Maine Office of Outdoor Recreation tracks outdoor recreation for the State. An interesting state resource is the 10-year Outdoor Recreation Economy Roadmap that can be found at <https://www.trailblazerroadmap.com/roadmap/>

Current state travel trends include travel as a “force for good” (travel with a purpose) such as participating in a trail building day, travel to regenerate, wellness and adventure, and for getting off the beaten path. To stay current, public, private, and community partnerships will be necessary to meet evolving travel trends. According to the *Adventure Travel Trends 2023*, adventure travel needs to include at least two of the following elements: physical activity, natural environment, and cultural immersion. Rangeley provides all three elements.

Rangeley employs a full-time Parks and Recreation Director who works with other Town staff to manage multiple recreation facilities, fields, launches, courts, excursions for outdoor sports and recreation, and community programs. The Town also assists the local snowmobile club with trail maintenance. The Town has an appointed parks commission made up of citizens who provide guidance and support to the department.

The University of Maine at Farmington recently started an Outdoor Recreation degree program. Given the regions' abundant outdoor recreation resources, the Town may want to consider working closely with the university as this program develops. Interns from the program could provide useful work to the Town to preserve, protect, and expand outdoor recreation opportunities for the Town and the region.

State and local recreational areas, programs, and facilities also provide good opportunities for outdoor recreation.

Rangeley's outdoor recreation facilities available with free parking include:

- **Rangeley Town Park**—Basketball, tennis and pickleball courts, picnic tables and pavilions, playground, bath house, beach area, disc golf, kayak launch, and swimming dock
- **Oquossoc Town Park**—Playground, tennis court, basketball court and pickle ball court lines
- **Haley Pond Park**—Benches, kayak and canoe dock, gazebo, and ice skating
- **Boat launches** on Rangeley Lake at the Town dock and in Oquossoc, and on Mooselookmeguntic Lake at Haines Landing
- **David Bartlett Memorial Field**
- **Public restrooms** in Rangeley and Oquossoc
- **Ball fields and a playground** at the Rangeley Lakes Regional School.

State outdoor recreation facilities include:

- **Rangeley Lake State Park**—The park encompasses almost 900 acres and contains 9,000 feet of shoreline on Rangeley Lake. Visitors can enjoy hiking on three miles of trails, wildlife watching, photography, swimming, fishing, and boating. The park’s campground has 50 well-spaced sites close to the lakeshore. The swimming beach offers commanding views of Saddleback Mountain. A picnic area, playground, and boat launch with finger docks are available for both day visitors and campers.
- **Bald Mountain**—Administered by the Maine Bureau of Parks and Lands, the area encompasses 1,850 acres between Rangeley and Mooselookmeguntic lakes, offering wildlife viewing and snowmobiling. Hiking trails to the mountain’s 2,043-foot summit where spectacular 360-degree views of the region’s mountains and lakes can be enjoyed.

***The Rangeley Lakes Heritage Trust*** (RLHT) works with partner organizations to conserve, restore, and steward the land and waters of the Rangeley Region. RLHT believes that nature provides the foundation for a healthy, sustainable regional economy and the organization works to benefit both humans and nature in its projects. RLHT conserves land through fee acquisition and easements, restores forests and waterways, and stewards the region’s lands and waters.

Under the RLHT’s mission and goals, all people have the right to access nature. The trust works to ensure that Maine’s forests and mountains continue to provide recreational opportunities for people of all ages, backgrounds, and interests. Current local trails include those on Bonney Point, Hatchery Brook Preserve, Hunter Cove Wildlife Sanctuary, Rangeley River Corridor, South Bog Trail, and Mingo Springs Birding Trail. Each trail features multiple picnic sites with tables, and they can be accessed by land or by water. RLHT collaborates with regional partners to create an interconnected regional trail network to connect Saddleback Mountain with Rangeley and Rangeley to Oquossoc.

In addition, RLHT works with MaineDOT and the Town to manage the Rangeley Lakes National Scenic Byway by constructing scenic turnouts and visitor amenities. The organization provides environmental education to the Rangeley Lakes Regional School and the public at large, such as its birding and night sky programs, and collaborates with numerous organizations in town, like Historic Rangeley and the Chamber of Commerce.

The Rangeley Lakes Heritage Trust supports sustainable economic development and tourism by enhancing and marketing the Region’s Outdoor Recreation opportunities. Its trail systems and conserved lands provide residents and visitors with the ability to watch wildlife, hike, snowshoe, fish, hunt, cross country ski or snowmobile.

***Snowmobiling:*** The Greater Rangeley Region is a premier snowmobile destination. The Rangeley Lakes Snowmobile Club (RLSC) maintains a system of more than 150 miles of local trails and Interstate Trails 84 and 89. The Club has an annual budget in excess of \$350,000 per year for grooming and maintenance operations, which is generated by state support, Town appropriations, donations, and membership fees. The organization has a dedicated group of

volunteers and paid groomer operators using several state-of-the-art grooming tractors. The RLSC hosts the multi-day Snowdeo annually each winter, as well as fundraising events throughout the year.

In the State of Maine, snowmobile registrations are decreasing. Over the last five years, the average number of registrations per year in the state was 86,129. In the winter season 2023-24, the total statewide number of registrations was 46,813.

Snowmobiling requires a significant amount of natural snowpack to cover rocks, stumps, roots etc. on the trails. In more recent years, Rangeley has experienced some snow droughts. Having alternative, non-snow events for visitors is important.

***All-terrain vehicles:*** The ATV business is a relatively new outdoor recreation pursuit offering backcountry trail riding outside of the winter season. Rangeley has a limited number of trails compared to the snowmobile system, and the Town allows ATV access on Main Street between the Evergreen cemetery west of downtown to the Depot Street parking lot on the east end of town. The Rangeley Region ATV Club provides trail maps, educates the public on rules and regulations, and monitors the activities of its members and visitors.

***Fishing and Hunting:*** It was the fisheries resources, mainly blueback trout and landlocked salmon, that attracted visitors in the mid-1800s. The *Oquossoc Angling Association* was formed to bring "sports" to the area. The Association and other clubs were responsible for stocking both landlocked salmon and brook trout. A state hatchery was established at Rangeley around 1900. The region continues to provide outstanding habitat for a sport fishery of wild brook trout and landlocked salmon. **See the Natural Resources section** for more information on the fisheries' habitat.

Game and non-game wildlife species are plentiful. Hunting in the area follows Maine regulations and seasons. The game includes moose, bear, deer, rabbit and a variety of upland game birds. Most private landowners have traditionally allowed public access to their lands for hunting.

Lodges such as Grant's Kennebago Camps and Bald Mountain Camps were established to support the hunting and fishing industries. Hunters and anglers support the local economy by supporting lodging, and visiting restaurants, local shops, and grocery stores. Hunting in particular is a shoulder season activity and angling starts before the high summer season begins; therefore, maintaining and growing this industry is important to the local economy.

### ***Golfing***

- **Mingo Springs Golf Course**—Located on a scenic hillside site overlooking Rangeley Lake, the course offers several vistas with commanding views of Saddleback, Bald, and other peaks in the western Maine mountains. The course features 18 holes that provide a challenge for advanced players but is easily playable for people of all levels of ability. The club offers reasonably priced memberships and hosts many tournaments and competitive leagues, while creating a social environment along with outdoor recreation.

- **Evergreen Golf Club**—Located in nearby Dallas Plantation, Evergreen is a well-designed 9-hole public golf course. Recent improvements to the layout and the clubhouse will provide more recreation and entertainment opportunities for both residents and visitors.

***Saddleback Mountain and the Rangeley Lakes Trails Center***—Though located in the adjacent Sandy River Plantation, Saddleback is synonymous with Rangeley and is also fundamentally core to the local economy. The Trails Center is newer and offers a variety of four-season activities. When the mountain closed for skiing in 2015, the negative economic impact was felt throughout the region for the next five years. It removed a key outdoor recreation component for both locals and visitors. All business sectors suffered, especially restaurants, hotels, and retail establishments. Rangeley’s reputation as an outdoor recreation destination was severely damaged.

In 2020, Saddleback was acquired by *Arctaris Impact Investors*, and a success story was begun. Almost immediately there was a momentum change for the communities in the area. Trails and lifts have been upgraded, new employee housing and private homes are being built at the mountain, and construction in general across the region has increased dramatically. In addition to purchasing the mountain, by 2025 Arctaris and its foundation partners, including the Finance Authority of Maine, have invested more than \$42M. The result has been a resurgence of regional economic activity and top-rated Outdoor Recreation amenities. In 2024 Saddleback was voted by the public as the #2 ski area in the Northeast, #4 in North America, and for the third year in a row, #1 in Maine!

On over 6,339 acres, Saddleback encompasses a large area that includes a large solar array producing sustainable energy, guest lodges and employee housing, a separately owned and operated cross-country ski and touring center, and numerous hiking trails. It is also a big mountain and the seventh-highest in Maine at 4,120 feet, with over 2000 feet of vertical drop. The mountain offers downhill skiing, a ski school, ski rentals and repairs, outdoor programming, events and weddings, food and beverage, retail, and mountain biking.

Saddleback is the region’s largest direct employer, and its recent success has created a significant multiplier effect on both local economy and through increased employment.

The Rangeley Lakes Trail Center is located at the base of Saddleback Mountain. For trail centers, it enjoys one of the highest elevations in the state. As such, it tends to get more snow with over 200 inches per winter. This is a four-season center.

## **SHOULDER SEASONS**

Shoulder Seasons are both challenging and necessary for local businesses. On the one hand, the lower level of business provides respite and time to do repairs and upgrades. On the other hand, fixed expenses still need to be paid and local workers still need a paycheck. At the September 19, 2024 meeting to discuss this Plan, local business owners suggested the need for more shoulder

season events, indoor events for bad weather days, and new business ideas. Those ideas are all listed in a synopsis of that meeting and can be found in **Appendix B**.

### **THE TOWN'S ROLE IN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

The Town of Rangeley supports businesses in a variety of ways. Constructing and maintaining infrastructure such as roads, sidewalks, parks, parking lots, boat launches, and public sewer lines all improve the quality of life and the experience for visitors. In addition, the Town provides public safety and recreational services. All of these items come at an expense to the Town. During events, the Town provides public safety coverage, and the use of public facilities, which includes two public restrooms. To pay for qualifying capital projects, the Town has developed a *Downtown Omnibus Tax Increment Financing District*. Excise tax revenues funds road construction, and grants are applied for when available. Taxpayers fund a significant portion of capital projects and the operating costs for special event support. The Town doesn't currently charge for services during events; however, if the number of special events becomes too much of a burden on the taxpayers, the Town may need to look for other ways to cover costs.

### **AGRICULTURE**

Agriculture is growing in Rangeley, though the farms are small. The 2012 Comprehensive Plan reported that there were no agricultural uses in Rangeley. A web-based search in 2024 found five farms listed in Rangeley and the surrounding Plantations. Likewise, in 2010 there was one parcel of land of 15 acres registered under the Farmland Tax Program, and in 2023 there were 355 acres enrolled in the program. Local farms produce a variety of vegetables, flowers, livestock, and compost and other soil amendments. There are two Farmers' Markets each week during the growing season where farmers can sell their products. There are both prime farmland soils and farmland soils of statewide importance in Rangeley. Most of these soils are located in Rangeley Village and on the floodplain of the Kennebago River. For more precise locations, see the Agricultural Resources in **Appendix A**.

Access to healthy, fresh, affordable food is critical for a healthy, thriving community. Rangeley's rural location requires trucking in most of the food that the community needs. Residents consistently report that food prices are very high. There are many ways to address that concern, and expanding the production of locally grown food is a good starting point. Many households have a garden, all one needs to do is take a quick drive around town in August to see the abundance. Community gardens and orchards are another way to expand the opportunity to those who do not have a backyard or those with too much shade. Many herbs, fruit trees and bushes, and vegetable plants are also excellent for landscaping.

Local professional growers report that their operations tend to be on a smaller scale, compared with conventional commercial farming. Locals also tend to employ regenerative farming, a system-based, holistic look at stewarding land that enhances biodiversity and implements livestock and plant management for soil stability and health. These climate- and ecosystem-friendly techniques have been practiced for centuries and work well in our remote location. The

professional farmers in the area see their work as an emerging piece of the local economy that could expand beyond food production to include education, training, eco-tourism, community gathering places, and help mitigate the “food desert” challenge that Rangeley faces.

Zoning that seeks to protect can sometimes be a barrier to uses that are desirable. For example, would indoor growing or aquaponics be allowed to extend the growing season? Would community gardens be allowed on Town-owned land? Are backyard and small-scale egg, bee, dairy, and meat production allowed? Can locally grown products be sold on-site?

## ***LOOKING TO THE FUTURE***

Rangeley’s economy has grown steadily in the last few years. The local economy is a combination of Saddleback, local goods and services, hospitality and food service, outdoor recreation, agriculture, and forestry. As the economy continues to grow and diversify and remote working continues to grow, the Town can expect continued prosperity. The challenge to this expected growth is to have policies that keep “Rangeley Rangeley,” such as:

- a. Supporting and diversifying the types of economic development activity the community desires, that provides good jobs to the region, that adds value to local natural resources, and that provides goods and services that the region needs.
- b. Making strategic financial commitments to incentivize and support desired economic development, including needed public improvements and infrastructure.
- c. Coordinating with regional economic development organizations and surrounding plantations and towns as necessary to support desired economic development.
- d. Clearly defining economic opportunities, the appropriate locations, and amount of land for future commercial development.
- e. Prioritizing projects that support and expand outdoor recreation and visitor experience.
- f. Attracting and expanding low-impact businesses that can provide good quality year-round employment.
- g. Creating incentives for businesses to grow within areas that are currently served with public water and sewer, or in areas that allow for cost effective expansions to existing utilities.
- h. Recognizing the importance of the arts and humanities and supporting the future growth of the arts for both Rangeley and the region.
- i. Creating regulations that allow for development to occur that are compatible with existing buildings and still protect the natural environment.
- j. Providing adequate funding to manage all Town parks, playgrounds, sport fields, boat launches, and courts, as well as adequate parking and restrooms, to ensure enjoyment for residents and visitors of all age groups.
- k. Considering expansion and improvement of existing facilities to meet changing needs that might include more popular or newer sports.

- l. Evaluating outdoor recreation programming to meet the needs of Rangeley's changing interests and demographics.
- m. Safeguarding lands identified as prime farmland and land that is capable of supporting commercial forestry.
- n. Supporting forestry by allowing a wide variety of uses that add value to raw forest products and by encouraging best management practices on active forest land.
- o. Supporting agriculture by allowing a wide variety of agricultural operations.

## ***ECONOMY***

### **GOALS**

- A. To promote an economic climate that increases job opportunities and overall economic well-being.**
- B. To maintain Municipal Outdoor Recreation facilities and programs and consider expansion or redevelopment to accommodate changing population demographics.**
- C. To safeguard the State's agricultural and forest resources from development which threatens those resources.**

### **IDEAS TO CONSIDER**

#### **Amend CH 38 as follows:**

1. Review existing definitions in commercial districts to be broader so that unforeseen desirable uses are allowed, such as: consolidating various types of visitor lodging into a use called "tourist lodging" and consolidating various types of living units such as lodging houses, boarding houses, studios, and dorms into "employee housing."
2. Reframe the definition of "commercial use" and the districts where this use is permitted so that any use that sells or buys goods or services is allowed in these districts.
3. Allow commercial and residential uses on the same lot without having to have a larger lot, provided the lot is large enough to accommodate the necessary parking, utilities, and stormwater management so as to accommodate employee housing. (38.6.7.5).
4. Expand the uses allowed in areas where the roads do not require posting such as the industrial districts expanding the commercial uses that are allowed.
5. Amend the Conditional Use Permit so that all uses are permitted, but commercial uses are subject to Site Plan Review, to incorporate the existing conditional use standards and include standards for managing stormwater, erosion control, limiting phosphorus loading, traffic, landscaping, signs, lighting, protecting scenic vistas, and so on.
6. Develop architectural design standards for existing commercial building undergoing renovation and for new commercial buildings in Rangeley and Oquossoc villages.
7. Analyze the allowable uses in Rangeley's ordinance language in commercial and industrial zones to consider tertiary and complementary industries to Lumber, Construction, and the Arts.
8. Permit land use activities in the Woodland, Commercial, and Industrial Districts that support value-added forestry operations in commercial, industrial, and forest districts, firewood operations, log chipping, making wood pellets, sawmills and log buying yards, and new forest products to compete with concrete and steel.
9. Allow small-scale operations by right such as: hoop houses, ADUs, green houses, boarding facilities and process facilities to accommodate food production farms.

#### **Work with the MaineDOT to improve roads in commercial areas so that they do not require spring posting.**

#### **Amend CH 38.9.8 performance standards for hotels, motels, and inns as follows:**

1. Reduce the minimum road frontage or allow a right-of-way of at least 50' in width (38.9.8.2).
2. Eliminate/reduce shore frontage requirement to align with what is required by shoreland zoning (38.9.8.3).
3. Change the limitation on building footprint to be impervious surface and increase the impervious surface to between 40% and 60% of the total land area, provided the land area within 100' of any great pond is undeveloped except for necessary access to the water and simple walking trails (38.9.8.6).
4. Eliminate the requirement that each tourist lodging unit with cooking and eating facilities meet the residential density requirement for the district in which it is located (38.9.8.7).
5. Increase the number of units allowed for on-site employee housing (38.9.8.9).
6. Eliminate the requirement that employee housing meets the density requirement for the district in which it is located.

#### **LEAD RESPONSIBILITY:**

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Create a new Town staff position focused on planning, economic development, and/or community development</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| <b>Consider tax increment financing agreements (Downtown TIF for development projects that make improvements such as water and sewer extensions, upgraded internet, trails that connect to other trails of places, building or repair of sidewalks, allowing parking on their private property during special events, funding arts and cultural events, and so on).</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| <b>Continue applying for grants through the <i>Northern Border Regional Commission</i>, the <i>Community Development Block Grant Program</i>, the MaineDOT, etc., to expand utilities and other infrastructure for new commercial areas and to upgrade roads such that they don't require spring posting.</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| <b>Re-invigorate the Rangeley Economic Opportunity Committee to:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Act as liaison between the Town and regional cooperative efforts.</li> <li>2. Review <i>the Downtown Revitalization Plan</i>, the ideas, and the priority system, and incorporate the suggested infrastructure improvements into a Capital Improvements Plan that works for both Villages.</li> <li>3. Advise the Select Board on Tax Increment Financing applications.</li> <li>4. Advise the Select Board on CH 38 amendments that impact economic development, such as the commercial permitting process, land uses in commercial districts, performance standards for commercial land uses, etc.</li> <li>5. Develop economic opportunity plans on an as-needed basis.</li> </ol>                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| <b>Find low-cost ways for the Town to support businesses such as:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Creating a section in the Town's website for listing events, festivals, shoulder season events, advertising of local travel packages, etc.</li> <li>2. Coordinating the development of a "casual labor pool"—people Rangeley who are willing to be trained to work for businesses on an as-needed basis such as busy days and weeks (rainy days, festivals and events, school vacation) when regular employees are unable to work, during shoulder seasons, etc.</li> <li>3. Working with mobile healthcare, pharmacy, and veterinary providers for services.</li> <li>4. Convening meetings with the business community and nonprofits to coordinate events, activities, festivals, and to share problems and solutions.</li> <li>5. Creating and distributing a "Welcome to Rangeley" packet.</li> <li>6. Advertising and marketing the newly-installed high speed internet.</li> </ol> |
| <b>Work with the Maine Department of Labor, Chamber of Commerce, and the Community College system for workforce development and workforce support such as:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Taking advantage of the Apprenticeship Program to develop apprenticeships for a wide variety of appropriate job sectors such as construction, hospitality, forestry and agriculture, trades, etc.</li> <li>2. Taking advantage of the Jobs Plan to create affordable and workforce housing, pre-K, and childcare.</li> </ol>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| <b>Work with Saddleback and the Maine Department of Transportation to expand the existing Saddleback transit system.</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p><b>Find ways to use public/private partnerships to:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Seek assistance for the Maine Forest Service under the Project Canopy Program for street tree planting.</li> <li>2. Coordinate a discussion with interested restaurants, RREOC, and the area's commercial farmers to highlight farming as an economic driver.</li> </ol>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| <p><b>Consult with the Maine Forest Service district forester when developing any land use regulations pertaining to forest management practices as required by Title 12 MRSA section 8869.</b></p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| <p><b>Consult with the Soil and Water Conservation District staff if any land use regulations are considered pertaining to agricultural management practices as required by Title 7 MRSA section 155.</b></p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| <p><b>Continue the designation of the areas adjacent to the Kennebago and Rangeley Rivers as resource protection areas and development, earth material extraction, and forestry activity strictly controlled.</b></p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| <p><b>Encourage owners of productive farm and forest land to enroll in the current use taxation programs.</b></p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| <p><b>Adopt LUPC rules when available.</b></p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| <p><b>Incorporate and promote the State of Maine's Outdoor Recreation Goals as follows:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Align with the state's outdoor recreation strategies to increase sector employment and business growth.</li> <li>2. Maintain and foster partnerships with recreation users and land managers to ensure that all interests participate in local policy decisions.</li> <li>3. Coordinate with state agencies involved in park management, tourism, agriculture, fisheries, and wildlife to promote and manage outdoor recreation opportunities.</li> <li>4. Work with the University of Maine at Farmington's new Outdoor Recreation program.</li> </ol>                                                                     |
| <p><b>Work closely with private landowners and land trusts to:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Ensure continued access to lakes, rivers and roadways for recreational use.</li> <li>2. Promote and support existing hiking trails and canoeing access.</li> <li>3. Support the interconnection of trails to link separate public parcels.</li> <li>4. Offer incentives and other benefits to encourage private landowners to make available their land for public use.</li> <li>5. Support the conservation, restoration, and protection of all natural assets for recreational uses now and in the future.</li> <li>6. Improve access and linkage between trails and land parcels, especially at important intersections and junctions.</li> </ol> |

**Promote and assist in the management of the snowmobile and ATV industries, such as:**

1. Providing operational support for snowmobile trail maintenance.
2. Managing ATV usage to benefit businesses and riders, while protecting the trails for multiple uses.
3. Considering financial and promotional support to encourage visitation.

**Form a deeper relationship with Saddleback Resort to ensure its success, as follows:**

1. Develop more mutually beneficial opportunities for collaboration.
2. Improve communication between municipal officials and Saddleback management.
3. Continually evaluate Saddleback's contribution to the Town's economy and resident employment.
4. Collaborate on expanding employee housing and improving overnight accommodations for visitors.

## 6. *Housing*

### **BACKGROUND**

Consistently, Rangeley residents and business owners have reported that the shortage of housing is the Town's biggest challenge. Apartment buildings were voted as the most-needed type of housing at a public meeting in January 2024. In 2022, 50% of households in Rangeley owned their home, compared to 75% statewide and 65% nationally.

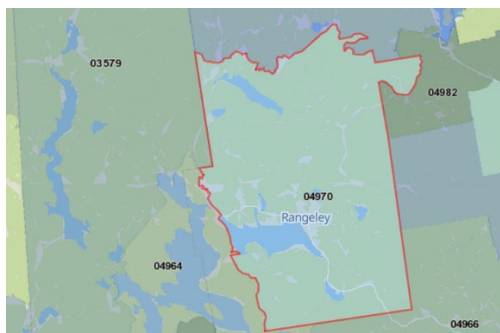
### **DATA USED**

Much of the data used for this section is from the American Community Survey (ACS) 2009 and 2023. The ASC is an annual survey conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau that collects data on the country's social, economic, housing, and demographic characteristics. The ACS randomly selects about 3.5 million addresses each year to survey. Resulting data are used to inform people how federal funds are distributed for projects such as roads, schools, childcare, and hospitals. ACS data is categorized according to ZIP code.

Rangeley has two ZIP codes, 04964 for Oquossoc Village and Plantations and unorganized territories to the west; and 04970 for Rangeley Village and some of the surrounding Plantations. The 2022 ACS data is for ZIP code 04970. It is assumed that the 2009 ACS data is also ZIP code 04970; however, that has not been confirmed. Different sources have shown different maps of these ZIP codes. The maps below show the difference in area between ZIP code 04970 and the Town of Rangeley.

Data from the Town of Rangeley is generated around the geographical bounds of the Town and does not include any of the Plantations.

Despite these discrepancies, this data is valuable, but these maps should be viewed and interpreted only as estimates of past and current conditions.



**ZIP 04970** Source: unitedstateszipcodes.org



**Town of Rangeley** Source: Google maps

### **HOUSING CHARACTERISTICS**

Rangeley's housing stock is comprised of year-round homes and second homes. According to the 2023 ACS, Rangeley's homeownership rate was 66.2% compared to that of Franklin County, at

77%. Year-round homes are defined as dwellings which are occupied on a year-round basis while second homes are not occupied year-round. The same data reports that 608 of the units in Rangeley are occupied year-round, while 1,147 of the units are not occupied year-round. In 2022, 10% of Rangeley’s unoccupied houses were for sale. Some second homes are rented when not being used by the owner. Second homes range from seasonal camps and cottages not suited for year-round occupancy to large homes that are suitable for year-round occupancy.

### **BUILDING TYPE**

Building permit information maintained by the Town of Rangeley indicates a great increase in the number of new housing units from 2020-2024. During that time period, building permits were issued for 127 new single-family homes, 40 additional bedroom/Additional Dwelling Units (ADUs), and nine duplexes. (NOTE: An ADU is a dwelling unit equal in size to 50% or less of the site’s primary dwelling.)

The majority of the building permits were issued for second homes that will not be used year-round but are constructed to allow year-round occupancy. Some older second homes have been upgraded for year-round occupancy. See Table 1 for more information.

| Table 1. Residential Building Permits Issued in Rangeley |                                 |                |                      |                      |
|----------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------|----------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| Year                                                     | Single Family                   | Duplex # Units | Multi Family # Units | Total Dwelling Units |
| 2000                                                     | 26                              | -              | -                    | 26                   |
| 2008                                                     | 5                               | 1/2            | 1/3                  | 10                   |
| 2010                                                     | 7                               | 2/4            | -                    | 11                   |
| 2017                                                     | 7                               | 0              | 0                    | 7                    |
| 2018                                                     | 9                               | 0              | 0                    | 9                    |
| 2019                                                     | 7                               | 0              | 0                    | 7                    |
| 2020                                                     | 22                              | 0              | 0                    | 22                   |
| 2021                                                     | 47                              | 2              | 0                    | 51                   |
| 2022                                                     | 29                              | 1              | 0                    | 31                   |
| 2023                                                     | 29 + 11 additional bedrooms/ADU | 4              | 0                    | 33                   |
| 2024                                                     | 57 + 29 additional bedrooms/ADU | 2              | 0                    | 59                   |

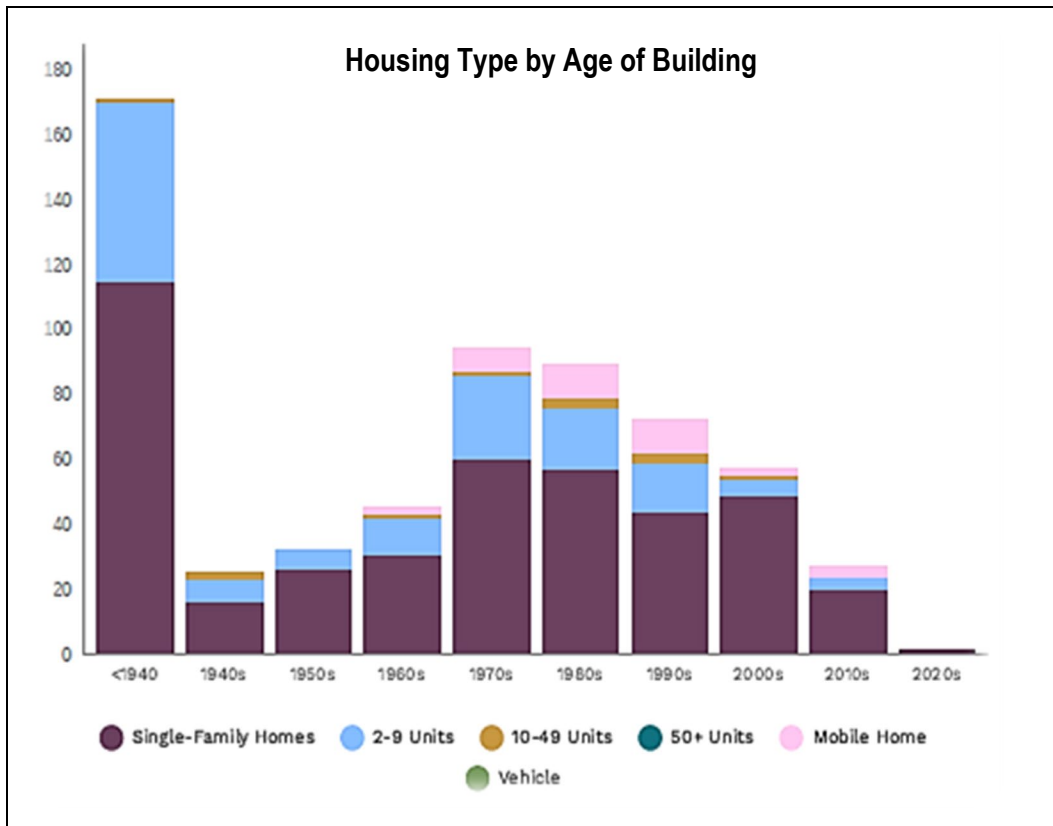
Source: Town of Rangeley, Code Enforcement Department

### **OWNER/RENTER PATTERNS**

According to the 2023 ACS, the median rental rate in Rangeley was \$674/month (±127), compared with \$759/month (±93) in Franklin County.

### **HOUSING AGE BY TYPE**

One indicator of the overall physical condition of a community's housing stock can be its age. However, caution must be exercised when age is considered as an indicator of physical condition. Many of Rangeley's older homes are in excellent condition and are assets to the community. Sixty percent of occupied housing units were constructed prior to 1970. For renter-occupied units, 82% were constructed before 1970, as shown in graph below.



Source: **NO SOURCE WAS LISTED FOR THIS—can add?**

## **HOUSING ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS**

Information provided by the Maine State Housing Authority indicates that there are three federally-assisted multi-family housing developments in Rangeley. The majority of residents are low-income elderly and people with disabilities and represent 38 units. There are also eight low income family units and four vouchers serving renters in private apartments. The management companies of these projects report that at any given time, there might be individuals or families on the waiting list. See Table 2.

| Table 2. Federally-assisted Multi-family Housing Developments |                        |                    |                  |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------|--------------------|------------------|
| Project Name                                                  | Management Company     | Total # Units      |                  |
|                                                               |                        | Elderly            | Family           |
| Rangeley Town House                                           | C&R Realty Management  | 22<br>(1 and 2 BR) |                  |
| Rangeley Elderly                                              | Labreque Property Corp | 16<br>(1 and 2 BR) |                  |
| Saddleback View                                               | Labreque Property Corp |                    | 8<br>3 and 4 BR) |

Source: Maine State Housing Authority

## **HOUSING COSTS/ WORKFORCE HOUSING**

It is important for towns to have a mix of housing types and cost ranges. For towns dependent on tourism, this includes a supply of temporary housing. Having housing that is affordable goes hand-in-hand with economic growth. Workers needed by all businesses need housing they can

afford that is well maintained and energy efficient. Without it, enough workers may not be available, and municipal employees may not be able to live in the community. **See Chapter 5, Economy.**

Affordable/workforce housing means different things to different people. Standardizing the definition is necessary if policies are going to be developed to promote certain types of housing. The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) tracts income levels throughout the country and periodically updates the income levels for a region based on area median income (AMI). The AMI is the midpoint of household income for a specific geographical area. The incomes are updated periodically. The incomes are based on the size of the family. HUD classifies income levels as follows:

2024 AMI for Franklin County for a family of 4 was \$80,500. Other income levels are determined based on a percentage of the AMI.

Very Low Income (50% of AMI)  
Low Income (up to 80% of AMI)  
Median Income (100% of AMI)

State law (30-A, §5002) defines “Affordable Housing” as follows::

A safe, decent, and sanitary dwelling, apartment or other living accommodation for low-income and moderate-income households—including households with income that is not more than 120% of the median income for the area and the household spends no more than 30% of its income on housing-related costs. This includes costs for mortgage or rent, utilities, taxes, insurance, and maintenance

Workforce housing is somewhat of a new term in the planning and housing community. It can mean almost any type of housing that is affordable to members of the workforce, including but not limited to teachers, office workers, service workers, police officers, and the like. Workforce housing is affordable, generally either single-family or two-family dwellings. Workforce housing is located in or near employment opportunities rather than in distant locations. The Town can develop its own definition for workforce housing if local programs are developed. In 2024, the Town entered a credit enhancement agreement with a private firm that intends to develop 26 attainable/workforce rental housing units on Cross Street.

Based on information obtained from the Maine State Housing Authority (MSHA), the gap between median priced homes in Rangeley and the median income family has grown substantially over the last few years, making homeownership out of reach for many families. Affordability is measured by an affordability index. An index greater than one means that the median value home is affordable to median income households; an index of 0 means that the median home value is unaffordable for median income households. Between 2018 and 2022 the affordability index has shrunk from 0.63 to 0.44 in Rangeley. See Table 3 for more information.

| Table 3. Affordability Index for those at Median Income in Rangeley |       |                   |               |                                           |                                        |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------|-------|-------------------|---------------|-------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|
| Year                                                                | Index | Median Home Price | Median Income | Income Needed to Afford Median Home Price | Home Price Affordable to Median Income |
| 2004                                                                | 0.58  | \$185,000         | \$36,410      | \$63,130                                  | \$106,690                              |
| 2008                                                                | 0.57  | \$220,000         | \$43,580      | \$74,200                                  | \$126,250                              |
| 2018                                                                | .63   | \$250,000         | \$46,348      | \$73,032                                  | \$158,657                              |
| 2023                                                                | .46   | \$430,000         | \$70,261      | \$153,784                                 | \$196,459                              |

Source: Maine State Housing Authority

*NOTE:* While the affordability index points to a serious affordable/workforce housing problem in Rangeley it is somewhat exaggerated because the medium home price includes all homes sold including very high-priced second homes. However, residents and business owners consistently report that housing is unattainable for many families.

Rangeley needs a variety of affordable housing types, rental, homeownership, temporary and permanent, new construction, and rehabilitation and retrofitting of existing units. Given the gap between median income and home prices, subsidies will most likely be necessary to bridge the gap. Subsidies could be in the form of grants from a variety of sources such as the MSHA, the Northern Border Regional Commission, private donation, and so on.

The Future Land Use Plan shows areas within Residential District that are currently served by public water and sewer that could accommodate higher levels of development. Allowing higher density by right may result in more units but not necessarily units that are “affordable” for those meeting the income definition of “affordable” or “workforce.” However, the Town may opt to add provisions that allow higher density use specifically for units of a certain type and/or price point and for those that the price point stays affordable over the long run, while still allowing an owner the ability to keep some appreciation of the value. There are a variety of ways to achieve these goals through ordinance amendments and oversight by the Town, Housing Authority, or a nonprofit dedicated to providing and preserving housing affordability.

Another way to get more affordable housing and to preserve open space is through a transfer of development rights (TDR) This is when development rights from a rural property are traded for higher density in the downtown area and could be arranged via cooperative effort between the Town and the Rangeley Lakes Heritage Trust (RLHT). Any programs that depend on public and/or nonprofit financial support require constant oversight to ensure that eligibility criteria are met, and grants are written and administered properly. A Community Land Trust owns the land that houses are built on. The homeowner owns their house and the land is owned in common by the Trust. This removes the land cost of new construction, bringing the overall price down. A nonprofit organization like a housing authority could advance affordability efforts. Western Maine Mountain Housing, centered in Carrabassett Valley, is an existing organization that could expand its reach to Rangeley.

An adequate supply of higher-end housing is also important. Without a strong supply of higher end housing, more affluent newcomers can overbid for an existing house making it unavailable to a more moderate-income family. Likewise, in this market, home builders are enjoying much higher profit margins. Therefore, without a subsidy or control of some sort, new affordable housing options will be few or non-existent.

Clustering allows for the same number of lots but smaller-sized lots, so that open space can be preserved. Reduced-lot frontage and setback requirements allow for shorter roads and less impervious surface which, in turn, reduces stormwater management and phosphorous-loading treatments. The Town has clustering provisions in the Zoning Ordinance that five subdivisions have used. To encourage more use of the option, the Town could consider a review of its cluster provisions to ensure they are density-neutral and may provide incentive for higher density.

The 123 lot Rangeley North Subdivision approved in 2009 includes an affordable housing component. The Town has not enacted any ordinances that encourage or discourage affordable/workforce housing development.

## ***LOOKING TO THE FUTURE***

As Rangeley's current in-migration population grows, the 1) creation of new jobs and businesses and 2) expanding and maintaining the existing economic base all hinge on having enough housing that is affordable for those working in town. Housing is the highest priority issue to address, and in order to be effective, it will require a wide variety of solutions. Some examples are as follows:

- a. Removing barriers in the zoning ordinance to allow higher densities and a wide variety of housing types;
- b. Creating a Planning Board permit review process that is efficient and protects natural resources;
- c. Seeking grants and other funding sources to subsidize housing costs;
- d. Establishing Affordable Housing Tax Increment Financing (TIFs) to lower the cost of homeownership; and
- e. Creating incentives in areas served by public water and sewer to create more housing units that are affordable for people living and/or working in Rangeley.

# ***H***OUSING

**GOAL—To encourage and promote affordable, decent housing options for all Maine citizens by:**

- A. Encouraging and promoting adequate workforce housing to support the community’s and region’s economic development.**
- B. Ensuring that land use controls encourage the development of quality affordable/workforce housing, including rental housing.**
- C. Seeking to achieve that at least 10% of all newly constructed/placed primary residences during the next decade are affordable.**
- D. Encouraging and supporting the efforts of regional housing coalitions/organizations that address affordable and workforce housing needs.**

## **IDEAS TO CONSIDER**

**Update amendments to land use ordinances as applicable, including:**

1. Review the space and bulk standards in all Districts and make amendments as needed. In reviewing these standards consider elements such as the setbacks in adjacent districts, the existing setbacks especially of buildings that pre-date zoning.
2. Provide density bonuses in the Village and Residential Districts as incentives for the development of affordable/workforce housing.
3. Allow the development of smaller (under 1,200 sf) houses (rental and home ownership) in more dense developments (similar to the requirements for mobile home parks) in areas connected to public water and sewer, to increase affordable employee housing.
4. Allow the conversions of single-family dwellings to multiple units, provided that the exterior characteristics of a single-family home are retained and all building, sewerage disposal, and parking requirements are met.
5. Allow commercial and residential uses on the same lot without requiring a larger lot, provided the lot is connected to public sewer and is large enough to accommodate the necessary parking, utilities, stormwater management, etc.
6. Cap the number of units in a multi-family building at six units and remove the need for larger lot when the number of units goes over three, provided the building is connected to public sewer, as an incentive to provide more employee housing.
7. Expand the definition of types of housing such as dorm housing and seasonal outdoor living, provided these outdoor options have access to proper sanitary systems, showers, and cooking areas when connected to public sewer.
8. Allow boarding houses to provide meals if desired and/or to provide shared cooking areas when connected to public sewer.
9. Allow density bonuses for subdivisions that have provisions to preserve affordability.
10. Remove housing restrictions that are not enforceable, such as, the minimum or maximum amount of time a unit can be rented.
11. Review the existing clustered development standards (CH38.9.7) and adjust as appropriate to encourage more subdivisions to be developed as clusters. Consider allowing higher density for housing units that meet the price point of affordable for the median income household.
12. Limit short term rentals in the Village districts of Rangeley and Oquossoc, as these areas have historically proven to be the most affordable homes for year-round residents and first-time homebuyers.
13. Adopt LUPC rules regarding short-term rentals.

**Create housing authority or join Western Maine Mountain Housing to facilitate the development of different types of housing by:**

1. Overseeing existing housing units, verifying that income requirements are met.
2. Writing grants to help subsidize housing.
3. Staying current with state housing initiatives such as the Rural Affordable Housing Rental Program, Low-income tax credits, Affordable Homeownership Program, etc.
4. Working with the Town to develop and manage affordable housing TIFs.
5. Developing a “homesharing” program, working with nonprofit funding institutions such as the Genesis Fund.

**Create an expedited review process for new housing developments provided certain requirements are met such as expanding staff approval authority for the following:**

1. Expanding staff approval authority for
  - a) Smaller projects;
  - b) Projects that are connected to the public sewer system;
  - c) Projects built by contractors who are educated in proper construction practices to minimize soil erosion and phosphorous loading; and
  - d) Projects that will be inspected by civil engineers trained in best management practices to minimize soil erosion and phosphorus loading.
2. Meeting all building and life safety codes, as well as local zoning regulations.

## 7. *T*RANSPORTATION

### Reference Maps included in Appendix A

1. FCC, Rangeley Federal Functional Class
2. HCP, Rangeley Highway Corridor Priority
3. CSL—Safety, Rangeley Customer Service Level
4. CSL—Condition, Rangeley Customer Service Level
5. CSL—Serviceability, Rangeley Customer Service Level
6. Rangeley High Crash Locations
7. National Scenic Byway
8. Rangeley Context Classification
9. Oquossoc Village
10. Rangeley Village

### **INTRODUCTION**

Rangeley’s transportation system consists of state, local, and private roads; bridges; aviation; and bicycle, pedestrian, snowmobile, ATV, and transit systems. This multimodal system is extremely important to existing and future development, public safety and economic well-being, both at the local and regional levels.

Public roads in Rangeley are comprised of 2.01 miles of minor arterial roads, 21.2 miles of major collector roads, 3.98 miles of minor collector roads, and 30.31 miles of local roads.

Improvements related to pedestrian and bicycle safety were recognized as one of the highest priorities for the downtown in the creation of Rangeley’s *Downtown Revitalization Plan*.

Additional parking will be required to accommodate the influx of seasonal population in Rangeley and Oquossoc villages. Traffic calming measures and improvements to infrastructure for active transportation continue to be further explored. A majority of the curb ramps in Rangeley are not in compliance with ADA Standards and require improvement. Rangeley appropriated \$836,681 for Highway functions at the 2024 Annual Town Meeting. MaineDOT details project costs in Rangeley at \$1,869,000 in the *Three-Year Work Plan 2023 Edition*.

### **CLASSIFICATIONS, CONDITIONS, AND TRENDS**

The federal functional classification of a roadway defines the role that a particular roadway plays in serving travel needs and traffic flows through a network. Roadways are assigned to a functional classification based on the character of the service they are intended to provide. Typically, roadways fall into the following categories: *arterial roads*, *collector roads*, and *local roads*.

The state highway system describes the type of service that a public road or highway is expected to provide, and which entity is responsible for maintenance. Private roads are not classified in the federal function classification or state highway system.

The functional classifications for Rangeley include:

***Arterial Roads:*** A series of continuous routes that are expected to provide for high overall travel speeds and minimal interference to through movement. Arterial roads include principal and minor subcategories.

Rangeley has 2.01 miles of minor arterial roads: Main Street (Route 4) south of Stratton Road (Route 16). Minor arterial roads are classified as state highways and maintained by MaineDOT year-round.

***Collector Roads:*** Routes that collect and distribute traffic to and from the arterial routes and serve towns with lower population densities and disconnected travel routes. Collector roads are grouped into *urban*, *major*, and *minor* subcategories.

Rangeley has 21.2 miles of *major collector roads*. Major collector roads include Wilsons Mills Road (Route 16), Rumford Road (Route 17), Carry Road between Wilsons Mills Road and Rumford Road (Route 17), Main Street between Wilsons Mills Road and Pleasant Street (Routes 4/16), Pleasant Street (Route 16), and Stratton Road (Route 16). Major collector roads are classified as state highways and are maintained by MaineDOT year-round.

Rangeley has 3.98 miles of *minor collector roads*, including Dallas Hill Road and Loon Lake Road between Main Street and Taylor Road. Minor collector roads are classified as state aid highways. MaineDOT maintains state-aid highways in the summer and the Town of Rangeley maintains them in the winter.

**Public Local Roads:** Local roads are designed primarily to serve adjacent land areas and usually carry low volumes of traffic. They include public roads not classified as arterial or collector roads. Rangeley has 30.31 miles of *local roads*. The Town of Rangeley maintains local roads year-round.

The federal functional classification of arterial and collector roads in Rangeley are illustrated in **Appendix A, Transportation, Map 1 FCC**.

**Private Roads:** Private roads are maintained by the property owners that utilize them for access. Rangeley Public Works and MaineDOT are not responsible for any maintenance on these roads. Rangeley's Town Code articulates road requirements in *Chapter 27, Road Construction*.

## **TOWN REGULATIONS**

Parking, traffic, and signage are regulated through *Chapter 35 Traffic Ordinance* of the Town Code. Provisions for road maintenance and construction within the shoreland zone are articulated in *Article 38.7 Shoreland Area*. Road standards for subdivision applications are provided through *Chapter 33, Subdivision Review* and *Chapter 38, Zoning*.

## **TOWN MAINTENANCE AND APPROPRIATIONS**

Rangeley's Highway Department spent much of 2023 repairing damage to roadways and infrastructure due to significant storm activity. Repairs were completed on Bald Mountain Road, Faunce Road, and Grandview Avenue. Culverts on Quimby Pond Road were replaced in preparation for paving. Continued maintenance of local roads will be required to repair road deterioration that comes as a result of increased storm intensity and snowfall. Enforcement of regulations for traffic, parking, road creation, and driveway entrances should be ensured to protect the integrity of infrastructure.

In 2020, Rangeley adopted the *Rangeley and Oquossoc Villages Omnibus Downtown Tax Increment Financing (TIF) District Development Program* on December 8, 2020. The Downtown TIF District aims to create a pedestrian-friendly downtown with safe traffic flow and to provide upgrades to infrastructure including sidewalks, streetscapes/streetlights, parking, signage, utilities, and green space. Appropriation of those TIF funds is included in the annual budget for various transportation projects.

In addition, the town allocates all of the annual excise tax revenue for capital road items.

## **ASSET MANAGEMENT**

Road conditions can help direct future development and suggest the need for capital expenditures for reconstruction. MaineDOT provides a fair structure to prioritize programs and projects through the "Highway Asset Management" framework. Highway asset management includes two parts: Highway Corridor Priority (HCP), and Customer Service Level (CSL).

## **HIGHWAY CORRIDOR PRIORITY (HCP)**

MaineDOT uses Highway Corridor Priorities (HCPs) to categorize transportation systems by level of priority, as described below. HCPs in Rangeley are illustrated in **Appendix A, Transportation, Map HCP**.

**Priority 1:** Interstate and all other national highway systems. There are no Priority 1 roads in Rangeley.

**Priority 2:** High priority, non-NHS arterials. Route 4 from the town line on the south end to its terminus in Oquossoc (at Route 17 intersection) falls into this category.

**Priority 3:** Remaining arterials and high-volume major collector highways. There are no Priority 3 roads in Rangeley.

**Priority 4:** Remainder of the major and minor collector highways, and state aid system, in which road responsibilities are shared between the state and municipalities. Rumford Road (Route 17), Wilson Mills Road (Route 16), Loon Lake Road between Main Street and Taylor Road, Dallas Hill Road, Pleasant Street (Route 16), and Stratton Road (Route 16)

**Priority 5:** Local roads that are the year-round responsibility of Rangeley.

## **CUSTOMER SERVICE**

Customer Service Level (CSL) The Customer Service Level (CSL) is used by MaineDOT to measure the state's highway assets in customer-based metrics. Customer service levels include three indicators: *safety*, *condition*, and *serviceability*. Each area is graded similar to a report card, A: Excellent, B: Good, C: Fair, D: Poor, and F: Unacceptable.

### ***CSL - Safety***

The first indicator of customer service levels is safety. Safety is evaluated by crash history, paved roadway width, pavement rutting, and bridge reliability. Dallas Hill Road received the lowest safety score in Rangeley, with a grade of D. This was due to the crash history and pavement width. A portion of Rumford Road received a safety grade of C due to crash history. Safety grades in Rangeley are shown in **Appendix A, Transportation, Map 3**.

### ***CSL - Condition***

The second indicator of MaineDOT's customer service levels is condition. Condition is evaluated by ride quality, pavement condition, roadway strength, and bridge conditions. The following segments received C ratings: Wilson Mills Road (Route 16) north of Targett Road; Carry Road between Wilson Mills Road (Route 16) and Rumford Road (Route 17); Main Street (Route 4 and Route 16) between Dodge Pond Road and Mingo Loop Road; Main Street between Center Street and Pleasant Street; Main Street south of Windy Cross Road; and Loon Lake Road from Main Street to Cross Street. These ratings resulted from structural bridge conditions and ride quality. Condition grades in Rangeley are shown in **Appendix A, Transportation, Map 4**.

### ***CSL - Serviceability***

The last indicator of MaineDOT's customer service levels is serviceability. Serviceability conditions are evaluated a) if a roadway is eligible for temporary posting to mitigate vulnerabilities associated with spring thaw; b) if the weight load restrictions of bridges are posted; and c) if capacity can accommodate traffic volumes during peak summer months due to the potential impacts of tourism. A posted state road's maximum weight limit is 23,000 pounds. State roads in Rangeley received either a score of A or C. The C grades on Rumford Road (Route 17), Wilson Mills Road (Route 16), part of Loon Lake Road, and Dallas Hill Road were all attributed to road posting. Serviceability grades in Rangeley are shown in **Appendix A, Transportation, Map 3, CSL – Safety, Map 4 CSL-Condition, and Map 5 – Level of Service**.

## **CRASH DATA**

The MaineDOT maintains records of all reportable crashes involving at least \$1,000 damage or personal injury. A report entitled Maine Accident Report Summary provides information relating to the location and nature of motor vehicle crashes. One element of the summary report is the identification of "Critical Rate Factor" (CRF), a statistical comparison with other similar locations in the state. Locations with CRFs of 1.0 or greater and with more than eight crashes within a three-year period are classified as "High Crash Locations" (HCLs). There were two HCLs identified in Rangeley from 2021-2023. There was a total of 21 accidents between the two

identified HCLs from 2021-2023, as seen in Table 1 below. Rangeley's HCLs are shown in **Appendix A, Transportation, Map 6 High Crash Locations**.

| Table 1. Rangeley High Crash Locations 2021-2023                                        |               |          |              |            |      |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|----------|--------------|------------|------|
| Location                                                                                | Total Crashes | % Injury | # Fatalities | # Injuries | CRF  |
| Main Street (Route 4) from the Rangeley Plantation Town Line to Pickford Road 1983 2110 | 8             | 0%       | 0            | 0          | 1.25 |
| Main Street from Bonney Point Road to Judkins Road 3759-3995                            | 13            | 7.7%     | 0            | 1          | 1.38 |

Source: MaineDOT

Of the eight crashes that occurred at HCL Location 1, seven included deer, and one occurred because the driver went off the road. All crashes reported at Location 1 resulted in property damage only. Crashes occurred in June, September, November, and December. No crashes were reported on Tuesdays or Sundays. One crash involved rain during daylight hours, two crashes took place on a clear day during daylight hours, and five took place on a clear day at night.

Of the 13 crashes that occurred at HCL Location 2, 10 accidents included deer and three occurred due to the driver going off the road. One accident resulted in a possible injury and the other 12 resulted in property damage only. Most of the crashes that occurred in Location 2 were between October and April, with the exception of one crash in August. There were no crashes reported on Tuesdays or Fridays. Two crashes involved snow during daylight hours; one crash involved snow at night. One crash involved rain during daylight hours. Six crashes took place on a clear day during daylight hours, and three took place at night. Out of the 21 crashes that occurred, 17 involved deer. This indicates that both locations would likely not be considered high crash locations without the external factor of deer.

Road safety signs such as speed limit signs and signs that inform the driver of high wildlife crossing must be erected in accordance with Maine law and MaineDOT regulations. Specifically, the MaineDOT must approve the location, form, and character of the signs on designated state and state-aid highways.

Other safety issues of concern to the town are outlined in the *Downtown Revitalization Plan*. Improvements related to pedestrian and bicycle safety were recognized through public input as one of the highest priorities for the downtown. Key findings of the *Downtown Revitalization Plan*, including safety concerns, are described in further detail later in this Chapter.

### **HIGHWAY/ROAD CAPACITIES**

MaineDOT maintains traffic volume data for select roads in Rangeley. Typically, these volume counts occur every three years, however, data may not be available at all locations every three years. Traffic counts were not conducted in 2020, due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Traffic counts in Rangeley can be seen in Table 2. Traffic in Rangeley is generally attributable to outdoor tourism and increased seasonal population in the peak months of July and August. The

data shows an increase in traffic in some locations and a decrease in other locations, even with the increased visitation and population.

| Table 2. Traffic Counts in Rangeley                       |      |      |      |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|------|------|------|
| Location                                                  | 2014 | 2017 | 2023 |
| Allen Street north of Main Street                         | 330  | ---  | 340  |
| Mingo Loop Road s/e of Route 4/16 (westerly junction)     | 150  | 220  | 210  |
| Mingo Loop Road northeast of IR 805 @ Bridge # 2384       | 200  | ---  | ---  |
| Dallas Hill Road east of Route 4                          | 1000 | 1060 | ---  |
| Bald Mountain Road south of Carry Road                    | ---  | 450  | ---  |
| Carry Road east of Haines Landing Road                    | ---  | 200  | ---  |
| Carry Road southwest of Oxford Street (westerly junction) | 650  | 660  | 620  |
| Loon Lake Road north of Main Street                       | 1010 | 1080 | 1150 |
| Park Road southwest of Main Street                        | ---  | 590  | 470  |
| Pleasant Street north of Stratton Road                    | 300  | 320  | 250  |
| School Street west of Pleasant Street                     | 290  | 350  | 320  |
| Pleasant Street north of Main Street                      | 1910 | 1730 | 1650 |
| Stratton Road east of Pleasant Street                     | 1310 | ---  | 1450 |
| Stratton Road northeast of Sunrise Road (private)         | 1150 | 980  | 1080 |
| Wilsons Mills Road north of Main Street                   | 830  | 960  | 830  |
| Rumford Road south of Rangeley Avenue                     | 1180 | 1160 | 1010 |
| Carry Road southwest of Route 16 @ Oquossoc Bridge        | 2010 | 1940 | 1920 |
| Main Street north of Depot Street                         | ---  | 4140 | 4490 |
| Main Street north of Grand View Avenue                    | ---  | 3960 | 4650 |
| Main Street southeast of Park Road                        | 4950 | 4650 | 4780 |
| Route 4 north of Dallas Hill Road                         | 3320 | 3280 | 3920 |
| Route 4 south of Dallas Hill Road                         | 2550 | 2470 | 2990 |
| Main Street west of Allen Street                          | 3930 | ---  | 4240 |
| Main Street west of Loon Lake Road                        | 3080 | 2990 | ---  |
| Main Street west of Pleasant Street                       | 4370 | 4450 | 4520 |
| Main Street east of Wilsons Mills Road                    | 2000 | 2110 | 1970 |
| Main Street west of Mingo Loop Road easterly junction     | 2150 | 2300 | 2470 |
| Route 4/16 west of Rangeley Manor Drive                   | ---  | ---  | 2950 |
| Main Street west of Quimby Pond Road                      | ---  | ---  | 2150 |

Source: MaineDOT

## **BRIDGES**

There are five publicly owned bridges in Rangeley: Dodge Pond Bridge, Hunter Cove Bridge, Oquossoc Bridge, Nile Brook Bridge, and Kennebago Bridge, all of which are owned by the state and maintained by MaineDOT.

Bridge condition is determined by the lowest rating of National Bridge Inventory condition ratings for Deck, Superstructure, Substructure, or Culvert. The bridge inventory and

classification system of public bridges in Rangeley, as established by MaineDOT, is shown in Table 3 below.

| Table 3. Rangeley Bridge Classification and Inventory |            |                 |                |                           |                         |                                 |                              |                    |
|-------------------------------------------------------|------------|-----------------|----------------|---------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------|
| Bridge Name                                           | Year Built | Max Span Length | Deck Condition | Super-structure Condition | Sub-structure Condition | Culvert Condition               | Annual Average Daily Traffic | Date Of Inspection |
| Dodge Pond                                            | 1925       | 15.2 feet       | Fair           | Fair                      | Fair                    | N/A                             | 2,419                        | 6/24/2021          |
| Hunter Cove                                           | 2018       | 78 feet         | Good           | Very Good                 | Very Good               | N/A                             | 302                          | 7/11/22            |
| Oquossoc                                              | 1951       | 77 feet         | Fair           | Satisfactory              | Satisfactory            | N/A                             | 2,041                        | 6/13/22            |
| Kennebago                                             | 1980       | 120 feet        | Good           | Good                      | Fair                    | N/A                             | 778                          | 6/13/22            |
| Nile Brook                                            | 1954       | 16 feet         | N/A            | N/A                       | N/A                     | Moderate to major deterioration | 2,277                        | 12/7/21            |

Source: MaineDOT

MaineDOT defines the federal sufficiency rating of a bridge as “a numeric indicator of the overall value of the sufficiency of the bridge.” The rating will be from 0 to 100 (100=best, 0=worst) and gives an overall value of the sufficiency of a bridge. Federal sufficiency rating is computed using a federally-supplied formula.

Beginning with the 2018 data archive, the term “structurally deficient” was eliminated from use in the National Bridge Inspection Program. A new term, “poor condition,” was adopted to characterize the summary condition of a bridge that has any component (Deck, Superstructure, Substructure, or Culvert) in poor or worse condition.

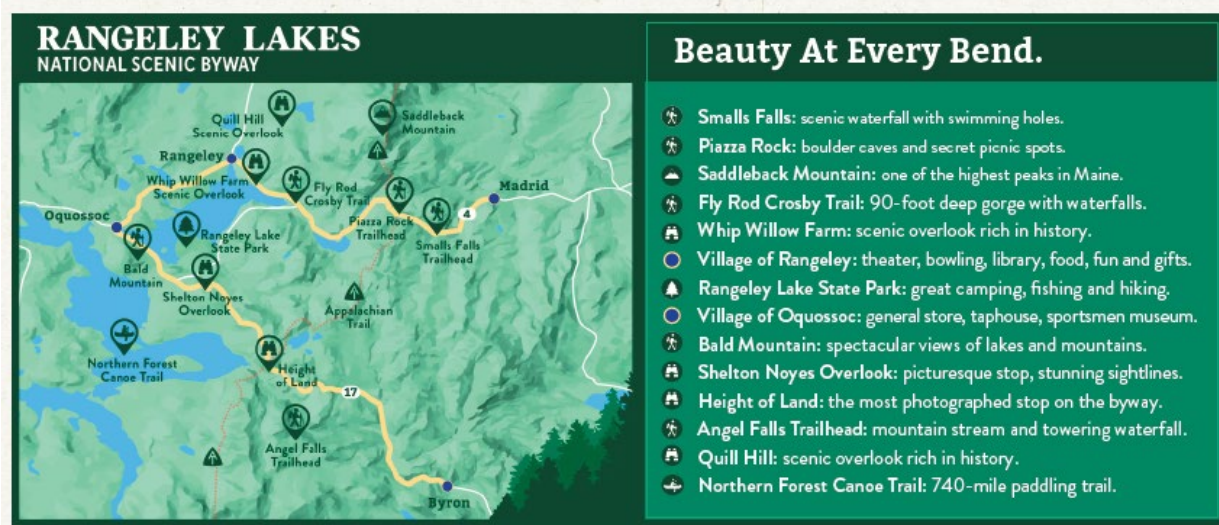
A bridge must be classified as “deficient” before it is eligible for federal bridge replacement or rehabilitation funds. It must also have a certain sufficiency: to qualify for replacement, the bridge’s sufficiency rating must be 50 or under. To qualify for rehabilitation, the sufficiency rating must be 80 or under. This does not imply the bridge is unsafe, but rather in need of repair. See the federal sufficiency rating for bridges in Rangeley in Table 4 below.

| Table 4. Sufficiency Ratings for Rangeley Bridges |            |                   |                            |
|---------------------------------------------------|------------|-------------------|----------------------------|
| Bridge Name                                       | Year Built | Bridge Road Width | Federal Sufficiency Rating |
| Dodge Pond                                        | 1925       | 35 feet           | 64.2                       |
| Hunter Cove                                       | 2018       | 26 feet           | 99                         |
| Oquossoc                                          | 1951       | 26 feet           | 57                         |
| Kennebago                                         | 1980       | 29 feet           | 74                         |
| Nile Brook                                        | 1954       | N/A               | 68.5                       |

Source: MaineDOT

## **RANGELEY LAKES NATIONAL SCENIC BYWAY**

Rangeley is the only organized Town along the 35-mile Rangeley Lakes National Scenic Byway. There are various scenic overlooks along the way, including the Height of Land and Whip Willow Farm Scenic Overlook. Much of the Rangeley Lakes Scenic Byway is staffed by volunteer greeters overseen currently by the Chamber of Commerce. See key attributes of the Rangeley Lakes Scenic Byway, created by the Rangeley Lakes Heritage Trust (RLHT) below.



Source: Rangeley Lakes Heritage Trust

In April of 2022, MaineDOT, Rangeley Lakes Heritage Trust, and the Town of Rangeley applied for a Scenic Byway Grant. This project is to plan, design, engineer, and construct two Gateway Connector Hubs in Rangeley and Oquossoc Village, located directly along the Rangeley Lakes National Scenic Byway. The grant application was awarded in the amount of \$481,650 for gateway improvements at Depot Street and Routes 16 and 17 at the approach to the Town. The grant runs for six years and improvements will continue throughout the established time period.

## **SAFETY/COMPLETE STREETS**

MaineDOT adopted its first Complete Streets Policy in 2014 and completed an update in 2024. Complete streets provide safety and mobility benefits for all roadway users and are an important part of Maine's transportation projects. MaineDOT recognizes that some users, especially those outside of motor vehicles, are inherently more vulnerable than others, and that safety is a shared responsibility between all stakeholders and transportation system users. The 2024 update of the policy now utilizes Roadway Context Classifications in providing contextually appropriate guidance for incorporating "Complete Streets" elements into transportation projects.

## **MAINEDOT ROADWAY CONTEXT CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM**

MaineDOT has created a context classification system that applies to all public roads in the state. The roadway context classification system will assist in the implementation of MaineDOT's

speed limit setting process, the updated Complete Streets Policy, and increased utilization of speed management strategies. MaineDOT is implementing five context classifications: *Rural*, *Rural Town*, *Village*, *Suburban*, and *Urban*. See below for more information. The five current context categories will not replace urban compact lines, which are important to existing agreements for maintenance and cost share responsibility. Context Classification of roads in Rangeley can be seen in **Appendix A, Transportation Map 8, Map 9, and Map 10**.

***Rural:*** The Rural context roadways serve as higher-speed connections between communities. These road segments often have higher posted speeds (typically 40 to 55 MPH), fewer buildings with larger building setbacks from the road, low access density, low density of public and commercial facilities, and lower bicycle and pedestrian volumes. There are no Rural context roads in Rangeley.

***Rural Town:*** The Rural Town context represents areas where small, built-up areas suddenly appear to drivers after traveling through miles of high-speed Rural context. These contexts are developed slightly closer together and closer to the road than Rural context areas but are not as densely developed as Village context areas. Pedestrian volumes are often higher where sidewalks have been built, but moderate levels of pedestrian and bicyclist activity can be expected even when these facilities are not present.

In Rangeley, the following roads and road segments are classified as Rural Town context: Carry Road from Old Skiway Road to Shore Road; Rangeley Avenue; Franklin Street; Oxford Street; Cupsuptic Avenue; Kennebago Avenue; Carry Road west of Bald Mountain Road; part of Pleasant Street; part of Robbins Avenue; School Street; Oquossoc Avenue; Cross Street, Allen Street; part of Stratton Road (Route 16); Park Road; Lake Street; and part of Depot Street.

***Village:*** The Village context represents the centers of heavily developed rural communities. Village areas are developed at a similar intensity to Urban areas, but they typically cover smaller areas, serve fewer people, have lower traffic volumes, and have less variety of land uses and businesses present. Villages are also more likely to be isolated communities with smaller building setbacks. Heavy active transportation activity is expected, and sidewalks and on-street parking are common.

In Rangeley, Main Street (Route 4) from Sunset Lane to Allen Street; Pond Street; Richardson Street; High Street; and Center Street are classified as Village context.

***Suburban:*** The Suburban context is characterized by a higher density of driveway access, large commercial shopping areas, moderate pedestrian or bicycle use, and larger building setbacks. Roads in Suburban context experience potential conflict with vehicles entering and exiting these commercial areas. High-priority roads through Suburban contexts are some of the highest traffic volume roads, as they are commuter corridors for people who live in Rural and Suburban Towns.

In Rangeley, two segments are classified as Suburban context: Rumford Road (Route 17) between Rangeley Avenue and Carry Road; and Main Street (Rt 4) starting 655 feet east of Manor Drive and continuing to Allen Street.

**Urban:** The Urban context exists in cities and metropolitan planning areas with dense land use, smaller building setbacks, on-street parking, mixed commercial and residential use, and higher use by pedestrians and bicyclists. Speeds in the urban context should prioritize safety for all road users to foster comfortable access to businesses, public facilities, and residential neighborhoods. There are no Urban context roads in Rangeley.

## **RANGELEY’S DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION ACTION PLAN**

The Town of Rangeley consulted with Wright-Pierce to create Rangeley’s *Downtown Revitalization Action Plan*, which was adopted by the Town of Rangeley on February 25, 2019. The *Downtown Revitalization Plan* outlines prioritized and actionable recommendations for implementing the community’s vision and improving vibrancy and safety in Rangeley Village and Oquossoc Village.

The stated vision of the *Downtown Revitalization Plan* is as follows:

*“The downtown revitalization of Rangeley Village and Oquossoc Village should preserve and support the Town of Rangeley’s unique character, history, and outdoor heritage on a year-round basis.”*

### **Project Goals include the following:**

1. Develop a Downtown Revitalization Plan that is actionable.
2. Improve appearance and make the villages more welcoming to visitors.
3. Preserve the historic character and architecture of the villages.
4. Improve bicycle and pedestrian systems and safety.
5. Continue to support a diverse economy.
6. Improve economic viability on a year-round basis.
7. Improve cell phone service.
8. Improve vehicular traffic flow and safety conditions.

The *Downtown Revitalization Plan* studied various topics, including pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure and accessibility, infrastructure for streetscapes and utilities, signage, and parking. Key findings and recommendations of the *Downtown Revitalization Plan* are described below.

## **ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION**

In 2022, MaineDOT added the Village Partnership Initiative to their suite of community initiatives. This initiative aims to focus on projects in lower-speed areas where people meet, walk, shop, and do business. Rangeley has partnered with MaineDOT for the Village Partnership Initiative and is currently conducting a transformative village study in the Oquossoc village. The Village Study focuses on active transportation elements, availability of parking adjacent to economic drivers, access management along the two state routes, and truck-turning movements

at the village’s largest intersection. Improvements related to pedestrian and bicycle safety were identified as key priorities in the public input received during the creation of the *Downtown Revitalization Plan*.

## **BICYCLE INFRASTRUCTURE**

There are currently no designated bicycle lanes or paved paths in Rangeley. Due to Rangeley’s historic ties to outdoor recreation, it is expected that interest in mountain and road biking will continue to increase, creating further need for on-road and off-road bicycle routes. Increased traffic calming measures will assist in providing safer conditions for both bicyclists and pedestrians. In May of 2024, the Select Board accepted a donation from Rotary to install bike racks in the Town park, Haley Park, and potentially, Oquossoc Park.

## **SIDEWALKS AND CROSSWALKS**

The Rangeley sidewalk system allows pedestrian movement in the village between compact residential areas, the school, Town office, and commercial enterprises on Main Street. Sidewalks are located along Main Street (Route 4) from Dallas Hill Road to Pleasant Street, Pleasant Street from Main Street (Route 4) to Stratton Road (Route 16), Main Street from Pleasant to Kempton Street, Loon Lake Road from Main Street (Route 4) to Mendolia Road. There is a small section of sidewalk in Oquossoc at the intersection of Route 4 and Route 16.

MaineDOT contracted with AVCOG to analyze each crosswalk in AVCOG’s three-county region, including those in Rangeley, to determine the degree of compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Four of the 39 total curb ramps in Rangeley were found to be in compliance with the ADA. All four of the compliant curb ramps are located on Main Street (Route 4) between Dallas Hill Road and Grandview Avenue. The Town is working to bring the other curb ramps into compliance as it completes construction projects. The Public Works Department maintains all sidewalks within Rangeley.

A public engagement session was held at the Oquossoc Fire Department on June 25, 2024, to obtain input from the residents of Oquossoc. Public input received at the Oquossoc public engagement session included a desire for pedestrian improvements near the boat launch, crosswalks in Oquossoc Village, signage for traffic calming on Bald Mountain Road, pedestrian walkways at-grade, improvement to grade along the road for pedestrians, and providing firmer shoulders to Haines Landing to improve walking surfaces. It was determined that sidewalk infrastructure would take away from the rural character of Oquossoc Village and the recommendation was changed to: shoulder width should be increased and striping added to accommodate pedestrian access.

## ***Recommendations from the Downtown Revitalization Plan:***

1. Continue to implement bicycle and pedestrian improvements in a phased approach in Rangeley Village and initiate these improvements in a phased approach in Oquossoc Village, in a manner that is affordable within the Town’s capital improvement budget. Consider

starting at the center of the villages and working outward towards regional trail systems. ***In progress***

2. Continue to support regional cycling interests and coordinate with MaineDOT, the Bicycle Coalition of Maine, etc., on joint-funded project opportunities to initiative bike lanes in the Rangeley and Oquossoc Villages, and for connections to regional systems. ***No action***
3. Continue to coordinate with MaineDOT to ensure that bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure improvement projects are consistent with MaineDOT policies and regulations. ***In progress***
4. Consider pedestrian and bicycle improvements in coordination with other vehicular infrastructure and streetscape elements (trees, lighting, etc.) from a “Complete Streets” approach. ***No action***
5. Examine current street and sidewalk ordinances during their update process to consider the requirements of individual commercial property owners maintaining sidewalks in a safe manner immediately in front of their property. ***No action***
6. Continue the consistency of granite curb and asphalt sidewalk materials throughout the villages. ***In progress***
7. Continue to evaluate strategic pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure improvements in association with other downtown revitalization improvements, including roadway, streetscape and utility infrastructure improvements, as well as private development projects so that bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure does not have to be reconstructed “after the fact,” since these other initiatives often involve an underground infrastructure component within the sidewalk and bike lane areas. ***In progress***
8. Improve existing sidewalks to comply with current ADA accessibility standards. ***In progress***
9. Continue to monitor and plan for capital improvements to maintain existing sidewalk on an annual basis (This work is currently performed by Public Works Department.) ***Ongoing***
10. Define a streetscape standard within Rangeley Village for Main Street and Stratton Rd (sidewalks, bike lanes/shoulders, on-street parking, signage, landscaping, site lighting with full cutoff fixture, site amenities – benches, trash receptacles, etc.). ***Ongoing***
11. Define a streetscape standard for adjacent side streets within Rangeley Village (sidewalks, shoulders, signage, and lighting with full cutoff fixtures). ***No action***
12. Coordinate with Rangeley Lakes Scenic Byway and MaineDOT Highway Signage Program to promote Rangeley and Oquossoc Villages (Routes 4, 16, and 17). ***Ongoing***
13. Coordinate with MaineDOT regarding highway improvements to Routes 4 and 16 in association with context sensitive design for improvement within the village, and in terms of opportunities to reroute and reduce industrial truck traffic through Rangeley Village, and in terms of overall streetscape and traffic calming improvements (e.g., bump outs, raised medians, street lighting, on-street parking, etc.). ***Ongoing***
14. Define a streetscape standard within Oquossoc Village for Carry Road / Rumford Road (Sidewalks, bike lanes/shoulders, signage, landscaping, site lighting with full cutoff fixture). ***Paused***

15. Define a streetscape standard for adjacent Oquossoc Village side streets (sidewalks, shoulders and signage). **No action**
16. Coordinate with MaineDOT to implement pedestrian and bicycle safety improvements. This signage should meet the objectives of AASHTO and ADA federal safety objects and be consistently applied throughout the downtown. **Ongoing**

## **TRAILS**

Off-road, multimodal routes provide alternative ways to travel through, and within, town. While these routes are sometimes considered to be for recreational use, they can be vital transportation corridors. According to the website [MaineTrailFinder.com](http://MaineTrailFinder.com), there are 11 trail networks in Rangeley and Oquossoc, and 40 networks of trails in the entire Rangeley Lakes Region. They are Boy Scout Road, part of Forest Legacy Trails, Bald Mountain Trail in Oquossoc, Rangeley River Trail, Wilhelm Reich Museum Trails, Hunter Cove Uplands, Hunter Cove Wildlife Sanctuary, Mingo Springs Trail and Bird Walk, and Hatchery Brook Preserve. Outdoor recreation in Rangeley is described in further detail in the Economy chapter of this Plan. There are over 100 miles of trails in the Rangeley Lakes Region, providing additional connectivity through means of active transportation.

Additionally, there are extensive snowmobile trails in Rangeley that connect to the regional Interconnected Trail System, providing access to eight other Towns. The Camp-2 Trail Riders ATV Club and Rev-It-Up Sport Shop maintain 70 miles of ATV Trails that encompass the Rangeley Lakes Region. The Oquossoc ATV Club is a 501(c)(7) nonprofit organization that develops and maintains trails in Rangeley and Rangeley Plantation. Creating a consistent look and design of all trailheads can improve the visibility of trails.

The Rangeley Lakes Heritage Trust, Maine Forestry Museum, Rangeley Lakes Trails Center, Rangeley Lakes Snowmobile Club, the Rangeley Region Guides & Sportsmen's Association, and the Wilhelm Reich Museum all work to maintain the wealth of trails in Rangeley. The Trails for Rangeley Area Coalition provides coordinated activities involving trail utilization. Annual appropriations have been approved at Town Meetings and future appropriations are expected.

### **Recommendations from the *Downtown Revitalization Plan (Wright-Pierce 2019)*:**

1. Continue to monitor and plan for capital improvements to maintain existing trail infrastructure on an annual basis.
2. Improve wayfinding signage guiding pedestrian, bicycle and vehicular visitors to village amenities, adjacent neighborhoods, regional trail systems, and cultural resources.

## **PARKING**

The Town maintains public on-street parking and a municipal lot on Main Street. Because of the density of Rangeley Village, some business parking is located at the rear of the commercial

buildings. Public parking lots are located off Pleasant (Town-owned) and Depot streets. Parking regulations in Rangeley are dictated in Chapter 35 Traffic Ordinance of the Town Code.

To improve traffic flow and safety on Main Street/Route 4, the Town of Rangeley converted diagonal parking to parallel parking. With larger pickup trucks and SUVs parking diagonally along the Byway/Main Street, there often was not enough width for two vehicles on the roadway, particularly when one of them was a logging truck or tanker truck. While this change helped improve vehicle and pedestrian safety, it resulted in a significant reduction in the number of available parking spaces. To address this challenge, the Town purchased a parcel of vacant land in 2001 adjacent to the Byway to be used for off-street parking.

In Oquossoc Village, there is no public parking along the roadway, except for an undeveloped parking area that serves vehicles and trailers using the public boat launch. The Scenic Byway Gateway Project proposes to expand and improve parking in the Village. At the June 2024 public meeting at the Oquossoc Fire Station, areas for on-street parking were identified. The Town is in the design process for upgrades to the public parking lot at the intersection of Routes 16 and 17. At this public engagement session held in Oquossoc, input included the need to provide parking through public/private partnerships, as well as signage for parking areas. Community members also voiced a desire to relocate the post office to provide additional parking in its place.

Rules for winter parking, overnight parking, and parking in excess of 72 hours, as well as parking lot lease agreements are included in Chapter 35 of *Rangeley's Town Code*.

Parking facilities in Rangeley and Oquossoc are shown in the maps in **Appendix A, Transportation**, and the ***Downtown Revitalization Plan***, prepared by Wright-Pierce in **Appendix C**.

#### **Recommendations from the *Downtown Revitalization Plan*:**

1. Improve directional way-finding signage to parking areas within walking distance of the villages. ***Ongoing***
2. Improve Main Street streetscape infrastructure, sidewalks, lighting, and landscaping, to create a greater sense of security and aesthetic interest for pedestrian traffic traveling to and from off-street parking facilities and the surrounding village areas. ***Ongoing***
3. Consider revisions to the Town's ordinances regarding parking. This could include reduced parking requirements for mixed use development where the upper-story residents' parking needs and the lower-story commercial / business peak demand needs are typically not in conflict. ***No action***
4. Consider a parking study master plan as a long-term strategy for downtown revitalization after initial phased plan improvements are made, which may, along with changes in the economy and social trends, result in different parking demands than what exists currently. ***No action***

5. Consider acquiring permanent rights / ownership of current Town-leased gravel parking lots and pave the lots to improve demarcation of parking spaces and potential increase in capacity of parking within these lots. ***Purchased Depot Streett lot, IGA lot – private sale***
6. The Town could also consider opportunities to acquire new properties for paved parking lots. ***Ongoing***
7. Consider on-street parking opportunities in Oquossoc Village, which can also serve as a means for traffic calming. ***Ongoing***
8. Consider replacing on-street parking in Rangeley Village with off-street parking, where feasible, to allow for greater streetscape improvement space. This should be considered in a coordinated effort with potential opportunities to increase Town-owned off-street parking lots at other strategic locations throughout the villages (e.g., vacant lots or at a location closer to the IGA) and the Town should dedicate capital reserves for proactive purchase of such potential properties as they become available.
9. Coordinate with businesses regarding employee policy requirements for employee-designated parking spaces beyond the “prime” spaces which are most visible and convenient for visitors to the downtown.
10. Consider requiring parking to be sited behind buildings on Main Street, Stratton Road, Rumford Road and Carry Road for new development ordinance standards.

## **ELECTRIC VEHICLES**

Public comments from the *Downtown Revitalization Plan* included the recommendation of “Electric vehicle infrastructure behind businesses off Main Street.”

Saddleback Mountain has 12 EV chargers on site. The EV charging stations were installed in the fall of 2022 as a partnership with ReVision Energy. EV chargers are also located at The Hideaway and Pleasant Street Bed & Breakfast. As more EV charging stations are installed, their locations will be listed at online sources such as Charge Hub.

At the public engagement session held in Oquossoc, community members noted that there are no electric vehicle charging stations available in Oquossoc, and that providing infrastructure would accommodate electric vehicles.

## **PARK & RIDE FACILITIES**

There are no MaineDOT Park & Ride facilities in Rangeley. The closest MaineDOT Park & Ride lot is located in Farmington. Smalls Falls is a maintained rest area and trailhead located at in Township E.

### **Recommendations from the *Downtown Revitalization Plan*:**

1. Improve parking, public transit, bicycle, and pedestrian connections to Rangeley and Oquossoc village parks from other areas of the villages, and from other regional recreation destination points (e.g., AT Trailhead on Route 4). ***No action***

## **TRANSIT**

Public transportation in rural areas is an increasingly necessary but inherently expensive service for local (county or municipal) governments to provide. There are a significant number of adults who have no personal transportation or license to operate a vehicle. Additionally, seniors want to remain engaged, but do not want to drive or have surrendered their licenses.

Western Maine Transportation Services (WMTS) is the designated regional transit provider for Androscoggin County. WMTS provides “demand-response” curb-to-curb and “flex-route” hybrid scheduled/off-route curb-to-curb transportation services to residents of Androscoggin, Franklin, and Oxford counties. WMTS also provides commuter services in some areas. Buses and vans operated by WMTS are open to the general public. Riders may use services provided by WMTS mostly as they would a personal vehicle, with the exception of limitations on the size, number, and type of parcels allowed, and pets/animals being limited to small animals in carriers or trained service animals under control of the rider.

Service from Farmington to Rangeley operates every second Tuesday of the month, including stops in Strong and Phillips. Stops include Phillips Shadagee Apartments, Strong White Elephant, Rangeley Townhouse Apartments, Franklin Memorial Hospital, Walmart/Mt. Blue Plaza, and Hannaford Plaza. Reservations are required for this service and are available on a first-come, first-served basis. The greatest number of rides provided by WMTS are to healthcare appointments, followed by shopping, personal appointments (hair, banking, social service, legal, etc.), employment, higher education, entertainment, social and family engagements, and dining at restaurants and senior meal centers, during non-holiday weekdays. WMTS also provides commuter buses for employees of Sugarloaf and Sunday River.

Saddleback has a bus service to bring employees and skiers to and from the mountain. The Town could explore partnering with Saddleback to expand this service. Getting more visitors and employees to use transit reduces traffic and the need to build and maintain costly parking. The Town could consider working with Saddleback to expand the service using existing buses.

The Rangeley Health and Ride Program provides local transportation for individuals to and from medical appointments, the health center, the dentist, and the grocery store. The Health and Ride Program also provides non-local rides for medical appointments only. As support, the Town has made an annual contribution to the program

Other transportation services provided in the region include a few for-profit taxis, vans, and shuttle operators which are utilized by LogistiCare, a non-emergency medical transportation broker. Commercial taxi operators providing general transportation, as opposed to those providing MaineCare rides, are not consistently available in most towns. None of these providers is considered a “public transit” provider.

Currently, ridesharing/ride-hailing services (Uber, Lyft, etc.), if available at all in rural areas of the state, are generally not reliable due to hours of availability and numbers of drivers who sign

up. This is mostly due to the business model requiring a minimum population density greater than what typically exists in Western Maine communities in order to be profitable and sustainable for drivers.

A business opportunity giving rides for a fee may have potential. The State of Maine has a brochure on starting such a service, *Running A Taxi Or Limousine Service In The State Of Maine*. It can be found at [chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcgclefindmkaj/https://www.maine.gov/sos/sites/maine.gov/sos/files/content/assets/Running-20a-20Taxi-20or-20Limousine-20Service-20in-20the-20State-20of-20Maine-20MD.pdf](https://www.maine.gov/sos/sites/maine.gov/sos/files/content/assets/Running-20a-20Taxi-20or-20Limousine-20Service-20in-20the-20State-20of-20Maine-20MD.pdf)

Even with the available transportation options, the transportation needs of residents may not be able to be met without additional public or other transit services.

### ***Rail***

There are no active railways in Rangeley. There is an abandoned railbed running from the western end of Salmo Road to Boy Scout Road that is now a dirt road named Indian Rock Road. Snowmobiles and ATVs currently use the railbed.

### ***Aviation***

The Town of Rangeley owns and operates the Stephen A. Bean Municipal Airport. The airport facility's paved runway extends 4,300 feet and is located on Loon Lake Road. Services and amenities offered include aviation fuel, aircraft parking, flight school, and aircraft rentals. Rangeley adopted Rules & Regulations for the Stephen A. Bean Airfield in 2008, which defines public and tenant usage. The Town owns the land in the runway protection zone which ensures that inappropriate development does not take place in the runway approaches. There are no zoning standards that address incompatible land uses with airport operations outside of the runway protection zones.

The Town invested in a runway expansion project in 2019 that resulted in increased emergency response capabilities for Rangeley and surrounding communities through Life Flight of Maine.

The Sugarloaf Regional Airport and the seaplane base on Rangeley Lake also service the Rangeley Lakes Region. Float plane tours are offered out of the Rangeley Lake seaplane base by Acadian Seaplanes.

## **REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLANS**

The 2021 Androscoggin Valley Council of Governments Regional Strategic Transportation Investments Plan identified the following project which could provide opportunities for Rangeley:

- Provide bicycle-pedestrian infrastructure and facilities, where appropriate, as roads are upgraded.

## **MAINEDOT PLANS**

MaineDOT maintains several transportation plans including the *Statewide Long-Range Transportation Plan*, the *Statewide Transportation Improvement Program*, the *Statewide Active Transportation Plan*, and the capital/maintenance Work Plan.

The Long-Range Transportation Plan is a 20-year policy-based transportation plan. The Plan identifies MaineDOT's vision for the future and provides guidance and insight into the necessary strategies to meet the state's transportation goals over the next 20 to 30 years. MaineDOT has identified the following eight key trends that are anticipated to impact transportation in the years ahead: Maine's aging population, labor market/industry, global trade/freight movement, urbanization/shifting population, tourism, technology, safety, and climate.

The Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) is a four-year, federally required, transportation capital improvement program. The STIP includes the Transportation Improvement Programs (TIPs) of Maine's four Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPOs). The STIP identifies federal funding by year for scheduled transportation projects that receive FHWA or FTA funding and includes capital projects identified in MaineDOT's three-year Work Plan.

MaineDOT's Work Plan outlines the capital and maintenance projects that the department plans to perform over the next three years. The Work Plan is calendar year-based and includes all MaineDOT work activities. The majority of the capital projects listed in the Work Plan are eligible for FHWA and FTA funding. MaineDOT's current work plan can be found at <https://www.maine.gov/mdot/projects/workplan/>.

## ***LOOKING TO THE FUTURE***

Maintaining and expanding transportation infrastructure is an ongoing responsibility of any community. As the community moves forward, more alternative forms of transportation are expected to increase, including more trails for walking, hiking, and biking for both transportation, recreation, and exercise; and public transportation options for those that can't drive or do not have a vehicle. The airport is an important resource to maintain and expand for public safety, delivery of goods, and visitor and resident transportation. The following policies will guide transportation improvements and investments over the cycle of this Plan:

- a. Prioritize community and regional needs associated with safe, efficient, and optimal use of transportation systems.
- b. Safely and efficiently preserve or improve the transportation system.
- c. Promote public health, protect natural and cultural resources, and enhance livability by managing land use in ways that maximize the efficiency of the transportation system and minimize increases in vehicle miles traveled.

- d. Meet the diverse transportation needs of residents (including children, the elderly, and people with disabilities) and through-travelers by providing a safe, efficient, and adequate transportation network for all types of users (motor vehicles, pedestrians, bicyclists).
- e. Promote fiscal prudence by maximizing the efficiency of the state or state-aid highway network.
- f. Plan for, finance, and develop an efficient system of public facilities and services to accommodate anticipated growth and economic development.

## ***TRANSPORTATION***

**GOAL: To plan for, finance and develop an efficient system of public facilities and services to accommodate anticipated growth and economic development.**

### **IDEAS TO CONSIDER:**

**Update a prioritized improvement, maintenance, and repair plan for the community's transportation network.**

**Initiate and/or actively participate in regional and state transportation efforts to improve road conditions and road safety.**

**Maintain, enact, or amend local ordinances as appropriate to address the following:**

1. Management regulations, and state traffic permitting regulations for large developments;
2. Standards for subdivisions and for public and private roads as appropriate to foster transportation efficient growth patterns and provide for future street and transit connections; and
3. Amending the clustering provisions of CH 38, to provide incentives for shorter road lengths, more open space and trail connections when possible.

**Continue to implement the recommendations of the *Downtown Revitalization Plan* as appropriate, by means such as:**

1. Bicycle and pedestrian improvements in a phased approach in Rangeley and Oquossoc Villages
  - a. Coordinating with other vehicular infrastructure and streetscape elements (trees, lighting, etc.) from a "Complete Streets" approach.
  - b. Considering a variety of funding source such as grants, inclusion in the capital budget, TIF funds, public/private partnerships, etc., to fund projects.
  - c. Maintaining consistency with MaineDOT and ADA policies and regulations.
  - d. Starting at the center of the villages and working outward to connect regional trail systems.
  - e. Developing requirements of individual commercial property owners to maintain pedestrian pathways and sidewalks in a safe manner immediately in front of their property.
  - f. Developing requirements of individual commercial property owners to build pedestrian pathways and sidewalks in front of their property if identified in the *Downtown Revitalization Plan* during as part of a local review process.
  - g. Developing standards for streetscape improvements for both Rangeley and Oquossoc villages such as sidewalks, at-grade walkways, bike lanes/shoulders, on-street parking, signage, landscaping, site lighting with full cutoff fixture, site amenities – benches, trash receptacles, etc.
  - h. Support regional cycling interests and coordinate with MaineDOT, the Bicycle Coalition of Maine, etc., on joint funded project opportunities to integrate bike lanes in the Rangeley and Oquossoc villages, and for connections to regional systems.
2. Improving parking in Rangeley and Oquossoc Villages by:
  - a. Revising reducing parking requirements mixed use developments where upper story residents parking needs and lower story commercial / business peak demand need are typically not in conflict.
  - b. Conducting a parking study as a long-term strategy for downtown revitalization after initial phased plan improvements are made, which may, along with changes in the economy and social trends, result in different parking demands than what exists currently.

- c. Acquiring permanent rights / ownership of current Town-leased gravel parking lots and pave the lots to improve demarcation of parking spaces and potential increase in capacity of parking within these lots.
- d. Identifying locations for on-street parking opportunities in Oquossoc Village, which can also serve as a means for traffic calming.
- e. Acquiring new properties for paved parking lots.
- f. Replacing on-street parking in Rangeley Village with off-street parking, where feasible, to allow for greater streetscape improvement space. This should be considered in a coordinated effort with potential opportunities to increase Town-owned off-street parking lots at other strategic locations throughout the villages (e.g., vacant lots or at a location closer to the IGA) and the Town should dedicate capital reserves for proactive purchase of such potential properties as they become available.
- g. Requiring parking to be sited behind buildings on Main Street, Stratton Road, Rumford Road, and Carry Road for new development ordinance standards.

## 8. *NATURAL AND WATER RESOURCES*

### Reference Maps included Appendix A

1. Primary Map 1 – Water Resources and Riparian Habitats
2. Primary Map 2 – High Value Plant and Animal Habitats
3. Primary Map 3 – Undeveloped Habitat Blocks and Connectors and Conserved Lands
4. Natural Resources Co-occurrence
5. Rangeley Water Resources
6. Rangeley Constraints
7. Scenic Resources

### **BACKGROUND**

The Rangeley Lakes Region is a place of diverse and interconnected ecosystems that have provided an economic foundation for the region’s inhabitants since the glaciers receded more than 10,000 years ago. With increasing threats from a changing climate, land transfers, and the legacy of historic land management practices, we must work to conserve, restore, and steward these important resources.

Rangeley’s economy is based on businesses that rely on the region’s lakes, ponds, and streams; world-class fisheries; wildlife; mountains; forests; and the recreation they provide. These natural resources comprise the primary reason that people live here, own second homes, and visit the area year-round. By preserving the quality of these assets, the Town of Rangeley will preserve its future.

### **WATER**

The Region’s lakes and rivers form the headwaters of the Androscoggin River. The big lakes—Aziscohos, Parmechenee, Richardson, Cupsuptic, Mooselookmeguntic, and Rangeley—are managed by Brookfield Renewable Partners in accordance with a Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) licensing agreement that protects the interests of over 20 user groups.

There are 11 great ponds located wholly or partially in the Town of Rangeley. They cover approximately 25% of the Town’s total surface area and properties on their shores generate over 78% of the tax base.

It will take intentional and consistent effort of the entire community to protect the region’s water bodies from non-point source pollution, invasive aquatic species, habitat fragmentation, and degradation. To help coordinate this effort and educate the public, Rangeley Lakes Heritage Trust (RLHT) implements its award-winning *Headwaters Lake Protection* program.

Created in 1998, and supported in part by the Town, RLHT’s program utilizes its staff and more than 80 volunteers to 1) monitor water clarity and chemistry; 2) teach boaters how to inspect

their watercraft, trailers, anchors, and fishing gear for invasive species; and 3) survey more than 100 miles of shoreline on 10 or more water bodies to identify and document all the plant species they find. If an invasive aquatic species is found, RLHT will work with the Town, Maine Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), the University of Maine—Farmington (UMF), and several regional organizations to implement a cost-effective management plan to address the invasive infestation with minimal ecological impacts.

In 2022, RLHT began river restoration efforts in the Kennebago watershed to ensure that resilient, self-sustaining populations of brook trout will persist in the face of climate change. During the early log driving days in the region, starting around 1800, many rivers and tributaries were heavily manipulated. It was common practice at the time to straighten and reroute rivers and remove structures such as log jams and boulders. These practices made rivers more conducive to log driving but severely degraded the aquatic ecosystems present.

An extensive network of logging roads serves as a critical route to transport sustainable forest products that we all rely on. These roads cross rivers and tributaries at hundreds of locations across the region and often are barriers to aquatic organism passage, fragmenting critical habitat. Following recommendations based on advanced science, RLHT works to enhance in-stream habitat by replacing culverts with open-bottomed bridges; strategically adding large wood into rivers and streams; establishing strong riparian (adjacent to, or living on, the bank of a natural watercourse or waterbody) buffers; and restoring the natural characteristics of rivers. These river restoration techniques also reduce the impact from floods, maintain excellent water quality, improve infrastructure, and benefit many aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems. It will take continued determination and collaboration from the community, state agencies, federal agencies, conservation organizations, and landowners to bolster climate resiliency for the Rangeley Lakes region's aquatic ecosystems.

## **SURFACE WATERS**

- **Kennebago River:** The Kennebago is the major river draining to Cupsuptic and Mooselookmeguntic lakes, with headwaters located at the border with Quebec. Long Pond, Little Kennebago, and Kennebago lakes are found along the river, all formed by dams. The Kennebago is classified AA (last tested in 2018) under the State of Maine surface water classification system (38 M.R.S. §§ 464(2), 464(2-A), and 464(3)). This is the highest classification and is applied to waters which are outstanding natural resources that should be preserved because of their ecological, social, scenic, and recreational importance. The Kennebago is the primary nursery area for Cupsuptic/Mooselookmeguntic salmon and provides a famous salmon and trout fishery. The portion of the River in Rangeley is also designed as an Outstanding River Segment under MRSA 38 §480-P.
- **Rangeley River:** The Rangeley River, flowing northward from the northwest corner of

Rangeley Lake, drains an area of 100 square miles and is known for its quality salmon and trout fishing. It has a water quality classification of A (last tested 2023). Though only 1.1 miles in length, the waterway is heavily used by fishermen seeking wild salmon and brook trout.

- **Cloutman Pond Outlet:** Flowing some 2,000 from Cloutman Pond to the Kennebag River, this outlet has a water quality classification of A.
- **Dodge Pond Stream:** This stream flows through a series of logans/wetlands in northeastern Rangeley to Round Pond, Dodge Pond on into Hunter Cove at Rangeley Lake. In February 2019, Maine DEP classified this pond as “threatened.”
- **Gull Pond Inlet:** A portion of one of the inlets of Gull Pond located in Dallas Plantation is in Rangeley. In 2017, the DEP categorized its water quality as moderately-sensitive.
- **Hatchery Brook:** The brook is the outlet of Ross Pond and flows some 6,000 feet to City Cove. No recent water quality assessment was available.
- **Kamankeag Brook:** Flowing from Kamankeag Pond in Davis, this brook flows for approximately 300 feet through Rangeley before reaching the Kennebag River No recent water quality assessment was available.
- **Lost Logan Brook:** Lost Logan Brook flows from wetland areas in north central Rangeley to Dodge Pond Stream. No recent water quality assessment was available.
- **Nutting Stream:** This waterway flows from Nutting Pond through Hayno Bog to Smith Cove at Rangeley Lake. Its length is approximately three miles. No recent water quality assessment was available.
- **Quimby Brook:** This brook flows from Quimby Pond to Hunter Cove. No recent water quality assessment was available.
- **Whetstone Brook:** Flows to the Kennebag River. No recent water quality assessment was available.
- **Cloutman and Ross ponds:** These ponds are small, 20 and 26 acres respectively. In 2017, the DEP categorized their water quality as moderately-sensitive.
- **Dodge Pond:** Dodge Pond is a 214-acre water body whose southern end abuts Routes 4 and 16 approximately halfway between Rangeley and Oquossoc villages. Coldwater game fish are found in Dodge Pond. Dodge Pond is on the 2023 DEP list of Threatened Lakes and is considered to be “sensitive.”

For the DEP, classification as “sensitive” indicates that vulnerability modeling predicts the number of years for the lake’s phosphorus concentration to increase by 1 ppb to be 25 years or fewer. The vulnerability model predicts changes in lake phosphorus concentration using watershed growth projections to estimate changes in phosphorus loading and the 1976 version of Vollenweider’s lake model to convert load to concentration. The model compensates for the influence of upstream lakes. If these sensitive lakes were determined to

have watershed threats, they were then added to the priority list.

- **Haley Pond:** Located adjacent to Rangeley Village, Haley Pond covers 164 acres with a maximum depth of 23 feet. Before implementing the spray irrigation of treated wastewater, Haley Pond received treated wastewater from the Rangeley Sewage Treatment Plant. In the past there were algae blooms on the pond, due in part to discharge of treated wastewater. In 2017, the DEP categorized the water quality at Haley Pond as moderately-sensitive. Haley Pond was previously listed on the Maine Nonpoint Source Priority Watershed Program. However, in 2023, the Pond is no longer on that list
- **Loon Lake:** Approximately one-third of Loon Lake is located within Rangeley, with its remainder lying in Dallas Plantation. Due to its relatively small drainage area, 1.11 square miles, and its slow flushing rate, 0.4 flushes per year, Loon Lake is highly susceptible to water quality degradation. During 1974-76, algae blooms occurred over short time periods indicating nutrient enrichment. Some problem areas were later identified and landowners took steps to correct the situation. More recently, the DEP listed the lake as a low risk for algae blooms.
- **Mooselookmeguntic (Cupsuptic) Lake:** Prior to the construction of Upper Dam at the outlet of Mooselookmeguntic Lake in the mid-1800s, Mooselookmeguntic and Cupsuptic were two separate lakes. This dam and others were constructed to manage flows to the Androscoggin River in order to maximize power generation. Construction of Upper Dam raised the level of Mooselookmeguntic by some 14 feet and joining it with Cupsuptic Lake. Mooselookmeguntic is by far the larger of the two lakes, and its water depths are much greater. Approximately 15 percent of the combined 16,615 acres of Cupsuptic and Mooselookmeguntic Lakes are actually within Rangeley's borders. The lakes are an important natural resource and asset. The Maine DEP's 2024 Integrated Water Quality Report lists this lake as a Class AA.
- **Quimby Pond:** A shallow 157-acre pond, Quimby is widely recognized for its quality brook trout fishery. It has many springs that allow trout to survive the summer temperatures of the Pond. Water quality monitoring data has been collected since 1979. In 2023 the Maine DEP classified this pond as "threatened" because it is considered "sensitive." For the DEP, classification as "sensitive" indicates that vulnerability modeling predicts the number of years for the lake's phosphorus concentration to increase by 1 ppb to be 25 years or fewer. The vulnerability model predicts changes in lake phosphorus concentration using watershed growth projections to estimate changes in phosphorus loading and the 1976 version of Vollenweider's lake model to convert load to concentration. The model compensates for the influence of upstream lakes. If these sensitive lakes were determined to have watershed threats, they were then added to the priority list.
- **Rangeley Lake:** Approximately two-thirds of the Town's total surface waters are found in Rangeley Lake. Covering some 6,000 acres, the lake is widely recognized for its exceptional

coldwater sport fishery. The Lake is considered a non-colored lake (average color 15 SPU) with an average SDT of 16.2 feet. Recent dissolved oxygen (DO) profiles show very little DO depletion in deep areas of the lake.

- **Rangeley Lake-Round Pond:** Round Pond, located north of Dodge Pond, has minimal shoreline development. It has had historically good water quality for coldwater fish. Water quality monitoring data has been collected since 1991. The pond is considered a colored lake (average color 39 SPU) with an average SDT of 15.1 feet. The spray irrigation system to dispose its treated wastewater is located in the upper watershed of Round Pond. Maine DEP has stated that due to the spray irrigation system's location well up in the watershed and the large amounts of wetlands which exist between the spray site and lake, it is not expected that the treatment operation will affect the Pond.

Table 1 details the lake and pond characteristics of Rangeley's surface waters.

| Table 1. Lake and Pond Characteristics |                    |                |                 |                |                                       |                           |
|----------------------------------------|--------------------|----------------|-----------------|----------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Body of Water                          | Total Surface Area | Max Depth (ft) | Mean Depth (ft) | Volume (ac-ft) | Direct Drainage Area in Rangeley (ac) | Flushing Rates (per year) |
| Cloutman Pond                          | 20                 | *N/A           | *N/A            | *N/A           | 150                                   | *N/A                      |
| Dodge Pond                             | 214                | 51             | 25              | 4,392          | 1,482                                 | 5.13                      |
| Haley Pond                             | 164                | 23             | 8               | 1,259          | 410                                   | 8.57                      |
| Loon Lake                              | 171                | 50             | 21              | 3,091          | 170                                   | .34                       |
| Mooselookmeguntic/Cupsuptic            | 16,724             | 132            | 60              | 562,451        | 7,509                                 | .09                       |
| Nutting Pond                           | 10                 | *N/A           | *N/A            | *N/A           | 86                                    | *N/A                      |
| Quimby Pond                            | 157                | 12             | 6               | 1,135          | 256                                   | .58                       |
| Rangeley Lake                          | 6,000              | 149            | 60              | 291,219        | 7,702                                 | .39                       |
| Ross Pond                              | 26                 | 8              | 4               | *N/A           | 674                                   | *N/A                      |
| Round Pond                             | 166                | 50             | 20              | 3,100          | 6,844                                 | 7.75                      |

\*Not available. The quality of water in a lake or pond depends on the condition of the land in its watershed. Phosphorus is abundant in nature, but in an undisturbed environment, it is tightly bound by soil and organic matter for eventual use by plants. Natural systems conserve and recycle nutrients and water. Land development changes the natural landscape in ways that alter the normal cycling of phosphorus. The removal of vegetation, smoothing of the land surface, compaction of soils, and creation of impervious surfaces combine to reduce the amount of precipitation stored and retained, dramatically increasing surface runoff. The increased runoff from disturbed land generally carries higher concentrations of phosphorus.

## **WATER CONSERVATION**

To ensure permanent public access to these water bodies, preserve their scenic beauty, and protect their water quality, the RLHT conserves over seven miles of shoreline on Mooselookmeguntic, Cupsuptic, Loon, and Rangeley lakes, and along the Rangeley, Kennebago, and other rivers/streams.

Access to these valuable resources is on private property with permission, public property, or an

easement that allows access. To guarantee continued permission to use private property, those who are accessing must be respectful of the land and be careful to carry out everything they carried in.

The RLHT owns and maintains trails on these shoreline parcels (Hatchery Brook, Hunter Cove, South Bog, and Bonney Point) that are enjoyed by visitors and residents all 12 months of the year. Rangeley Lake State Park has also conserved significant shorefront on Rangeley Lake and provides affordable access including camping, boating, and swimming.

To control phosphorus, the Maine DEP has created a methodology for controlling phosphorous input into lakes. Table 2 details the per-acre allowable phosphorus loading to the various lakes and ponds, the watersheds of which are located in Rangeley.

| <b>Body of Water</b>          | <b>Drainage area in Rangeley (ac)</b> | <b>Area Available for Development (ac)</b> | <b>Growth Factor</b> | <b>Area Likely to be Developed (ac)</b> | <b>Water Quality Category<sup>1</sup></b> | <b>Level of Protection</b> |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| <b>Cloutman Pond</b>          | 150                                   | 140                                        | 0.20                 | 28                                      | mod – sensitive                           | medium                     |
| <b>Dodge Pond</b>             | 1,482                                 | 1,382                                      | 0.25                 | 346                                     | mod-sensitive                             | high                       |
| <b>Gull Pond</b>              | 897                                   | 767                                        | 0.30                 | 230                                     | mod-sensitive                             | high                       |
| <b>Haley Pond</b>             | 410                                   | 360                                        | 0.25                 | 90                                      | mod-sensitive                             | medium                     |
| <b>Loon Lake</b>              | 170                                   | 170                                        | 0.20                 | 34                                      | mod-sensitive                             | high                       |
| <b>Mooselookmeguntic Lake</b> | 7,509                                 | 6,009                                      | 0.25                 | 1,502                                   | mod-sensitive                             | high                       |
| <b>Nutting Pond</b>           | 86                                    | 56                                         | 0.20                 | 11                                      | mod-sensitive                             | medium                     |
| <b>Quimby Pond</b>            | 256                                   | 156                                        | 0.30                 | 95                                      | Poor- restorable                          | high                       |
| <b>Rangeley Lake</b>          | 7,702                                 | 6,932                                      | 0.30                 | 2,080                                   | good                                      | high                       |
| <b>Ross Pond</b>              | 674                                   | 634                                        | 0.15                 | 95                                      | mod-sensitive                             | medium                     |
| <b>Round Pond</b>             | 6,884                                 | 5,844                                      | 0.15                 | 877                                     | mod-sensitive                             | high                       |

**Source:** Maine Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), DEP.<https://www.maine.gov/dep/land/stormwater/stormwaterbmps/vol2/volume%20II%20March%202016.pdf>

<sup>1</sup>Water quality category is an assessment by the Maine DEP of the water quality of a lake.

In addition to reviewing the phosphorus allocation of development under the conditional use permit applications and the subdivision ordinance, other protection measures may be used to protect lakes, rivers, and streams. Important measures to consider include use of buffers around all water bodies, and both temporary and permanent erosion control for all construction and land-disturbance activities.

In Rangeley, the greatest threats to the quality of all surface waters result from 1) non-point sources caused by improper land management practices creating erosion of soil that carries phosphorus in stormwater runoff and 2) failed subsurface wastewater disposal systems. In 2009 the Town enacted a *Shoreland Zoning Ordinance* that complies with the most recent guidelines

adopted by the Board of Environmental Protection. Subdivision and zoning standards include provisions for control of erosion, sediment, and phosphorus; however, water quality would benefit from stronger regulations on stormwater management, phosphorus loading standards, and erosion and sedimentation control. Inspection of site improvements during construction for stormwater management, phosphorus control, and erosion control performed by a qualified engineer can ensure that improvements are made properly. In addition, requiring that site contractors are trained to properly install site features that protect water quality is yet another measure that will help protect the water quality in the region.

Rangeley Lakes Heritage Trust (RLHT) is a leader in water quality protection. It has coordinated a water quality monitoring program for lakes and ponds both in and outside of Rangeley. RLHT has designed an aggressive invasive plant prevention program that is supported through intensive local cooperation.

Through purchase and easements, RLHT has conserved a large amount of land abutting lakes and ponds and/or within their watersheds. These include South Bog, Rangeley River, Hatchery Brook, Bonney Point, Bald Mountain, Hunter Cove Sanctuary, Hunter Cove Uplands, Kennebago Woodlands, and Kennebago Wildlands. The Town, in partnership with the surrounding Plantations, area lake associations, and RLHT members, supports the RLHT *Headwaters Lake Protection Program* to monitor water quality and help protect our lakes from the threat of invasive aquatic plants.

## **GROUNDWATER RESOURCES**

Groundwater is water derived from precipitation that infiltrates the soil, percolates downward, and fills the tiny, numerous spaces in the soil and cracks or fractures in the bedrock below the water table in both sand and gravel as well as bedrock aquifers. These aquifers are a major source of water for wells.

The Maine Geological Survey maps sand and gravel aquifers. In Rangeley, a large sand and gravel aquifer is located in the Kennebago River Valley and is capable of supplying groundwater at a rate between 10 and 50 gallons per minute. See <https://www.maine.gov/dacf/mgs/pubs/digital/aquifers.htm>

## **PUBLIC WATER SYSTEMS**

Drinking water in Rangeley relies primarily on groundwater. The Rangeley Water District provides water to the Village of Rangeley. The Oquossoc Standard Water District provides water to the Village of Oquossoc. Businesses outside of the range of these Districts that have 15 or more connections or serves at least 25 individuals daily at least 60 days out of the year are known as a “public water system.” Both the Districts and the public water systems are subject to regular water quality testing by the Maine Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) to ensure that the water meets federal and state drinking water standards. See 22 MRS, 601

Subchapter I §2605, Subchapter II §2611-2613, 2615 and Subchapter III, §2628.

The Division of Environmental and Community Health within the DHHS oversees “public water systems” in the state, as listed in Table 3 below. While the list identifies the systems as within Rangeley, some may be located in one of the surrounding Plantations. Whether located within Rangeley or a Plantation, they are important area water sources.

| <b>Table 3. Rangeley Area Public Water Systems</b>    |                                                                                 |
|-------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>System</b>                                         | <b>Details</b>                                                                  |
| <b>Rangeley Manor Cottage Association</b>             | (1) Drilled Well 428', (1) 790' into Bedrock @10gpm, both groundwater wells     |
| <b>Bald Mountain Camps<br/>Mooselookmeguntic Lake</b> | Intake surface water                                                            |
| <b>Well Pump Association</b>                          | 225' bedrock well @ 20gpm, groundwater well                                     |
| <b>Rangeley Water District</b>                        | (1) 65' gravel well @350 gpm, (1) 53' gravel @300 gpm                           |
| <b>Rock Pond Condos at<br/>Saddleback</b>             | (1) 300' drilled well @73 gpm, (1) 500' drilled well @17 gpm, groundwater wells |
| <b>Oquossoc Standard Water<br/>System</b>             | (1) 380' drilled well @10 gpm, (1) 449' drilled well @40 gpm, groundwater wells |
| <b>Mid Mountain Lodge</b>                             | 700' bedrock well @2.5 gpm, groundwater well                                    |
| <b>MDOC State Park Rangeley<br/>Campground</b>        | 300' bedrock well@12gpm, groundwater well                                       |
| <b>US Navy Sere School</b>                            | (1) 560' drilled well @11 gpm, (1) 600' drilled well @10gpm, groundwater well   |
| <b>Oquossoc Angling Association</b>                   | 503' drilled well @5.3 gpm, groundwater well                                    |
| <b>MDOC State Park Rangeley<br/>Managers Cabin</b>    | 300' drilled well @6gpm, groundwater well                                       |

Source: Maine Public Water Systems by County

Small businesses and homeowners use individual wells for their water supply. Wells range from shallow dug wells to wells drilled into bedrock. Since 1987, the State requires well-drilling companies to submit information on new wells. This data is found at <https://www.maine.gov/dacf/mgs/pubs/digital/well>. Individual wells are not subject to periodic testing.

Contamination of sand and gravel aquifers and bedrock wells is possible. Common groundwater contaminants include petroleum products, hazardous materials, failing septic systems, and road salt.

Current land use regulations provide minimal protection to groundwater resources. Other than pollution from the railroad era, there are no known non-point or point sources of pollution threatening groundwater supplies. Wellhead protection is a way to regulate by restricting certain land uses within certain distances from a public water system. The State Subdivision Law 30-A MRSA §4403.3.A requires that drinking water suppliers be notified if the subdivision is within a source water protection area.

## **FLOODPLAINS**

A floodplain is the land along a river or shoreline that is covered by water during heavy rainfall.

Under the Federal Insurance Program, the 100-year floodplain is called the flood hazard area. During a flood, water depths in the floodplain may range from less than a foot in some areas to over 10 feet in others. However, regardless of the depth of flooding, all areas of the floodplain are subject to the requirements of the Flood Insurance Program. Floodplains along rivers and streams usually consist of a floodway, where the water flows, and a flood fringe, where stationary water backs up. The floodway will usually include the channel of a river or stream as well as some of the land area adjacent to its banks.

Flooding occurs in the winter and early spring months following heavy rainfall on snow-covered or frozen ground. Major areas of floodplain exist along the Kennebago River, Rangeley River, Quimby Brook, Dodge Pond Stream, and Haley Brook. Most of these floodplains are non-developed, with the exception of the Haley Brook floodplain. As the water surface rises in Haley Pond, floodwater overtops its outlet structure and flows around buildings on Main Street.

Rangeley participates in the National Flood Insurance Program which allows property owners who are located in the 100-year floodplain to purchase flood insurance. The Town has also enacted floodplain management standards and zoned undeveloped portions of the 100-year floodplain to restrict future structure development.

Rangeley's *Floodplain Management Ordinance* is administered and enforced by the Code Enforcement Officer. The effective date for the most recent floodplain maps is 09/08/99.

## **TOPOGRAPHY**

There are two important aspects of topography—relief and slope. Rangeley's local relief, or the difference between the highest and lowest points, is approximately 1,200 feet. The Town's highest elevation is 2,700 feet above sea level atop Ephram Ridge and drops to 1,480 feet in Oquossoc.

Slope, or the amount of rise and fall of the earth's surface in a given horizontal distance, presents limitations to various land activities including development and forestry. Generally, as slopes become steep, construction and other land-use activities are more difficult and the potential for environmental degradation increases. Areas with greater than 20 percent slope generally require more complex engineering solutions, thus increasing the cost of construction. Approximately 20 percent of Rangeley's land area has slopes in excess of 20 percent. The majority of these steeper slopes are located on the slopes of Bald Mountain and in northwestern Rangeley.

## **SOILS**

The characteristics of soil should be a primary factor in determining where construction happens. Land-use activities which occur on soils unsuitable for the proposed use will face increased costs associated with development, construction, and annual maintenance, and may also result in environmental degradation.

Soil mapping indicates the primary soils in Rangeley are Thorndike, Dixmont, Bangor, and Berkshire. These soils are generally stony. Major limitations to most land-use activities are depth

to bedrock and high water tables.

## **WETLANDS**

Wetlands are important natural resources for several reasons. They are necessary for ecological functions such as shoreline stabilization, water storage for flood control, recharging groundwater supplies, and natural treatment of contaminated wastewaters. In addition, wetlands provide habitat for many species of game and non-game wildlife. Wetlands are characterized by wetland hydrology, soil types, and hydrophytes (wetland plants), which are used in wetland identification.

The U.S. Department of Interior has identified numerous small wetland areas in the lowland areas, and larger wetlands associated with the Gile, Long, Yorks Logan, Lost Logan, and a major system associated with the Kennebago River.

Under the Shoreland Zoning Law, open freshwater wetlands of 10 acres or more require shoreland zoning. There are 16 wetland areas in Rangeley that require zoning under the Shoreland Zoning Law.

Wetlands serve different functions, and some serve more than one. Wetland functional use in Rangeley has been identified and mapped. These functions include runoff, floodflow alteration, erosion control, sediment retention, plant and animal habitat, finfish habitat, and cultural value. Wetlands are important natural features in Rangeley.

## **WILDLIFE**

Wildlife should be considered a natural resource similar to surface waters or forest land. Our wildlife species are a product of the land and thus are directly dependent on the land base for habitat. Although there are many types of habitats important to our numerous species, there are three which are considered critical: 1) water resources and riparian habitats; 2) essential and significant wildlife habitats; and 3) large undeveloped habitat blocks.

In addition to providing nesting and feeding habitat for waterfowl and other birds, wetlands are used in varying degrees by fish, beaver, muskrats, mink, otter, raccoon, moose, and deer. Each wetland type features different plant, fish, and wildlife associations. Eleven wetland areas in Rangeley have been rated by the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife (DIFW) as having high or moderate waterfowl and wading habitat value. For wetlands, riparian habitat is the transitional zone between open water or wetlands and dry or upland habitats. It includes the banks and shores of streams, rivers, and ponds, as well as the upland edge of wetlands. Land adjacent to these areas provides travel lanes for numerous wildlife species. Buffer strips along waterways provide adequate cover for wildlife movement, as well as maintenance of water temperatures critical to fish survival. There is a great deal of riparian habitat in Rangeley.

While deer range freely over most of their habitat during spring, summer, and fall, deep snow cover (over 18 inches) forces these animals to seek out areas which provide protection from deep snow and wind. These areas—commonly known as deer yards or deer wintering areas—may

vary from year to year or within a given year, but most are traditional in the sense that they are used by the animals year after year. The Maine DIFW has mapped 12 deer wintering areas in Rangeley, which cover significant portions of the Town. Except for those areas that fall under shoreland zoning, there are currently no local regulations or programs to maintain their value.

Large undeveloped habitat blocks are relatively unbroken areas that include forest, grassland, agricultural land, and wetlands. “Unbroken” indicates the habitat is crossed by few roads and features relatively little development and human habitation. There are two types of undeveloped habitat blocks in Rangeley. The first are forest blocks that are less than 300 feet away from other non-forested habitat or less than 500 acres in area. These blocks contain a greater edge-to-interior habitat ratio. The second type is forested blocks greater than 300 feet from other non-forested habitat and those greater than 500 acres in size. Both types of undeveloped habitat blocks are needed by animals with large home ranges such as bear, bobcat, fisher, and moose.

Conserving large contiguous tracts of land is critical to the long-term viability of the Rangeley Lakes Region’s wildlife. Connected blocks of forest serve as important routes allowing for species migration, adaptation to climate change, and maintenance of genetic diversity. The Rangeley Region is located within the 10.5-million-acre Northern Forest Block, a *Globally Important Bird Area* designated by the Audubon Society. Rangeley is also located in the heart of one of the largest intact mixed-temperate forests on earth. The landscape here provides critical habitat for many migratory neotropical bird species and has been dubbed the “baby bird factory” of North America.

The undeveloped area north of Route 4 is part of a very large (over 32,000 acres) wildlife habitat block that extends into Davis, Lang, and Lower Cupsuptic. A second large undeveloped block of more than 1,900 acres is found in the Bald Mountain area.

While these critical areas meet the specific needs of certain wildlife species and are necessary for survival, they alone cannot support adequate populations of deer and other wildlife. A variety of habitat types ranging from open field to mature timber are necessary to meet the habitat requirements of most wildlife species throughout the year. Since different species have different requirements of home ranges, loss of habitat will affect each in different ways—from loss of individual nesting and feeding sites to disruption of existing travel patterns.

Generally, loss of habitat does not have an immediate negative impact on specific populations; however, the cumulative loss reduces the capacity of an area to maintain and sustain viable wildlife population.

## **FISHERIES**

The cold, clean waters in the Rangeley Lakes Region support world-class brook trout and landlocked salmon fisheries. Anglers and flycasters from around the world travel to Rangeley to catch the region’s legendary brookies and salmon.

It was the fisheries resource, specifically arctic char (or blueback trout), brook trout, and

landlocked salmon fishing, that began the tourism and recreation industry in Rangeley in the mid-1800s. The Oquossoc Angling Association was formed to bring "sports" to the area. The Association and other clubs were responsible for stocking both landlocked salmon and brook trout. A state hatchery was established at Rangeley around 1900. While current-day anglers may dream of the renowned fishing available in the late 1800s and 1900s, the region continues to provide an outstanding sport fishery for wild brook trout and landlocked salmon.

The Rangeley Lakes Region's wild brook trout fishery is a unique and irreplaceable resource. Brook trout are an indicator species representing excellent water quality and coldwater habitat. It is of utmost importance to foster climate resilience within Maine's Western mountains. The native brook trout range has been reduced by 90% due to a variety of factors including pollution, water quality, development, introduction of invasive aquatic species, habitat fragmentation degradation, and climate change.

Maine supports the last stronghold of native brook trout in the U.S. and the Kennebago and Magalloway watersheds have been identified as two of the most resilient watersheds in the state. Through land conservation, habitat restoration, sustainable forestry practices, and facilitating stream connectivity, we can ensure that healthy, fishable populations of brook trout thrive in the Rangeley Lakes Region for future generations.

The Town's two major lakes, Rangeley and Mooselookmeguntic, are cold, deep-water lakes managed for brook trout and landlocked salmon. Summer water temperatures, dissolved oxygen concentration, and other habitat characteristics are ideal for coldwater fisheries. These two lakes are managed by the DIFW and monitored by season-long creel surveys and aerial angler counts. In Mooselookmeguntic, recent more liberal salmon fishing rules and educational efforts have resulted in improved growth rates.

The Kennebago River—originating from a cluster of ponds in Seven Ponds Township—flows into Cupsuptic Lake, which joins Mooselookmeguntic. The Kennebago is well known as a significant riverine fishery and is an important spawning and nursery tributary to Cupsuptic and Mooselookmeguntic lakes. The Rangeley River, flowing northward from the northwest corner of Rangeley Lake, drains an area of 100 square miles and is well known for its quality salmon and trout fishing. Although only 1.1 miles in length, this waterway is heavily used by fishermen in summer and fall.

The smaller waters in Rangeley include Quimby Pond, Dodge Pond, Gull Pond, Kamankeag Pond, Loon Lake, Nutting Pond, and Ross Pond. These are also important brook trout fishing areas, as are most brooks and streams including Hatchery Brook and Quimby Brook.

### **HIGH-VALUE PLANT AND ANIMAL HABITATS**

The *Beginning with Habitat* program has compiled data and mapped Maine's high-value plant and animal species and their habitats. The species and habitats have been identified by the State

of Maine as having a status of endangered, threatened, or of special concern. In Rangeley, the Northern Wild Comfrey has been identified. This endangered plant is a perennial herb with a hairy stem and large clasping leaves. It has been documented in only 11 towns in Maine. Bald Eagle and Canada Whiteface are considered species of special concern and have been documented in Rangeley.

### **LOCAL AND REGIONAL SIGNIFICANT NATURAL AREAS**

Several unique natural areas exist in Rangeley. These areas contribute to the ambiance of the Town and include the following:

- **Bugle Cove Boulder Field:** A strip approximately 200 feet wide that once was the outlet of Rangeley Lake and connected Rangeley and Mooselookmeguntic lakes.
- **Lost Logan:** This freshwater, marshy type pond located in northeast Rangeley contains rich flora of wild orchids, pitcher plants, and water mosses.
- **Fishery:** The coldwater sport fishery is a significant natural resource.

### **SCENIC RESOURCES**

The topography, surface waters, and other natural features of Rangeley and the region provide some of the most striking views in Maine. Residents and visitors consistently cite the area's many vistas as one of its greatest assets.

The Comprehensive Planning Committee for the Town's 2012 Plan identified scenic views in Rangeley. While there are many, the Committee identified what it believes to be the most noteworthy. It devised a rating system to score each scenic view: three variables were considered and a scoring system of 1 to 3 points was assigned for each variable, with 1 point being the lowest and 3 points, the highest. The criteria and scoring were as follows:

**Distance of Vista or View Shed:** This variable considers how far in distance that a vista can be viewed. It assumes that a view or vista which is blocked only a few feet from the observer has relatively less value than a view that can be seen for miles. SCORING: 1 point—Can be seen in immediate foreground; 2 points—Can be seen up to one mile away; 3 points—Can be seen farther away than one mile

**Uniqueness:** Although not always impressive, the features in the landscape which are unique contribute "something special" to that landscape. SCORING: 1 point—Contains no unique qualities; 2 points—Contains some rare characteristics; 3 points—Contains impressive/unique qualities such as mountains, views of water, etc.

**Accessibility:** A given vista is less important if there no public access point, or if access is difficult. SCORING: 1 point—Access is difficult such as along "path" or trail; 2 points—Accessible via public road; 3 points—Accessible via scenic turnout or similar area.

See Table 4 for details about Rangeley’s scenic views and the scores they were given.

| Table 4. Scenic Areas and Views in Rangeley |                                                      |                   |                |                |       |
|---------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|----------------|----------------|-------|
| Number on Map**                             | Location                                             | Distance Viewable | Unique Quality | Ease of Access | Total |
| 1                                           | Routes 4 and 16—top of Cemetery Hill                 | 3                 | 3              | 3              | 3     |
| 2                                           | Haines Landing at end of Route 4                     | 3                 | 3              | 3              | 3     |
| 3                                           | Top of Bald Mountain                                 | 3                 | 3              | 3              | 3     |
| 4                                           | Scenic Turnout on Route 4 before Dallas Hill Road    | 3                 | 3              | 3              | 3     |
| 5                                           | Route 4, approaching Rangeley after Dallas Hill Road | 2                 | 2              | 2              | 2     |
| 6                                           | Country Club Inn                                     | 3                 | 3              | 3              | 3     |
| 7                                           | Dallas Hill Road towards Rangeley Lake               | 3                 | 3              | 3              | 3     |
| 8                                           | Top of Spotted Mountain                              | 3                 | 3              | 3              | 3     |
| 9                                           | Route 4 Wes—Dodge Pond Hill                          | 3                 | 2.5            | 3              | 2.5   |
| 10                                          | 11th Tee Mingo Springs Golf Course                   | 3                 | 2.5            | 3              | 2.5   |
| 11                                          | Route 16, from west—before junction with Route 4     | 2.5               | 2              | 2.5            | 2     |
| 12                                          | Lakeside Park                                        | 3                 | 2              | 3              | 2     |
| 13                                          | Bridge across Hunter Cove—Mingo Loop Road            | 3                 | 2              | 3              | 2     |

Source: Town of Rangeley Comprehensive Plan Committee, 1996, 2011, and 2025

\*\* Numbers correspond to numbers on Scenic Area and View Map

## ***LOOKING TO THE FUTURE***

In order to thrive, Rangeley depends on its cold, clean waters, working forests, diverse wildlife and fisheries habitat, dark skies, and access for outdoor recreation. We must steward this inheritance, so our economy and quality of life will prosper. Looking forward, local regulations, public education, public infrastructure, and training are suggested to meet the following policies:

- a. Protect current and potential drinking water sources;
- b. Protect significant surface water resources from pollution and improve water quality where needed;
- c. Protect water resources in growth areas while promoting more intensive development in those areas;
- d. Minimize pollution discharges by upgrading existing public sewer systems and wastewater treatment facilities;
- e. Cooperate with neighboring communities and regional/local advocacy groups to protect water resources;
- f. Conserve critical natural resources in the community; and
- g. Coordinate with regional and state resource agencies and organizations to protect shared critical natural resources.

## ***NATURAL AND WATER RESOURCES***

### **GOALS:**

- 1. To protect the quality and manage the quantity of the State's water resources, including lakes, aquifers, great ponds, estuaries, rivers, and coastal areas; and**
- 2. To protect the State's other critical natural resources, including without limitation: wetlands, wildlife and fisheries habitat, shorelands, scenic vistas, and unique natural areas.**

### **IDEAS TO CONSIDER:**

#### **Update amendments to land use ordinances as applicable to:**

1. Incorporate stormwater runoff performance standards consistent with Maine Stormwater Management Law and Maine Stormwater regulations (Title 38 MRSAS420-D and 06-096 CMR 500 and 502);
2. Incorporate low-impact development standards; including Maine Department of Environmental Protection's allocations for allowable levels of phosphorus in lake/pond watersheds;
3. Require development or other land-use activities that occur 1) within the view sheds of high-value vistas or 2) where views of 8 or greater identified in this plan are designed and located so that their impact on the view is minimized to the extent reasonable.
4. Preserve scenic roads and byways—including the Rangeley Lakes Scenic Byway—by maintaining scenic views and vistas where they exist and requiring the retention of natural vegetated areas along the road; maintaining key scenic features such as tree lines and stone walls; and limiting the size of cleared accesses onto these roads where it is appropriate to maintain the character of the roads and byways;
5. Restrict the construction or expansion of telecommunication towers and commercial wind towers in scenic areas with a score of 8 or higher;
6. Incorporate *Beginning with Habitat* data into the development review process;
7. Require that high-value fisheries and wildlife habitat are recognized and protected during the review of residential and nonresidential development proposals;
8. Incorporate street construction standards relating to culvert size, design, installation, and maintenance so not to impede fish/wildlife passage; and require implementation by the town, its employees, and private contractors;
9. Regulate small wind and commercial wind power projects;
10. Reduce light pollution;
11. Adhere to Floodplain Ordinance as required by state and federal rules; and
12. Adhere to Shoreland Zoning as periodically required by the State.

#### **Create new land use ordinances to:**

1. Protect wetlands and steep slopes, prevent erosion, manage stormwater, and reduce phosphorous in stormwater. Protect critical natural resources such as resource protection areas under shoreland zoning; wetlands of special significance; significant wildlife habitats; deer wintering areas; threatened, endangered, and special concern animal species habitat; significant freshwater fisheries spawning habitat; rare or exemplary communities; areas containing plant species declared to be threatened or endangered; and fragile mountain areas;
2. Protect wellheads for public water supply;
3. Provide adequate riparian buffers regarding timber harvesting and construction. Consider adopting MNRCP riparian habitat management guidelines;

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4. Limit impervious surfaces and lawn areas, and incorporate stormwater quality standards, phosphorous loading standards, and erosion control limiting the amount of nutrients that can be exported from new or expanded residential and nonresidential uses that are in the direct watershed of a lake or pond with a major focus on Rangeley Lake, Dodge Pond, Haley Pond, Loon Lake, Round Pond, and Quimby Pond;</li> <li>5. Protect aquifers by controlling the placement of uses with potential to contaminate the groundwater (quality and quantity) in the vicinity of the Kennebago River Sand and Gravel Aquifer. In developing an ordinance, consider restricting certain land uses, limiting residential development, limiting impervious surfaces, and restricting new commercial extraction operations.</li> <li>6. Require an inspection to determine malfunctions of subsurface wastewater disposal systems in the Shoreland Area by the seller prior to transfer. The provisions of Title 30-A MRSA section 4216.2 may be used as guidance in ordinance development;</li> <li>7. Develop standards for the handling and storing of chemicals, petroleum products, and similar potential groundwater contaminants as part of Town's development review of proposals for nonresidential development; and</li> <li>8. Require a technical review of new commercial construction and subdivisions plans for compliance with standards and technical inspection to ensure construction is done according to the approved plans.</li> </ol> |
| <p><b>Become a Dark Sky Reserve, Park, or Sanctuary; promoting natural darkness; and encouraging tourism activities for viewing the night sky.</b></p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| <p><b>Seek conservation easements or similar methods to maintain significant natural areas.</b></p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| <p><b>Continue to designate areas adjacent to the Kennebago and Rangeley Rivers as resource protection areas and keep development, earth material extraction, and forestry activity strictly controlled.</b></p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| <p><b>Create and disburse educational materials to:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Protect water quality and prevent invasive aquatic species from entering water bodies; and</li> <li>2. Adopt "best management practices" from resources such as the Natural Resource Conservation Service, Cooperative Extension, Soil and Water Conservation District, Maine Forest Service, and/or Small Woodlot Association of Maine</li> </ol>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| <p><b>Train staff and contractors working in the area on:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Best Management Practices (BMPs) to protect water quality water;</li> <li>2. Standards for home and commercial construction; and</li> <li>3. How to stabilize erosion in roadside ditches and manage future road construction activities to minimize erosion and the sedimentation into water resources from stormwater through the use of BMPs.</li> </ol>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |

**Continue to practice and expand water quality monitoring by:**

1. Forming a watershed association for each of the lakes and ponds, developing a watershed management program, and undertaking activities to reduce nutrient export for both new and existing sources. As part of this effort, the Town should seek funding to underwrite the costs of these activities from state/federal sources;
2. Participating in local and regional efforts, including with LUPC and/or its replacement and Rangeley Lakes Heritage Trust to monitor, protect, and, where warranted, improve water quality;
3. Coordinating with the LUPC to assure the compatibility of lake protection levels and allowable phosphorus export per-acre calculations for shared watersheds; and
4. Financially supporting the invasive species education and monitoring program.

**Study the need, service area, cost, and institutional arrangements of a community sewerage system to serve the denser-developed area of Oquossoc Village.**

**Explore creating a semi-annual program for the collection and proper disposal of wastes that are hazardous and/or potential sources of ground or surface water contamination.**

**Support land conservation projects that conserve high-priority aquatic habitats serving important ecological services.**

## 9. *PUBLIC SECTOR: FACILITIES AND CAPACITY*

### **INTRODUCTION**

An important element of the Comprehensive Plan is examination of Rangeley's public facilities and services, including their current day capacities. In addition, future demands regarding the Town's public facilities and services must be addressed. This section presents an analysis of the current demands placed upon existing Town facilities and services. It also determines whether public facility or service system additions and improvements will be needed to adequately meet the demands of the forecasted year-round and seasonal population growth. For details, see Appendix D – Capital Improvements Plan.

### **WATER SYSTEMS**

In 1993, the Rangeley Water District (RWD) acquired the Rangeley Water Company by eminent domain. The District is overseen by an elected board of trustees. In addition to serving Rangeley Village, the District also provides water to portions of Dallas, Rangeley, and Sandy River plantations.

The source of water is two gravel packed wells located in a sand-and-gravel aquifer in Dallas Plantation. The District has approximately 6.5 acres around the wells. In addition, the Land Use Planning Commission has zoned some 440 acres around the wells as an aquifer protection district. Well #1(300 GPM) was developed in 1946 and Well #2 (350 GPD), in 2007. Water pumped from these wells goes to a 500,000-gallon, in-ground concrete reservoir located off Dallas Hill Road in Rangeley. The water is treated with sodium hypochlorite for disinfection and sodium hydroxide to combat corrosion. The system serves most of the Rangeley Village area including but not limited to: Main Street to Loon Lake Road up to the Rangeley Lakes Regional School, Cross Street, Allen Street, Center Street, School Street, Pleasant Street, Lake Street, Pond Street, and High Street. The District is currently dealing with higher-than-wanted levels of iron with periodic flushing of the system. The District does not have any plans to extend the system at this time. Any extension would be at the expense of developers or with grants or in conjunction with road reconstruction projects. The District is currently discussing a combined billing system with the sewer department as a way to improve efficiency and save ratepayers money. In 2024, the District completed a redundancy main line project under Haley Pond Stream that bypasses the Main Street bridge via private property between Lakehouse Road and Richardson Street.

The wells are tested periodically for microbiological contaminants (coliform), inorganics, disinfectants, lead and copper, and residual chlorine. No violations were detected in 2023. In 2024, the *Maine Drinking Water Program* accepted the RWD service line inventory, which did not identify any lead or galvanized waterlines that need replacement.

The District has the capacity to serve anticipated growth over the planning period. Water and sewer billing are currently done separately. The two utilities are researching the impacts of doing

a combined billing.

In 1991 the Oquossoc Standard Water District (OSWD) was formed to provide water to portions of Oquossoc Village. Rangeley Lakes Heritage Trust (RLHT) worked closely with the OSWD and the DEP when the best source for water supply was determined to be on conserved land owned by RLHT along the Rangeley River corridor. The parcel was subject to a conservation easement held by Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife(DIFW) to protect wildlife habitat and recreation. RLHT worked with the Maine DIFW and the Maine Legislature to amend the easement to allow for the installation of the water system while protecting the significant deer wintering habitat and major snowmobile trail.

The cost of constructing the system was approximately \$1.1 million with an annual operating cost of \$40,000. Two drilled bedrock wells (1 – 380’ bedrock well and 1 – 449’ bedrock well) with a yield of 50 GPM provide the water to the system. Storage capacity is 10,000 gallons. The system serves some 20 residential and commercial customers along Route 4 to the Old Ski Way Road, Rangeley Avenue, a portion of Oxford Street, and Marina Road.

The wells are tested periodically for microbiological contaminants (coliform), inorganics, disinfectants, lead and copper, and residual chlorine. No violations were detected in 2022. In 2024, the *Maine Drinking Water Program* accepted the Rangeley Service District service line inventory which didn’t identify any lead or galvanized waterlines that need replacement.

### **PUBLIC SEWER SYSTEM**

The Town of Rangeley operates the Chick Hill Pollution Control Facility which treats sewage collected in Rangeley Village. The Facility uses a non-point discharge process with land application. The treatment system is comprised of three treatment lagoons with a total of 5 million gallons and a storage lagoon with a capacity of 25 million gallons. The collection system is checked periodically with special camera equipment. Images show minimal infiltration of storm water through the structures. After large rain events, however, there can be significant surges in flow which are most likely caused by basement sump pumps discharging into the collection system. After treatment, effluent is sprayed on the spray fields. In the winter months the treated effluent is made into snow from snow guns and allowed to melt in the spring. The system has a design flow of 150,000 gallons per day with a per-day average flow of 122,000 gallons. In 2023 the facility disposed of 30.6 million gallons in the summer spray program and 16 million gallons in the winter spray program. The Chick Hill Wastewater Treatment Facility has additional treatment capacity which allows it to meet the projected residential and commercial growth in the Rangeley Village area.

The collection system is comprised of some seven miles of gravity sewer, 120 manholes, and four pump stations. The system is well maintained; replacement of the existing siphon lines is included in the *Capital Improvements Plan*. Other than that, no major improvements are proposed. Infiltration is relatively low. The collection system serves some 500 accounts that pay

approximately 50% of the system’s operating costs.

Since 2022, septic tank sludge is collected in a frac tank at the Chick Hill Facility and then transferred to a treatment facility in Madison.

Looking to the future (20 years), no major extensions to the system are anticipated. Extensions serving new development can be built to Town standards and with the full cost being paid by the developer.

A Fiscal Sustainability Plan was created in 2023 and is attached in **Appendix B**.

## **EDUCATION**

Rangeley is a member of RSU #78, including the Town of Rangeley, and Dallas, Sandy River, and Rangeley plantations. All students, pre-K and K-12, attend the Rangeley Lakes Regional School in Rangeley. The school was constructed in 1976, and a new high school wing was added in 2017. The indoor space has been updated to be ADA compliance. A portable classroom has been converted to office space so that all students are in the main building. In 2023, a security and safety analysis was completed for the building. The school department is in the process of making the improvements suggested in that study. Total enrollment over the last 20 years has remained at 200 students, although the school is experiencing a slight increase in elementary students over the last few years. The school has the capacity and flexibility to handle increases in enrollment.

In 2024-25, the high school ranked fourth in the state for reading (90%), math (92%), and science proficiency (40%). The school has a nurse who also supports athletic activities, a social worker, behavioral specialist, school therapist, and a school counselor. Curriculum enhancements such as STEAM (science, engineering arts, and math) programming and gifted and talented programs are available. The school coordinates with the business community to offer career education and apprenticeships. A summer “extended year program” is offered to support and advance students with a variety of needs.

The childcare facility under construction on the site in 2024-25 will provide much needed before- and after-school care for younger students and children of school employees. As of 2025, RSU #78 is currently fully staffed; however, a lack of affordable housing makes recruiting new teachers, support staff, and administrators a challenge. The school is serviced by public water and sewer and it appears to have land available to expand the campus to include other public facilities such as a community center and/or affordable employee housing. A study that identifies land available for development is an important first step.

## **POLICE DEPARTMENT**

The Rangeley Police Department is a full-time department, with a chief, patrol sergeant, two patrol officers, and up to five reserve patrol officers. Currently the police department operates on 24-hour, seven-day coverage with a six-hour on-call break per day. In recent years the

department has seen an increase in calls for domestic, drug, mental health, and juvenile-related issues. Dispatching is provided by the Franklin County Regional Communications Center.

The department operates out of two small offices and a closet used for an evidence room, all located in the Rangeley Municipal Building. This space is neither adequate nor secure for police work. In terms of physical space, the department lacks an interview/interrogation room, a secure area for weapons and equipment, suitable office space, and has no sally port or garage space to safely move people from cruisers to interview/interrogation room and to keep cruisers out of inclement weather.

### **EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES**

The Town contracts NorthStar for Emergency Medical Services. NorthStar's Rangeley Base is located at the Municipal/Safety Building. There is a paramedic-level crew at the Rangeley Base 24-hours, seven days per week, and 365 days per year, with a second backup truck available 24/7. There are living quarters at the Safety Building and two bays are used to park ambulances. Overall NorthStar serves 26 towns and 45 unorganized territories from several bases. Rangeley appropriates approximately \$151,300 annually per contract to pay NorthStar. NorthStar responds to approximately 450 calls per year in the Town.

Community paramedicine is an evolving delivery of healthcare, especially in rural areas. Community paramedics can fill gaps in the absence or shortage of primary care physicians. In Maine, community paramedicine is defined as “the practice by an emergency medical services provider primarily in an out-of-hospital setting of providing episodic patient evaluation, advice, and treatment directed at preventing or improving a particular medical condition, within the scope of practice of the emergency medical services provider as specifically requested or directed by a physician.” 32 MRSA§84, sub §4. A community paramedic requires training through an accredited college or university. A 2015 University of Southern Maine evaluation of pilot projects in Maine can be found in *Maine EMS Community Paramedicine Pilot Program Evaluation*, located at [https://www.maine.gov/future/sites/maine.gov.ems/files/inline-files/cp\\_muskie\\_report.pdf](https://www.maine.gov/future/sites/maine.gov.ems/files/inline-files/cp_muskie_report.pdf). This evolving method of delivering healthcare has strong potential for the Rangeley Region.

### **FIRE DEPARTMENT**

The Town is served by a full-time fire chief, two full-time firefighters, and paid volunteer firefighters with stations located in the Municipal/Safety Buildings in Rangeley Village and Oquossoc Village totaling about 24 firefighters. In addition to serving the Town of Rangeley, the department also provides firefighting services for Dallas, Rangeley and Sandy River plantations, and Adamstown, Bowmantown, Lower Cupsuptic, Lynchtown, Oxbow, Parkertown, Parmachenee, Richardson, and Upper Cupsuptic townships, as well as Township C in Oxford County. In Franklin County the department serves Davis and Stetsontown townships, Townships D and E, and portions of Langtown and Redington townships.



Rangeley's Public Safety Building

Currently Rangeley has an ISO rating of 5 out of a possible 10. An ISO rating of 4 is a goal. Lower numbers are better for ISO scores, and the lower the ISO score, the lower the insurance rates are for homeowners and businesses. As a volunteer department, without 24/7 coverage, the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) standards are not being met.

The fire department has equipment reserve accounts that are kept up-to-date so that replacement equipment can be purchased when needed. Major equipment includes an International 750-gallon tanker and pumper, a 2008 Engine 1, 1999 Heavy rescue, 2005, EM 1 truck, 2014, Unit 2, 1991, aerial tower, 2017 SCBA Equip, 2014 Marine 1. A fire station constructed in 1976, located in Oquossoc, is structurally sound but is at capacity. An additional bay would improve its function; however, land acquisition will be necessary for a new bay. The station in Rangeley Village at the Municipal Building was constructed in 2004. It has six bays, two of which are used by NorthStar. With the current use of the station for NorthStar trucks, fire trucks, and other rescue equipment the station is beyond its design capacity. Two or three additional bays are needed, unless other space options are developed. Table 1 details equipment.

In addition facility needs the replacement time for the older fire trucks is here. Firefighting personnel is also becoming a concern as members are aging and recruiting younger volunteers is proving to be challenging. At some point in the future paid firefighters (not volunteers) may be necessary. With the recent and future residential development, consideration will be needed for onsite water sources for fighting fires and/or sprinkler systems in individual residences.

All public safety departments are experiencing growing pains with an increase in calls, a geographically expansive area, and increased space and equipment needs. The scarcity of affordable housing makes employee recruitment difficult.

Staff have discussed current and future needs for the public safety departments and options for the best way to meet those needs. A next step to consider is to complete an architectural,

| Table 1. Rangeley Fire Department Equipment 2025 |        |         |           |
|--------------------------------------------------|--------|---------|-----------|
| Equipment                                        | Make   | Year    | Condition |
| Engine 1                                         | E-One  | 2008    | Good      |
| Engine 2                                         | E-One  | 2005    | Poor      |
| Engine 3                                         | Peirce | 2022    | Excellent |
| Engine 4                                         | E-One  | 2007    | Very Good |
| Tower 1                                          | Peirce | 1994    | Adequate  |
| Rescue 2                                         | KME    | 1999    | Good      |
| Truck 1                                          | Ford   | 2018    | Very Good |
| Truck 2                                          | Ford   | 2012    | Very Good |
| Car 1                                            | Chevy  | 2023    | Excellent |
| Marine 1                                         | ilogic | Unknown | Poor      |
| Marine 2                                         | Lund   | 2002    | Very Good |

Source: Town of Rangeley

structural, and code compliance analysis of the Town Office and public safety buildings to determine their potential for expansion and reconfiguring the public safety building and the Town Office. The analysis might include whether a second story could be added to either building, the cost effectiveness of rehabilitation of the Town Office versus rebuilding, the potential for sleeping quarters or apartments, and so on.

At the same time, the Town should consider an evaluation of the costs and benefits of services provided by the public safety departments. The evaluation should include the levels of services provided such as paramedicine, the value of cross-training between firefighters, law enforcement, EMS, and paramedics, etc.

## **PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT**

Town roads are maintained by the Public Works Department. The Public Works Department staff includes five full-time, year-round employees. The highway foreman also serves as the road commissioner.

All road equipment is stored at the Highway Garage on Robbins Avenue. The building was built in 1972 and is in fair condition. There is no salt/sand storage building.

Table 2 provides a list of the Public Works Department's equipment including its general condition and other information. The Town's *Capital Improvement Plan* replaces equipment annually on a "what is needed most basis."

The Town has prepared a road improvement priority listing for capital planning included in the *Capital Improvements Plan*.

| Table 2. Public Works Department Equipment 2024 |               |      |           |
|-------------------------------------------------|---------------|------|-----------|
| Equipment                                       | Make          | Year | Condition |
| Dump Truck                                      | International | 2012 | Good      |
| Dump Truck                                      | International | 2015 | Very Good |
| Dump Truck                                      | International | 2023 | Excellent |
| Grader                                          | John Deere    | 1990 | Adequate  |
| Bucket Loader                                   | John Deere    | 2016 | Excellent |
| Sidewalk Machine                                | Trackless     | 2018 | Excellent |

Source: Town of Rangeley

## **SOLID WASTE DISPOSAL**

The Town of Rangeley operates a transfer station/recycling center and landfill on the Loon Lake Road. The facility serves Rangeley, Dallas Plantation, Davis Township, and unorganized townships. The facility includes a state-licensed, closed landfill and compost area. Household trash is collected and hauled to a licensed facility twice a week. Recyclables include paper, cardboard, clear and colored glass, tires, aluminum, tin, white goods, HDPE 1-7 rigid, and triangle-numbered plastics. The volunteer recycling rate over the past five years has been approximately 30%.

Over the planning period, solid waste disposal and recycling facilities and programs will be ongoing.

## **CEMETERIES**

The Town owns and maintains four cemeteries. Recently the Evergreen Cemetery was expanded, adding 200 plots and upgrading roads. Computer software is now used for cemetery layout. The cemetery capacity will be adequate for the 10-year planning period.

## **MUNICIPAL ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICES**

Administrative offices are located on School Street in Rangeley Village, in a building adjacent to the Public Safety building. The brick, single-story structure provides office space for the town clerk and deputy clerk, tax collector, parks and recreation department, town manager, assistant town manager, police department, assessing and code enforcement officers. The Town Office includes a meeting room where the selectmen, planning board, and other town boards and commissioners meet. The town meeting and other large public meetings are held at the Rangeley Lakes Regional School.

The Town Office is in good physical condition; however, the available space to carry out administrative functions and document storage is crowded and has been at capacity for several years. As stated earlier, an architectural and structural analysis of the building will allow the Town to make informed decisions on the best way to proceed.

## **ADMINISTRATION**

Rangeley town government is organized according to the general laws of the State of Maine as contained in Title 30-A of the *Maine Revised Statutes Annotated*. The town is governed by its citizens who vote at the annual town meeting and periodically at special town meetings. These meetings provide citizens the opportunity to elect members of the Board of Selectmen and to vote on items of town business such as the budgets, ordinances, Capital Improvement Plans, and Comprehensive Plans. In 2016, the Town switched to a secret ballot form of voting. Instead of an actual meeting with debate, ballots are cast on a specific day via absentee voting. To be eligible, participants must be registered voters in the Town of Rangeley.

Five selectmen are elected on a rotating basis and each serves a three-year term. Selectmen appoint members of the various appointed Boards, Committees, and Commissions.

The Town Manager, who administers the day-to-day operations of town government, is appointed by the Board of Selectmen.

## **BOARDS, COMMITTEES, AND COMMISSIONS**

Rangeley has a number of elected and appointed Boards, Committees, and Commissions, including the following:

|                                  |                                     |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Selectmen                        | Five members                        |
| RSU #78 Board                    | Five members from Rangeley/12 total |
| Budget Committee                 | Seven members                       |
| Park Commission                  | Five members                        |
| Sewer Commission                 | Five members                        |
| Rangeley Water District Trustees | Five members                        |
| Oquossoc Standard Water Company  | Six members                         |
| Appointed Planning Board         | Five members and two alternates     |

|                              |              |
|------------------------------|--------------|
| Ordinance Committee          | Five members |
| Comprehensive Plan Committee | Five members |
| Airport Commission           | Five members |

# *FISCAL CAPACITY AND CAPITAL INVESTMENT PLAN*

## **INTRODUCTION**

A community's fiscal capacity refers to its ability to meet current and future needs through public expenditures. Over the next 10 years, demands will be placed upon Rangeley's fiscal capacity to provide various town services. In addition to today's public services, there may be needs for new or expanded public buildings, facilities and equipment, village infrastructure improvements, recreational facilities, and land acquisition. The Plan will make various recommendations requiring public investment. These recommendations must be considered in light of Rangeley's fiscal capacity.

## **REVENUE**

The largest source of revenue is real estate taxes. In 2014, the total valuation of the town was \$495,075,800, compared to 2024 with a total valuation of \$728,942,800.

In 2024, personal property value was \$7,351,250. Other major consistent sources of revenues are intergovernmental revenues charges for services, excise, and miscellaneous. See Tables 3 and 4 for additional details.

Rangeley's land and building values are driven by second homes and the market demand. While it is difficult to know exactly, non-year-round residents pay approximately 65% of Rangeley's property taxes.

| <b>Table 3. Valuation and Mil Rate, Fiscal Years 2015 -2024 [Numbers Rounded]</b> |                       |                        |                 |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|-----------------|
| <b>Fiscal Year</b>                                                                | <b>Town Valuation</b> | <b>Annual % Change</b> | <b>Mil Rate</b> |
| <b>2015</b>                                                                       | 495,406,700           | --                     | 11.55           |
| <b>2019</b>                                                                       | 507,542,950           | 2.44%                  | 13.50           |
| <b>2020</b>                                                                       | 509,807,200           | 0.45%                  | 13.95           |
| <b>2021</b>                                                                       | 510,700,009           | 0.18%                  | 13.84           |
| <b>2022</b>                                                                       | 515,159,800           | 0.87%                  | 14.83           |
| <b>2023</b>                                                                       | 523,377,500           | 1.60%                  | 15.06           |
| <b>2024</b>                                                                       | 782,942,800           | 49.59%                 | 12.23           |

Source: Town of Rangeley

| <b>Table 4. Municipal Revenue Fiscal Years 2015 -2024 [Amounts Rounded]</b> |             |             |             |             |             |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| <b>FISCAL YEAR</b>                                                          | <b>2015</b> | <b>2019</b> | <b>2020</b> | <b>2022</b> | <b>2024</b> |
| <b>Property taxes</b>                                                       | 5,659,161   | 6,833,816   | 7,178,014   | 7,672,341   | 8,520,216   |
| <b>Excise taxes</b>                                                         | 298,481     | 11,180      | 21,880      | 27,177      | 49,187      |
| <b>Intergovernmental</b>                                                    | 7,943       | 2,600       | -2,600      | 29,157      | 0           |
| <b>State of Maine</b>                                                       | 105,529     | 153,288     | 272,697     | 405,734     | 310,698     |
| <b>Charges for services</b>                                                 | 676,381     | 252,357     | 268,001     | 261,214     | 253,500     |
| <b>Investment income</b>                                                    | 11,181      | 36,631      | 33,403      | 35,967      | 324,380     |
| <b>Miscellaneous</b>                                                        | 40,673      | 443,391     | 439,043     | 624,593     | 563,033     |

Source: Town of Rangeley

## **EXPENDITURES**

Total municipal expenditures vary from year to year. Some increases are the result of capital projects while others reflect needed increases in operational costs. Expenditures for education, public works, general government, and county tax comprise the greatest expenditure amounts for municipalities on an annual basis. See Table 5 for details.

LD1 was abolished by the Legislature in 2024. The Town is no longer required to calculate a municipal commitment growth limit.

| <b>Table 5. Total Municipal Expenditures in Rangeley, Recent Years</b> |             |             |             |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| <b>EXPENSE CATEGORY</b>                                                | <b>YEAR</b> |             |             |
|                                                                        | <b>2019</b> | <b>2023</b> | <b>2024</b> |
| <b>General Government</b>                                              | 646,650     | 700,183     | 800,306     |
| <b>Public Safety</b>                                                   | 683,562     | 793,653     | 813,918     |
| <b>Public Works</b>                                                    | 1,585,188   | 1,969,182   | 1,783,460   |
| <b>Building</b>                                                        | 123,422     | 167,972     | 142,907     |
| <b>Cemeteries</b>                                                      | 38,669      | 33,931      | 33,323      |
| <b>Recreation</b>                                                      | 204,368     | 231,433     | 268,565     |
| <b>General Assistance</b>                                              | 0           | 1,507       | 408         |
| <b>Education</b>                                                       | 2,810,960   | 3,624,140   | 3,955,044   |
| <b>Culture</b>                                                         | 8,625       | 23,871      | 21,150      |
| <b>County Tax</b>                                                      | 667,233     | 729,862     | 1,073,897   |
| <b>Debt Service</b>                                                    | 124,424     | 438,195     | 457,340     |
| <b>Donation Requests</b>                                               | 212,022     | 224,711     | 220,011     |
| <b>Other</b>                                                           | 8,116       | 11,530      | 4,641       |
| <b>Capital Outlay</b>                                                  | 201,660     | 7,000       | 25,539      |
| <b>Program Expenditures</b>                                            | 7,768,166   | 1,231,261   | 618,191     |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                                                           | 15,083,065  | 10,188,431  | 10,218,700  |

**Source: Town of Rangeley**

## **DEBT**

As of June 30, 2011, the Town had an outstanding debt of approximately \$2.8 million. In June , 2024, outstanding debt amounted to \$5,069,370. The amount of debt allowed by a municipality is governed by state law; the law limits a town's outstanding debt to 15% of the town's last full state valuation. This limit is reduced to 7.5% if the debts for schools, sewer, water, and special-district purposes are excluded. Based upon Rangeley's state valuation, the maximum debt under state law would be approximately \$130 million. However, such a debt would increase the tax rate significantly. Nevertheless, should the town need to borrow for public improvements, Rangeley has significant borrowing power.

## **FISCAL CAPACITY**

A community's fiscal capacity is based upon its ability to pay normal municipal operating costs, including education, public works, public safety, and finance capital expenditures, as needed, compared with the ability of the property tax base and other revenue sources to support such expenditures. In considering Rangeley's capacity to fund normal municipal services and capital projects, two areas are important. First, there is a change in valuation. A rate of increase in valuation (because of new development) greater than the rate of inflation would allow increased expenditures to be implemented without a mil rate increase. Second, Rangeley has significant borrowing power based on the maximums established in state law. Future borrowing for capital expenditures should be based upon projected valuation increases and their impact upon taxpayers.

## ***LOOKING TO THE FUTURE***

Rangeley has done a good job providing a high level of public services with existing buildings and facilities. However, to continue to provide those services, new space will be needed. The right amount of new space, how it would be occupied, how departments would be configured, and where it would be located is unknown. How to pay for these new facilities is also unknown. Analyzing the existing building and the delivery of services is a necessary first step. In addition, continued prudent financial management will be needed to get projects done without being a burden on the taxpayers. Prudent fiscal management may include, for example, finding the right balance of TIFs to shelter new revenue and to give new projects a boost; expanding the commercial tax base; working regionally when it will save money; incentivizing new development in areas already served with public water and sewer; and so on. Looking forward, Rangeley should concentrate on the following goals:

- a. Efficiently meeting identified public facilities and service needs;
- b. Providing public facilities and services after thorough evaluation of public buildings and service delivery; and
- c. Incentivizing growth and development in growth areas, and establish a goal of spending 75% of the annual capital improvements budget in growth areas

## ***PUBLIC FACILITIES AND CAPACITY***

### **State of Maine GOAL:**

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

### **IDEAS TO CONSIDER**

**Identify capital improvements needed to maintain or upgrade public services to accommodate anticipated growth and changing demographics by:**

1. Undertaking an architectural, structural, needs, and code compliance analysis of the town Offices and Public Safety building to determine expansion potential;
2. Undertaking an analysis of public safety department service delivery to determine the most efficient way to deliver the best services, opportunities to cross-train employees, or provide new services;
3. Locating new public facilities whenever in growth areas; and
4. Exploring options for greater regional delivery of municipal services.

**Encourage water district/company to coordinate planned service extensions compliant with the *Comprehensive Plan*.**

**Identify and protect future water sources for the Oquossoc Standard Water Company service area and the Rangeley Water District.**

**Prepare amendments to land-use ordinances that would require an assessment of available water supply and provisions for providing a water supply for fire suppression.**

**Develop an assessment of the need, serve area, costs, and institutional arrangements of a community sewerage system to serve the densely developed area of Oquossoc.**

**Continue a formal capital improvement planning process that annually identifies the Town's capital needs, assesses the Town's ability to pay for capital facilities, establishes priorities for the identified needs, and sets out a five-year program for meeting the highest priority needs.**

**Review and prepare amendments as necessary to the *Impact Fee Ordinance***

**When public improvements are made in Rangeley and Oquossoc Villages, include "green" design (energy efficient, minimal storm water export, and landscaping).**

**Periodically review the cost-sharing amounts for services provided to the various Plantations to ensure that the amounts are fair and equitable to the tax burden for the citizens of Rangeley.**

**Continue to explore options to address the unmet urgent medical care needs in Rangeley.**

# ***10. HEALTHCARE***

## **BACKGROUND**

Rangeley is clearly a unique and special place – unlike almost any other in Maine. Its people, community and remoteness are identified as the top 3 characteristics most mentioned in the feedback we’ve received and in the public hearings we have held. Over the next ten years many challenges will need to be addressed to support these recognized attributes, and one of the greatest will be adequate (or better) healthcare options.

While not often included in a community’s comprehensive plan, Rangeley is not a standard town and certainly does not easily fit into a common mold. In a state that is statistically the oldest in the nation, Rangeley stands out as an outlier *almost ten years older than the state average!* It also has one of the state’s highest percentages of part-time homeowners, many of whom are retired and not included in the town’s age numbers.

At the same time, the number of graduates from Rangeley’s excellent regional school have largely plateaued in the past decade. Once they have graduated, these residents, along with other young people, couples and families seeking to live here, have a difficult time with Rangeley’s lack of affordable housing.

Healthcare, as with other sections in the plan, is very much interrelated and over time will either support or inhibit growth. Emergency services are currently delivered by Northstar EMS, along with Rangeley police, fire and rescue. Acute cases can be transferred to Franklin Memorial Hospital, part of the MaineHealth system and more serious cases can be airlifted via Lifeline to Portland. However, with no full-time doctor, a single dentist, a health clinic operating only on weekdays (and during normal business hours), a ‘pharmacy’ limited to the health and beauty aisle in the IGA, and a regional hospital an hour away, Rangeley does not appear to meet the health and wellness needs of the community for the present or the future.

## **TRENDS**

Another fact about Maine, and therefore Rangeley, is that it is widely considered to be the most rural state in the nation, and rural healthcare is in a national crisis today. The shortage of doctors, including primary care physicians and behavioral health specialists, in Western Maine is of significant concern to Rangeley residents. Recent reports have determined that as many as half of rural hospitals in the state are threatened with closure. This occurred in nearby Waterville with the closing of Inland Hospital due to the shortage of medical professionals and reduced payments and reimbursements from the federal government.

While it is unclear how policymakers and the medical industry will address this over the next ten years, Rangeley should be on the leading edge of any solutions. Town governments cannot do this without a collaboration with the private sector through partnerships or grants. The town should also actively reach out to other regional, state and federal government agencies for support. The University of Maine at Farmington is developing healthcare education programs that Rangeley should consider supporting.

Perhaps the most advantageous opportunities exist in combining forces with the surrounding plantations, along with other towns in Western Maine, to create a regional solution. Sharing facilities, staffing, costs and services might be the best way to create a healthier future for residents and visitors.

## **INITIATIVES AND PROGRAMS**

There are programs and initiatives that can be found on the Rural Health Information Hub ([ruralhealthinfo.org](http://ruralhealthinfo.org)), an agency of the federal government, as well as through the Maine Department of Health and Human Services. There are non-profit foundations that are looking to offer financial support for innovative healthcare programs. Rangeley should remain active in any organization targeting the community's health needs and seek to support efforts to locate resources that will help address this critical need.

## **LOOKING INTO THE FUTURE**

Opening soon is the Rangeley Childcare Center. This public/private partnership is a good model for how the community can approach other similar needs. The facility will be a place for children that supports working families and after-school

coverage. Another example at the other stage of life is the HARC and HELP Programs funded by Rangeley Health and Wellness and served mostly by community volunteers. These programs support families with cognitively challenged senior adults allowing caregivers a brief respite during the day while offering fun, educational time for senior clients.

These are just two programs that cover some of the healthcare issues facing Rangeley over the next ten years. Much more could be done should the community decide to aggressively focus on these challenges. Looking forward, the following actions are proposed:

- Consider ways to expand the Rangeley Healthcare Clinic to 24/7 operations.
- Evaluate the opportunities for a pharmacy/drugstore to locate in town
- Seek regional solutions for physician coverage or seek funding for a full-time doctor to reside here
- Actively support grant requests and funding opportunities to improve all aspects of Rangeley's health and wellness needs.
- Consider soliciting organizations to locate a long-term care facility in Rangeley
- Partner with state agencies, the University of Maine at Farmington and Franklin Memorial Hospital to improve medical and behavioral health in Rangeley.

# 11. *C*limate

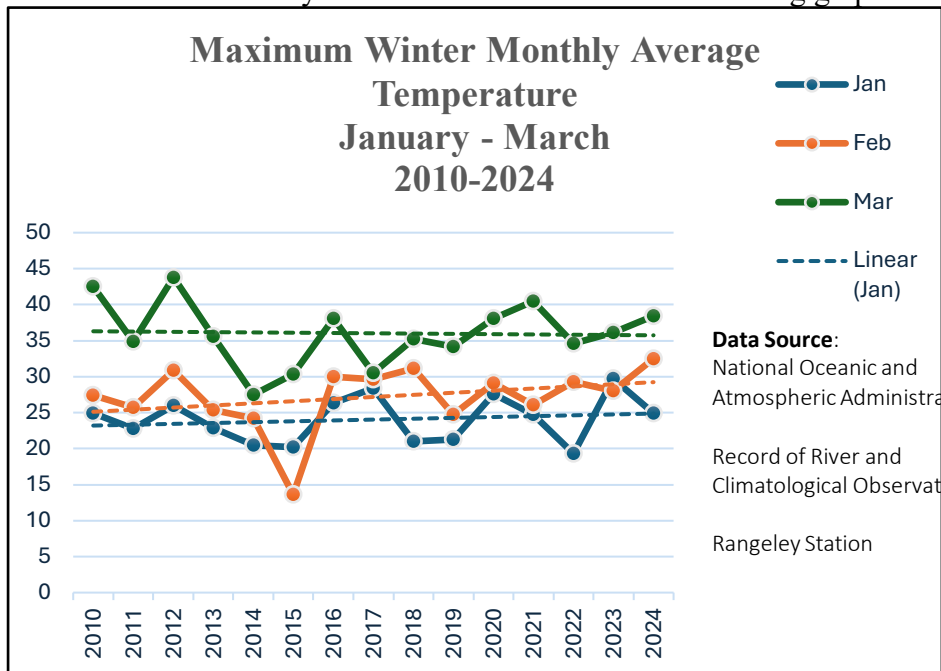
## BACKGROUND

Sustaining Rangeley requires anticipating and adapting to new patterns of weather. Rangeley experienced the damage of extreme weather of wind, rain, snow and ice in December 2023 and again in January 2024 causing multiple road washouts, trees down, flooding, and wide-spread power outages. Statewide the cost of clean-up after that storm was \$90 million. As weather patterns shift, pests that couldn't previously survive are now prevalent such as ticks and spruce budworm. The species of trees and other vegetation may start to change.

To be prepared, an understanding of how to respond and taking action to adapt to changes will make the community more resilient. Being adaptable may range from knowing how to identify harmful ticks, planting different types of vegetation, to increasing culvert sizes and identifying infrastructure and buildings at risk. It can also mean acting to lower energy consumption by insulating our buildings and houses, expanding villages so that walking can be a form of transportation, and investing in renewable energy sources and shifting heating and driving to electricity are a few ways that Rangeley can adapt to changes. To protect our natural resources, maintaining riparian buffers to keep waterways cold, preventing erosion and keeping phosphorus out of the waterbodies are necessary to protect the valuable and fragile natural resources of the area.

## LOCAL WEATHER TRENDS

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) maintains an automated weather station that they monitor at Chick Hill. The following graphs show maximum

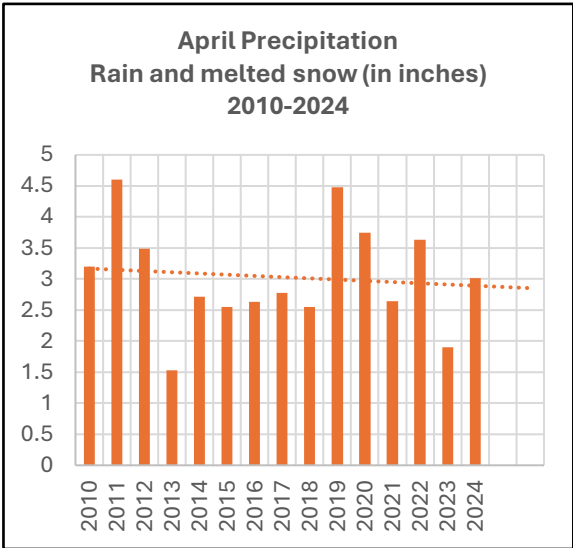
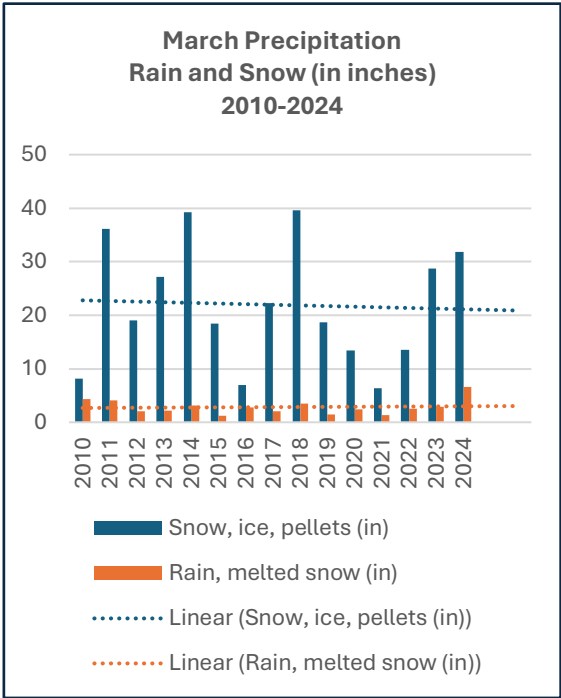
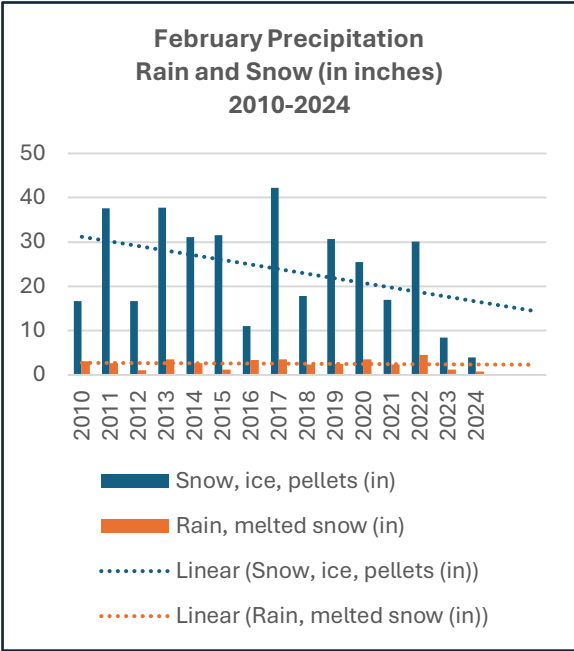
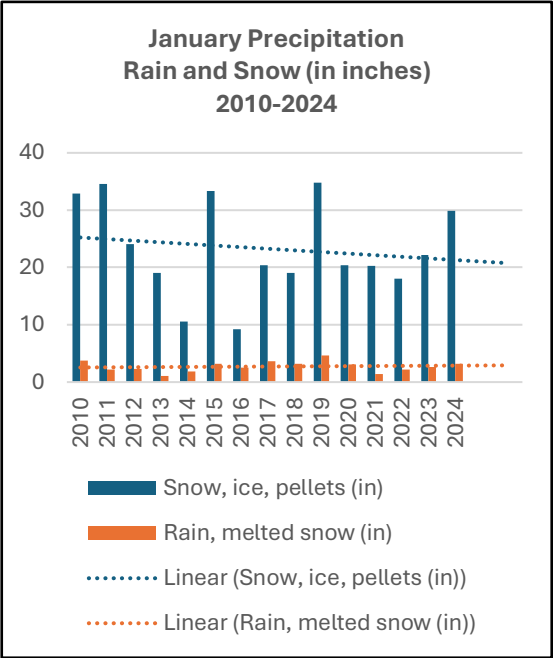


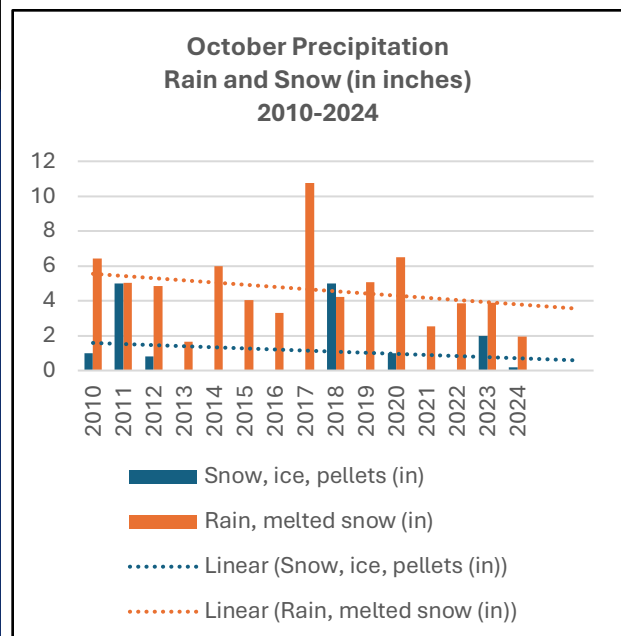
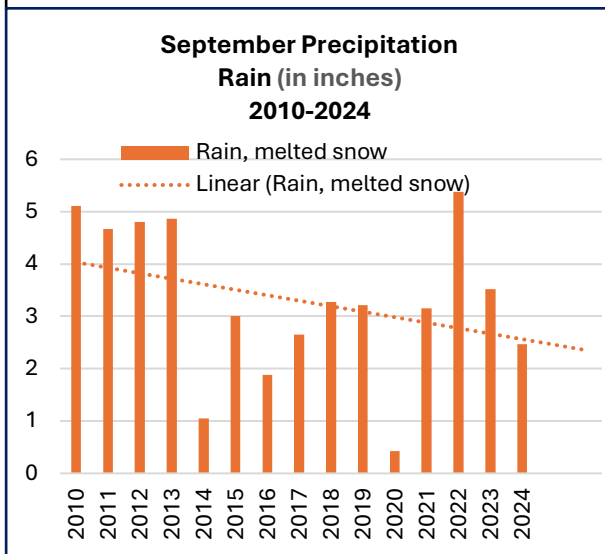
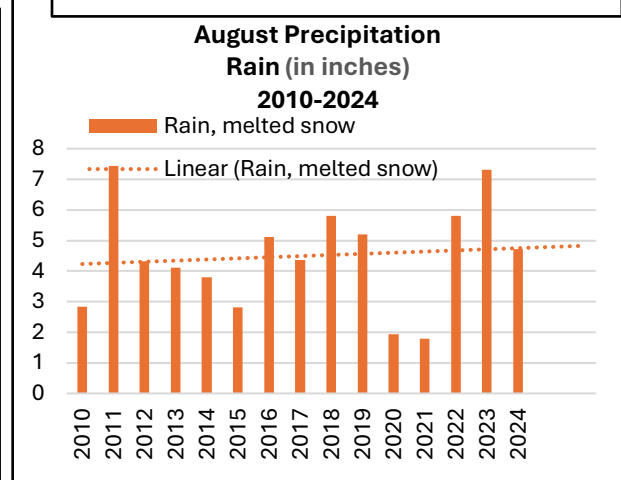
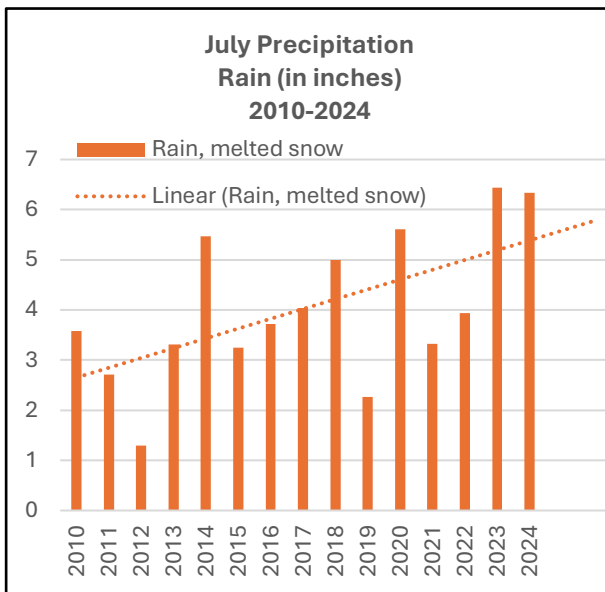
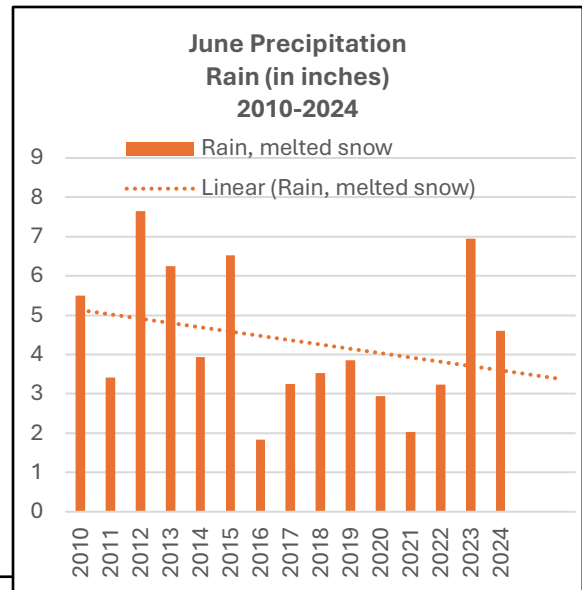
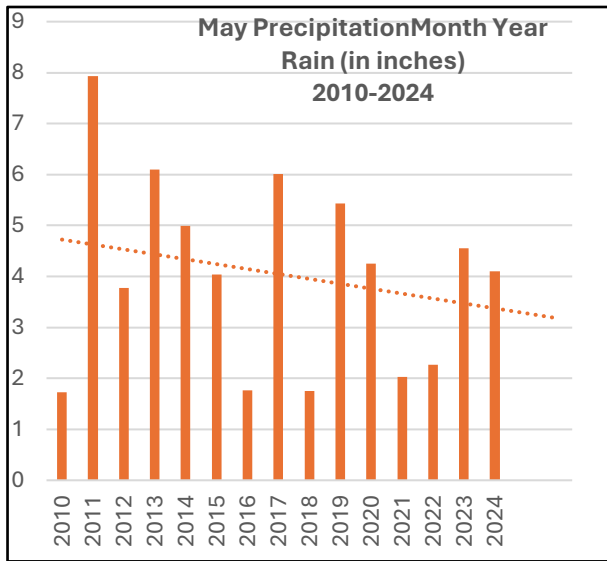
temperature and levels of precipitation from that local weather station.

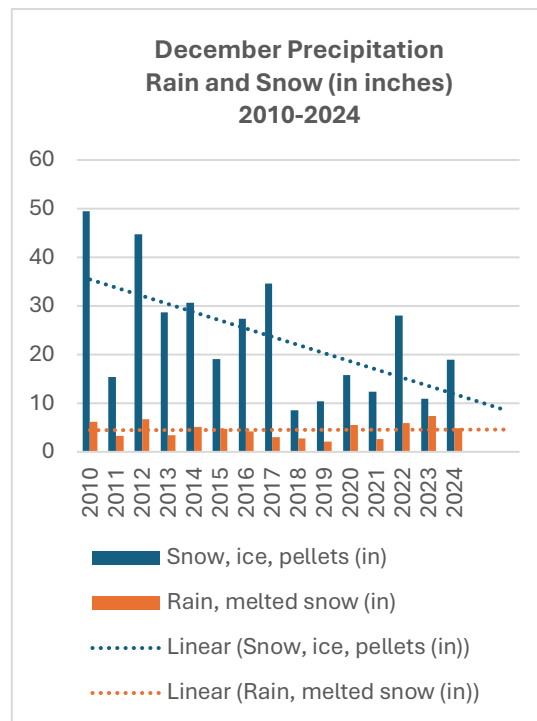
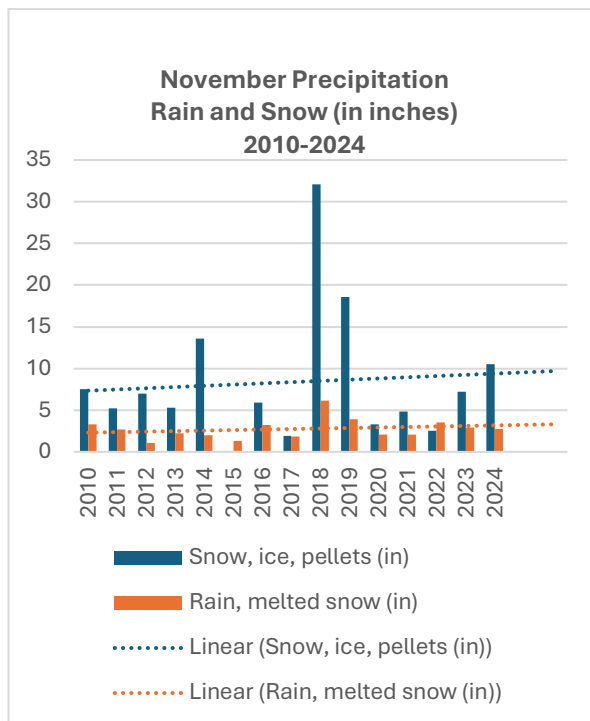
The data has been broken into months of the year to be more manageable. Trend lines (dotted line) generated by Excel have been added to show how temperatures and precipitation may

have changed over the study time of 2010 – 2024.

The following charts show monthly precipitation between 2010 and 2024 in the form and snow, melted snow, and rain. The dotted lines are trend forecasts (shown when possible).







## STATE INITIATIVES

In June 2019, Governor Janet Mills signed LD 1679 into law to create the Maine Climate Council. In December 2020, the Maine Climate Council published *Maine Won't Wait*, a four-year Climate Action Plan that outlines goals and strategies to prepare and be more resilient to the weather in Maine. *Maine Won't Wait* is not regulatory and it identifies four major goals:

- Reduce Maine's Greenhouse Gas Emissions,
- Strengthen Resilience to Climate Impacts,
- Create Jobs and Economic Prosperity, and
- Bring Climate Action to All Maine People

## IMPROVING THE ENERGY EFFICIENCY OF BUILDINGS

Heating and cooling of residential and commercial buildings contribute 31 percent of Maine's greenhouse gas emissions from fossil fuel combustion. Lowering these emissions and reducing energy costs will require modernizing our buildings to use cleaner energy, increasing energy efficiency, improving building efficiency with insulation and air sealing and encouraging the use of more sustainable building materials. This includes residential, commercial, industrial and town and non-profit buildings.

## SHIFTING TO RENEWABLE ENERGY SOURCES

Many homes and buildings use wood for heating and that is likely to continue. However, electricity is still a significant part of the energy used in the region. More renewable energy resources, along with battery storage could give Rangeley some energy independence, create

good paying jobs, and keep energy dollars local rather than sending them directly out of town. It requires some upfront investment, but projects with the right level of payoff could be beneficial to the town in the long term.

### **PROTECTING NATURAL RESOURCES**

Rangeley's abundant forests, lakes, streams, ponds, and local farms depend on vibrant natural ecosystems. These cherished natural and working lands and waters are at risk to climate change. The importance of healthy forests can't be overstated. They store carbon, provide habitat, keep the cold water cold, while providing abundant opportunities for recreation. As the climate changes, Maine's approach to natural and working lands and waters should emphasize restoration as well as protection, to reduce harm from climate impacts and sustain forest and forestry for generations to come.

### **IDENTIFYING VULNERABLE BUILDINGS, INFRASTRUCTURE AND PLACES**

Identifying and strengthening critical vulnerable infrastructure are needed to proactively prepare for disasters. In 2022, the Town hired Wright-Pierce to conduct a Climate Adaptation Plan for the municipal wastewater treatment facility and collection systems. That study is included in Appendix C as a resource. That Plan prioritizes improvements to the system to avoid extreme weather damage that could result in raw sewage contaminating surrounding areas. Similar type studies to identify priorities would help the town become more resilient.

An important step to becoming more resilient is identifying opportunities to bolster existing buildings and infrastructure at risk of extreme weather damage and exploring ways for buildings and infrastructure to become more resilient through building codes and standards. A wide range of natural climate solutions can also add to a community's resilience such as protecting natural wetlands that can hold and filter water, reducing impervious surface and increasing on-site infiltration with established low impact development strategies to name a few. Rangeley's remoteness was amplified during the January 2024 storm when all major routes to the town were washed out at some point. The more Rangeley can do to prepare and protect itself during extreme weather and result in a quicker and less costly recovery time.

### **LOOKING INTO THE FUTURE**

Rangeley has experienced the destruction of extreme weather on a few occasions. More of these incidences are likely and Rangeley will prepare for a more resilient future. Looking forward the following actions proposed:

- a. decrease the towns' dependence on fossil fuels;
- b. explore opportunities to shift to clean, renewable energy resources;
- c. identify buildings, infrastructure and places that are most at risk of damage during an extreme weather event;
- d. develop regulations where needed to increase natural ways to improve resilience and to protect new and existing construction from damage due to extreme weather;
- e. cooperate with neighboring communities and regional/local advocacy groups as appropriate to improve resiliency.

- f. coordinate with regional and state resource agencies and organizations as appropriate;

## ***Climate***

### **Goals:**

**1. To reduce dependence on fossil fuels, to increase use of renewable energy and to improve resiliency from extreme weather**

| <b>Goals met</b> | <b>Ideas to consider</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                           |  |
|------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|
|                  | 1.Consider conducting energy audits on all public buildings:                                                                                                                                                                       |  |
|                  | 2.Consider working with businesses and residences to decrease energy consumption by doing a bulk purchase of energy audits and subsequent energy reducing projects.                                                                |  |
|                  | 3. Conduct a renewable energy feasibility study for town-owned buildings, includes shifting municipal energy use to a renewable source when possible and constructing renewable energy systems such as solar, geothermal and wind. |  |
|                  | 4. Consider coordinating a bulk purchase of renewable energy resources such as solar, geo-thermal or wind for homeowners and businesses.                                                                                           |  |
|                  | 5. Conduct a vulnerability study of places, buildings, and infrastructure at risk of extreme weather.                                                                                                                              |  |
|                  | 6. Participate in regional efforts to improve energy efficiency and expand renewable energy resources.                                                                                                                             |  |
|                  | 7. Continue to educate residents with ways to prepare and to respond to extreme weather events.                                                                                                                                    |  |

## 12. *FUTURE LAND USE PLAN*

|                                       |
|---------------------------------------|
| Reference Maps included in Appendix A |
| 1. Existing Land Use 2025             |
| 2. Zoning Map 2023                    |
| 3. Future Land Use Map                |



### **BACKGROUND**

A major purpose of the *Comprehensive Plan* is to establish a guide to support the ongoing development of the community. The Plan establishes the foundation for land-use decisions and defines areas most suitable for development. It is important that the Plan sets forth a realistic development guide so that the community can prosper and at the same time maintain valued characteristics.

The purpose of the *Future Land Use Plan and Map* is to identify the future land use characteristics of Rangeley. The narrative of the *Future Land Use Plan* identifies areas where various land uses should occur.

The *Future Land Use Map* shows the existing and proposed land use areas. It is the purpose of the *Future Land Use Map* to indicate the general locations of desired future development. Some critical resource areas as defined in the *Comprehensive Plan Review Criteria Rules* are not identified on the map but will be conserved by recommendations contained in Comprehensive Plan.

The map was developed based on the *Vision for Rangeley*, policies, and action strategies contained in the Plan. It was developed without consideration of individual property owners but does use property lines as zoning boundaries when logical. The Plan should be viewed as a visualization of how the *Comprehensive Plan* recommends the Town develop in the years ahead. It is important to remember that as demands dictate, the *Future Land Use Plan and Map* will require revisions.

### **IMPLEMENTATION**

The *Future Land Use Plan* and *Future Land Use Map* will be implemented through amendments to existing zoning and other land-use related ordinances. The *Future Land Use Plan* will provide basic directions to those drafting ordinance amendments in relation to the purposes and dimensional requirements of the various land-use areas and so on. More details and ideas for implementation are included in the Housing section (CH 6), the Economy section (CH5), and the Natural and Water Resources section (CH8). The public will be given ample opportunity for input, through public meetings and hearings, as ordinance language is drafted.

### **SHORELAND AND RESOURCES PROTECTION AREAS**

*Natural Resource Areas* - Significant resources areas are those areas in Rangeley most vulnerable to development and other land-use activities. These areas are identified by the State of Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife (DIFW) and are used by the Town of Rangeley to establish resource protection areas. They are also critical factors in defining Rangeley's "brand" as define in its Vision. These areas warrant special consideration due to their vulnerability of degradation. Land-use activities within these areas require stricter regulation than in other areas. These areas, as stated in Rangeley's Vision, provide outstanding clean air and water, large remote areas, scenic views of lakes and mountains, wild fisheries, and bountiful wildlife.

Significant resource areas shall be protected by ensuring that new development and other land-use activities within the watershed of a surface water are undertaken to minimize negative effects on water quality. These standards will include erosion and sediment control measures, phosphorus export limitations and other recognized techniques, such as best management practices (BMPs) to protect water quality.

*Floodplains* shall continue to be regulated by Floodplain Management Ordinance and the existing Shoreland Zoning areas including the 100-year floodplain area along the Kennebago and Rangeley rivers, and areas around wetlands with high/moderate waterfowl and wading bird habitat value. Wetlands shall continue to be protected to maintain their resource values and functions by local Shoreland Zoning and the Maine Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) as appropriate. Steep Slopes of two or greater contiguous acres when sustained slopes are 25% or greater should be avoided from development; engineering techniques should be undertaken to stabilize hillsides and reduce erosion, sedimentation, and nutrient runoff; and these projects should be carefully monitored. Care should be taken to protect Significant Wildlife Habitat, such as known deer wintering areas as determined by a wildlife biologist; significant waterfowl and wading bird habitat; riparian areas; and large blocks of undeveloped land that are considered as critical habitats, using data from the *Beginning with Habitat* for regulations if needed

Rangeley's water resources are its most important natural resources and maintaining its outstanding clean water is a top priority. Shoreland zoning, including the most restrictive zone, Resource Protection, helps to achieve that vision. The purpose of designating shoreland areas is to protect the resource values and water quality of ponds, rivers, streams, and freshwater wetlands while permitting shoreland residential and recreational uses that are compatible with these resources.

Land-use activities in these areas require strict oversight to protect water quality and the other values of these resources. Year-round and seasonal residential and commercial development in compliance with the standards of the *Mandatory Shoreland Zoning Act* will continue to be permitted. Lot area per dwelling will be a minimum of 40,000 square feet with a private septic system and 20,000 square feet with a connection to the public sewer system.

No changes to the minimum shore frontage and lot areas are proposed, nor are any changes proposed to the specific land-use standards existing in Rangeley's Shoreland Zoning regulations. These areas

are identified with information from the Maine DEP, the Maine DIFW, the Maine Department of Conservation, the national Flood Insurance Program, and the *Beginning with Habitat* data.

For the purposes of the Growth Management Law, the Shoreland and Resource Protection Area is considered a Natural Resource Area.

Implementation ideas are outlined in Chapter 8- Natural and Water Resources

### **WOODLAND AREAS**

Woodland Areas are for the most part forested, suitable for commercial forestry use, held in large ownerships, not readily accessible from public roads, and expected to remain as active commercial woodlots into the future. Commercial forest land boosts local and regional economies, defines Rangeley's character, protects water quality, and offers wildlife habitats and recreation areas.

Within areas designated as Woodland, the primary uses will be forestry, commercial activities that add value to forestry products, and other natural resource-based activities. In addition, uses involving conservation or recreational activities are appropriate. Commercial and industrial uses other than those involving forestry, forest products, natural resources, or outdoor recreation are not appropriate in Woodland areas. Residential uses are allowed at the lowest density within the Town. Earth and rock materials removal will be allowed subject to standards for operation and restoration of the site.

Residential development may not be compatible with the allowed commercial forestry of the Woodland areas. Clustering houses in this District is a way to create wooded buffers around the residences, maintain wooded blocks, and reduce the length of roads and impervious surfaces within the development. Clustered subdivisions are allowed in this District, but in most cases, developers have not chosen a clustered subdivision as an alternative to more traditional development. Adding incentives to cluster, with lower road frontages and opportunities for extra lots if certain criteria are met may encourage more clustered development.

A transfer of development rights might also be a way to limit residential development and maintain large blocks of forested land in the Woodland District in return for higher density in the Village where public water and sewer are available. With a transfer of development rights program, the development rights of Woodland areas (the sending district) are permanently severed from the land and can be sold to a developer for higher density in the Village area (the receiving district). For the program to work, there needs to be an incentive for developers to purchase the rights. For example, the value of the development rights needs to be priced high enough for woodlot owners to sell, and low enough for developers to get additional density or housing type to be economically feasible. The challenge is finding the right balance.

For the purposes of the Growth Management Law, the Woodland Area is considered a Rural Area.

Implementation ideas are outlined in the Economy section (Forestry) of Chapter 5.

### **RESIDENTIAL AREAS**

The purpose of the Residential Areas is to accommodate moderate and higher density residential development, including single-family, two-family, and multi-family housing. Within these areas, incentives of higher density for affordable/workforce housing should be created. This Area supports the vision that there will be a diverse population, meaning that there will be young, old, and families with children onsite.

Mobile home parks could be expanded to include small, stick-built homes, if they meet design standards that include but not limited to: mobile home safety standards and appearance (pitched roofs and residential type siding), open space requirements, street design, sidewalks, street lighting, and landscape buffers.

The space and bulk standards (including property line setbacks, height limitations, road frontage requirements, minimum lot sizes, and density requirements) currently allowed in in CH38.9.7 could be adjusted to lower infrastructure costs such as utility and road construction, while still creating a desirable Rangeley neighborhood. Clustering is another way to encourage neighborhood development and lower construction costs.

Community facilities, public and semi-public uses, and smaller types of lodging facilities will be allowed in these Areas. Commercial and industrial uses, including new extraction of earth and rock materials, will not be located in these Areas. Home occupations would be allowed subject to criteria that consider the potential impacts of the use on the neighborhood in which it would be located.

Space and bulk standards and the allowable uses of this District should be reviewed to see if they are still appropriate for the type of development Rangeley is experiencing.

For the purposes of the Growth Management Law, the Residential Area is considered a Growth Area.

Implementation ideas are outlined in the Housing section – Chapter 6.

### **VILLAGE RESIDENTIAL AREAS**

The purpose of the Village Areas is to provide locations for quality, higher-density residential neighborhoods. A wide range of residential uses including single family, two family, and multi-family units (including condominiums) are appropriate uses in this Area. Other desired uses include bed and breakfasts, community facilities, backyard agricultural activities and institution/public buildings. Home occupations in conjunction with residential uses will be allowed but with limitations to minimize impact on surrounding uses.

As with the Residential District, space and bulk standards and the allowable uses of CH 38 should be reviewed to see if they are still appropriate for the type of development Rangeley is experiencing. For example, there are different types of housing such as larger multi-family buildings, boarding houses, dorms, and the like that would provide the types of housing needed for Rangeley's permanent and transient workforce. Likewise, build-to requirements rather than setback requirements create a different, more consistent look and could be appropriate. Different housing

types may require different types of space and bulk standards if the units meet desired housing such as affordable employee rental and homeownership types. This area is appropriate for incentives for higher density if affordable and/or workforce housing is constructed.

The *Future Land Use Map* shows an area that is currently Residential but is appropriate for Village and higher density and a diversity of housing types because public water and sewer are currently provided. Higher density may be offered as an incentive to build affordable and/or workforce housing. A second area that is proposed to be Village instead of Residential is between the Shoreland area around the lake and the Commercial area along Route 4 in the area around Cottage Road (see the *Future Land Use Plan* for a more precise location).

This Area supports the vision that Rangeley and Oquossoc Villages will be focal points.

For the purposes of the Growth Management Law, the Village Residential Area is considered a Growth Area.

Implementation ideas are outlined in the Housing section – Chapter 6.

### **DOWNTOWN COMMERCIAL AREAS**

Downtown Rangeley Area is a vibrant and changing village center where residents and visitors come to shop, eat and socialize. The Rangeley Downtown Area (Downtown Commercial District) includes a mixture of uses including public, retail, services, lodging, and residential. This area is walkable and business and services can be reached by parking a vehicle only once. No changes to the size of Rangeley Village Downtown District are proposed; however, removing barriers to create more opportunities for mixed use is suggested in **Chapter 5—Economy** (see Mixed Use sub-chapter).

The *Downtown Revitalization Plan* developed by Wright Peirce will guide local infrastructure improvements. See **Appendix C** for the Plan and recommendations. In addition, the town may also want to consider architectural and design standards to guide the design of new and redevelopment projects. Other land use regulations should be considered such as a Site Plan Review Ordinance that includes environmental development standards, parking, signage, lighting, wastewater disposal, odors, buffers, and so on. As in other Districts, the space and bulk standards should also be reviewed to see if they are meeting current development needs.

Oquossoc Village Area (Downtown Commercial District), while smaller than the Rangeley Downtown Area, contains a variety of service-type businesses, and the Rangeley Outdoor Sporting Heritage Museum. This area should maintain its mixture of uses to retain the village character.

In Oquossoc, there is no public sewer available and the cost of extending the public sewer line has been assessed and it is cost prohibitive. Therefore; the lot size will continue to be a minimum of 20,000 square feet with setbacks and lot coverage standards reflecting village character.

This Area supports the vision that Rangeley and Oquossoc Villages will be focal points

For the purposes of the Growth Management Law, the Rangeley and Oquossoc Downtown Commercial Districts Area are considered Growth Area.

Implementation ideas are outlined in the Economy section – Chapter 5.

### **COMMERCIAL AREAS**

The Commercial Area is intended to provide locations for a variety of commercial, office, service, research, or assembly operations that cannot be located in Village areas due to their size or scale and/or good neighbor impacts. Commercial operations that add value to logs could also be an appropriate use for the Commercial use. Because of its location adjacent to the Scenic Byway and populated areas, ordinance standards will not allow uses that have the potential to cause environmental harm and/or pose threats to human health and safety or that will cause excessive noise or traffic.

A new Commercial District is proposed in mid-town Rangeley along the south side of Route 4 near Quimby Pond Road. See the ***Future Land Use Map in Appendix A*** for a more precise location. Route 4 is not posted in the spring, allowing year-round traffic and the area currently has some commercial activity. This may become a different type of Commercial District or be an extension to the existing Commercial Districts.

As stated earlier, site plan review standards and architectural standards are a good tool to assure that new development will not be detrimental to adjacent land uses.

For the purposes of the Growth Management Law, the Commercial Areas are considered as Growth Area.

Implementation ideas are outlined in the Economy section – Chapter 5.

### **INDUSTRIAL/COMMERCIAL AREA**

The Industrial area includes the municipal airport, land adjacent to the airport that is suitable for industrial and commercial use, and the Chick Hill Pollution Control Facility/spray fields. Town-owned properties total some 630 acres (the airport comprises 130 acres and the Chick Hill Pollution Control Facility/spray fields comprise 500 acres). The purpose of the Industrial/Commercial Area is to provide locations for industrial/business type uses that can coexist with aviation activities and are not compatible with land uses in other areas due to size, intensity, and potential impacts on more compact residential and woodland areas.

This Plan proposes that the definitions of light and heavy industrial be merged and that uses allowed in heavy industrial such as chemical plants, wrecking yards, the use of radioactive materials, and freight yards be eliminated from the definition. Uses that create materials need for construction, support forest products and aviation industries, create energy or provide energy storage, and provide important products to the people of the Rangeley Region would be appropriate.

In addition to site plan standards mentioned earlier, specific standards will be developed to ensure such development does not limit airport operations and expansions.

For the purposes of the Growth Management Law, the Industrial/Commercial Area is considered a Growth Area.

Implementation ideas are outlined in the Economy section – Chapter 5.

# ***13. REGIONAL COORDINATION PROGRAM***

## **BACKGROUND**

The Town of Rangeley realizes that coordination and/or joint action is necessary to address a number of regional/interlocal planning issues. The Rangeley region is a combination of the Town of Rangeley and the surrounding Plantations of Dallas, Sandy River, and Rangeley. Extending further are the northern Western Mountain communities of Kingfield, Carrabassett Valley, Stratton, Eustis, and Rangeley. The entire area relies heavily on tourism and the ski industry. From a transportation perspective, the Route 4 corridor to Farmington is another important region.

Members of the Committee recently held two regional meetings. The first meeting was on September 11, 2024, at the Dallas Plantation Town Offices and included Dallas, Sandy River, and Rangeley plantations (no one participated from Rangeley Plantation). The primary focus of that meeting was whether it makes sense for the Plantations to adopt Rangeley's land use and building codes regulations and staff, instead of those of the Land Use Planning Commission (LUPC). Some Plantation members expressed frustration with how long it takes to get decisions from LUPC. The director of the LUPC explained that any Plantation could opt to leave LUPC provided that it had regulations at least as stringent as the LUPC regulations. They would have to adopt a plan and a map for LUPC to consider. The Plantations will discuss this issue in more detail. The Town of Rangeley was neutral on the subject but expressed a willingness to consider a proposal, provided the full cost of any services is paid by the Plantations. This group meets on a quarterly basis. It is likely that the topic will continue to be discussed.

The second meeting was held on September 16, 2024, at the Town Office in Stratton. Representatives from Kingfield, Carrabassett Valley, Eustis, and Rangeley were present. The group identified some high-priority issues that all of the communities are struggling with and which may have a regional solution. Topics of discussion included:

- Facilitating the construction of more rental, home ownership, long-term, and seasonal employee housing that is affordable by median-income households;
- Expanding transportation options for elderly people and those without cars;
- Improving healthcare services such as prescriptions, doctors, wellness, etc.;
- Developing renewable energy standards;
- Allowing more camping in the region;
- Coordinating flood prevention improvements;
- Creating year-round recreation options; and
- Addressing climate change-related matters—including infrastructure, energy conservation, renewable energy expansion, and invasive species.

## **NATURAL RESOURCES**

Exceptional water quality is a significant regional asset. It serves as an attraction to tourists and

seasonal residents. It is recognized that the value of shorefront property is greater where adjacent to lakes with good water quality than for those properties adjacent to lakes with poor water quality.

Lake water quality depends on a number of factors. The management of activities with the potential to degrade water quality within the overall watershed is necessary when considering the long-term health of surface water bodies. To protect water quality while allowing a reasonable amount of development to occur within the watershed, effective regulations and Best Management Practices (BMPs) are necessary. Regulations are most effective when there is follow-through with inspections of construction sites, and enforcement of improper construction or failed water-quality protection installations. Regulations are strongest when they are coupled with education. The more contractors and road maintenance staff understand how stormwater and erosion impact water quality sometimes miles away, the more lakes, ponds, rivers, and streams will be better protected.

The watersheds of Cupsuptic, Mooselookmeguntic, Loon, and Rangeley lakes and Haley Pond are shared with adjacent plantations and townships. Management of developing regulations, training programs, inspection procedures, and enforcement equates to a big task and current staff probably does not have the capacity to dedicate to the program. However, if people in the region worked together and developed consistent rules and procedures, these tasks might be more attainable.

For the Town of Rangeley, water quality is the responsibility of the town to regulate and oversee. However, the neighboring Plantations are regulated and overseen by the LUPC—so regulations and follow-up inspections and enforcement are handled differently throughout the region.

Maintaining access to water bodies is critical. Some sites have good public access. However, many sites rely on landowner permission over private property. In recent years there have been some incidents of misuse of private land. In addition, landownership changes over time, and access points may be at risk if landowners fear their land will be misused. Educating users about how to respect these access points is important to preserve these places as available in the future; for example, the importance of carrying out any waste that has been carried in and disposing of any human waste by digging a hole and covering it.

The Rangeley Region is known for its angling. The fisheries are regulated by the State of Maine, the *Statewide General Fishing Laws for Inland Waters*. The Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife (DIFW) enforces the rules. Some anglers have witnessed practices that are not in accordance with state rules, indicating an opportunity to better educate anglers about rules so that the fisheries resource is protected

## **REGIONAL ECONOMIC GROWTH**

Rangeley is classified as a *Specialized Service Center* in Maine and serves as the service, educational, recreational, cultural, and economic center for the Rangeley Region. It also provides convenient goods and services to meet the day-to-day needs of year-round residents of the region and the large number of seasonal residents and tourists. Retail trade and services and hospitality are the major components of Rangeley's economy.

In 2015, the “High Peaks Region” consisting of Kingfield, Carrabassett Valley, Eustis, Rangeley, and Philips were part of a study by *Americans for the Arts* to document the economic impact of the nonprofit arts and culture industry on communities. In the High Peaks region, 11 of the 19 nonprofit arts and culture organizations participated in the study. In short, the study concluded that the arts and culture section in the region contributed \$1,021,519 to the regional economy in a year. Cooperation throughout the region for increasing arts and culture is yet another boost for the tourism industry. Visit the *High Peaks Creative Council* at [www.creativehighpeaks.com](http://www.creativehighpeaks.com).

Economic growth in the Rangeley Region will not only benefit Rangeley but the region as a whole.

## **TRANSPORTATION**

The regional transportation system is extremely important for the future of the Rangeley Region. State routes 4, 16, and 17 are the primary highway corridors into and through the region. While portions of these corridors have been improved, the physical condition of other portions are not well suited for modern-day travel. Recent extreme storm events have resulted in upgrades to stream crossing on many roads. Additional improvements to these regional corridors will benefit the entire Rangeley Region.

The Stephen A. Bean Municipal Airport is the air connection into and out of the Region. The airport underwent a \$12-million runway extension and improvement project in 2017, adding an additional 110 feet of runway length. Its continued operation and modernization will benefit the economy of the Region.

Saddleback has started a new bus service between the mountain and Oquossoc. The shuttle is primarily for workers, but Saddleback staff has expressed interest in expanding the service for skiers and stops at other establishments. Western Mountain Transportation provides service to Sugarloaf and service from Farmington to Rangeley on the second Tuesday of every month.

## **PUBLIC SERVICES AND FACILITIES**

One or more adjacent plantations and/or townships successfully rely on Rangeley for a number of public services including fire protection and law enforcement when other agencies are not available, public water, septage disposal, and solid waste disposal.

Keeping up with regional public safety, as well as water, sewer, and solid waste facility needs are growing. It is important to plan ahead for the types of buildings, equipment, staffing, and programs that will be needed. Maintaining an accurate cost for existing programs and expansions is important to ensure that everyone is paying their fair share.

## **LAND USE AND DEVELOPMENT PATTERNS**

Regional land use and development patterns can significantly impact the delivery of public services, the character of the region, local water quality, and regional growth. Currently the LUPC plans, zones, and issues some of the development permits in the plantations and townships. A Prospective Zoning Plan for the Rangeley Region has been adopted by the LUPC.

The LUPC projected that the Rangeley Region will continue to experience a greater amount of development than other parts of their jurisdiction over the next 20 years.

### **RECREATIONAL TRAILS**

Regional trail systems both for motorized use and people-powered use are important to the economies of Rangeley and the Rangeley Region. Existing trails need to be retained, improved, and expanded, and new trails should be developed.

### **AFFORDABLE/WORKFORCE AND ELDERLY HOUSING OPPORTUNITIES**

All of the Plantations and communities in the Northern Western Mountains are struggling with a lack of housing. Housing is a regional problem and could benefit from having the combination of local and regional solutions.

### **REGIONAL PARTICIPATION**

Regional issues and needs can best be addressed with active participation by those involved. Many current issues and future issues will be most effectively addressed through regional approaches.

## ***LOOKING TO THE FUTURE***

Rangeley is the center of both the Rangeley Region and the larger region of the Western Mountains. The Plantations have cooperated with Rangeley to provide public safety services and education, because regional management makes sense. Opportunities to cooperate with other communities should always be considered and evaluated to determine if a regional approach will provide better services for less money. Looking forward, it is suggested to maintain and create systems to ensure regional discussion of opportunities to meet the following policies.

- a. Encourage and promote adequate workforce housing at a variety of price points to support the community's and region's economic development;
- b. Encourage and support the efforts of regional housing coalitions/organizations in addressing affordable and workforce housing needs;
- c. Coordinate Rangeley's land use strategies with other local, regional, LUPC and/or its replacement land use planning efforts;
- d. Coordinate with neighboring communities and regional and state resource agencies to protect shared critical natural resources, water resources;
- e. Promote adequate affordable/workforce and elderly housing opportunities;
- f. Promote regional land use and development patterns that reflect the valued natural environment and the desires of the region's year-round and seasonal residents;
- g. Plan for the adequate provision of public services; and
- h. Maintain and improve where needed Rangeley area water resources.

## ***REGIONAL COORDINATION PROGRAM***

**GOAL:** Coordinate with regional economic development organizations and surrounding plantations and towns as necessary to support desired economic development.

### **IDEAS TO CONSIDER**

**Creation of a regional committee to develop consistent regulations, development review procedures, inspection procedures, local staff, and contractor training programs regionally.**

**Creation of consistent land-use ordinances for the region that:**

1. Protects critical natural resources and *Beginning with Habitat* critical areas in coordination with the regional towns and plantations;
2. Clusters houses in rural area to protect critical and sensitive lands and trail corridors as open space; and
3. Protects surface water by determining the allowable phosphorus export per acre calculations for shared watersheds.

**Creation of educational materials for distribution throughout the region on:**

1. Respecting private access property rights—i.e., leave no trace, carry out what you carry in, dispose of human waste by burying and so on;
2. Angling practices which protect the fisheries; and
3. Current use-tax programs and applicable local, state, and federal regulations for those living in or near critical or important natural resources.

**Work cooperatively within the region to:**

1. Reduce energy consumption and address the impacts of climate change;
2. Participate in regional economic development efforts, including the Plantations, the northern Western Mountain communities, the High Peak Regions for arts and culture, and the Route 4 corridor;
3. Solve common problems;
4. Support regional affordable/workforce housing coalitions such as Western Maine Mountain Housing, and/or a Housing Authority to seize opportunities to build and rehab existing buildings to create more housing units. The organization would be aware of Maine State Housing Authority programs, federal programs, affordable housing, Tax Increment Financing and so on;
5. Coordinate land-use designations and regulatory and non-regulatory strategies including shared critical natural and water resources;
6. Expand regional and state transportation services such as the Western Mountain Transportation system, and expand transit services between Saddleback Maine, Rangeley, and the Rangeley Region; and
7. Work with public and private partners to extend and maintain a network of trails for motorized and non-motorized uses. Connect with regional trail systems, including the Fly Rod Crosby Trail, where possible.

**Continue to maintain communications with the Land Use Planning Commission relating to providing services to the Plantations around Rangeley, including the share of the costs paid by the plantations.**

# ***14. PLAN IMPLEMENTATION AND EVALUATION***

## **INTRODUCTION**

This Plan identifies issues for the Town to consider, and it offers ideas to address the various issues. It doesn't establish priorities and the ideas are just ideas. The Plan is a first step. The real value of the Plan is how the community decides to implement it. Evaluating the ideas will take time. In some cases, it might be found that some ideas might not be appropriate. Other ideas will need to be refined to fit Rangeley's needs. And, some great solutions may not have been included in the plan but are perfect for Rangeley—they should be considered.

Time changes things. To stay current and relevant, the plan may need amendments. The following action strategies will guide plan implementation and evaluation.

## **ESTABLISH PRIORITIES**

The Board of Selectmen (BOS) will manage the priority setting and implementation of the Plan. To start, the BOS will prioritize the various topics and ideas. This Board will also decide who (Town board or committee, staff, nonprofit etc.) should be reviewing ideas and bringing final products to the Board for their review, consideration, and possible action.

The top issues identified by the Plan include the need for a variety of housing types that are affordable for the typical worker, continuing to be an outdoor recreation destination and diversifying the economy, and protecting open spaces, water quality and other natural resources. Implementing the Future Land Use Plan, the Zoning Map and associated Ordinance amendments will be a significant first step to meeting the town's current needs.

To keep the Plan's implementation on track, on a quarterly basis, a report prepared by the Town Manager, ( or their designee) on the Plan's status shall be submitted to the BOS for their review. The reports will assess the degree that various ideas have been implemented. Once a year, the report will list new developments, whether they are in a growth or rural area, type of development such as commercial, residential (SF, duplex, multi-family, etc.). The Code Enforcement Office and the Assessing department will work with the Androscoggin Valley Council of Governments (AVCOG) to keep the local development GIS data up-to-date so that periodic maps can be made to show where development is occurring.

## **IMPLEMENTATION**

Implementing the Plan is a community process. It is the part of the process where ideas evolve into Ordinances, policies, capital projects, additional studies, and so on. Different entities will be responsible for different parts of the Plan. For example, new ordinances are the responsibility of the Planning Board and the Ordinance Committee, decisions on expenditures or additional

studies fall with the BOS, local nonprofits also play a role such as the Chamber of Commerce or the land trust. The final decision though is that of the BOS.

*New Ordinances:* New ordinances will be developed by the Planning Board with the help of the Ordinance Committee. The Planning Board will provide the overall goals and policies to the Ordinance Committee. The Ordinance Committee will develop the rules, regulations, processes, etc. of the new Ordinance. Professional planning services will be provided to guide the development of ordinances.

*New Studies, Expenditures, and Programs:* The BOS will oversee any new studies, expenditures, and programs. Staff will be assigned as appropriate to help guide any decisions.

*Coordination with local nonprofit organizations:* Some ideas might require collaboration with local nonprofit organizations. In these cases, the Town Manager will assign a staff person, local committee or committee member, or volunteer to work with the non-profit.

*Other ideas:* The BOS shall assign ideas that don't fall into the category listed above as appropriate.

## **PLAN IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE**

The following timeline is suggested to implement the Plan. The suggestions are grouped in broader categories such as ordinance amendments rather than each suggested amendment. Items that aren't included specifically can be considered low priorities. This suggested timeline is advisory only and should be adjusted as conditions change or new situations arise. Many of the recommendations are suggested as needed, those are considered "ongoing".

Year 1 – Amend the Zoning Map and Zoning Ordinance amendments identified in the Future Land Use Plan.

Year 2 –Consider a short-term-rental policy consistent with the LUPC, considering creating architectural standards for development in the villages, update Impact Fee Ordinance, consider conducting assessments of public buildings for their efficiency and capacity to expand, and conduct energy audits,

Year 3 – Develop viewsheds and development standards, develop renewable energy standards, study community subsurface sewage disposal in Oquossoc Village, develop educational materials as identified throughout the Plan,

Ongoing – meeting and cooperating with surrounding Plantations and the larger region, working with state agencies and departments, identifying and submitting grant applications as appropriate, finding low-cost ways for the town to support local businesses, communicating and working with Saddleback, creating TIF Districts as appropriate. Working with housing authorities or non-profits to expand affordable housing, capital improvements, implementing the Downtown Revitalization Plan, update Shoreland Zoning, Floodplain Ordinances, and Wellhead

Protection as needed to be consistent with state standards, monitor water quality, continue annual CIP planning.

### **PLAN EVALUATION**

Evaluating a *Comprehensive Plan* requires an assessment of how well the plan aligns with its goals and objectives. In practical terms that means whether it's effectively addressing the community's needs and aspirations. In Rangeley's case, the need for more housing was the highest priority. Other priorities include maintaining and expanding the commercial sector, preserving the Region's natural resources and outdoor recreational opportunities, clean water, forests, and wildlife habitats.

To evaluate the effectiveness of the Plan, at a minimum, the following data should be reviewed at least once per year.

1. Has the *Future Land Use Plan* been implemented?
2. How many new housing units were created that are considered affordable for year-round and seasonal workers and for seniors?
3. Were new units built in growth areas or rural areas?
4. Did any new-visitor-based or natural resource businesses start up over the last year?
5. Are water quality levels staying the same or improving?
6. How does the amount of sales tax paid from Rangeley businesses compare with the previous year?
7. What capital improvements by the Town have been made in the growth areas and the rural areas

# 15. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION SUMMARY

Comprehensive Review Committee (CRC): The Selectmen appointed a six-member committee to oversee the revision of the comprehensive plan. The town contracted with LK Planning LLC and AVCOG to assist the Committee with their work. The Committee started their work in August of 2023, the consultants started working with the Committee in November of 2023. The Committee met on an as needed basis throughout the process. The summaries of the public meetings and the various survey results are included in Appendix B of this report.

## **Public Visioning Sessions:**

January 31, 2024 the committee sponsored a visioning session in Rangeley at the school.  
*attached report*

June 25, 2024 the committee sponsored a visioning session in Oquossoc at the fire station. *See attached meeting summary*

## **Regional Meeting:**

September 11, 2024 at the Dallas Plantation Town Office with representation from Rangeley, Sandy River Plantation, and Dallas Plantation, Rangeley Plantation was invited but did not attend *See attached meeting summary*

September 16, 2024 at the Stratton Town Office with representation from Rangeley, Stratton, Eustis, Carrabassett Valley, and Kingfield *See attached meeting summary*

## **Business Sector Meeting**

September 19, 2024 at the Rangeley Inn to gather input from the business community. *See attached meeting summary*

## **Public Hearing**

June 18, 2025 at the school *To be attached when completed when available*

## **Special Town Meeting**

September 16, 2025 **Official results:**

Article A1: Shall the Town vote to adopt the 2025 Rangeley Comprehensive Plan?

Yes:     **54**

No:      **13**

## **SURVEYS COMPLETED**

### **Surveys Conducted**

Multi-topic general Survey *See B-7 for survey results*

Business Community Survey *See B-8 for survey results*

**Stakeholders Meetings** conducted by the consultant: During the development of the Plan the consultant met with the Rangeley Lakes Heritage Trust, Saddleback Mountain, the Historical Society, School, water and sewer departments, builders/contractors, and town departments.

**Use of Media:** Public meeting notices were posted on the town's website and local bulletin boards, and sent to local newspapers. Local radio station covered public sessions.

**Comprehensive Review Committee Members:** Chris Farmer (Chair), Steve Hewins (vice chair), Wendyll Caisse, Karl Kolze, Cyndy Egan, Jacob Beaulieu and staff liaison, Breck Parker

**Town Staff:** Breck Parker CEO, Traci Lavoie Assistant Town Manager, Joe Roach Town Manager

**Consultants:** Donna Larson Kane, LK Planning, LLC, Erica Bufkins, Androscoggin Valley Council of Governments focusing on mapping and data